

Grundtvig – Learning Partnership

Statement of Austria/Institute for Austrian Adult Education

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Europe of Knowledge and the European National Learning Cultures in Comparison – Stimulating Learning Potentials

Key Message 1

NEW BASIC QUALIFICATIONS for ALL

The Memorandum describes quite accurately, which new basic qualifications there are needed within a society of knowledge:

- IT-skills (handling Information Technology)
- foreign languages
- technological culture
- entrepreneurship
- social skills

These issues are comparable with conventional "cultural techniques" such as reading, writing and calculating.

Issues for discussion:

1. Is there any evidence that these are really the new basic qualifications and are they regarded as a matter of priority within our national learning cultures?
2. Are these basic competencies present within the different countries?
3. Are there any examples of best practice for their acquisition within adult education?

Key Message 1 quoting the original text of the Memorandum: „New basic skills for all

Objective of the Memorandum: Guarantee universal and continuing access to learning for gaining and renewing the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge society. This Memorandum defines new basic skills as those required for active participation in the knowledge society and economy.”

ÖIEB:

The first key Message of the Memorandum mentions „skill“ (Fertigkeiten) and „knowledge“ (Wissen) as the main objectives. As a general answer to this approach we believe that the discussion should go further than the memorandum seems to do. As it says in the paper for this conference, lifelong learning has more than functional objectives.

Rolf Arnold, who teaches at the university of Kaiserslautern in Germany stated at the last conference of the Austrian Adult Education that we have become somehow maniac about knowledge, whereas the problems we are dealing with are the consequences of the dynamics of modernisation. The steady modernisation goes on and needs reflection respectively competence of reflection. Because of the paradox phenomena of modernisation of society we need abilities and disposals to deal with differences, contradictions and complexity and we need the predisposition of critical distance towards fundamentalism of any kind. To come to sensible decisions for the future we need the competence for reflection and also the competence for creating and developing one's biography with its ruptures, setbacks and contradictions - especially the elderly, but also younger people. Here more than skills or qualifications like the memorandum obviously suggests are needed.

So if we discuss languages, technological culture or social skills there should always be a link to the social space with what is called in German "Lebenslage" and "Lebenswelt" - the objective and the subjective structure of an individual life, the actual situation of living and personal and social identity.

Concerning the spirit of the enterprise, we believe that the memorandum awakes false hopes that the problems of modernisation can be overcome by individuals as long as they are tough enough for the free market. We consider it needs more reflection on the development of society and the human values of society - last but not least this is an old Christian aim.

Now to the skills concerning the "cultural techniques" such as reading, writing and calculating. We don't consider them only conventional. We believe reading and writing are needed in a deeper sense of the meaning - as analytical approach to information: reading as a skilled comprehensive catch on texts e.g. while working with computer programmes. Or writing in the sense of argumentation/reasoning and narration. As machines have been given a fixed place in dealing with figures and numbers, we long for the human competence of estimation concerning the result and its consequences. Concerning the new techniques we need the capability of imagination what all that means "in reality" - for instance an architectural plan drawn on the screen. Altogether the capability of sorting, rating and judging information is an important task -

instead of only taking information in. Adult Education must go far further than having mere technical-instrumental competence. We believe that the memorandum talks too much about consuming information.

To us an important question seems to be, which kind of problems are brought forward through modernisation (in the sense of “reflexive Modernisierung”/Ulrich Beck et.al.) for instance through one’s work, which kind of exclusion is brought forward through radical modernisation - also in the field of adult education?

Lit.:

Ulrich BECK, *Schöne neue Arbeitswelt* (Opladen 1999)

Gernot BÖHME, *Bildung als Widerstand. Was sollen Schulen und Hochschulen lernen? Ein Versuch über die Zukunft des Wissens.* In: *Die Zeit/Reformwerkstatt* 38/1999

Concerning the questions to the skills:

IT-skills and technological culture: They seem to be obvious – at least they are a permanent topic of mass media; there are special programmes at schools and for elderly people. But there is certainly a lack of critical reflection of the costs of technological culture.

Best practice for IT-learning concerning elderly people seems to be, that elderly persons who need not know a lot about the matter teach other elderly persons. The point is, that they know best, what it needs to learn how to handle a computer at advanced age.

Foreign languages: Since the last World War most of the Austrian pupils learn English at school, pupils at grammar schools might also learn French or Russian besides Latin and some old Greek. This year is also in Austria celebrated as the European Language Year – with a lot of events and publications. Currently in Austria there is an EU-Project titled “Market-place of languages”/”Marktplatz der Sprachen” (National Institute for Adult Education/Bundesinstitut für Erwachsenenbildung). The idea is that teams of actors/actresses and teachers of adult education animate and motivate people on places and squares in various towns to get interested in foreign languages.

Entrepreneurship: We are a bit sceptical towards this term – among other meanings it has the meaning of working at one’s own risk.

First of all this is in fact a possibility for people with very little income or no income to survive. In the time between the world wars for instance Vienna was

full of very poor entrepreneurs who worked in dark and wet small shops only to survive at their own risk. Nowadays all the newspaper sellers are entrepreneurs.

There are certainly other meanings – such as independency, self-confidence or creativity. May be these meanings could find more support in the Austrian school system and in the general culture.

Social skills: We believe that there is a great lack in the Austrian Society and in the whole educational system concerning social skills. There are not many teachers for instance who know how to moderate a discussion or who have at least a basic knowledge in group dynamics.

Key Message 2

HIGHER INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

Memorandum: Objective: Visibly raise levels of investment in human resources in order to place priority on Europe's most important asset – its people

This message aims at creating better stimuli for LLL within all EU-countries, so as many people are motivated for further education as possible.

We can get an overview about the strategies used by the participating countries and if there are tendencies to develop new, more pro-active strategies (e.g. legal regulations for further education, agreements between the social partners to release personnel for further education, funding programmes for specific target groups, tax reduction for learners etc.)

For getting an illustrative overview of the practice within the different countries, I suggest to take contributions of a case study with us:

”What does person X in city Y, if she/he would like to learn a foreign language (e.g. Italian)?

- What possibilities are there?
- What institutions are there?
- What costs arise?
- What funding is obtainable?

ÖIEB:

Talking about cities in Austria we must consider that there is in fact only one real city – Vienna with 1.608.144 inhabitants. The other towns are much smaller – Salzburg where the next conference will take place has only 143.516 inhabitants. Half of the about 8 Mio Austrians live in communities under 6.000.

So we now look a bit closer to our case study concerning Vienna. Here it depends much on the district if you have more or less possibilities to learn a language or if you rather learn grammar or if you get in touch with the whole culture.

So we have a look to Simmering – a Viennese working class area and outskirts. According to the Viennese Statistics from Sept. 22.2000 there live 76.293 people in Simmering. There is one adult education centre with one branch near the border of town and one bookstore. Since recently there has been only one way to go by public transport to the City of Vienna: one tram which took about one and a half hours up to two hours. Because this tram also leads to the largest cemetery of Vienna most of the Viennese could experience that long ride at least once a year. Recently there opened a new branch of the Underground in Simmering though, which takes you much faster to the City now.

In comparison to Simmering the first district as the heart of the city – well known by many tourists: there are 19.039 inhabitants and there is one adult education centre – the old “Urania”. And there are 44 bookstores to buy a language programme or books, cassettes etc. Nearby there are also the University and several Cultural Institutes such as

British Council
Schenkenstraße 4
1010 Wien

Italienisches Kulturinstitut
Ungargasse 43
1030 Wien

Französisches Kulturinstitut
Palais Clam-Gallas
Währinger Straße 30
1090 Wien

Lateinamerikanisches Institut
Schlickgasse 1
1090 Wien

Concerning costs an average student has to pay for a course at an adult education centre:

A course at a VHS costs ATS 990,00/Euro 71,95 per semester for one hour per week. For a year it costs ATS 1.780,00/Euro 129,36.

A course which lasts 1 ½ hours/Semester costs ATS 1.490,00/Euro 108,28. For a year ATS 2.680,00/Euro 194,76

Working people, - for instance young secretaries – who want to improve in a special aspect of a language such as economic Italian mostly attend courses of two big institutions – founded by institutions who represent the side of the employers and the side of the employees – “Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut/WIFI” and “Berufsförderungsinstitut/BFI”.

Possibilities of compensation of the costs in Austria are handled by the provinces. In Vienna there is a fund which is dedicated to working people and job related training. “Wiener ArbeitnehmerInnen Förderungsfonds/WAFF” as a promotion for people who want to improve their working situation or who are out of work but get unemployment compensation.

From there a person who attends a language course gets a contribution of 50% of the costs of the course or the fee of the test up to a maximum of 2000 ATS/145,35 EURO as long as it is a job related training or of a maximum of 4.000 ATS/290,70 EURO when the person is out of work but gets unemployment compensation. The person is excluded when he or she is a student, a civil servant, a freelancer or an entrepreneur. The course must be attended by a certain institution according to a list which does not contain all possibilities (VHS, BFI, WIFI, Inlingua, University). The costs must be at least 1.000,0 ATS/72,67 EURO high.

Additional information about adult education in Vienna:

Wiener Volkshochschulen - ca. 40 (nicht in allen Einrichtungen gibt es Sprachunterricht, daher hier nur die ungefähre Zahl)

1. Bezirk: VHS Wiener Urania

16. Bezirk Ottakring: VHS Ottakring – Jugendbildungszentrum
VHS Ottakring - Zweiter Bildungsweg
VHS Ottakring - Kuffner Sternwarte

11. Bezirk Simmering: VHS Simmering
VHS Simmering – Zweigstelle Leberberg
VHS Simmering – Zentrum Simmering

8. Bezirk Josefstadt: VHS Wien-West, Zweigstelle Josefstadt

13. Bezirk Hietzing: VHS Hietzing

WIFI Wien
Währinger Gürtel 97
1180 Wien

bfi das bfi hat 400 Angestellte, 1000 freiberufliche TrainerInnen und mehr als 30.000 Teilnehmer pro Jahr, das größte EB Institut auf ArbeitnehmerInnenseite in Wien

Anmeldung: 1090 Kinderspitalgasse 5
1120 Schönbrunnerstraße 213/3

Recherche von Gebühren am Beispiel der VHS Wien-West

Italienischkurs

Normalkurse 1-stündig/ Semester S 990,00 Euro 71,95
Jahr S 1.780,00 Euro 129,36

1 ½-stündig / Semester S 1.490,00 Euro 108,28
Jahr S 2.680,00 Euro 194,76

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1090 Wien

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Schlickgasse 1
1090 Wien

Private Schulen:

1. Bezirk, Inlingua, Neuer Markt 1

Buchhandlungen: It.Österr.Buchhandlungen im Internet

1. Bezirk 44
8. Bezirk 6
11. Bezirk 1
13. Bezirk 0
16. Bezirk 2

Key Message 3

INNOVATING IN TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

Memorandum: Key Message 3: Innovation in teaching and learning

Objective: Develop effective teaching and learning methods and contexts for the continuum of lifelong and lifewide learning

Practically it is impossible to describe in advance, which learning methods are "new" and "innovative". This depends on the habits of the respective learning cultures.

In Germany, for instance, it is new and unusual to study within a group without a coach and thereby even attaining good results. This shall be called self-directed learning.

For others, it might be innovative not to learn within a group of learners, but to study alone at home with CD-ROM. Many doing so, miss the social dimension of the learning situation within the classroom.

Proposal:

We could collect examples for learning forms and methods, which appear to be innovative within our national learning context and due to which "modern learning" is realised in our home country.

ÖIEB/Elisabeth Wappelshammer:

It is true, in fact it is impossible to describe in advance, which learning methods are "new" and "innovative". This depends on the habits of the respective learning cultures." On one hand. On the other hand we consider that any kind of method is appropriate, which refers to the tasks, that modernisation provides for us. As I said before, society asks for willingness and competence to act in the paradox fields of modernisation: the importance of learning emerges more and more, but the consequences of learning something specific get less and less certain. We believe all kind of methods are appropriate, that allow reflection on society and life in general.

Here I would like to introduce one of them to you which indeed is not only an Austrian speciality but part of a widespread European network. I mean a certain method of life reminiscence and its application in various fields of adult education. This method was linked closely to the development of historical research in the 80ies - the every day history became an important part of studies at universities in Germany and Austria. So also this special Austrian programme was developed by social historians. I myself was then still studying social history and this was one of my first projects in adult education my teacher (Prof. Michael Mitterauer) at university invited me to go through.

Generally in the 80ies the interest on oral history and biographies written by "small people" rose. So at the beginning of the 80ies we – that is a group of students and our teacher from the Institute of Social History from University of Vienna started a group with elderly people at an adult education centre in a

working class area of Vienna. We where 5 – 10 students and about 20 - 50 elderly persons who finally staid together for 8 years. We told stories from our personal histories. Again and again we where thrilled about what happened with the elderly and also somehow with us during this procedure. Step by step people would talk about difficult times - for instance about times under the Regime of National Socialism (slides). And this kind of reflecting work made them vivid and kept their minds lively. It was obvious - this group was doing some work for society and for the younger generations. In 1988 we published a book with some of the most interesting stories, chosen by the elderly persons themselves. And not the aim of learning something concrete was the main cause for our meetings, and yet all of us learnt a lot. In all of this it never was really clear who was the teacher and who the pupil. We think that this is one aspect of modern teaching.

1985 the Austrian Ministry of Education and the ORF (the Austrian Broadcasting and Television Corporation) started a so called “Medienverbundprogramm” as a national programme which combined social learning with broadcasting and films to everyday history.

Especially elderly people were invited to talk about their life in organisations of adult education – as far as possible in intergenerational groups and on the radio and in TV-Films.. The idea of the programme was, that some started to tell their biography on the radio and on TV whereupon others got attracted by the programme and started to join it. The method included a special kind of questions to the milieu, to the generation and to the gender of the members of such a group.

We then started to develop material for teachers in the field of adult education and held trainings in whole Austria and in South Tyrol (Northern Italy) too. – And very soon also in Germany. In the end of the 80ies we where joined by some colleagues from the catholic theological faculty - Prof. Paul Zulehner is a relatively well known pastoral theologist. The theologists helped us to develop our method also for reflection on religious history, which is not easy in Austria because between 1934 and 1938 we had a very authoritarian regime which tried to copy the Italian fascism with a very catholic touch. (under the chancellors Dollfuß/Schuschnigg) So many elderly suffered under this regime and under the pressure of this type of religious education. And at the same time we saw the great need of reflecting these times, of course – specially for catholic social democrats

In fact we were not alone with this approach to adult education - we got to know similar projects in Germany, England, Sweden, France and Italy.

In Germany there was a famous project called “Kohle war nicht alles” - coal was'nt everything- a history workshop for elderly minors in the Ruhrgebiet.

In Sweden there was a famous project called “dig where you stand” by Sven Lindquist, a Swedish Author, who developed a method of studying the history of ones own working place and to exchange knowledge and experiences across the European countries - as a special kind of tourism. This project was adopted by adult education of other countries - in particular by the adult education of the Austrian Trade Union.

Here in London there has been and still is a famous project whith methods of theatre work called Age Exchange by the director and actress Pam Schweitzer and her husband Alex. There they make theatre work with elderly but also with younger people - specially with people who came from India or Pakistan.

Adress: The Reminiscence Centre, 11 Blackheath Village, London SE 9 LA.
Tel.: 0044 181/318 9105

Lit: Caroline Osborn/Pam Schweitzer, The reminiscence handbook. Ideas for creative activities with older people (London 1993). Translation: Caroline Osborn, Pam Schweitzer, Angelika Trilling, Erinnern. Eine Anleitung zur Biographiearbeit mit alten Menschen (Lambertus - Verlag, Freiburg i.B. 1999).

>From the late 80ies and in the 90ies we transferred our method of biographical work into the field of professional education - in particular for people who work with the elderly persons in homes or at their homes - nurses or social workers. So the method became part of the Science of Nursing and the Science of Social Work. In the Science of Social Work we integrated the method in projects of social planning - reminiscence work became part of a set of instruments for qualitative social planning - people were invited to reflect their own past to develop ideas for the future as an approach of the field of social pedagogics. This last project we developed in a binational team with Germans and Austrians.

The method is not new in the sense of developed recently - but I am still keen of it because it opens spaces for reflection. It goes further than the paradigm of teaching and learning. In the end there is actually no teacher and no pupil. Everybody works with everybody else. And in the context of processes of social planning for communities it has become a good method for fostering active citizenship.

A touch of active citizenship we could feel finally in September last year in the town hall of Vienna, where the department for science of the Municipal authorities of Vienna organised a conference to Viennese history in the 20th century. Hundreds of people listened to reminiscences of elderly people and

started to talk and discuss - not only about their own histories but also about current politics.

Lit.: Rolf Arnold/Horst Siebert, Konstruktivistische Erwachsenenbildung. Von der Deutung zur Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit (Schneider Verlag Hohengehren 1999)

Eva Blimlinger, Angelika Ertl, Ursula Koch-Straube, Elisabeth Wappelshammer, Lebensgeschichten. Biographiearbeit mit alten Menschen.

Heinz Blaumeiser, Annette Blunck, Thomas Klie, Thomas Pfundstein, Elisabeth Wappelshammer, Fürs Alter sorgen. Handbuch für kommunale Altenplanung (Deutscher Verein für private und öffentliche Fürsorge, Frankfurt im Erscheinen)

Key Message 6

BRINGING LEARNING CLOSER TO THE LEARNER - ALSO IN TERMS OF SPACE

The objective of this message is to enable learners to learn anytime anything desired also at their place of residence. Thereby the Memorandum emphasises not only the internet as learning medium, but also local services to support the learning process of children, transport or social services as well as the offers of associations of civil society being deeply rooted locally.

We could find out:

- whether there are special problems in the supply with learning possibilities of the rural area and of rural population
- which models have been tested to support learning in structurally weak areas.

ÖIEB:

In Austria the question concerning adult education in rural areas is very important because 50% of the population live in communities with less than 6000 inhabitants.

Adult education in rural regions generally is mainly carried out by volunteers who are members of special associations – with central nationwide associations and a federal structure with associations in the nine provinces of Austria. Roughly there are two respectively three kinds of big organisations: the rural structure of adult education centres – “Volkshochschulen”, the so called “Bildungswerke” – education-works with a special branch of catholic and protestant adult education.

This kind of voluntary work has a very low grade of institutionalisation. In most cases there is no permanent office, very little money and no professional education. But volunteers are usually highly integrated in the communities where they live.

We are dealing with following problems:

We are facing a theoretical lack in rural adult education: Generally in the history of adult education rural education has been neglected for a long time by pedagogic theories and by politics. In the 70ies, when adult education expanded in its institutions and started to develop more and more as a profession, the emphasis lay more or less on urban education. Rural life on one hand was

thought to be still a refuge of the good old farmer's life and on the other hand it was thought only "provincial" in the negative sense of the word. In spite of these prejudices there has been a fast process of modernisation in rural regions and still is – concerning agriculture, lifestyle etc. Nevertheless there were some single authors in the 70ies, who developed new concepts of community orientated adult education or adopted them – one was Walter Sulzberger from Salzburg, who pointed out, how important adult education would be for a regional development.

„Aus der Absicht, Menschen und Gruppen innerhalb des Gemeinwesens Gemeinde für die Lösung aktueller, die Gemeinschaft berührender Fragen zu motivieren und zu engagieren, wird das örtliche Bildungswerk zu einem wirksamen Motor für die Entwicklung der Region“. (zit. nach Ulrich Klemm, Provinz im Aufbruch. In: Bilanz und Perspektiven regionaler EB (= DIE Materialien für EB Nr. 8, Frankfurt/M 1997 S. 9)

In the 80ies this lack of theory was caught up. In Austria there were several nationwide conferences with interdisciplinary discourses concerning rural regions. These discussions were organised by members of nationwide associations of adult education, and also members of provincial organisations were involved in this theoretical development of rural adult education. In fact it was already a European discussion – as for instance the international conference on rural education 1989 in Goldrain South Tyrol shows.

The „Seven Thesis of Goldrain“ ask for repoliticizing, regionalising and professionalising of rural adult education. („Repolitisierung, Regionalisierung und Professionalisierung von Erwachsenenbildung“ (Klemm, ebd. S. 18).

That means

- Developing of strategies of visiting animation and motivation
- Stimulation of local and regional networks and of intercultural projects
- Orientation on every day life and social space and biographical developments
- Orientation on specific gender related questions – such as health, working possibilities, prevention of violence in families and so on
- Discussion of local and regional identity

According to these demands also in Austria several organisations started projects and developments – nevertheless we face a rather big gap between the theory of the 70ies and 80ies and the practical work of the new century. Volunteers have to struggle with a number of problems:

- With a network of old arrangements concerning the competences of the provincial associations: In general language courses for instance are regarded as the field of the adult education centres – so they start complaining very fast if a volunteer of a “Bildungswerk”/education-work offers such a course or leaves her/his own community
- With their lack of professional education and approach: many volunteers still offer lectures, reports about journeys with slides, folkloristic evenings or technical hobby-courses for sewing “Dirndls” etc. There is definitely a lack in moderating social processes or in simple methods of analysing social space or do some action research.
- With their own images and the definition of education: they often think that their work is of a too inferior value to be called adult education. They make cultural or folkloristic work they say. So this is also a lack of theory because theoretically it is very common to talk about educational and cultural work as a combination of terms.

The national or provincial associations provide a lot of advanced trainings, but with a volunteering structure there is always the question of expecting too much.

To the models we think worth while to be regarded:

There started some programmes of a new kind. In the province of Styria for instance there was adopted an approach coming from Germany and originally from Sweden:

„Erweiterte Regionale Erwachsenenbildung (=EREB)“, Extended regional adult education (Grete Dorner). This means a special kind of campaign where people need not go anywhere but are visited by volunteers who interview them about their wishes concerning adult education.

Also a nationwide project with little budget and few members is to be regarded, because of its high professional standard: “ARGE Region Kultur”. A „working pool of region and culture“. It was founded at the beginning of the 80ies by a group of Austrian ethnologists/folklorists, social scientists and social workers. They work in regional projects and combine regional or local history with cultural, folkloristic and social work. From there Austria got also quite a lot of theoretical and international inspired impulses concerning community development.

Recently one of the nation wide voluntary organisations has started to adopt methods of reflecting one’s skills, competences and qualifications through volunteering: certification of volunteers. The colleague (Wolfgang Kellner) who is in charge of this programme is gathering examples from other European countries – specially the Netherlands.

Lit.:

Ulrich Klemm, Provinz im Aufbruch. In: Bilanz und Perspektiven regionaler EB (= DIE Materialien für EB Nr. 8, Frankfurt/M 1997

Grete Dorner, in einer Schwerpunktausgabe der Zeitschrift „Erwachsenenbildung in Österreich“, 1/91

Introduction to the Austrian Institute for Adult Education/Österreichisches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (= ÖIEB)

The | ö | IEB| is a scientific service provider for adult education both within Austria and internationally. It is located at the interface of research and education. Through its inter- and transdisciplinary research it aims to stimulate a creative debate on the current hot spots of society, and to find new educational concepts for adults.

The | ö | IEB| provides an open forum for adult education organisations and projects, and supports a lively exchange of different kinds of experience and perspectives. In short, the | ö | IEB| encourages research-driven action and a common quest for the "venture of thinking".

You are welcome at www.oieb.at