

FUTURE VISIONS OF ADULT EDUCATION CENTERS - SoMe Times?



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A leap into the unknown

The world of projects is full of challenges. Development projects represent a leap into the unknown together with the partners, while trying to achieve something that does not exist yet. However, everything must be anticipated – what, when and with whom will be done and what the estimated costs are. LEMON or Learning Communities of Modern Liberal Adult Education carried out under Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2008–2013 is an example of the project whereby the bureaucracy required from the creativity and development more energy and time than the partners had expected. Monitoring the budget and the activities carried out by budget lines, work packages and partners, annually in each third, as decimals and round numbers is not rational anymore. Our joint leap was hindered by unexpected contrary wind against us.

The Lemon project was planned in 2007–2008. In January 2009 when the project was launched there was an economic recession. While planning it there were no signs of it whatsoever. One of the priorities of the project was to get adult education centers prepared for limited resources, although for several partners it was a reality already during the project. Instead of parachuting, the project turned for some of us into a free fall.

The priorities of the project were oriented towards the future of the liberal adult education work: adult education centers in Finland and in Estonia started to look for new learners, target groups, activity models as well as networks. Although the project plan was prepared together with the partners, adopting the priorities took quite a while. One objective of the partners was to become familiar with the social media and to find out what kind of opportunities they offer in teaching and other activities of the adult education centers. For some of the partners, even the term ‘social media’ was unfamiliar. Considering this, we managed very well, which can be realised after reading the articles of this book.

The Open University of the University of Turku has been using the information and communication technologies in teaching since 1990s. First it used telephone conferencing and afterwards virtual learning environments and web-meetings. For some of the partners these tools were unknown, but now we can all participate in project work over the Internet. The meetings over the Internet have saved time and travel costs. However, it took quite a while until the 13 partners got to know each other and became a network. There were eight Finnish and five Estonian partners in the project. The operation principles of adult

education centers in different countries differ greatly but their primary task is the same.

Brahea Centre for Training and Development in University of Turku was responsible for the co-ordination of the Lemon project targeted at liberal adult education. One of the objectives was to promote lifelong learning. Adult education centers and open universities have had a long and close co-operation network in Finland. The Open University of the University of Turku has strongly contributed to the flexibility and accessibility to university studies in locations without any higher education institution. The partnership of the open university and liberal adult education await big changes because the number of people will grow mainly in online learning. Learners must be met online and organisations must provide the opportunities for interaction also there. The teachers of the co-operative institutions continue playing an important part because they still provide conditions for learning, although now partly online. Viable adult education centers are useful for the students of open universities because they cater for such skills as foreign languages, information and communication technologies and media skills needed for learning. The development of the liberal adult education is therefore an important task for the open universities.

The co-ordination of the three-year long project, with the obligation of presenting reports in every four months and the budget changed twice, was complicated. I assume that from now on any project seems easy. Hopefully the partners will develop their capacities after the project on a similar platform together with others because it has been one of the objectives of Lemon.

As the project leader I can state that the goals of the project have been met as expected. Some of them have been even exceeded, for example the pilot trainings were attended by more people than we had expected during the planning. It has not been difficult to get people writing articles for this book. It shows that partners have learned and developed during the project and that they are willing to develop the operational models that will be applied to carrying out their main duties. It provides a good and at least for some time a stable ground.

In Turku, in the year of the Capital of Culture, 18.3.2011

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Visual online communication brightens the image of liberal adult education

Jaana Houessou, Adult Education Center of the City of Salo / Tanja Kivi, The Civic Institute of Porvoo

The traditional spring exhibitions have paced the annual activities of adult education centers in Finland for a long time. Exhibitions show and draw attention to everything that has been achieved within a year. The motivation of the students to exhibit their works is strong. The selection made for the exhibition, framing, monitoring, building and removing the exhibition are quite massive tasks. Since there are not many appropriate rooms for the exhibition in adult education centers, it needs to be organised in the hallways and temporary walls, which are not particularly suitable for presenting the artifacts produced in art and handicraft classes. The large number of students' works and shortage of space result in the need to change the exhibitions several times a year. The students are disappointed when their work is exhibited only for a short period of time. The opportunity of marketing the adult education center and its activities turns often to be unused.

The typical adult education center exhibitions are usually tight, badly lit and cheerfully yet chaotic collections of various handcrafted, artistic and restored items. This makes focussing on one piece of work impossible and the viewer sees it as mediocre and amateur. Although the question is about hanging up the work of students, at the same time the question is about the image of the entire adult education center.

More than a thousand words

The visual communication is especially efficient for people. A small child, who does not know how to read or write, learns to know visual styles and can tell these apart. People develop an opinion from early on, which styles they prefer and which not. Choices are continuously made and they are not always conscious. Nowadays, the range of free-time activities is so wide that the meanings of one's visions are emphasized. The client who does not have any earlier experience of the provider of activities makes his decisions on the basis of his expectations and visualisations.

It is no secret that the municipal services are considered to be

mediocre. Negative prejudice lives on for a long time. As the person gets new experience, prejudice often becomes something positive. In order to survive, grow and develop, the adult education center needs to constantly draw in new clients. Middle-aged and older women use the services of adult education centers the most. The younger clientele as well as men in all ages and young families need to be incorporated into the activities as well. That is why the task of creating a modern and positive image for the adult education centers is an unavoidable and demanding challenge. As an addition to the activity which has been advertised in a positive way, visual information available on the internet is an important tool in shaping people's opinions. It offers the language which opens up easily without analysing for each age and cultural groups.

During the last twenty years, the field of activity for adult education centers has changed. Similar activities are offered by the communal services, associations, private businesses and companies. The needs and attitudes of clients have changed as well. Services which are designed better and up-to-date are being asked for. A larger part of adult education centers in Finland created their own websites on the end of the last century, which made the spread of information among those who can work with a computer as easy and fast as possible. The sites were designed to be informative and practical, using the help of contracted project workers or adult education center staff. The final result was decent but not always visually fresh and attractive.

A view on the current websites of adult education centers in Finland shows that the general level has not improved. Right now, when the municipal economy is short-budgeted, the competition on the traditional fields of adult education centers has become more harsh and the adult education centers need to make their services more attractive and modern. Visual contribution and information on the websites and social media sites is a fast, convenient and usable instrument.

One of the main goals of Lemon project was to reach new clienteles and to create new partner networks. The use of social media by adult education centers have received considerable support in the program. These goals have supported each other fruitfully. By uploading exhibitions and other visual material online, we can reach those target groups who are familiar and comfortable with internet as an energetic and interactive forum, but who are not yet familiar with the adult education centers. The involvement of the youth and young families will be easier when it can be done in internet. Also among older people, the number of internet users is rapidly growing. An elderly person who is active in practising his hobbies can find the necessary information using a home computer. Online exhibitions and information are easily accessible for people living apart. The social media brings the adult education center without any interruptions to the clients as well as to the co-operation partners.

New opportunities

If we would forget the homepages as they exist now and started to consider the present needs of pedagogy and internet marketing of adult education centers, the result would probably be nothing like the current websites. Luckily on this century the adult education centers do not need to create the interactive websites requiring lots of work and demanding hardware. Today there are many social media services suitable for adult education centers offered with half price or rather cheaply.

The whole dimension of social media in adult education centers can be designed from the basis of the real needs, and pedagogy can be involved as the need occurs. People learn and experience in three major ways: visually, auditively and motorically, in other words by seeing, hearing and moving. These are the basic facts of pedagogy, which seem to be forgotten in adult education centers when marketing is considered. If a person is offered several ways in which to experience adult education centers, their image will become more versatile and positive. Generally people also like to be in contact with others, loneliness gets boring.

The social media offers one solution for all of these needs. By applying the mouse and keyboard on the websites, the motoric skills are used. Audiovisual information can be brought from adult education centers to the potential clients in the form of pictures and video clips. In addition, the opportunity to comment and discuss the pictures and videos in social media offers the sense of community that many people look for.

If the adult education center is considering holding its spring exhibition online, the first stage would bet to choose the right online outlet for the school. Would Finnish, Swedish or the Estonian language be the most important? What kind of people visit websites in general? Does the service cost and is the issue of copyrights involved? We also should make sure that the website follows the general marketing plan of the adult education center, so that the public would not receive contradicting information.

Exhibitions in Porvoo and Salo

In the best case, the chosen social medium provides for free or for a nominal fee a place where copyrights are being upheld and where the school can safely present its activities to potential new groups of consumers. In Porvoo, as a part of the Lemon project, in addition to the normal spring exhibition organised in the hallway, twice now the exhibition has been set up also in the Irc-Gallery¹. IRC comes from 'Internet Relay Chat' or a conversation via internet. At first, the service

was created as a gallery for the chatters to post their picture. This way the chatters could see what their chat partners looked like. The photo function took off on its own. Now, many users share their pictures and do not really participate in chatting.

Adult Education Center of the City of Salo organised its first online exhibition in 2010 as a part of Lemon project. It was shown on the school's website². This way, the same website informs the visitors on the courses about to start and has examples of earlier work. Later, a subdivision to exhibit the video material filmed during the courses was created as well. During Lemon project, online shows³ and Facebook profiles were created also in other free education institutions in Finland and Estonia. To increase the use of social media in educational institutions was one of the goals of the Lemon project.

In the very beginning, it became evident how various types of material, differing from the regular material exhibited in the hallways, can be uploaded onto social media. Video clips of exercise classes like dance courses, and clips showing the stages of manufacturing Tiffany artwork, among many others, gave a new dimension to the spring exhibition. From language classes there were video clips presenting the way the language studio was used, and the students' writings and other small assignments were shown as well. It was possible to upload videos from theatrical and self-expression courses. The hikes organised during environmental and nature courses could be documented and shown. The wide variety of the activities of adult education centers stands out much better: the spring exhibition is not only about handicraft and art anymore, and the lack of space during the conventional hallway exhibitions does not limit the duration of the exhibition or the amount of material exhibited.

It is not necessary to take down the spring exhibitions and these remained online as a permanent advertisement of the courses offered by the adult education centers. During the first year, it came as a surprise that the second peak of visitors' coincided with the registration to courses in the autumn. The Information revolution has changed human life at least as much as the industrial revolution once did. People are used to finding information online. It is natural that when people think about enrolling on a course, they used online resources to get more information about the course.

During the time when local governments are cutting the funds of print media, the social media provides a new and soon maybe the *main* channel to present the courses. Using a normal digital camera, teachers and in some cases the students could film a presentation video. Or a professional hired for the purpose could visit classes and film various courses for the spring exhibition. From a pedagogical point of view, it would be ideal if the teacher participated in the creation of the video, which could be just a few minutes long. The video can also consist of

digital photos or it could be made into a digital story. In the basic art education, video editing could be one subject that is taught. Also, the authors of traditional exhibition pieces could use the video to shortly tell about the creative process of the piece, about the quality of the teaching and how satisfied he or she was with the course. Such peer-to-peer opinions are often seen as reliable and solid information.

Tasks on the net

Work done online changes both the management and teachers of the school and influences the daily activities of the course secretaries as well. When the marketing activities of the schools become increasingly based on the internet, more work hours need to be allocated to the collection, formatting and recording of the material. It takes regularity and a lot of work to be able to use the social media flexibly and purposefully. Dated information leaves a bad impression of the administrator of a profile or site. On the internet, the general visual image of the school is constantly being compared to that of thousands of other educational services. The distinctiveness of the school becomes evident fast and easy this way.

During the Lemon project Adult Education Center of the City of Salo opened the Taidesilta website, which presents activities from various fields on basic art education. Taidesilta is an entirely separate website and is dedicated to the students of the basic art education. In Salo, basic art education is being taught in music, visual arts, handicraft, dance and drama. A common medium supports the activities connecting the various arts, which is one of the most important future prospects in childrens art education in Salo. The websites also show photos, videos and short stories of the activities, in addition to the main information.

Taidesilta is updated a couple of times a year. All the art education teachers film or let their students film their activities in their classes. The teachers who have a full-time position choose the photos and videos which are uploaded onto the site. Teachers with development responsibilities process the photos before they are uploaded. This model of activity ensures that the maintenance of the website does not become too hard a task for one person to do. Everyone associated with the tasks are committed in creating content, but the actual technical updating is left for only a couple of people to do. The main emphasis of Taidesilta is on photos and their abundance will probably become a problem within the next couple of years. The questions of archiving the material and the extent of archiving and keeping the material online will have to be answered.

In addition to the content of the web pages, the appearance and image needs frequent updating too. When the photos change fast and are of abundance, we become accustomed to the graphic material being

visually actual. Although the schools' websites are not ment to be an entertainment mediaum, the visuality needs constant maintenance. The appearance needs to be updated regularly, and this needs to be left to professionals specialists. A contemporay adult education center is prepared to keep the content, structure and visual image of the school's online presence up-to-date, and uses social media in publicity. This resolution is reflected in the budget and in the organisation of tasks.

If some social media service is being used, such as the IRC Gallery in Porvoo or the Facebook profile of Haapsalu Folk High School, the updating of visual image is done by the service provider. Even then, the school has a task to check the website regularly in order to ensure that its renewed appearance would not contradict the image favoured by the school.

The answer lies in the reorganisation of work, not so much in additional work. It is still important to assign persons responsible and to plan the policies carefully. The turnover of course teachers needs to be considered and the time it will take to brief new teachers. This procedure ensures least amount of work and best quality of results.

How to get started

In order to brighten the image of adult education centers by visual online communication, some extra work is needed to develop this communication. However, a big impact can be achieved with little work. Often, the decision and the initial plan to use social media are the biggest steps. It is easy to get started by browsing the excisting online presences of different adult education centers and reflecting on which ideas would fit well with the school's plans.

¹ <http://irc-galleria.net/user/Kansalaisopisto/blogs>

² www.salonkansalaisopisto.fi

³ www.rahvaulikool.ee/galerii,

<http://picasaweb.google.fi/turuntyovaenopisto/RefreshingLEMON#>

⁴ Haapsalu Folk High School

⁵ www.taidesilta.fi

⁶ Haapsalu Folk High School

⁷ www.taidesilta.fi

Ning network as the project's official homepage

Annika Nummelin, Turku Adult Education Centre

The Lemon project is presumably one of the first projects – if not the first – to use a social media website as its official homepage. This article provides an overview of the Ning website and assesses its functioning from Lemon project's point of view.

What is Ning?

Ning (*www.ning.com*) is an online platform that was launched in 2005. Its users can create their own social networks and communities. Ning was co-founded by Marc Andreessen and Gina Bianchini, the present CEO.

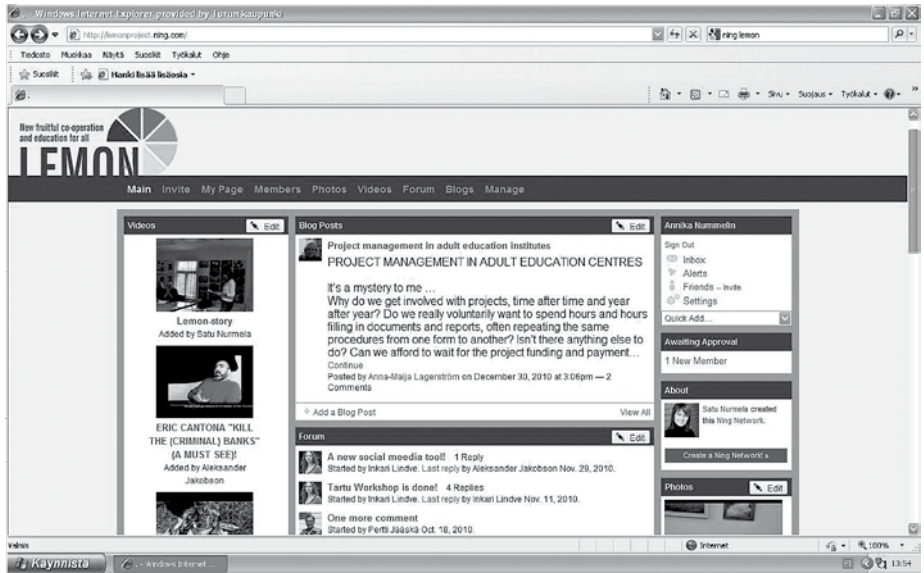
In marketing the Ning website emphasizes its speed and simplicity. It promises that designing and creating a network takes less than one minute and underlines that the website users have available a whole range of applications that can be adapted to their needs. It seems that the marketing of Ning has been a great success: Three years after its founding it was used by more than half a million societies.

For a long time Ning was a free application, until in summer 2010 it started to ask a fee for network services. There are licences with three different prices. The monthly fee ranges from USD 2.95 to 49.95. Among other things, the licences differ in the variety of users' applications, the number of members allowed and the storage room.

Ning in the Lemon project

The Lemon project has been using the Ning website (*http://lemonproject.ning.com/*) as its official homepage since autumn 2009. The aim of the website is to give information about the project and to enable the sharing of experiences and ideas about the actual issues of social media as well as other topics of the project.

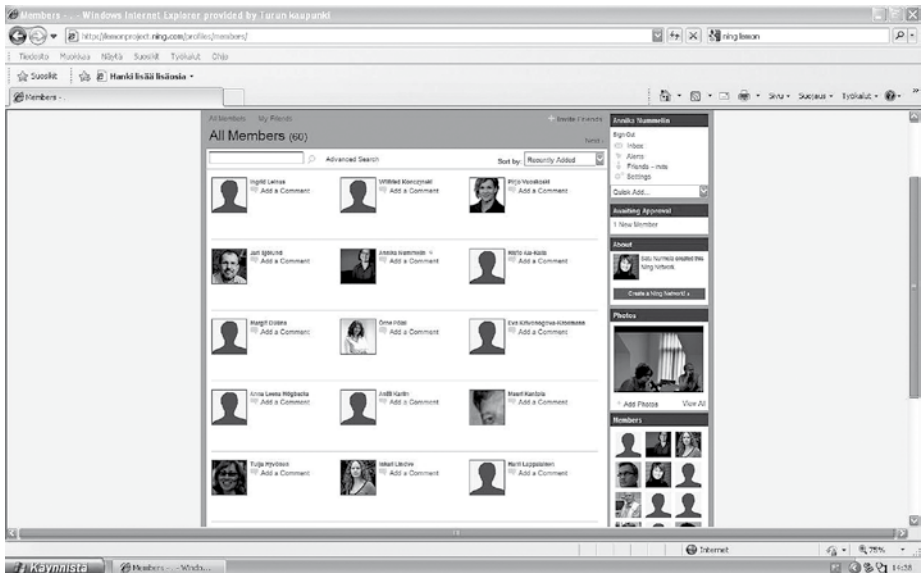
When Ning became chargeable, the Lemon project chose the licence of a Mini network, i.e. the most limited option from the three available. It was decided that the Mini network is sufficient in terms of the number of members (maximum 160) as well as the applications available to the users. The website allows members to share photos and videos, write blogs and have discussions in the forum.



Members

By the end of 2010, Lemon network had 60 registered users. Most of the members are employees of the project’s partner institutions but representatives of other Adult Education Centres’ are involved as well. In addition, there are other cooperation members who have participated in the project in some ways and also members that are not involved in the project in any level. In terms of information sharing and meeting the goals of the project, the participation of this latter group in the network is particularly important and pleasant.

The Ning website of the Lemon project was initially open, which meant anyone could join. However, it was soon joined by users who sent spam e-mails and it was therefore decided to turn the website into



a closed one. Now the new members can register themselves only with the approval of administrators. The same applies to the publishing of content.

Members' profiles vary greatly. Some of the members disclose only their compulsory data (sex, place of residence and country) and have no photo. They account for about a half of the membership. The other half has uploaded a profile photo, though, but still only half of them have actively participated in discussions and other social activities.

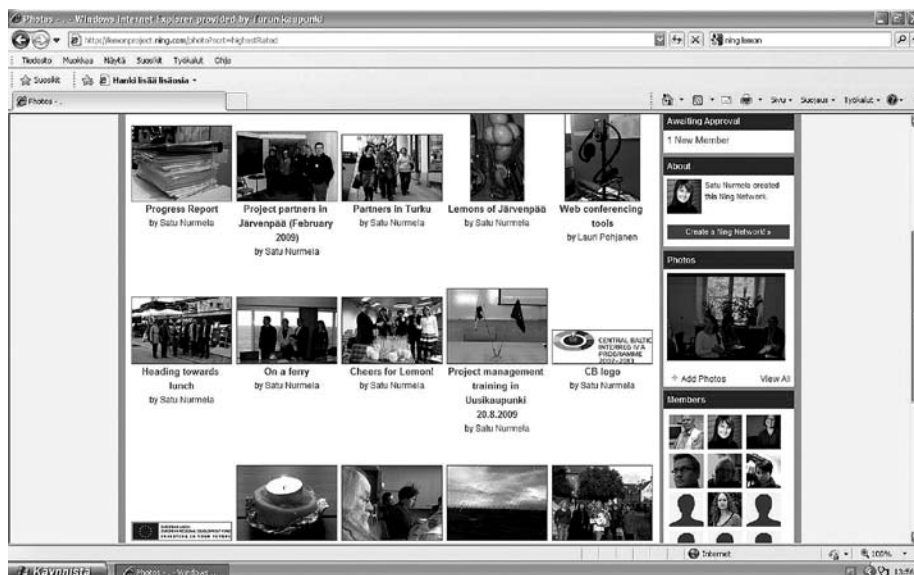
Content

The content of the Ning website involves 129 photos, 14 videos, 32 blog entries and 15 comments in the forums (at the end of 2010). The content was created most actively at the beginning of 2010.

The photos depict primarily various project meetings, work package meetings and other events related to the project. In spite of the official nature of the photos, there is also a lot of humor involved in them. The photos have been viewed a lot - which is great - but commented rarely.

There are remarkably less videos uploaded than there are photos. However, in terms of viewing and commenting these two modes of sharing do not differ much. Almost all of the videos introduce the possibilities of social media, which means they are very conducive to carrying out of the project.

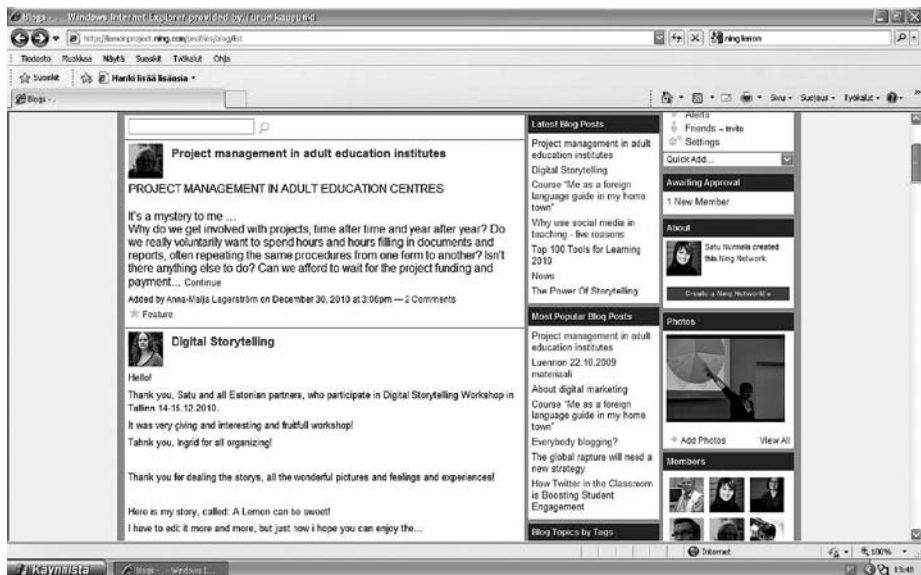
The topics of the blog entries are very different. Among other things, they discuss actual issues related to the project and social media, suggest better applications of social media and introduce the launched



or completed courses or cooperation meetings. The blog entries have been commented actively by the members. In the best cases the entries have eventually turned into a chain of comments.

The forum entries are subject-wise rather similar to blog entries but they are shorter and written in a less strict form. In a way, the forum acts as a marketing and information channel, while discussing new courses and the financial situation of the Adult Education Centres.

As already mentioned, the content of the site is created only by around every fourth member. With some exceptions, they have created almost the entire content of the page. They are active in writing and commenting on the blogs and they inform other members by introducing actual matters in the forums. In addition, these members upload photos of the project events and provide videos on subjects of interests.



Summary

The Ning website of the Lemon project is a good example of how a social media tool can be used as the official homepage of a project. In its essence it is simple and clear and easy to use. It has been updated regularly and the administrators make sure no irrelevant messages will be displayed. The website enables to discuss relevant topics that the members are interested in. Sharing of information with colleagues is simple and safe.

Although the members are not blogging or commenting as often as it was perhaps initially expected, the site has made the members familiar with the opportunities in the Ning platform and at the same time also with a social media tool. Many members, including me, have

now the courage to write our very first blog entries and comments. And although some of us do not yet dare to publish our writings on the website, we will probably be more likely to share blog entries and participate in forum discussions in the future.

Teaching and learning with digital stories

Satu Nurmela, University of Turku, open university

“Digital storytelling should be seen as a new means or one of new ways of expressing yourself.”

“It’s impressive how big difference the voice is making. Simply pictures don’t have so much influence but with voice and story it’s complete.”

“Creative activity. Different stories can have different objectives and style, so it should be interesting for many people.”

Comments of the participants about the digital storytelling workshops of the Lemon project that took place in autumn 2010.

The story now comes back in digital form

Individuals and communities shape their experiences and identity through stories. The 21st century storytelling is characterised by the fact that it is a collective picture of that time and it is formed through individual stories. In social media my stories become our stories if they are shared and experienced online. The most important element in the online architecture of Facebook that creates sense of collectiveness is the opportunity for common storytelling through sharing news. (Matilainen 2011)

Digital storytelling format developed simultaneously with the social media. It means that the story of an individual will be presented with the means of multimedia from the personal point of view. The digital stories represent user-generated content and microdocumentary of people’s lives. They demonstrate how public and personal aspects meet in mass media, how the boundary between commercial and non-commercial gets blurred and how national and global aspects get mixed. The stories teach us various things and there are many ways to implement the method in education.

Content at the age of digital life and condition of immediacy

The development of media and media technologies convey the condition of immediacy. John Tomlinson (2007) uses the term to refer

to time as well as closeness. The examples of this condition are the amounts of data available on the Internet, blurring of the boundary between work and leisure time, round a clock services and various mobile communications means and also the social culture changing because of that. It is all made possible by the Internet.

At the age of digital life and condition of immediacy we can present and tell stories about ourselves and the community here and now. The short forms of the stories are represented by fresh short updates provided by services like Facebook and Twitter and the separate finished stories are the digital stories that require scripts and editing. At the present it is assumed that besides traditional literacy people also have media skills in order to use services through which they share their lives. One of the important skills on the 21st century is the ability to create from your own knowledge and experiences valuable, attractive information that opens new opportunities and information for others. Access to information as well as the ability to create user generated content are the aspects where the adult education centres have a lot of room for teaching. Especially the socially disadvantaged people need possibilities and encouragement to make them heard. The question is about much more important task than merely reducing digital divide, namely about making social inequality, poverty and exclusion visible. So that in a democratic civil society the voices of individuals can be heard, they need guidance, workshops and online forums and the digital storytelling provides a good basis for it.

Modern camp-fires are only partly online

Social media has amended traditional notion of the nature of common room that is precondition for collectiveness. It might pose a challenge for the liberal adult education to involve those citizens who have already found their place in social media forums and have relatively good skills to cope there. Liberal adult education should target places where people and content already exist. Facebook will be visited several times a day but at the same time the civic institutes are visited much less than earlier for getting information, giving feedback, making proposals, etc. Social media is space where the adult education centers can influence their current, future and potential learners. Forums like Facebook are hardly acting as sufficient nowadays camp-fires – face to face meetings are also necessary. The content of the stories will be created within groups and communities, including by recalling events together. Various cultural organisations, such as museums and libraries, are the main organisers of the workshops on preserving community stories (William 2009, 62.) If the voice of different groups and communities is wanted to be heard then the adult education centers are potential coordinators of storytelling.

In its best form the storytelling workshop is a travel in time together with one's identity

"Most of all I like the fact that it gives us yet another chance to relate our personal stories, emotions, things that we believe to be important and want to share with others."

Digital story is a short, one to three minute personal story told by using multimedia. It has potential to promote democracy because everyone's voice can be heard. The personal traits develop when the viewpoint of an individual and telling with one's own voice will be presented at the same time. The story can involve photos of the storyteller but also photos taken by others, abstract pictures or photos taken specifically for the story. A story can also be conveyed through drawings, paintings, letters and other visual material. In addition to creation, the process also involves viewing and discussing together. The storytelling has reached its ultimate goal if the participants feel themselves after creating their own story and being part of the workshop somehow different.

For the purposes of learning the stories can be created from other point of view than personal and without emotional touch. However, it might reduce the power and importance of digital stories. Patric Lowenthal has said that the further the digital stories move from the workshops initial form the less impressive they become. Bernard Robin (2006) argues, however, that digital stories can be of different types. It depends on the context what kind of stories the participants want to produce and whether the personal point view is the only goal to be achieved.

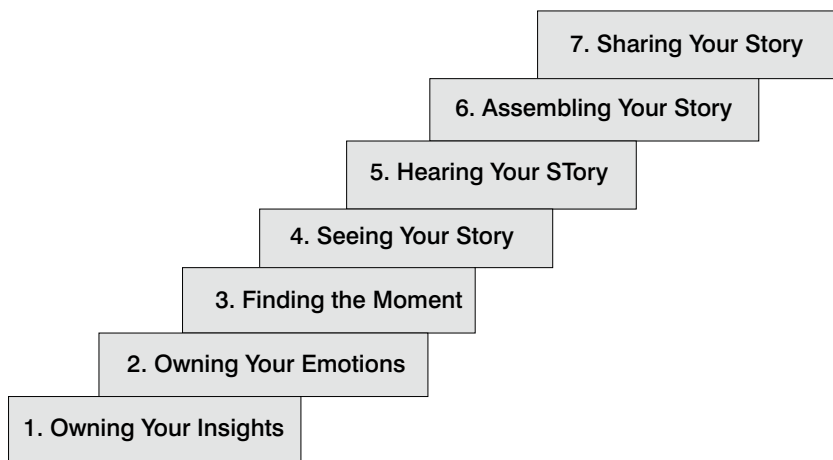
Facilitating the workshop requires various skills

According to Daniel Meadows (2003), creating digital stories is not easy. The person facilitating the workshop must have various skills, such as pedagogical knowledge about supervising groups as well as individuals, technological skills and, essentially, knowing the method very well. The facilitator must create a safe and trustworthy atmosphere in the workshop. Writing of the scripts and visual communication will be advanced by different exercises. By writing the scripts the participants travel in their memories and feelings and at the same time refine their identity. The facilitator and the group support the work through feedback and encouragement in different stages. The creator opens and closes some of the doors but the finished story is always surprising to the author as well as the group. The guidance is beneficial even for participants with good technical skills. Mere sequences of pictures and music do not lead the story so as Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley, who

developed that method, initially foresaw it. (Lambert 2005)

The purpose is to tell a creatively produced story so that it would touch and speak to the creator as well as the viewer. From the aspect of the message and the author of the story it is important that the finished story would be aesthetic, carefully refined and elaborated. The story serves the primary purpose, technology only supports it. Various travel reflections only listing events and similar stories do not qualify as digital storytelling, although they use multimedia potential in various ways. A mere presentation does not convey such emotional touch as a story from the personal point of view. The presentation of the stories organised at the end of the workshop includes both viewing and their reflection, and all participants will learn something from them.

The following steps will appear:



Picture 1. Seven steps of digital storytelling by Joe Lambert. Lambert and Center for Digital Storytelling have developed the method of Story Circle for 16 years and taught workshop facilitators in different countries. (Lambert 2009 and <http://www.storycenter.org>)

What was learned in workshops of Lemon

I presented the digital storytelling to the partners of the project Lemon in autumn 2010 and it sparked great interest in adult education centers in Finland as well as Estonia. At the end of the year the partners of both countries participated in digital storytelling workshops. The Finnish workshop resulted in seven and the Estonian in eight stories. The stories told about the teller's grandchild, godchild or own child, about home and moving, hobbies of children, the highlights and other important events in people's lives. At more general level it was presented a separate art project, courses of the education institutions

and their activities. Estonian workshop also gave rise to the story *Way to go* that was my reflection of the work of that workshop. It can be accessed on the web page of Lemon <http://lemonproject.ning.com>.

After the workshops people were asked to share their thoughts and ideas about using the digital storytelling in the liberal adult education. 10 participants out of 17 answered and all of them found it to be an enriching experience. At the same time it occurred that digital storytelling is quite a big challenge.

The term does not reduce the value of the content ... or does it?

'Digital storytelling' is maybe not the best term as the word 'digital' at the beginning of it suggests that it has something to do with technology and depends on the technological devices and appliances. But it is the narrative and person that carry the primary purpose, in other words different stories about lives and changes, learning experiences, developments and memories. Technology only enables to listen to the story digitally for more than once and by people outside the workshop.

The uncertainty towards digital stories can be reduced by telling about the workshops in digital format. Digital stories are the best examples of the final products of the method and after the first workshop there are more examples to show and experiences to share. We should avoid frightening away those people whose information and communication technologies skills are not so good. A course with a confusing name seems to be too distant and the workshop will not attract huge crowds of people.

Making digital stories is creative work

Narrating is the ability to see the most important point; it is about taking advantage of intuition and unprejudiced way of thinking. If the narrator feels that the story matters to him or her, they engage passion in it which characterises the process of creating. The script is exactly what the teller wants it to be, although it receives feedback and suggestions. This is the stage where it is only natural to work alone. After the introduction in the web meeting, one week for independent work suited for the Lemon workshops very well. The final result would have been better if the introductory part could have been a one day long face to face meeting. Writing the script is guided by the communication with narrator's mind. Successful work requires much belief in oneself. At the beginning of the workshop the scripts will be planned together; it encourages to enter

the stage of independent work. The feedback of the facilitator helps to polish the script. The facilitators must have their own methods for amplifying opinions and broadening minds so that the personal story would not become a mere technically finalised presentation but would involve the personal, unique aspect of the storyteller.

Support is needed foremost by writing scripts and managing the process as a whole

The workshops used the program PhotoStory3 which is a free and easy program for beginners although its options are more limited than for example those of Microsoft MovieMaker. In the case of Lemon course people did not need help in terms of technology. They needed more guidance by forming the process, i.e. by writing scripts. Using one's own voice by storytelling and adding it to the story was difficult.

People had one and a half day for creating the story. According to the participants it was too little. The workshops should last at least two days or even three days, depending on the level of the participants. It would give enough time to get used to with writing the script, planning the visual side, rhythm and style and refining it. Different stages of creating the story should give the narrator time for contemplating their own identity and finding the way of expressing themselves. Some of the stories in the workshops were left unfinished which is regrettable because one of the enriching stages, i.e. the premiere was left out and it was not possible to discuss them in the group either.

Reflection on experiences and identity is the core of storytelling

"The workshop was actually great because it was possible to focus for one day only on one thing. Creating the story was also pleasant. One should always keep in mind that through creating and refining the story the storyteller experiences the event and its context all over again."

Not all people are fond of touching their deepest emotions but the photos make it possible to become more aware of the feelings and to express them. Awareness of the feelings makes it easier to write scripts, select photos and plan the world of voices. For creating a safe and trustworthy environment Banaszewski (2002) suggests the facilitators to share their own digital story about feelings and in this way demonstrate risk-taking that will be faced by each storyteller. The sample stories also demonstrate the whole idea of storytelling.

Continuing with new ideas from Lemon workshops

The participants of the Lemon workshops continue with creating stories in their own organisations. Storytelling is a good activity for liberal adult education. Digital stories have already been used in presenting the art classes. The participants intend to teach the method to the teachers of their institutions and it can be used for example in folk traditions classes and also computer classes for older people. The interviews related to family or community history and stories about old photos can be integrated with digital storytelling in the future. The users of the digital stories will be groups who have experienced major changes as well as language learning and handicraft courses. According to plans the stories will illustrate several classes. The stories also provide an opportunity for marketing activities, similarly to small and middle-sized enterprises. Digital stories in different languages will be used to present courses offered to immigrants. It has been quite difficult to provide the immigrants a comprehensive picture of what the civic institutes actually offer.

On the International Day of Storytelling held each year in May the Open University of the University of Turku will offer the learners an opportunity to participate in storytelling workshop. In the next year it is planned to create a co-operation network with other open universities and in this way to increase the international contacts of the learners by using also learners' stories. At the same time they can try whether the storytelling can be used as a teaching method in open universities and whether they can provide an alternative or complement the traditional essay writing.

From individual's story to a community story

The digital storytelling is a flexible method that is worth developing and testing in various ways. The digital story can be created by a group as well. Jerry Watkins and Angelina Russo (2009) criticise the Story Circle storytelling method because it focuses too much on individuals. They argue that in this way the opportunities for development of democracy and changes will be decreased remarkably. They believe that strategic team-based approach to participatory content creation may provide a more sustainable approach for communities and organisations engaged in this kind of collaboration. One of the strengths of the digital storytelling workshop is particularly guided or even limited group work, not personal photos targeted at different topics. Maybe there is something to be worth trying out in the world of liberal adult education?

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Have the non-formal education centres become friends with Facebook?

Heli Kaldas, Haapsalu Folk High School / Ingrid Leinus, Tartu Folk High School

Facebook is a web-based social network. The network users can add friends to their communities, send them messages, update their personal profile in order to inform their friends about the important events and share photos. In addition to this, the users are able to join the communities managed by the city, workplace, school and region. Facebook was launched in 2004 and it is widely used all over the world. According to Wikipedia, there are 270,000 users in Estonia. It means that one out of five people living in Estonia use Facebook.

Facebook has become an increasingly important communications and marketing channel. As one of the subjects of the project Lemon was social media and taking advantage of its opportunities, we gained interest whether the non-formal education centres have discovered that opportunity and how they use it. We sent an invitation to participate to 49 centres and received 31 replies.

It can be said that this concerns many people, even those who do not have the Facebook account yet. Many people feel that sooner or later they have to join the platform, or they will miss their opportunity for good. Does Facebook really have such a strong influence and is it really so widely used?

Using Facebook in the member organisations of the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association

We prepared a questionnaire in order to get information about using Facebook in the member organisations of the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA). The questionnaire was submitted over the webpage www.connect.ee to 49 non-formal education centres participating in the programme Adult Education in the Liberal Education Centres.

The questionnaire was returned by 31 organisations. In addition to this, an interview was conducted with the chairpersons of the ENAEA and the Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras as well as the teams of Tartu and Haapsalu Folk High Schools.

The questionnaire was filled in by 24 women and 7 men. 22 of

them had and 9 of them did not have a Facebook account. There were different reasons mentioned why people had not created a Facebook account. Some of them (4) did not find it necessary. People were also afraid of excessive and unmanageable flow of information and did not feel it necessary to have more than one account (3). However, there were also those (2) who wanted to have a Facebook account but lacked the sufficient knowledge about its creation and use.

People having the Facebook account started to use that social network quite long time ago. 9 of respondents started to use it more than a year ago and 6 of them within the last 12 months. The number of those who had started to use it only recently (4) is almost equal to the number of those (3) who had started to use it within the last 6 months.

Facebook is used mostly for communicating with friends, family members and acquaintances (15) and for finding and exchanging information (4). Among the respondents there were also passive users (3) who are still in the phase of learning and watch other people's doings.

Anyone who has their personal account and actively uses it has obviously noticed that many organisations have their own account. We asked the participating organisations whether they had joined Facebook and on what purpose.

According to the questionnaire, 11 organisations had their own account and 16 did not. 2 organisations replied that they had an account but is not used actively. 10 respondents had their personal account and their organisation had one, too. Hence, it can be said that personal experience is applied to the level of organisation as well.

The main objective of such an account is the distribution of information, advertising the courses and trainings and sharing the information about cultural events. 2 respondents considered the communication between the learners and the need to share common room and be in the same social network with them especially important.

On the one hand, it seems that there is a lot of information made available; however, the frequency of distributing it is quite different. 5 respondents said that they post information once a day on average, and 5 once a week on average. As many as 8 respondents post information only rarely.

In more than half of the organisations (6), there is one person responsible for the posts and in the rest (5) the account is administered by several people. In some organisations, all employees are able to post information and in some organisations there are special units or people updating and monitoring the account.

As one of the activities of the project Lemon is training, we asked if the users feel themselves comfortable in using Facebook and do they need any additional instruction. 12 people noted that they feel themselves quite or very comfortable, 7 did not feel very comfortable

and also mentioned that they learn within the process and it makes them feel increasingly comfortable. However, the need for instructions was not mentioned which probably means that the creation of an account is instructed by the friends and acquaintances already having an account. People also learn a lot through experimenting. Moreover, Facebook is probably not considered a serious marketing channel that would require a separate training. One of the respondents said that does not see any point in continuing the using of Facebook.

While asking negative and positive aspects of using Facebook, we received plenty of substantial responses particularly on the positive side. There was nothing particular on the negative side but it was emphasized that there is a solution to every problem and the lack of knowledge and skills is usually the reason for feeling insecure. One on the respondents considered negative aspects the loosing and forgetting of the passwords, technical issues, excessive information and sense of insecurity in front of the “large audience”.

Positive sides of Facebook are:

- sense of satisfaction from communicating;
- finding old friends with whom the contact had been lost;
- finding new friends;
- communicating with family members;
- reminding of birthdays and other important days;
- better overview of the activities of other organisations;
- source of ideas for new courses;
- feedback from the clients;
- an overview of commendable activities of the other organisations in the same field and of the work of colleagues.

Using Facebook in the umbrella organisations of adult education centres

The authors also conducted an interview on the phone or over the e-mail with the representatives of two major umbrella organisations in the area of adult education in Estonia, with the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA) and the Association of Estonian Adult Educators Andras. Neither of these organisations has a Facebook account and do not deem it necessary to have one yet. The reason for this is primarily the lack of time and human resources.

The Facebook account should be constantly updated /.../ but we are not able to ensure that because it should be managed by a specific employee doing it systematically /.../. However, I will not rule out the possibility of having a Facebook account in the future. (The representative of Andras)

The ENAEA has discussed the issue of having a Facebook account and considered that there could be one but have not created it yet. The ENAEA has still recognised the need for it and sees it foremost as a means of getting closer to the learner.

Of course in order to raise the awareness /.../ of non-formal education and attract people to participate in the trainings of our network. It is also a good opportunity to promote life long learning. (The representative of the ENAEA)

To the question whether the organisations providing adult education should create a Facebook account, they both answered that consider it a good idea.

I personally think that the organisations providing adult education will benefit from social media. Essentially, it is a good opportunity for sharing information. On the other hand, information can be disseminated everywhere, the question is, whether it has any point. But it is possible. However, I would refer to my previous statement that it requires a lot of time and systematic approach. (The representative of Andras)

The non-formal education centres should definitely participate in social media as it enables to find new target groups. Social media could be used as a new learning environment. (The representative of the ENAEA)

The umbrella organisations bring together organisations offering trainings for adults and work with general issues of adult education and develop it. The organisations are probably rather hesitant about creating a Facebook account because they believe that it requires a lot of time and energy and they wish to do what they know best.

Using Facebook in Haapsalu and Tartu Folk High Schools

A year and a half ago in Finland in the meeting of the project Lemon we discussed seriously the issue of social media: what it is, how to apply it and what its added value is. The Finnish partners were quite surprised that out of five Estonian partners no-one had a Facebook account. Surely, some of us remember the explanation that it is not for us and we will never present ourselves in public in this way. But here we are! Most of the participants in the project have now their personal Facebook account and Haapsalu and Tartu Folk High Schools have their account as well. That list was joined recently by Tartu Intellectuals' Society.

Today, Facebook seems to be a fun free time network, although

with slight “official touch”. Besides private individuals, there are also companies, local government authorities, schools as well as friends’ networks. The account holder is probably also in the real life a rather active person who considers socialising an added value to their life or work.

Haapsalu Folk High School created an account in 2010 and it is administered by two persons. The school uses Facebook very actively for giving information, communicating and sharing interesting experiences. For example, there was a course on photography at school and five participants agreed to share their photos on Facebook. The photos were available for five days and the others could watch and comment on them. This is also a way of advertising because in the background there is a reference to learning in Haapsalu Folk High School. This way, the school may benefit from new learners and will keep in touch with the old ones.

Sharing good experiences and thoughts, which is actually a covert advertising, is even a better form of promotion. Facebook plays its part in getting new ideas as well – it is possible to see what other schools are doing and get an idea for a new course.

On the other hand, Facebook does not always create positive results. Sometimes the teachers feel overall pressure and are tired of it.

Sometimes I find the pressure of the society to use Facebook annoying – if you are not on Facebook, you don’t exist. (Mari)

Anyone can decide whether Facebook will become a friend or a burden. The employees of Haapsalu Folk High School find it actually very good that anyone can decide what kind of information, how much and with whom to share. It requires some knowledge which is usually acquired through using Facebook. While knowing all about the postings and sharing of pictures Facebook can sometimes be quite fun.

If someone special posts a positive message it makes me sometimes feel good for several days. (Merilin)

I like it if someone comments on my thoughts. I like it if someone says something nice and likes my posts. I actually watch my Facebook account the first thing in the morning. (Anu)

Tartu Folk High School established their account also in spring 2010 in order to attract interest towards the courses and the school. It also gives the learners an opportunity to express their views.

In Tartu Folk High School the account is administered by four people but it is considered essential that the other team members would also comment, share and like the content as much as possible. There are posts

about interesting happenings, events and information but the direct advertising of the courses is avoided – after all, the trainings should be presented in some kind of an interesting context. The inexperienced users feel the need for instructions in order to know where each click exactly leads to. Very often people do not have sufficient knowledge and therefore use only very few of the Facebook’s opportunities. Even if people learn new techniques they may forget about them if they do not use them.

Although Tartu Folk High School has more than 700 followers, the employees sometimes wonder if it is worth it because Facebook is enormously time-consuming. Therefore they wanted to see how many of their posts end up in walls through sharing. Having found that there are as many as several thousands of them it motivated to make new posts.

Even though it is a kind of a superficial information channel, developing a habit to use Facebook also needs time and determination. The amount of information is huge and even by making the best effort it is possible to grasp only fragments of it, but actually Facebook is very helpful. Friends or organisations on the list have usually similar interests and through sharing their interesting thoughts and ideas will finally reach the right recipient. Therefore, Facebook plays an essential part in the school’s development activities.

It can be said that both Haapsalu as well as Tartu Folk High Schools have discovered Facebook as an additional means for introducing the school and finding learners. In addition to this, Facebook is a considerable learning environment because many of the courses can be planned together with finding information on Facebook and using it.

Summary

For non-formal education centres Facebook is nothing new: 22 out of 31 respondents have personal account and 11 respondents administer the organisation’s account. There are schools that are making only careful steps in the world of Facebook but there are also those that feel themselves confident and are regular users. Organisations use Facebook mostly for distributing information about the school’s activities.

Managing the Facebook account requires a lot of time and energy and also certain skills. The umbrella organisations who participated in the study consider it very carefully before create their own account, but recommend using Facebook the schools involved in their network.

As most of the non-formal education centres post information once a week or less frequently, it seems that many of the schools have created their account but are not committed to using it on regular basis. It seems that there are very different approaches to using Facebook: more

competent organisations take it as seriously as any other marketing channel but there are also those who see it as an extension to the personal account or just an experiment in the virtual world.

The best way to find out about its functionality is to try it out. The insecurity about the Facebook's technical functions and different rules of communication in the virtual world will only disappear through experimenting. As usual, when entering an unknown environment, first you need to find out the written and unwritten rules and then constantly keep on learning through your own as well as other people's experiences. Hopefully, the non-formal education centres will find a suitable output because on Facebook there is a solution for every issue, it just needs to be found. Such an opportunity has been given by the project Lemon by creating preconditions for immersing in the world of social media.

Possibilities for using social media in education

Madli-Maria Naulainen, KG Foundation's Schooling Centre Osilia

Learners and educators in a changing world

The world changes, the ways of interaction change. The Web 2.0 has provided people abundant tools that are being used very actively. So much creative virtual content has never been available than there is today. People are intertwined in complicated networks and they interact directly and indirectly with hundreds or even thousands of other people. In a fast-changing society, ways of learning also change.

New ways of learning

The world has changed and so have the ways of learning. Motivated learners are open to everything new and hence, teaching and educating methods must change to keep up with the contemporary learners. We as educators should keep us informed and take advantage of new media and possibilities for creating educational content.

Social media is a way of interaction that takes advantage of means easily accessible to everyone. Web-based technologies turn the created content from a monologue into a dialogue. The social media are built upon the ideology of Web 2.0 that makes it possible to create and mediate user-driven content. The most well-known examples are blogs, podcasts, news flows, wikis and social networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.). The key terms of these means are creativity, co-operation and adaptation. Today, almost all people in the world create virtual content and group's wisdom is usually more wide-ranging than that of an expert.

In a changing educational framework there should be a discussion on the ways of learning and the role of an educational institution. For a learner it is important to have well-informed educators so that they were courageous enough to explore and to be aware of the technologies available. Many learners are interested in discussing the provision of education and they would like to see their educators as initiators of collaboration and as co-creators.

Changed world

If you give it some thoughts you would instantly recognise that the world has considerably changed. When was the last time you played a videotape, stood up from a sofa to switch the channel, took a film to a photo shop for processing or used a pay phone that in Estonia do not even exist anymore?

The same changes take place in education as well. Ten year old methods may not have the same relevance today. As educators we should also consider the fact that today's learners practice new media – they use social media instead of e-mail, manage social media communities involving hundreds of people, they create and publish their works on the various web-based platforms.

The whole Europe is focused on implementing the idea of life long learning and people have already recognised this principle to some extent. A large part of the adults have realised that constant personal development through training and re-training enhances their opportunities in the current unpredictable labour market. Ten years ago many of the today's professions did not even exist. Today's young people will probably work in ten different positions in the future, while the previous generation used to work in only one position throughout their life.

Therefore, the changing conditions must be considered important also in education in order to meet the new requirements and learners changing needs. Everything must change – what we teach as well as how we teach. Traditional paper and pen have become digital, the learners know well their way out in various media (Facebook, YouTube, Blogger, Skype, MSN, Google, etc.) and this process is irreversible. The training centres must be able to keep up and to use innovative methods in order to continually motivate the learners.

Contemporary learning must be learner-driven and individual, offer new experiences and opportunities to apply knowledge in practice and to be accessible round the clock. It is essential to share good practices on how to adapt in a changing environment.

Important medium

There is even a popular saying that if you are not on Facebook then you don't exist. Facebook is available in 70 different languages and is the second-popular platform after Google. Essentially, many organisations and companies have made it work for them – on the one side, for marketing, on the other side because of its valuable immediate feedback and human dimension.

In the present world of social media each training centre should

take a maximum advantage of the possibilities occurred. It should be noted that the possible learners are not searching the homepage for information about the educators but rather look for it in various networks. Therefore, the nature of this information should be monitored, it should be influenced in a more favourable way and the feedback to be found there should be given a priority.

Social media in education

The social media has become a great and innovative way of keeping contact with friends and acquaintances; however, it has also developed to a powerful tool in business and education that the educators should also take advantage of. Such networks as Facebook and Twitter or communication tool Skype connect people increasingly more, offering new and interesting learning environments. Notwithstanding who the learners are (why not employees of a company), the social media can be used to bring innovation in learning and to make it serve your interests.

All you need is courage to start and to be visible

The popular social media networks provide hints and show good practices on how to use them for educational purposes and encourage trying it out by giving various positive examples. Today, people spend a lot of time behind the computers and participate actively in social media, and hence, the educators should make these networks to serve their purposes and in this way provide innovative and interesting possibilities.

The educators should create accounts in different networks in order to communicate with their target group, to answer the questions in a timely manner, to give homework in an interactive way, to help finding solutions and to give useful information about various websites and articles.

Keeping up with the world

On the other hand, using the social media enables to follow the activities of the other professionals in the given field throughout the world. In addition to many prominent experts the social media are widely used by many teachers and academics whose thoughts and ideas might lead to new learning possibilities or methods.

If the teacher uses the social media, those learners who are not very

active in the classroom discussions or cannot participate in all classes due to their duties find it easier to contact the teacher.

Educators will find it useful to have contacts with various local or global experts, to arrange their web-based presentations or interviews with them, by using for instance Skype, message board or some other common platforms. It is possible to follow the virtual classes, held by experts in different fields (the most well-known are the TED-conferences). This kind of opportunity definitely contributes a lot.

Using Skype in learning

Skype is free communication software that enables to hold free (video) calls and instant messaging.

Skype is probably used the most often for daily communications, for keeping in touch and holding e-meetings. Skype is a useful tool for the educators as it enables to keep in contact with their learners, to help them with the tasks, to be constantly accessible and to participate in e-meetings.

One of the most valuable experiences the Skype can offer to the learners is a virtual meeting with prominent people. Many prominent people use Skype for visiting classrooms in a virtual way. It gives the learners the opportunity to find out who are the experts in the given field, introduce a global dimension in the learning process and sense the open world.

In language learning, Skype is almost indispensable. Projects of a Skype-friend make it possible to find so-called pen-friends globally with whom to communicate over the Internet and to improve language skills.

Using Twitter in learning

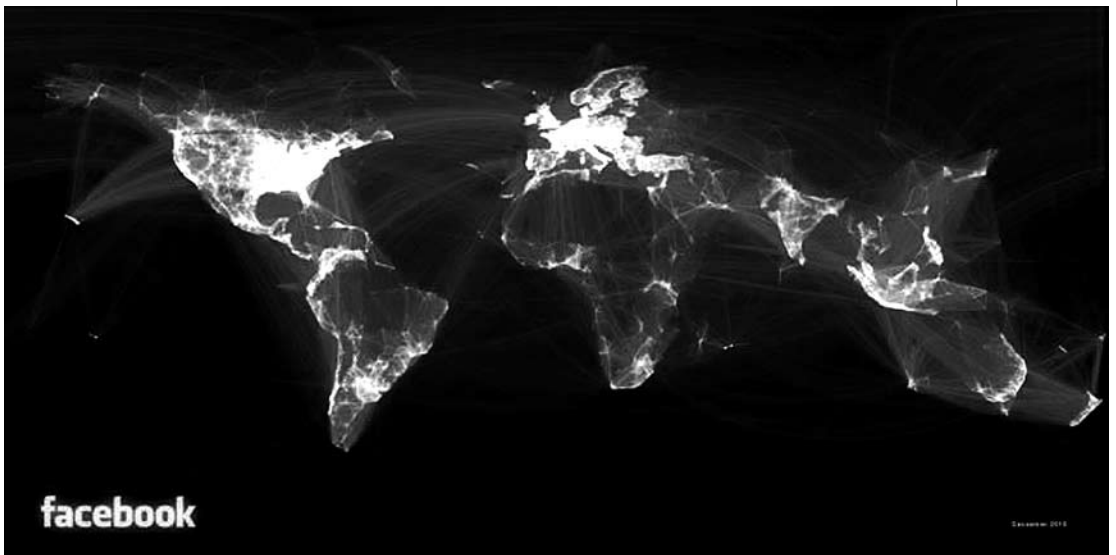
Twitter is a web-based social network, a microblogging website. It enables to send short messages called tweets. Tweets are a maximum of 140 characters in length and they appear on the author's user account. The content can be public or it can be turned into private so that the tweets can be seen only by people on the friends' list.

Twitter is useful for immediate active communication between the teacher and learner. It makes it possible to exchange information and link to interesting websites and materials for reading. Twitter is used in the classroom in order to actively follow the lesson, to comment and have feedback. Twitter is a good application for discussion, for encouraging the learners and for having an overview of the immediate feedback.

In the language and media studies the social networks can be used for studying language particulars in a quite diverse way. For example, the teacher may select a word and ask the learner to find out how it is used in different contexts by various target groups on Twitter (or Facebook). Major networks have specific web pages for practicing language skills. These web pages offer an opportunity to interact with local people. For example, you can practice your foreign language skills by speaking with native speakers over Twitter.

As all major social media networks give plenty of guidance and have forums on how to use this particular network for educational purposes, it is definitely worth trying to use them and to be informed about them.

Using Facebook in learning



Picture 2. Facebook connecting the world.

Facebook is the most widely used social network in the world: it has more than 400 million users. In Estonia, this number exceeds the limit of 300,000. As there are so many people using Facebook, the training providers can reach their target group specifically through this network. This article provides some practical first-hand experiences on how to use Facebook in learning.

A web-based learning environment today is the norm, not the exception. Facebook enables to establish various learning groups as well and why not to use it then as a platform for simpler e-learning.

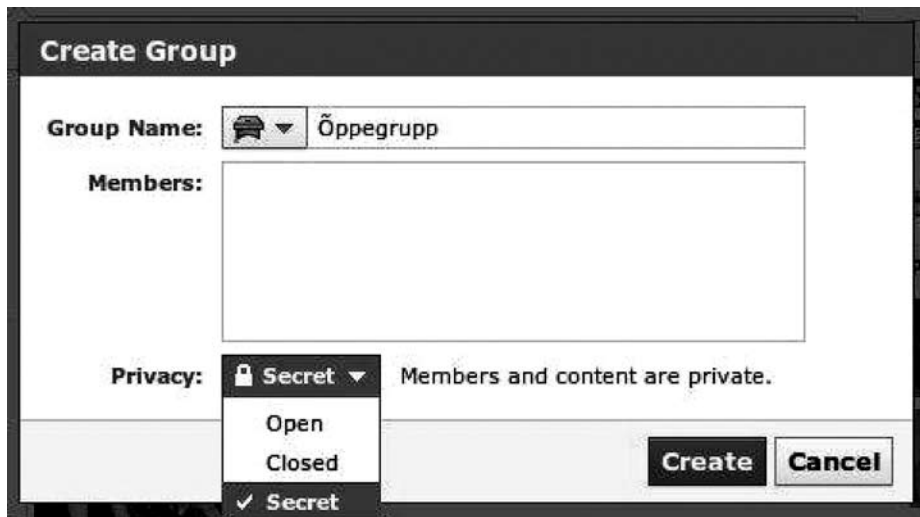
Groups on Facebook

While establishing a Facebook group (an option in the left-handed menu), first the group must be given a name, then the names of the members must be added (only the names on the Friends' list of the person creating the group can be added) and then it must be determined whether the group is open, closed or secret. The content of an open group is visible to everyone. A closed group is given in the database and its name can be seen by others but the content can be accessed only by its users. For joining a group a relevant request is required. A secret group is not visible in the search engine and it can be joined only after accepting the invitation by the administrator.

Creating the content of the group the same options are available as for a common user on their personal account: it is possible to post messages or comments on the wall, under the discussion section to add longer texts or discussions, also post pictures and videos to the group's site or schedule events.

The administrator of the Facebook group will greatly benefit from the automatic saving of the whole action. In addition to this the network users can actively comment on posts and other content and give immediate feedback. The different learning episodes and participation therein provides a good basis for the log of the training course.

While instructing a Facebook group the teachers can to their own surprise get much different kind of information than they usually get in the classroom. The network enables to get the information about learner's interests, skills and knowledge that are not revealed in the context of the specific topics. While using this information the teacher can influence the learner's development considering his/her interests in more diverse ways.



Picture 3. Options of Facebook groups.

Means of professional development

At the same time the educator does not necessarily need to relate their social profile with the learners. Several educators use the networks for delivering their interesting views on education, also referring to the relevant literature, participating in discussions and giving examples of positive experiences. Hence, the network serves the purpose of their professional development. Facebook enables the educator to create an e-portfolio which becomes a value in its own terms and can be accessed by a large number of readers.

Facebook is also an alternative learning environment. For example, in the outdoor learning the digital means provide very diverse opportunities. The social networks can be applied here as well because many networks enable to send text messages, pictures or videos over the mobile phone directly to the social network by a simple click. A log of outdoor learning developed in this way is actually very interesting and it can be viewed by the colleagues and other course mates.

Facebook provides various opportunities for improving language skills. For example, there is a specific environment for learners for practicing their language skills through networking (the same is possible in Twitter or Skype).

Surely, people need time to get used to it because a new technique is always challenging. From my first-hand experience I can only recommend to have the courage to start. Why not to get to know the modern technologies. The 21st century has opened up so many new opportunities. It will probably influence the education as well because the teacher has to keep up with the learners in order to provide motivating exercises.

Why use social media in teaching – five reasons

Tanja Kivi, Civic Institute of Porvoo

All the other kids have...

As always in life, first some people start to do things in a new way, and suddenly everybody rushes to do the same. Go to any random page in the Net and I am rather sure you will find little icons that would allow you to “share” the information in Facebook or Twitter or dozens or even hundreds of other social media sites that are “hip” right now. Nowadays having a presence in social media is not something extra, but in fact a normal and necessary part of any organizations media plan. And yes, every organization, even schools, should have and follow a media plan. That means every teacher should be aware of the plan and implement it as best to his/her abilities.



Picture 4. A site that offers almost 300 places where to share the information. (www.peda.net/veraia/porvoo/thop)

Every school should make a media plan now, if they don't already have one. And even in case a media plan is successfully made and implemented, should it be checked regularly. The principal, possibly the vice principal, the person responsible of visual planning and/or web site, and a member from the office staff (who will, after all, be in direct contact with customers daily), should be present in this meeting. An hour could be enough. In the notice of the meeting it would be a

good idea to instruct participants to prepare with given questions. This way everybody is ready to tackle the subject as soon as the meeting starts.

What is the vision and motto of the school? What kind of an image the school wishes to convey? What kinds of methods are used? What are the rules of using the logo? What kind of projects are going on and how are their logos to be used? What brief instructions should all teachers and other employees remember when talking to the press? Is there a preferred color palette? Answers to these questions are the essence of the media plan, and something all the employees would benefit to be aware of.

A contingency plan

Having a social media site can be a great support to a teacher. If the worst happens and you get sick, you should do the responsible thing: not drag your body-turned-virus-factory in the midst of your unsuspecting class. In this contingency the site might prove to be invaluable. You may sneeze and snooze, dig yourself into a comfy sofa and drink tea with honey and lemon - and still stay in touch with your pupils. A good substitute teacher is still worth his or her weight in gold, but having that personal touch from you, the teacher, makes a difference.

You can load your site full of extra exercises for this eventuality. You can even send an email to everyone telling them before the class that you are ill, and you hope the students would do these tasks. Then the students could choose between coming to class and studying at their homes that evening. In any case you, as a teacher, would have something to fall back on.

Storage for handouts and other information about classes

Also your students might get sick or for other reasons miss some classes. Usually they ask for handouts from those missed classes. You don't have to become a beast of burden, to carry more and more heavy burden of papers with you as the semester progresses. Instead, you can upload your handouts to your site and your students who are members of the site or know the password, can get them. Also you can upload information about the chapter you read, exercises you made in the class and gave as homework. How cool is that? Even those missing classes can have homework done!

One plus one equals...ten?

If you use a social media site as storage for handouts and student information anyway, you can use it for all your class information also. Storage is usually pretty safe, the information is in one place and it is easily retrievable and updatable from anywhere with Internet connection. Information you need to write down anyway is now something called *added value*. Same amount of work, extra value for your students for their money.

Wikipedia explains added value to be some extra features “that go beyond the standard expectations and provide something “more” while adding little or nothing to - - cost”. So everybody is happy: teacher, student and school.

Another way to describe added value is from Laurie Dart, author and owner of Writing Wisely writing and editing services: “These are services you offer your clients in addition to your regular services. - - That puts you above your competition in your client’s eye.” This is noteworthy. Added value can make you stand out from competitors. In case of implementing social media it can give you an air of being “the tech-savvy school”.

Support from other teachers

Social media is an excellent way to get support from your fellow teachers. A site can be created for the English teachers of one school, for example. Best practices can be shared, as well as funny anecdotes and stories of how difficult students were handled. A discussion with colleagues can solve many problems.

If several teachers teach similar classes, a site for students could be created together. The amount of work per teacher would decrease dramatically, and creating a social media site would not seem intimidating for first-time users.

Swedish language course for learners on advanced level by using Skype

Eva Raidma, Foundation Tuuru adult education centre

Have you got an account on Facebook? What is your user name on Skype? These and other questions have become very common. We should probably agree that today people live more on the Internet than anywhere else and a computer has become an everyday tool and means of communication.

Why and how?

Distant working has globally become an indispensable form of working. E-learning and learning over social media is constantly developing and improving. Courses organised by using modern interactive means have an important advantage – they save time. Today, when people are always in a hurry, time is a very valuable resource.

In addition to this, e-learning enables to cut costs and by eliminating the need to attend a classroom to protect the environment. It is especially important factor in places with long distances to drive, for instance in Hiiumaa. Learners can participate in courses exactly there where they are at the very moment.

E-learning cannot be the only form of studying, of course, because it requires a computer, necessary programs as well as skills.

I have been teaching Swedish for ten years and have organised very different courses: evening courses, intensive courses, in a format of lecture, etc. In most cases, they have been traditional courses in a classroom whereby teacher is in the same room with the learners and the course relies on a specific study material.

Participation in a social media project was for me as a teacher an interesting experience. Running a Swedish language course over Skype was a new task. As I had helped to learn language over Skype by one person at a time I decided to take the chance if I was given the opportunity.

A course of 18 lessons took place in the Foundation Tuuru adult education centre from 25 November to 30 December 2010. The group consisted of five people.

The course was structured as follows: the presentation of the

possibilities of Skype in the computer class of Foundation Tuuru adult education centre, 2 lessons + testing of Skype at homes in the following day; using Skype and Mikogo jointly in the computer class of Foundation Tuuru adult education centre, 3 lessons + independent work at home, 1 lesson. Only after that the Swedish language course over Skype started, involving altogether 10 lessons (five times 2 academic hours in the evening).

The course was completed with a lecture on social hacking.

The advantages and disadvantages of a course over Skype based on my experience

Advantages

While trying to find out what are learner's expectations, the answer is often the same: learning the everyday language to be able to interact with people and express oneself.

By teaching a language over modern social media, one of the biggest advantages is the availability of the study material. If people learn a language they want to discuss everyday subjects. Hence, topical information available on the Internet is absolutely suitable. In the case of language learning, the glossaries and dictionaries found on the Internet are very helpful because the learners can find the meaning of an unfamiliar word very quickly.

The preparation of a course over Skype requires a lot of work and much time from the teacher. A traditional course is based on a specific study material and the teacher can improvise more, but that is not the case by an online-course. On the other hand, it is an important advantage because the study material relies on the language level of a particular group and the materials can be prepared and uploaded beforehand. These materials can be used partly in other Skype-based courses.

Online materials contain articles, videos and files for listening and they are all in the target language. All the participants can access the materials in an equal way and quickly and there is no need to send them separately to everyone. If the learner has not been able to attend a lesson, then the teacher just has to send a link and they can see what was done. In discussing certain topics the learners can illustrate them with their own pictures and show them to the other group members.

By running the course, the teacher plays a leading role. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the material and grammatical aspects related to the text have been looked through thoroughly. If the learners have any questions they can get quickly an answer.

While having a conversation, it is important for the teacher to intervene if there is a pause and ask another learner to speak or ask

some questions.

In this kind of a course the learners and the teacher can be physically in different rooms or even different countries. This enables to exchange very diverse experiences and widen the horizon. It also removes the physical boundaries between the classrooms and different countries. In addition to learning a language, the learners also acquire knowledge on computer programs and develop other skills.

There is no eye contact with the teacher which can be positive as well as negative. It is positive because modest Estonians are usually not very wordy in the classroom but may have more courage to speak over Skype. They are not ashamed of the other learners because they do not see them while making a mistake.

However, the teacher can always use a web camera and make the learners see each other.

By teaching over Skype the teacher uses more the target language. The teacher does not switch to the source language as willingly as they would do it in the classroom, where the learners' faces reveal if they do not understand.

Disadvantages

One of the disadvantages of the distant learning is the lack of body language. The body language contributes to the language learning a lot. The learners often use gestures for explaining a word or translating a sentence instead of immediately using their mother tongue.

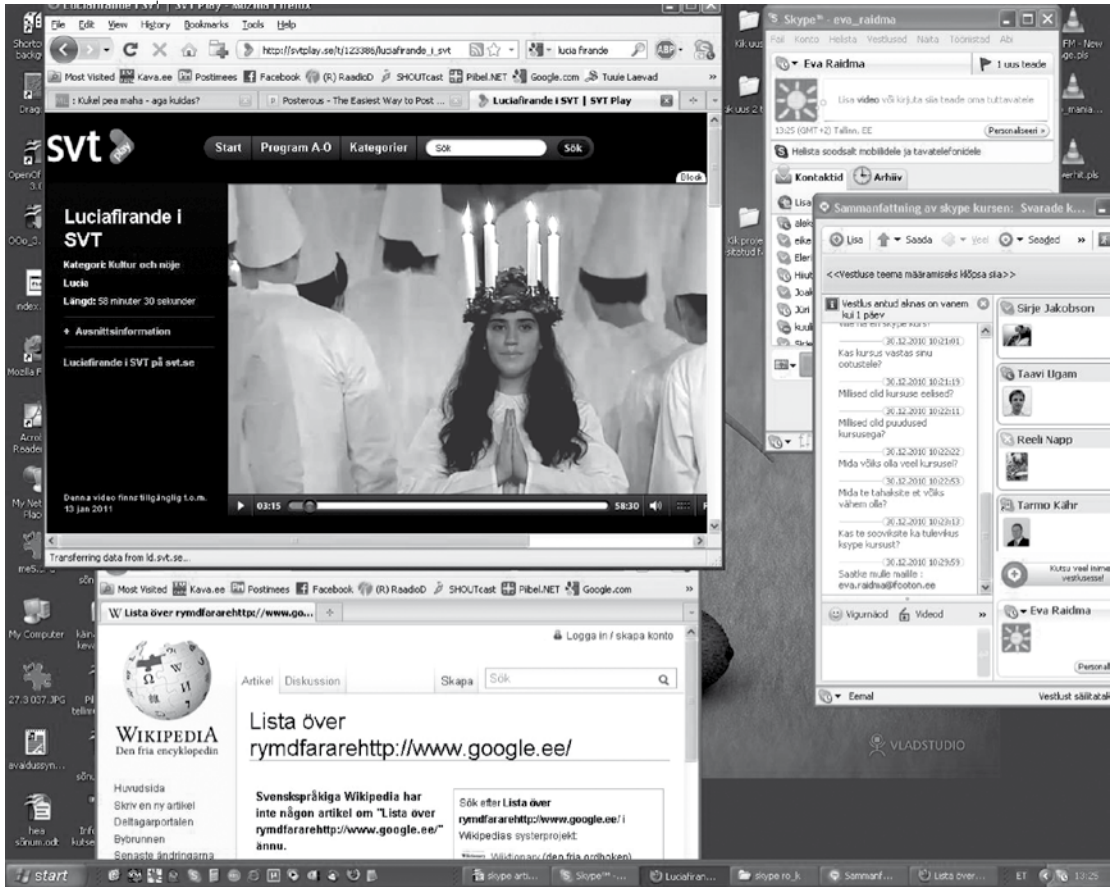
The learners may feel themselves anonymous – they do not share the sense of unity that usually develops in a classroom situation. Therefore it is good if in the case of a Skype-based course people would meet as much as possible. They will get a wider perspective and they know who are behind the voices.

Abundance of the materials available can also act as a disadvantage. I consider it important to keep the course within certain frames.

One of the disadvantages can be the insufficient knowledge on computer programs. Therefore, the teacher must be sufficiently familiar with the programs they are planning to use for running the course.

Summary

A successful social media course requires thorough preparation and profound knowledge on the computer programs, also knowing the target group and courage to start. The number and role of the courses conducted over Skype will definitely increase in the future.



Picture 5. During the Skype-based lesson, the teacher's computer screen displays a Skype conference call window with all the participants involved. There is also a conversation window that can be used as a whiteboard. The topic of that particular lesson was Swedish traditions – we discussed the celebration of the Saint Lucy's Day and followed a webcast of the Saint Lucy's Day celebrations in a church in Stockholm. There was a video open in every learner's screen. In addition to this, on a lower picture there is a Wikipedia window open for finding the meaning and explanation of unknown words.

Learners' opinion on the course

While delivering their opinions, the participants could rely on the following questions submitted earlier:

- 1) Did the course meet your expectations?
- 2) What were the advantages of the course?
- 3) What were the disadvantages of the course?
- 4) What would you have liked to have more in the course?
- 5) What would you have liked to have less in the course?
- 6) Would you participate in a Skype-based course in the future as well?

The learners could choose to give short answers to the questions or to discuss the course in more detail. The short answers to the given questions are summarized. Below there is also a longer description of a participant on the course.

Summary of the opinions of the four participants (Taavi Ugam, Sirje Jakobson, Reeli Napp, Tarmo Kähr)

Did the course meet your expectations?

Yes, it did, and the frequency of once a week seemed to suit better than twice a week, which is the usual arrangement. In terms of language improvement, actually it did not meet the expectations but it was easier to schedule it. The group's size was appropriate. According to the respondents, with seven learners as it was initially proposed, the group would have been too large. According to the answers the appropriate size is from three to five people, and then the learners would benefit the most. The participants got the idea of the arrangement of this kind of a course and everything ran smoothly. Skype turned out to be an excellent way of learning the language. The learners became more interested in the possibilities of social media and in the ways of using them in language learning.

One of the respondents noted, "I believe that I didn't meet the expectations of the course, as before the course my Swedish should have been a little bit better. Then I would have benefited even more."

What were the advantages of the course?

One of the major advantages mentioned was that it saved the time and money. There was no need to travel to the training centre and no costs for the classroom. Sitting at home behind the computer and studying was comfortable and pleasant. There were no tensions involved, the atmosphere was peaceful and it made feel good. The independent work and the work in the lesson were well-balanced.

One of the learners said that since her Swedish was not very good and the texts that were given for reading were quite difficult, it was very good to have one lesson per week – there was enough time to get prepared.

A significant advantage was the possibility to participate in the course without leaving the house. Another major advantage was the flexible schedule – the time of the lessons was agreed together. The participants liked the fact that the lessons took place in the evening. Also, the small number of participants was deemed good as it was easier to follow. In addition to this, the important information was saved on the Skype account and it was possible to access it later if necessary, as opposed to writing on whiteboard in a traditional classroom. The course expanded the vocabulary and improved the sentence making skills which is not practiced every day. The articles and texts were difficult enough to widen the expertise.

What were the disadvantages of the course?

A contact over Skype or so-called semi-virtual meeting is not the same as being together in a classroom (no intervening remarks, facial gestures, etc.) However, the switch-over from one speaker to another was quite quick and no information went missing in the meantime, as opposed to the experience gained in videoconferences.

Unfortunately, we missed the opportunity to use videoconference application of Skype, released last year. However, it might have reduced the relaxed feeling of the learners.

Another disadvantage mentioned was that the sense of unity did not develop as it does in the case of a classroom because there was no small talk. Reaching an agreement concerning some issues would also have been easier in the case an immediate contact. On Skype, the learners had to wait for each other to finish until they were able to speak and confirm that they have understood. In a traditional classroom it would have happened more naturally.

One of the participants noted that in the long-run she tended to loose focus because the computer was in the living room, with a lot of distractions: the TV set, people talking, the dog barking, etc. The traditional classroom situation would not involve such issues. Therefore, in the case of a Skype-based course the learner must make an extra effort to have a peaceful environment at a given time.

It was suggested that the learning environment Moodle could have been engaged more. Moodle enables to upload different types of learning material, and is therefore a convenient way of diversifying the course. There are several interactive tools in Moodle that also would have been beneficial.

What would you have liked to have more in the course?

The number of lessons could have been bigger but the course mates expressed the hope that it can be arranged. Since it was a pilot course, it was rather short and the amount of new knowledge was somewhat limited. The course could have involved more grammar, and some extra work in this regard would have been useful. The homework could have involved more writing of short stories and summaries. The course could have been even more diverse.

One of the learners said, "I tried to look through materials from my previous studies of Swedish but did not have enough time as there were quite many assignments for the next lesson."

Since learning over Skype seemed to be very convenient, the course could have lasted longer. The course could have involved more games in Swedish, e.g. something similar to the *My Estonia*, to try to guess an animal or object by a description, etc. However, it was stated that these games require better knowledge of the Swedish language and culture. However, these recommendations might make the course more interesting and remarkably improve the language skills.

What would you have liked to have less in the course?

There was a little bit too much homework. If there are too many assignments, then those who work do not have enough time to prepare due to other responsibilities. On the other hand, giving too few assignments is not good either because it is not possible to learn if you do not take time for this.

Would you participate in a Skype-based course in the future as well?

"Certainly, this time we only touched upon it and I am definitely willing to continue," one of the respondents assured.

The learners also noted that it depends on financial means available and on whether there is anything like that in the future at all. The learners appreciated that the course was not very intensive because they have other responsibilities. Some of them expressed a wish to participate in such course over a longer period, for a year, for example.

*Toomas Kokovkin on the Swedish language course over Skype by
Foundation Tuuru adult education centre*

I do my everyday work mostly on the computer – I edit photos and texts and connect for this purpose over the Internet with all over of the world. Language learning is also nothing new for me; I can speak 7-8 languages to some extent. I have organised a web-based course over the Internet on my specialty. So in terms of assessment, I will do it from the perspective of a rather experienced person.

I believe that the learning process functioned quite well; for language improvement studying in virtual groups is absolutely suitable. However, I would like to share some of my thoughts.

About the teacher

Our teacher was very good and it seemed that for teaching over Skype she had developed a simple but efficient method. Although we did not have eye contact with each other she managed to work the whole group together. The combination of different applications like text, video and sound worked surprisingly well. However, I tend to think that the distance learning is more suitable for reading and translating texts but less suitable for grammar, not to mention casual language.

About Skype and the other techniques

Fortunately, the Internet connection was good and there only a few disruptions or sound problems. But from the hindsight I believe that in technical terms we were working on the limits. Five-to-six people group is probably the maximum for this kind of distance learning. Hereby I am not having in mind only the quality of the connection but the entire organisation of the learning process. Computer skills are absolutely crucial. Sometimes it seemed that even Skype, with its windows and choices with a few clicks away, was rather complicated. Although we had planned to use the other applications as well, in practice it was impossible.

I think that Skype could develop a simplified version for group learning. As the learners have to switch quickly between the microphone, text box or video they do not focus on foreign language anymore. So someone with basic computer skills would probably not manage.

About the group work

Distance learning is definitely an efficient way of learning for complementing traditional methods, especially in remote areas and islands, where we are, and particularly in winter with a lot of snow. It has its disadvantages, though, and for me it is the lack of immediate interaction with people. I would suggest the distance learning to involve, for example, one lesson in the classroom together and five lessons over

the Internet. Our course was actually something similar. In the case of a longer course, it is absolutely necessary to meet sometimes (maybe once a month). In the case of distance learning there are also several distracting factors, e.g. colleagues dropping in, children, dogs, e-mails coming in, etc., and therefore it is quite complicated to stay focused for ninety minutes and study.

Summary

Skype (or something even simpler) is a very good complementary method for learning under the instructions of a teacher. However, it can be used only with learners who have both computer and language skills on the basic level at least. Distance learning is an especially good way of making a lazy person to use the grey matter and acquire foreign language.

Development of international teacher exchange promotes cooperation between Adult Education Centres

Annika Nummelin, Turku Adult Education Centre

Introduction

Adult Education Centres have been engaged in international projects for many years. International performance of the employees has improved alongside with the projects and Adult Education Centres have been positively visible at local, national as well as at international level. In addition to various projects, the teacher exchange programmes have also gained popularity and they have given active participants new ideas for teaching. It is believed that the promotion of international mobility and co-operation now plays a more crucial role in the non-formal education than earlier. However, to function flexible and efficient, the enhanced exchange programmes require more consistent policy and precise planning.

One of the aims of the Lemon project was to enhance cooperation between Finnish and Estonian Adult Education Centres. As stated before, the Adult Education Centres need a harmonised model for the arrangement of exchanges, schedules and financing, for informing about the exchange possibilities and destinations as well as for organising joint courses. In 2009-2010, as part of the Lemon project, Turku Adult Education Centre prepared a Teacher Exchange Strategy that aims at meeting those challenges. The strategy was developed by a wide-ranging working group considering the need to improve the international and multicultural performance and skills of the teachers. The aim is to better take into account the requirements the global society has set for the non-formal education. The improvement of skills plays an important part in the enhancement of the quality of education and the degree of diversification as well as the advancement of teachers' qualification and motivation.

In order to map the present situation regarding the teacher exchange, Turku Adult Education Centre carried out a survey among the teachers and rectors of the project partners. Considering the answers, the working group aimed at suggesting how to eliminate the possible obstacles for participating in the exchange, developing it and enhancing the mobility.

This article discusses briefly the results of the survey. It also provides a summary of the answers, a teacher exchange vision that is based on the comments of the partner Education Centres and guidelines for joint follow-up measures.

Results of the survey

The survey was targeted at teachers and rectors of the Finnish and Estonian Education Centres participating in the Lemon project. There were in total 146 respondents. Only a little bit more than eight per cent of them had participated in teacher exchange abroad. None of the respondents had participated in exchange based on teaching over the internet. About one-half of the participants were permanent staff teachers and about one-half part-time teachers having less than 14 lessons a week. According to the survey, teachers who had 14 or more lessons a week had never participated in an exchange. Majority of those who have been exchange teachers have been working in Adult Education Centres for a long time (over 15 years).

The exchanges did not last long. One-half of the respondents participated in exchange programmes lasting for 3-7 days, 25 per cent in programmes lasting for 1-2 days and other 25 per cent in those lasting from one week up to one month. In addition to Finland and Estonia, the target countries have also been i.e. Turkey and Sweden.

Most of the respondents said both teachers and Education Centres would benefit from teacher exchange. From the perspective of a teacher, the most positive gain from participating in an exchange have been new ideas for teaching and a better understanding of different cultures. Development of professional skills, meeting of specialists of the given field and learning about new teaching and learning methods were also highly appreciated. From the perspective of an Education Centre, it was said that it will make an institution more visible and improve its reputation as an international actor. Another positive effect was the possibility to expand networks and cooperation aspects of the Adult Education Centres. Teachers also felt that the exchange facilitates to widening of the course program through e-learning and study materials of other Education Centres. They also believed that teaching methods and materials improved and became more diversified and the students started to network more.

The survey focused also on factors that hinder or prevent from participating in an exchange. According to the teachers, the biggest obstacle was the lack of information about the exchange options. It was highlighted by as many as 40 per cent of the respondents. One-third of the respondents felt that the contact networks abroad were insufficient, 25 per cent mentioned that their participation was hindered

by time management. However, it was remarkable that almost every fourth respondent admitted the lack of self-confidence. On the other hand, financing of the exchange was not considered an issue. One of the obstacles is also the arrangement of personal life- family, small children and reconciliation with other duties prevented about every fifth respondent from participating in an exchange. Almost one-third had never experienced any difficulties.

Teachers were also asked if they would be interested in teacher exchange in the future. Majority of the respondents were interested in various forms of participation: exchanges of different duration abroad, exchanges over the internet or hosting visiting teachers. According to the answers, teachers of Adult Education Centres were willing to participate in exchanges of one week or less. Most of the respondents said that organising exchange programmes in one particular week each year is a good idea. It was believed that it may enhance the visibility of the Adult Education Centres at national and international level as well as among the Centres themselves.

Ideas of developing the exchange programme

According to the results, the biggest obstacle for teachers was the lack of information. Hence, it is necessary to focus particularly on informing and improving the visibility of exchanges. The informing activity means that information of exchanges within the institution as well as between the institutions must be improved. The information related to the teacher exchange must be up-to-date, easily renewed and easily accessible to the teachers.

For standardising the exchange activities, the Adult Education Centres need common channel for searching and disseminating the information. It has been proposed to have a separate internet portal where teachers can easily find information about cooperating Education Centres as well as other possible exchange options. This portal would enable to update information quickly and to inform about any possible changes. The website could also include a discussion section for teachers as well as a section for introducing experts and institutions. In addition to this, the portal would contribute to organising the suggested annual exchange period.

In order to strengthen teacher exchanges, each Education Centre should appoint a teacher exchange coordinator who is responsible for the coordination and organisation of the exchange programme and who knows all the possible exchange and financing programmes as well as who are the teachers currently in the programme. Within the Centre, the coordinator gives information about the programme to teachers and updates the data of the respective Centre in the portal. The teacher

exchange coordinator plays a crucial role in terms of continuity of the exchange activity.

Conclusion

According to the survey, the teachers of the Lemon project partner institutions are very interested in participating in teacher exchange programmes. Therefore, the Adult Education Centres should actively develop this action. The development activity will improve the qualification of teachers and international cooperation. In addition, teaching will become more diversified and of better quality. Teacher exchange programmes and international cooperation will also advance other aspects that are important in today's societies, such as cultural awareness of teachers and students, capability to work in a multicultural environment and life long learning.

The working group on the Teacher exchange strategy of Turku Adult Education Centre formulated a vision of the international teacher exchange of the partner organisations in the Lemon project:

“International teacher exchange activity of Adult Education Centres is active and visible and teachers have every possibility of participating in its different forms.”

Quality adult education – key to the management of schools

Heli Kaldas, Haapsalu Folk High School

Adult education in Estonia awaits major changes. A new Adult Education Act is to be completed and it will provide the education centres many new tasks, such as requirements for adult education institutions, including documentation, method of issuing education licence, entering the data into the Estonian Education Information System, etc. All these amendments aim in general at the enhancement and ensuring of the high-quality of the education centres. The objective of the project Lemon is to modernise and develop Estonian and Finnish folk high schools through cross-border co-operation and it has given the idea to write about the high-quality management and operation of the adult education institutions.

Education centres need changes

The quality of the adult education is a subject that has gained a lot of public attention during the last few years. The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research has initiated in 2010 the drafting of the new version of the Adult Education Act. The draft Adult Education Act has provided for mandatory internal assessment of the adult education centres and that should foster the centres' constant improvement and development.

At the moment the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association comprises 80 organisations, including folk high schools, folk schools, study circles and societies, training centres and educational centres. They have been able to choose their name at their own discretion following the Private Schools Act and the Adult Education Act that has been applied since 1993 and clearly does meet the real needs. Just like the legislation needs to be amended so do the education centres as well. Many small societies and associations have developed into folk high schools and folk schools that follow in their activities the principle of a school year. These are the schools that try to offer tuition in several fields, while starting in September and finishing in May and organising also summer schools and camps, if possible. The folk high schools are able to carry out various EU projects and educational programmes. Many people ask why it is so remarkable. And the answer is that in order to run different projects, the folk high schools have to organise

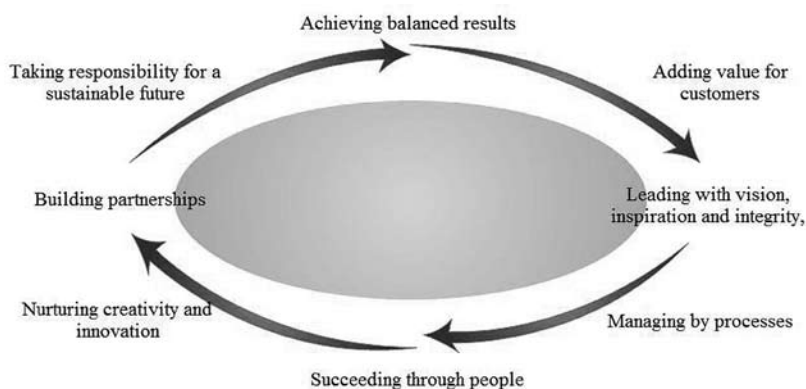
many courses with tuition fees, and that is not so simple today. Hence, the adult education institution needs to find resources for better coping and better quality of management.

First, the head of the organisation needs to recognise the principles of high-quality management, then communicate them to the staff and finally, commit to driving this process. All the members of the education institution should know the answer to the questions *why, how, when* and *in what way*.

Possibilities for quality assurance of adult education

The world's best educational systems have realised that something that is not measured cannot be improved². P. Drucker also argues that in order to achieve something it has to be measured. If it cannot be measured then forget about it.³

When talking about a high-quality organisation, usually we have in mind the concepts of quality management and quality assessment. The quality management of an organisation became more widely known on 1980s. At that time the quality management principles were also introduced in the field of education. As the schools have become increasingly autonomous, they are able to better assess their operation⁴. One of the theoretical starting points of the quality management of the many Estonian and European education institutions is the excellence model of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM)⁵. The model can be used as a tool for self-assessment, a foundation for the common grasp and understanding, a framework for the operation and a structure for the management system of the organisation which are important areas also in education and which require constant monitoring. The excellence model of the EFQM relies on eight fundamental concepts⁶.



Picture 6. Fundamental concepts. (www.efqm.org).

For an organisation to be able to use the excellence model by the EFQM in the quality assessment and to benefit from it as much as possible, it is necessary to find out whether the concepts of the model can be applied to the organisation⁷. The management of the organisation must be able to ensure that the concepts will be recognised and the process supported by the staff. If the management is not able to sufficiently motivate the employees and explain why the assessment is needed, it might make the assessment process cumbersome and meaningless instead of making it a serious effort. It is the responsibility of the head of the organisation to guide people⁸ in managing of the results.

In the context of the education institutions, including adult education institutions, the quality management concept is mostly used for self-assessment. It gives feedback on all management levels and members of the organisation as well as the target groups, and hence, the management will get valuable information about the organisation's strengths and weaknesses. As the primary goal of the self-assessment is to improve the functioning of the organisation, it must be related to the management of the organisation, especially to the strategy and business planning. The management must focus on achieving the results throughout the entire economic chain⁹. The essential factors of the creation and implementation of the assessment model are the size, resources and culture of the organisation, grounds for and purposes of the assessment and essentially, whether the core values of the organisation support the self-assessment¹⁰.

Examples of the quality management and assessments implemented in the European adult education

In Europe the quality assurance has been carried out continuously. Several strategic documents have acknowledged the need for quality assurance. For example, the document on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework refers to the need for quality assessment, while proposing consistent evaluation methods, self-assessment and external review as one of the possibilities. The document also emphasizes that the assessment results must be available to the target groups (learners, teachers, employers, local government authorities, etc.) and also the need to implement a training system on assessment¹¹.

The Development Plan for Estonian Adult Education 2009-2013¹² also foresees as one of the targets the provision of the preconditions for the adults that enable to improve their level of education or qualification through the high-quality training. As Estonia is a member of the European Union, it is reasonable to follow the EU guidelines and recommendations on education institutions, including adult education,

concerning the quality assessment and adapt them to the needs and possibilities in Estonia. Essentially, it is possible to develop an entirely new system for the quality assessment of the adult education in Estonia; however, the author believes that it is worth considering the good practices in this field in other countries.

In Europe there are several projects and analyses carried out on the quality assessment of the adult education institutions. For example, the Nordic Network for Adult Learning gives an overview of the quality assurance systems in the Nordic countries¹³ and enables to access the essential information for quality assurance on their web page. Moreover, in several European countries an adult education institution or society can apply for the European Quality Mark (EQM). The EQM was Recall (Recognition of Quality in Lifelong Learning) project within which the quality assurance criteria for non-formal education were developed. Eight European countries participated in creating the EQM model: Iceland, Denmark, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. Anyone who is interested in it can get the information on the web page of the EQM. The EQM model was developed based on the integrated quality management principles and both the quality assessment criteria of the ISO as well as the EFQM excellence model¹⁴.

In Estonia, the education institutions have been subject to self-assessment as well as external review for several years. In formal education the assessment models of the schools rely on EFQM excellence model. The earliest of them have been implemented in Tallinn where many competitions have been organised¹⁵. Moreover, the Foundation Innove and the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research have initiated a quality awards competition in the Estonian vocational education system, and in the Estonian higher education system the Foundation Archimedes is running the programme Quality Assurance in Institution of Higher Education.

The quality assessment is not something new in the Estonian adult education, either. In 2006 and 2009 the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association (ENAEA) carried out the self-assessment of the training centres relying on the satisfaction surveys of the learners, learner's employers, staff and teachers, owners of the training centres and local government authorities¹⁶. The assessment model was developed by the implementing body (ENAEA), considering the objective and goal of the training centre and the expectations of the target groups. This information was received through interviews. The heads of the education centres also carried out the internal assessment by including the learners as well as the teachers. The self-assessment was carried out in approximately 40 non-formal education centres which is only a small proportion of all private non-formal education providers in the field of non-formal education in Estonia. According to the estimates of the Ministry of Research and Education, there are approx. 400 licensed

private non-formal education providers and approx. 1100 of those without a licence. In many countries, the adult education providers cannot operate without a licence. Therefore, it is necessary to regulate the area of adult education with drafting a new act. The state as well as people has the right to know what the quality of the education centre and the training provided by it is.

In Finland, the education centre has anytime right to request an unofficial evaluation of its teaching and learning activities in order to complement the internal assessment, and no regular official external review is applied¹⁸. It follows that globally the objective of the assessment has moved further from the mere monitoring, while replacing it with conscious self-assessment. In Finland, there are good examples of the quality management of the vocational education, where a modified model of the EFQM excellence model is applied¹⁹. The adult education has been engaged in the quality assessment through the quality award competition of citizens' institutes. The citizens' institutes are similar to the Estonian non-formal education centres and the quality competitions are carried out for the sixth time now²⁰. The objective of the competition is to make the citizens' institutions more attractive and to give the owner of the institute an overview of the quality of the non-formal education provided.

In Finland, the quality management and assessment has been carried out but its implementation is not a smooth process, though. Some institutions find it very difficult to understand the approach of the perfect quality management. The reasons for this can be the insufficient planning, lack of trust of existing models, undefined organisation of work, unclear structures, uncooperative relations between people, lack of commitment and many other aspects²¹. Hence, the problems with the quality assessment in Finland and Estonia are similar. It confirms even strongly that any alteration requires prior explanation and guidance.

The Estonian and European quality assessment models described above account only for a small proportion of successful quality assessment options. What they have in common is that they are based on quality management principles.

Summary

Globally the objective of the assessment has moved further from the mere monitoring, while replacing it with the conscious self-assessment. The EFQM excellence model forms the foundation of the quality assessment of many organisations, including education institutions, and there are several quality assessment models in Europe and Estonia relying on it. In Europe, there are many essential projects carried out for supporting the quality assessment of the adult education institutions.

Estonia can join the EQM network or the Nordic Network for Adult Learning and on the state level adopt the quality assessment models that have proved their functioning in Europe. It is also possible to have a new model built on the quality management concepts that would promote integrated approach and would be suitable for any type of adult education institutions.

According to the draft Estonian Adult Education Act, the applications provided therein for the adult education institutions have to be implemented before the end of 2015. Hence, there is enough time to make necessary preparations and run pilot projects if needed. In the context of the new act the Ministry of Education and Research should emphasize the objective of the internal assessment and explain in more detail the importance of the assessment because before the mandatory implementation the education institution wants to have answers to the questions why, how, when and in what way.

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Adult education centres in non-formal education

Pertti Jääskä, Civic Institute of Porvoo

The current situation

Non-formal education plays an important role in the Finnish adult education system. There are 1.7 million people participating in different forms of adult training each year. More than a half of it accounts for non-formal education, organised primarily in the adult education centres.

Non-formal training contributes to the individuals' welfare as well as social capital. The non-formal education is subject to a specific act regulating its activities and financing. Most of the non-formal education institutions are privately owned, except for the adult education centres.

The non-formal education has its roots in the tradition of folk education. The non-formal education is the combination of the network of education institutions formed in the long-run and the training provided by them. The non-formal education is characterised by the fact that the objective and content of the training will be decided by the authorities financing the education centres and organisations within their competences. This education is not regulated by the curricula or examinations. Its essential feature has been voluntary participation. The non-formal education has been traditionally governed by the legislation on the state funding which does not regulate it comprehensively.

As of 1 January 2009, the non-formal education institutions were divided as follows:

Table 1.

Non-formal education institutions	
Adult education centres	206
Folk high schools	88
Summer universities	20
Study centres	11
Training centres of physical education 14: 11 national and 3 regional centres	
In total 339 education institutions	

The system of funding of these institutions is different. The adult education centres are primarily financed by the municipalities (187). Four adult education centres are financed by the association of municipalities, 26 by a private association or foundation. In relation to the ongoing reform of the system of municipalities and services, the funding system of the civic institutes is undergoing major changes at the moment.

The non-formal education centres are allowed to organise development and service activities (paid service activities) supporting the training or being closely related to it. According to the law, the objective of the non-formal education is "to support the multi-faceted development of personality, the ability to act in the community and to pursue the fulfilment of democracy, equality and diversity in the Finnish society, following the principle of life long learning."

The civic institutes are educational institutions built on the local and regional educational needs that provide opportunities for the voluntary learning and development of civic skills.

Open University

Since the early years of the open universities, the non-formal education institutions have played a special role because places without any university have tried to provide training relying on the concept of the open university. Co-operation has helped the open universities to ensure regional equality. The importance of the co-operation has been emphasized in the open university strategy as well as in the recommendations of the working party Life Long Learning in the Universities and in many other papers.

Training of immigrants

Educating of the immigrants is actually the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour but labour market training is not necessarily available in all of the municipalities. Therefore, in these regions non-formal education institutions and upper secondary schools for adults play a more significant role.

The need for training of the immigrants varies. Especially those who do not seek the job through labour market boards attend folk high schools, adult education centres and training centres as well as other non-formal education institutions. The number of the clients of the Ministry of Labour encompassed in the voluntary adult education system increases together with the increase of coordinated training.

Financing

The state finances the non-formal education through public subsidies. The financing of the education does not involve the legal contribution of the municipality. The education institutions may also apply for additional funding of the state. These are the public and special grants allocated for the development and foundation projects.

Table 2.

National subsidies and grants given to adult education centres in 2011			
	Subsidies	Grants	Total
Section 29.30.30			
Civic institutes	91 026 000	2 630 000	93 656 000

The calculation of the unit cost for adult education centres is now primarily based on single unit cost; the differentiated unit cost system was maintained in densely populated municipalities. Hence, in the civic institutes of the municipalities with the population density more than one hundred people, the unit cost is fifteen per cent higher.

Structure of the income

In addition to the public funding, the income of the civic institutes involves also the funds provided by the owners, tuition fees and paid services. The public funding is determined by the activities carried out under the act on the non-formal education.

A remarkable part of the financing of the adult education centres will be spent on operational expenditure. The tuition fees play also an important part. Moreover, the tuition can be organized so that the support described as vouchers for adult education is used for reducing the tuition fees of underrepresented groups. In particular these groups cannot participate in education due to tuition fees. It also contributes to the promotion of equality in education.

Future

Changes in the age groups and population in different regions are reflected in various ways in the demand for education. The educational needs of an aging population are most likely targeted at civic institutes in particular.

Under the initiative on the ageing policy launched by the Office of the Council of State, there was compiled an overview of the influences

of ageing and necessary measures (Publication of the Office of the Council of State).

According to this overview, in order to extend the professional career it is necessary to enhance the opportunities for the youth to participate in education and accelerate their entering in the labour market as well as to improve the skills of the adult population, so that the retirement age could be increased.

Moreover, the overviews prepared under the initiative suggest that it is necessary to aim at supporting the welfare and inclusion of the elderly in a diversified way. The activities of the non-formal education institutions play an important role in this regard.

In the work of the non-formal education centres the increasing demand for language learning and specifically for trainings fostering the integration reflects the increase of immigration and internationalisation. Although the age structure of the immigrants is younger than that of the population, the need for training of the adults with the immigration background is also enormous. The training fostering the integration of the adult working population is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour (in practice the labour market boards) but its implementation requires co-operation between the municipalities and educators.

The Ministry of Labour is also responsible for the schooling of illiterate immigrants.

The amount and proportion of the immigrants in the voluntary vocational adult education and higher education is on increase. In the future, the importance of the civic institutes as the primary education providers for the immigrants will definitely grow.

Globalization and changes in the working life and labour market are reflected in the challenges concerning the tasks, contents and the efforts aimed at strengthening the equality of the non-formal education. The improvement of knowledge on climate change, global economy and sustainable development are the important challenges of the folk education in the 21 century. In order to balance the rapid changes in working life, the non-formal education needs to make new efforts for supporting the welfare and capacities of the adult working population. Global economy and development of the information and communication technologies influence citizen's lives and give rise to new equality and polarisation risks. They emphasize the importance of the responsibilities of the non-formal education in promoting unity, equality and active citizenship.

The importance of the information and communication technologies constantly grows in working life as well as the entire physical and social environment. The application environments play now a stronger role and they involve, among others, personal communication, business processes, work of experts, localisation technology, integration of systems, innovations related to welfare, health, leisure activities,

culture and education, “intelligence” related to devices, so-called agent technologies (e.g. various reservation and information searching systems), automatic media transfer and sensor technologies (e.g. following the processes in the real time).

Considering these remarkable changes, the non-formal education actors and civic institutes must be especially client-driven and know the demand. The training needs of the adults are constantly diversifying which means that the adults form a relatively heterogeneous client base in terms of training. The adult education includes individuals who need special counselling, such as those not participating in the working life, or with insufficient primary education or learning difficulties as well as immigrants. It requires well-functioning information, supervision and counselling services that must help the citizens to reach the training that conforms to their conditions and needs and to support them in learning.

In this new environment the adults must have new skills of media literacy. These skills are needed in order to understand the operation of the digital devices and use them as well as digital media services. The media literacy is not only limited to technical skills. It also means the ability of the adults to create an essential relationship with different forms of electronic media and new content offered therein, the importance of which in providing information grows rapidly. The media literacy involves critical ability to evaluate the reliability of the information offered in new forms. The primary task of the non-formal education institutions is to provide the skills required by the information society, particularly to those population groups who have not received the essential training in primary education.

Recent discussions have also highlighted the concept of social media. It refers to web-based interactive group work systems. The social media is characterised by the fact that its users can create and shape content, comment on it, discuss, share different materials and create networks. In addition to the means, it also involves socialisation aspect. Users are not interacting with the machine but people using the same services. There are trends towards open learning environments. This poses a new challenge for the non-formal education institutions. They must develop open learning environments which involves, among other things, using of the opportunities offered by network learning methods. At the same time, they must continue offering to the learners the socialising, meeting and interaction services in traditional form.

Service capacity

The adult education centres stand out more clearly and become more distinct. Smaller institutions located in sparsely populated areas are

trying to cope with the consequences of the weakening management of municipalities. As the number of permanent staff has decreased, they are not able to develop the adult education centres in a required way. They act primarily as a financing authority of the non-formal education. Furthermore, they are not able to meet the demands of those not involved in education. Major civic institutes in the central areas, on the contrary, are able to increase their resources and develop their activities. They can also direct the resources for engaging people who are not participating in education.

Highly educated successful women form the largest group in the activities of the civic institutes. A report says that considering the current situation and resources, the courses provided by these institutions meet the training needs emerging at given times, without having hereby in mind the the non-formal education's primary responsibilities. Moreover, these institutions should focus on new target groups (children, young people, elderly), considering the educational task of their community. The gap between the preconditions of the activities of the civic institutes and their service capacities is increasing.

The number of these centres decreases rapidly as a result of merger.

When considering equality between these institutions it is not positive if a wealthy municipality can increase the public funding and in this way increase the number of lessons centres can provide. The amount of funds provided by the local authorities to the civic institutes strongly varies, depending on their financial situation.

Image and vision of non-formal education in the era of social media

Aleksander Jakobson, Tartu Intellectuals' Society

One of the initial tasks of the project Lemon was to promote the image of adult education in the society and to contribute to the modernising of visions and strategies of non-formal education centres.

Before the start of the project in 2008, most of the project participants did not know what the social media is. To their knowledge they had not come across to it, although many of them had written and read e-mails and participated in the Internet forums and e-mail lists and used for learning or teaching such applications as WebCT, Moodle, NING which may be considered as social media platforms.

Today, there are more than one hundred social media applications used for learning and teaching alone. Knowing all of them is time-consuming for the individuals and the organisations alike. Hence, the initial task of the project, i.e. focusing among other things on the visions and strategies of the non-formal education centres was absolutely appropriate.

About strategic planning

Strategic planning includes the establishment of the goals and ways achieving them, the assessment of the activities carried out and their current state, drawing of the conclusions based on the assessments, the establishment of new goals and planning the essential actions and resources for achieving them.

Compared to the private and public sector, strategic planning in the third sector is relatively new phenomenon. Formal beginning of the strategic planning is considered the 1960s or 1970s. In the management of a public enterprise the strategic planning was introduced in 1980s.

In Estonia the third sector enterprises started to state their visions and missions and carry out the SWOT analyses and prepare development plans soon after Estonia regained its independence, in 1990s. However, the development plans were often lacking effective action, also specific and measurable objectives, measures and resources for implementing them, etc. It is one of the main problems of strategic planning in the NGOs even now.

According to many authors, the third sector would benefit greatly from the strategic planning because

- it will develop strategic thinking and contribute to the activities and learning within the organisation as well as between target groups;
- the decision-making process will improve;
- the organisation will become more efficient;
- the society in general will become more efficient;
- the parties in the process will benefit from it.

There are many different models developed and introduced for strategic planning but there is no universal model that can be applied in all organisations. An appropriate model will develop in the process of strategic planning.

The essential part of the planning is the current-state analysis which also relies on different models. One of the analysis methods is the problem tree method, which is mostly about stating the problems faced by the enterprise or organisation, the analysis of the causes and effects and the establishment of the priorities or main issue(s).

Concerns in the non-formal education system

Following a written survey carried out by the Estonian Non-formal Adult Education Association in 2007 and various seminars the heads of the education centres established the areas of concern and 9 most important of them were:

- 1) lack of constant financing;
- 2) inadequate financing of development activities;
- 3) inadequate technical means for learning;
- 4) lack of studies on the need for training;
- 5) lack of financing of the support staff;
- 6) insufficient co-operation between the education centres;
- 7) lack of good employees, including teachers;
- 8) insufficient availability of legal aid;
- 9) insufficient co-operation with local government authorities and other local partners.

Although *The 2007 Annual Report of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on the NGOs of Central and Eastern Europe and Former Soviet States* considers the Estonian NGOs to be one of the strongest in the region² the weakness of the Estonian third sector is foremost the financial sustainability of the organisations³.

In its report to the Riigikogu, the National Audit Office also emphasized the shortcomings of the financing of adult education⁴.

In the initial phase of the project Lemon we had the idea of

establishing common issues of Estonian and Finnish partner organisations and subsequently through analysing them formulating the future visions and complementing together the strategic planning of education centres. However, soon it became evident that the main issue in Estonia, i.e. the lack of the constant financing of the education centres from the budgetary means of the state or local governments, is not relevant in Finland. Essentially, there are common issues but the management of the education centres and planning of their activities should rely on typical key issues. These vary on the state level as well as in particular education centres.

J. David Hunger and Thomas L. Wheelen, the US researchers, have defined the management strategy as set of general rules for solving the most common problems⁵.

The problem tree method was demonstrated to the partners on the project web page Moodle and in several project meetings, most recently in the workshop in Tartu on 11 October 2010. The topic was not discussed in further details, though. Firstly, partly, because it is believed that the strategic planning of adult education should be carried out foremost by the state. Secondly, because the partners did not feel any need for the current state analysis and strategic planning on the level of the education centres, and also, possibly, because necessary prerequisites and interest were lacking.

However, I feel that I must formulate some of the conclusions, and present and analyse them by using the roots of the problem tree (Annex 1) discussed within the project.

Roots of the problem tree

The scheme discusses the factors influencing the key issue of the non-formal education centres, i.e. the lack of constant financing.

The finances of the training centres is influenced foremost by the state and local government bodies, projects, donations, sponsors, schooling and education.

- In Estonia there have been high expectations towards the financial support from the state and local government bodies, following the example of Scandinavian countries which support the adult education much more.

The problem of inadequate funding of the adult education from the state budget cannot be solved on the level where it has occurred, i.e. by the adult education institutions. The solution must be found on the state level. Therefore, it will be not analysed here in further detail. Moreover, the draft adult education act is currently in the Riigikogu

under the legislative proceeding addressing also the financing of the adult education. One of the working documents of the draft stated⁶:
“Continuing education that contributes to the personal development of an individual and to the development of their creativity, talents, initiative and sense of social responsibility and to complementing essential knowledge, skills and competences shall be paid by the natural or legal person concerned. For supporting such education, relevant means might be allocated from the state, rural municipality or city budget, whereby budgetary means are only provided to support through the Ministry of Education and Research the remuneration of the teachers and managers (heads) of the adult education institutions holding education licence.”

- Various **projects** have been an essential source of funding for the education centres.

Possible cause-effect sequence influencing the number of projects:

PROJECTS ◀ SELF-FINANCING ◀ TERMS OF LOAN
 - „ - ◀ CAPACITY OF WRITING PROJECTS ◀ LACK OF FUNDS

Comment

The lack of funds is a major obstacle for developing new projects, while leading to a vicious circle – projects are needed to improve the financial situation but there are no funds for self-financing or increasing the capacity of writing projects.

However, due to limited scope this subject is not discussed in further detail.

- **The importance of donations and sponsors** in Estonia has been traditionally insignificant and therefore this part has not been analysed or discussed within the project. While planning resources in the strategic planning phase, each organisation or institution should assess and engage all possible resources, including donations, sponsors and voluntary activities.

- **Training** is the main area of activity and source of funds of the non-formal education centres.

The author will analyse this in depth.

Possible cause-effect sequence influencing the number of courses:

1. COURSES ◀ NUMBER OF LEARNERS ◀ MEETING DEMAND and QUALITY
 ◀ PRICE
 2. „ - „ ◀ MARKETING & PR ◀ RESOURCES (FUNDS AND SKILLS)
 ◀ MARKETING STRATEGY AND TRAINING
 3. „ - „ ◀ COMPETITION ◀ ANALYSIS OF COMEPTITORS
 4. „ - „ ◀ ANALYSIS OF NEED FOR TRAINING
 5. „ - „ ◀ CO-OPERATION ◀ CO-OPERATION STRATEGY

Comments

1. Essentially, the number of courses and their total gain depend on the number of the learners which in turn depends on whether the study programmes meet the demand and on the quality of the training. The number of learners depends on the price of the training;
2. The number of courses and success of the offer depend also on how efficiently the education centres can offer the courses and how good are their public relations, which in turn depend on their marketing skills and financial means for studying marketing. The good marketing and PR relies on the marketing strategy;
3. The success of the training activities depends on the competition and on how well a centre knows its competitors, i.e. the analysis of the competitors;
4. The number of the learners depends on the analysis of the need for a training;
5. The success of the training activities depends on the co-operation with partners and local government bodies and on planning of it, i.e. strategy;
6. It is recommended to complement and amend the present as well as the previous list of causes and effects according to the needs of the education centre.

Summary

Considering the analysis of the problem tree and literature of the given field the keyword cloud below is a recommendable tool for adult educators. The activities, means and the field of social media that the author believes an education centre should prioritise at the moment are given in bigger fonts.

Depending on the time and means available, the planning skills and experiences, preferences and many other factors each education centre can decide what their priority actions are. Some of the keywords represent to one centre a more significant concept but to another a less significant.



Picture 7. Keyword cloud

There is no one-size-fits-all activity model or strategy. No-one can tell us today what to do and how to do it. Experts can only refer to the most important developments and trends.

Today, we can hear increasingly often that there is no point in making long-term development plans because the society is changing so rapidly. Learning and action must take place at the same time and at once.

Quite many things can be undertaken together but some of the analyses should be carried out separately. On the issue of financing of the education centres the co-operation between the Estonian and Finnish counterparts was not reasonable because the financing of the adult education is organised too differently in our countries. In the keyword cloud above, there are several other topics and activities essential for the adult education under which we can have and have had successful cross-border co-operation.

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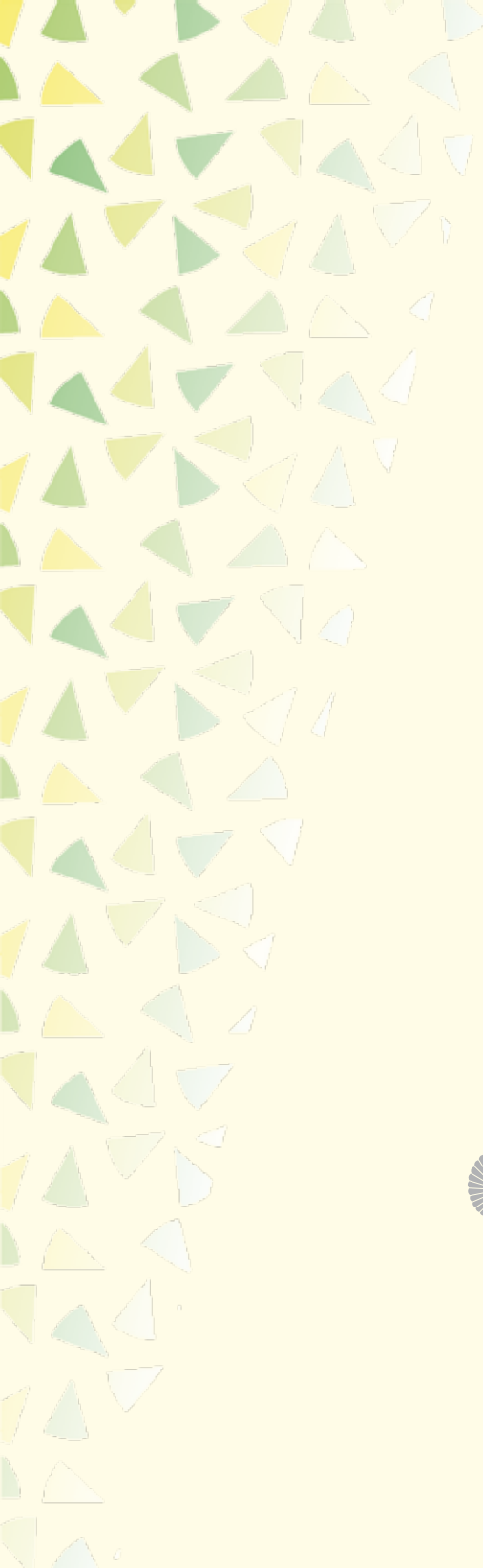
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