

A network of communities of learners who are committed to the right to literacy training

WHO ARE WE?

Created by trade unions in 1983, the goals of Lire et Ecrire are:

- Raising public awareness and that of public authorities on the persistence of literacy difficulties and the urgent need to fight the causes and find solutions,
- Promote the effective right to quality literacy provision for all adults who look for it,
- Developing literacy in the context of empowerment and participation of people and achieving greater equality through social change.

Lire et Ecrire develops and coordinates literacy trainings, analysis, political lobbying and prevention and awareness-raising actions. It also supports the development of literacy provisions and the improvement of their quality as well as the social inclusion of adults with literacy difficulties.

DESCRIPTION

In 2007, French-speaking learners from the Verviers region observed that in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation of Belgium, literacy actions were geared for the most part to migrants. They asked themselves about the causes of the persistence of illiteracy despite mandatory education, and decided to make an effort to sensitize the people concerned.

This group chose to call itself "L'illettrisme, osons en parler" (Illiteracy, dare to talk about it) and organized a conference "L'illettrisme on en parle nous-mêmes" (Illiteracy, let's talk about it ourselves) during which they analyzed their paths and developed their messages.

For them, illiteracy is not something to be ashamed of. It must be brought out in the open – they must talk about it themselves.

Groups of learners sprang up in other regions with the same objective of improving awareness and the same approach focusing on concrete development of awareness tools: comic strips, posters, video spots to be broadcast on local television channels...

Lire et Ecrire organized meetings of various groups and supported the learners' determination to make their voices heard and to claim the right to literacy for all. The "learners' network" began in October 2010.

At the time of the creation of the network, the 80 learners that were present chose 4 images to express the reasons why they wanted to get organized:

- A solid network, like a tent in the desert, to resist and be heard,
- A network like a tree, to produce fruit,
- A network like a heart, to work trustingly and generously,
- A network like a spiral, to expand and count for those who are fighting for greater consideration of illiterate people.

LIRE ET ÉCRIRE
COMMUNAUTÉ
FRANÇAISE

FÉDÉRATION
WALLONIE
BRUXELLES -
BELGIQUE

HOW DOES THE LEARNERS' NETWORK IN FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM WORK?

Learners meet three times a year in general assemblies. The purpose of these meetings is to determine the general orientations of the network and to assess its actions.

At the same time, a monitoring committee, consisting of two learners representing each group, meets every six weeks. Its role is to act as a go-between for other learners and to prepare the general assemblies and follow up the decisions taken.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE LEARNERS' NETWORK IN FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM

To have their voice heard better, learners decided to work on a common theme for a given period of time. At the end of a general assembly, the learners had identified 6 "worlds": the Teaching World, the Business World, the Administrative World, the Literacy World, the World for the Fight for Equality and the Prison World.

After discussions and a vote, the theme of the school and teaching was chosen. Illiteracy often begins with failure experienced at school. Consequently an important issue is to change the school system, to fight to have all children leave school with basic skills, and to see that everyone has real access to schooling, whatever his/her social condition.

Acting preventively is one of the priorities. For that reason, learners go to schools, meet teachers and learners, distribute tools that they have created, speak at conferences.

To carry out these actions and give a positive approach to confront the negative attitudes of certain teachers, they need to understand the way the school system works and be able to analyze the reasons for failure. Lire et Ecrire consequently organized a training cycle where learners learn how to take focus off themselves, and to relate their own stories to a historical, geographical, economic and social context.

Learners also want to see this become a political priority in a concrete policy that takes consideration of literacy training, as long as it is chosen freely, accessible to all, under good conditions.

IMPACTS

Participation in the network enabled the learners involved:

- To gain more objective awareness of the issue of literacy. To associate their own experience with a broader social-economic context,
- To develop their capacity to travel alone and to use technologies to communicate,
- To take new initiatives in their training programme, and also in their private lives,
- To maintain contacts among themselves outside of the time devoted to the network – the network reduces isolation,
- To question the association Lire et Ecrire on how to support and develop participation of learners at institutional level and in teaching practices.

CONTACT

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