

## ***Rural literacy programme for adults in Slovenia – Challenges of the Countryside***

***Ljudska univerza Velenje***

### **I. General information**

<b>Field :</b>	<p>The training programme for adults - rural literacy programme is presented as a case of good practice</p> <p>Pedagogical aspects of the programme – project work as an pedagogical approach embedding the basic skills within the topics of sustainable development, starting up own economic activity, etc.</p>
<b>Theme(s) addressed</b>	Raising the level of literacy of low educated (skilled) unemployed inhabitants on the country side.
<b>Target audience</b>	Unemployed low educated inhabitants on the country side, who are land or other estate owners.
<b>Pursued objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising the level of skills and competences</li> <li>• Evaluation and assessment of individual talents, potentials and resources</li> <li>• Starting an economic activity on the basis of available resources, local traditions, sustainability ...</li> </ul>
<b>Method(s) used</b>	<p>In the rural literacy programme teachers help people living in rural areas find and take advantage of opportunities provided by the environment they live in. Through the programme they are also trying to help participants improve their social position and economic living status.</p> <p>Within the project learning approach the participative learning approach and socio constructivists' theoretical backgrounds are being implemented.</p>

## II. Description

### Practical modalities

The rural literacy programme is non-formal, 120 hours long training programme that mostly takes place in the premises of Folk High School and in the premises of rural communities. The programme also includes examples of good practice regarding entrepreneurship in rural areas of which visits take place in the near surroundings (see Photo No 1). There is around 12–16 participants in the group. The programme is delivered by 2 teachers at a time (pair teaching). Teachers were trained in the basic training programme for adult literacy teachers (duration aprox 100 hours). Entry requirements for this training are university degree, pedagogical-andragogical qualification and experiences in adult education especially in teaching vulnerable groups of adults.



Photo 1: Field visits in the near surroundings, a case study of successful entrepreneurship: Production and processing herbs, June 2010

The programme has been a verified one, which means in Slovenia, that the providing institutions in order to get public funding, need to prove that they have trained teachers and premises to deliver such a programme.

The programme is funded by Ministry of Education and Sport and ESF and is free of charge for participants. Programmes is also included in the Active Employment Policy, therefore participants are entitled for funds for unemployed person in education (e.g. public transport costs). The legal base for funding and for the delivery is Slovenian Adult Education Act (1996) and Adult Education Master Plan (2005-2010), and its successor in the stage of proposal still. In the period 2010-2013 there around 500 low educated adults from rural areas will have an opportunity to participate in rural literacy programme, free of charge.

### Description of the main stage

The rural literacy programme (like other adult literacy programmes in Slovenia) is aimed at increasing participants' basic skills and competences (literacy, numeracy, ICT), social skills, promoting lifelong learning and developing skills to becoming an active citizen.

The programmes for individual group of participants starts with the motivational elements, aiming at get to know each other and at assessment of individual learning needs. This is the starting point in creating the open and negotiated curriculum development and individual learning plans. Other elements that are part of

the implemented curriculum are building up motivation for learning (using the individual successful learning biographies as examples), removing barriers of different kind for learning, using ICT, learning and teaching materials adapted to adults, etc.

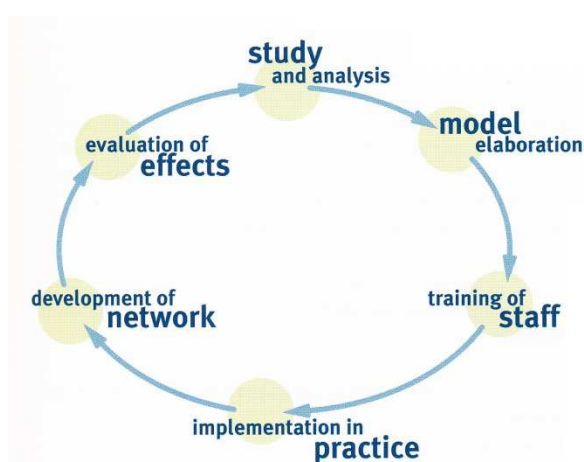
The rural literacy programmes is based as already mentioned on the project learning approach: The starting point for planning project learning in these programmes is that learning is considered successful if the learners actively participate in all phases of learning – from the selection of topic, planning, carrying out, monitoring and evaluation of learning. The learning defined in a project becomes variegated and multi-layered learning in life, even better – in the community which evokes sufficient emotions and values in participants, so they are willing to think about their learning needs, plan learning, monitor and evaluate, in the process cooperate with other people, accept efforts and responsibility which accompany learning. They thus form an identity, develop and improve competences for lifelong learning, primarily by facilitating metacognitive processes, such as defining problems, creative search and evaluation of solutions, which occurs in the process of learning and is supported by it, this consequently most often ends with successful solutions of problems. Improving participants' competences for learning is also the most highly regarded value in adult project learning, which can be defined also as sustainable knowledge acquired by participants through reflected learning experience within the learning context with well defined scopes and goals.

During the teacher training teachers are introduced to the characteristics of project learning from the participants' point of view – primarily from the learners' point of view, yet also from the teacher's point of view, as well as from the point of view of the environment in which learning takes place.

## Remarks

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The Rural literacy programme has been developed by Slovenian Institute for Adult Education in 2005 on the basis of the insights of adult literacy problem in Slovenia (IALS survey in Slovenia), and assessment of educational needs of low educated adults on Slovenian country side (applicative research project in 2005). The concept of the rural literacy programme has been derived from social constructivism, and implemented through project learning approach. The project followed the development cycle of 6 staged. The last one, evaluation of the effect was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Sport and completed in 2010.



The national evaluation of the programme revealed, that it has effects foreseen in the project objectives. Changes are needed in the area of validation of skills and competences, in the area of assessments of individual educational needs and consequently in the areas or teacher training to be able to raise the quality of their work in those areas.

### III. Self-determination evidence

The national evaluation of the adult literacy scheme in 2010 revealed that the Rural literacy programme contribute significantly to self-determination and participation of adult learners. The evidence is as follows:

. »...76% of participants in the Rural literacy programme in the period 2005-2010 said that they know better their living environment, 83% meet individuals who convinced them that individual has chances to succeed in the local community, 87% participants realised new opportunities for them in the community they live in ...«. And in addition to that »...Teachers in the rural literacy programmes have said that the participants acquire new communication, social and interpersonal skills. The most significant benefit according to teachers are: new knowledge and skills, self determination, motivation for further education .....«. /Evaluation report of adult literacy programmes in Slovenia, SIAE 2011/.

In order to step out from the theory and the data we decided to introduce 1 concrete example of a women participant in the programmes and through her story we will confirm the points and crucial elements of the programme that have assist the participant to make a progress.

Mrs. Silva Mikek joined the rural literacy programme in May 2010 and until the end of June 2010 attended the planned 120 hours of training. At the beginning of the programme, when the participants presented themselves, their hobbies and goals, she explained that years ago she lost a job as a saleswoman in the shop and has been without a job ever since. Her family owns a small farm, which meets the needs of the family, but her wish is to acquire new knowledge that could be used in the preparation of domestic products (bread, baked goods, homemade meat products, production and processing of herbs, etc). She said that in addition to her lack of relevant knowledge she also lacks confidence and above all the courage to enter the market with her products and to start selling them. Another wish of hers was to acquire computer knowledge, which she does not have.

It was interesting that soon after becoming involved in the programme Ms. Mikek clearly shaped her goal: to sell her own products at the farmers' market in Velenje. She pursued her goal by acquiring both arithmetic skills (setting the cost and economic prices of the products) and literacy skills (product descriptions, recipes, invitations, offers...). At the computer course she designed her business card and the presentation of their farm Mikek.



Photo 2: The “felt-making” workshop within the Rural literacy programme (Silva Mikek is fourth from right), Maj 2010



During the programme she realized that she also lacks knowledge regarding communication, foreign language, and production and processing of indigenous fruits, arranging products for sale, ethnological characteristics of the products in the Upper Savinja region etc.. So after the completion of rural literacy programme she participated in some additional courses and became active member in two societies (Society of rural women and Fruit growers' association).



Photo 3: The 'Pottery workshop' organised within the Rural literacy programme, June 2010

She encouraged her husband to join the programme with the aim to acquire the knowledge in the field of personal supplementary work and to obtain the permits required for supplementary activities on the farm. This allows them to sell their products at the farmers' market in Velenje and thus to achieve her main objective.



Photo 4-5: Silva selling her own products on Farmer's Market in Velenje (on the left), November 2011

#### IV. Dissemination

The information about the programme is available through the website of the implementing institution and Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. Presentation is possible via email, website, skype or in the form of presentation or study visit on the site.

##### Format

Photos to evidence the individual participant activity.

#### V. Contact

<b>Name of the organisation</b>	Ljudska univerza Velenje
<b>Status</b>	Ljudska univerza Velenje is a non-profit education and training provider for young people and adults in Slovenia.
<b>Details</b>	
Address	Ljudska univerza Velenje, Titov trg 2, 3320 Velenje
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Tel/Fax	+386 3 898 54 50
Web site	<a href="http://www.lu-velenje.si/">http://www.lu-velenje.si/</a>
<b>Short description</b>	Our main aim is to encourage learning for a wide range of target groups. We offer high quality courses, teach how to learn, introduce new methods in educational and training programmes.
<b>Contact person(s)</b>	Mirjana Šibanc : <a href="mailto:mirjana.sibanc@lu-velenje.si">mirjana.sibanc@lu-velenje.si</a>

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Lifelong Learning Programme



Education and Culture DG

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.