

Scenarios of Intergenerational Learning

The UniBuc Local Case Study (PDF) The University of Bucharest case study consists in an activity unfolded in a small town located in south east of the country. We choose this location because of its particularities: economical and social situation. On the other side we had the ODL Credis Department support, with a large experience in adults and children education. As a characteristic of the community a tendency of exclusion for old people was observed. From the other side, parents are not involved in children's education leaving this important aspect of a teen-ager life exclusively for the schools. Also must be mentioned low level of information exchange in families.

The Puente local team planned this activity as a way to put together children and adults in order to make them to know better them selves and to know others. All of this in order to have more concerned people actively involved in their community's life.

We developed different activities in order to offer a model of intergenerational and informal learning for all people involved. Being a new activity we had a tight collaboration with the beneficiaries and teachers. In the first phase we consult them in order to find their meanings of intergenerational learning.

THE FIELD WORK

We worked with children and adults, beneficiaries of the classes and with teachers from primary school. Our activities were organized in indoor and outdoor activities, having as base traditional courses. But there were many differences from the traditional schools: there was no planning lesson, no grades, no time for formal evaluation, flexible learning. All the participants were encouraged to express them self, to help each other and to collaborate, giving them a sense of a community, social education young people oriented (learning to understand and respect others viewpoints).

We choose to create a non formal environment in which we could analyze people's reaction to this type of activity. The activities included in the case study were:

- English,
- Acting,
- Sciences
- Arts
- and Computer Science

Every lesson was developed and mediated by a teacher or volunteer. In fact they were facilitators, having the main role not only to transmit knowledge but, most of the time, to mediate the discussions. All the time, the participants were the central point in learning process.

In the first phase we experimented learning with partners having approximately same age, and in the second phase, children meet their parents and grandparents. The second phase of the activity consists in meeting between children with their parents and grandparents. Even with this measure, in the groups we had major differences between participants (intergenerational gap between teen – ages and adults).

The level of communication between children and adults was considerable improved if we will take into account the existed situation from the beginning of the activities.

Lessons were adapted according with the participant's age, having as common element will to learn and experiment. The teachers worked with specific instruments, methods and techniques. The experiences were made, most of them with materials used in the everyday's life, lots of them recovered and reused. For example we used for science lessons: science bag (in house made), work sheets, recycling materials (a little gas cylinder; wires, small bottles); English course: multimedia equipments, cutters, colored pencils, video movies; Arts: clay, paint, specific tools for modeling the clay; Act: scenery objects, fancy dress, different materials; Computer experiments: computers, free software (Crocodile Clips, Interactive Physics).

KEY OUTCOMES

We had the proof that the participants have different behaviors in different environment. For most of them it was the first occasion to experiment the advantages of flexible learning, to establish strong connection with their learning partners, mutual respect and to experience new challenges. The older people felt that they are respected and they concluded that the education can be a tool for social integration.

For the teachers (facilitators) these activities were also lessons that must be learn: they experiment a model of intergenerational and informal learning; they can take this into consideration in order to adapt the activities from traditional classes. They said that this experience can be considered a connection between formal and informal learning. The main scope of the entire activity wasn't to transmit formal knowledge but to learn people to communicate, to express their feelings and threads, to be aware of their role in a community and the fact that there is an great relation between education and society's progress and increase the level of communication in family environment. Adults understand that they have to try to know their children in order to create a bridge in communication.

Intergenerational activities can actively demonstrate that the older and younger generations have a great deal to offer each other in terms of knowledge and experience. All the participants were agreeing that education process cannot be restricted to schools; cannot be restricted to a specific period, overlapping studying period in schools.