

The promotion of active citizenship in adult learning in the context of social integration

Ms Vasiliki Tsekoura

Representative of the European Association for Education of Adults (EAEA)

Patras, Greece

1. Introduction

A core challenge faced by policy-makers of the European Union today is to design policies targeting very diverse areas and groups. How could we integrate such different characteristics?

The reply was already given :Building a Knowledge-based society

Main concepts contributing to conceptual framework of this direction are : **learning regions, active citizenship and Social Integration as a mutual reciprocal process.**

In this presentation I intend to give focus on the interconnection and indispensability of ‘active citizenship’ and ‘learning regions’, as these two concepts represented and have been served via a Grundtvig 2 project named “Hagiography in Internet” (a case study that took place in Patras (Hellas).

2. Some words for the project ‘Hagiography in Internet’.

Hagiography in Internet implemented on July 2006 (total period 2004 – 2006) .

Its objectives were

- ✚ The social integration of deaf people via Internet basic steps and religious art (paintings), and
- ✚ the promotion of the cooperation between deaf and hearing .

Target group:

- adults
- 18 – 55 years old
- deaf (80%)”: unemployed (60%), undereducated (illiterate)
- hearing (20%)

In concrete , sub aims were

- the development of the learning possibilities of the deaf people
- the acquisition of new competencies as ICT skills -introductory use- (using of Internet , communication via mail, ...)
- the art as a mean of expressing feelings and silent needs
- the enrichment of the spiritual aspect of life
- the awareness of an alternative mean of communication via sign language
- the awareness of the need of making sign language a tool of silent communication between deaf and hearing
- the development of the empathy of those working or co – learning with deaf people for the deafs special needs and special abilities
- the aim to involve broader community in the implementation of the project by organizing visits in cultural settings , financial contribution of dissemination

activities (local authorities, church, schools respond to the vocation of participate in conferences events...)

Results and products : cd-rom from every institution that participated in this project , an Exhibition with the artifacts of the learners(10 – 15 learners from every institution involved as partner in the project, a brochure and information via INTERNET (in action : www.scarabeus/hagiographyinInternet.it)

3. Why this combination of learning activities /subjects chosen by the promoters?

Because this project had been designed mainly based on and for developing and enriched the following

- ✚ The relationship that had been already informally constructed within the social context of City of Patras between a learning organization (vocational training centre DAFNI KEK) and the Assosiation of Deaf of the western Greece region .
- ✚ The willingness to work together deaf and hearing in order to help the mutual incorporation in a diverse social reality
- ✚ The provision of the opportunity to deliver the **peer mentoring** as basic learning method by giving to the deaf people the role of mentor in subjects of sign language and religious painting (as the President of Deaf Assosiation is Professional educator in religious art and Painter himself and actively involved and motivated the deaf learners to participate equally).
- ✚ On the other hand the DAFNI KEK was responsible to provide the infrastructure and the methodology in implementing ICT seminars via interpreter.

4. The main points of the project in accordance to Active Citizenship and Learning Regions and Social Integration issues . In comparison with the ‘Hagiography in Internet’

a. Concepts’ identification :

Active citizenship: Citizens taking opportunities to become actively involved in defining and tackling the problems of their communities and improving their quality of life. One of the three key elements of civil renewal. (civil renewal: The renewal of civil society through the development of strong, active and empowered communities, in which people are able to do things for themselves, define the problems they face, and tackle them in partnership with public bodies. Civil renewal involves three essential elements: active citizenship, strengthened communities and partnership in meeting public needs.)¹

¹ www.active-citizen.org.uk/glossary.asp

Learning regions : Learning regions: "...representing the territorial and institutional embeddedness of learning organizations and active learning"²The distinctive feature of a 'learning region' is: the co-operation between different actors ,i.e educational bodies, research and development agencies, statutory bodies, enterprises and non-governmental organizations ('civil society') – in 'learning together' on how to devise solutions and produce new knowledge to address local needs, ...how to' share common objectives or problems'³

Social Integration (as a mutual/ reciprocal process) : A vision where the investment in the education of the community and in the (inter)cultural activation is an important start for a real and a positive **intercultural society**, where every person stands central.....and where the **education is "..... transformative"** in the sense that it should lead individuals: to modify presently held beliefs, judgements and values, to **integrate alternative** ones and apply them in their own ways of thinking and acting⁴ ”

² Wolfe, David A. Social Capital and Cluster Development in Learning Regions. Forthcoming in: *Knowledge, Clusters and Learning Regions*, ed J.Adam Holbrook and David A. Wolfe. Kingston:School of Policy Studies. Queen University (<http://www.toronto.ca/isrn/WolfeSocialCapital2.pdf>), pp.8

³ Stavrou,S. Building Learning regions in : Andra Aldea-Partanen, *Local Development Networks in Remote Areas and Knowledge Management*, in 3rd European Knowledge Management Summer School

⁴Dr. Beate Schmidt-Behlau, Network Intercultural Learning in Adult Education in Europe, Grundtvig 4 Network, PP(2005)

b. How 'Hagiography in internet' integrated the above general issues ?

Basic issues	Learning region concept	Active citizenship concept	Social (reciprocal) integration	Hagiography in Internet activities /actions respectively to them by:
opportunities to become actively involved		x		transnational mobility, conferences implementation, producing their own artifacts)
improving their quality of life		x		socializing (not isolated) , Internet skills, communication via e-mail
embeddedness of learning organizations and active learning	x	x		visits in cultural settings, learning by doing
co-operation between different actors	x			vocational training association of deaf (NGO) School / foundation of deaf local authorities (providing place for conference or financial contribution) Patras cultural capital of Europe : presents for the transnational guests , Media (channel of local church)
'civil society'	x			as above
an important start for a real and a positive <u>intercultural society</u>			x	deaf , hearing from 5 different countries Italy, Cyprus, Poland, Spain, Greece
education is transformative'			x	silent communication, empathy, non verbal communication , equality , peer mentoring
integrate alternative values, judgment			x	non verbal communication, priority to the feelings , art as communicative action
define the problems they face		x		sign language to become broader aware of the hearing