

Project drafted during the Qualification Training in Bad Urach

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DanceLit

Rationale

In PIAAC, “Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society”. (OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies).

In the 21st century Europe reading is essential. Those who don't read adequately fall behind or fall out of school. They are called, unfairly, “dumb, stupid or lazy.” All too often they end up in prison or in unemployment because they don't “fit” with the school. Poor reading and/or low literacy make individuals and groups more vulnerable to inequality, increase the risk of exclusion and undermine social mobility.

At the same time there is a general consensus that literacy is a fundamental skill; a cornerstone for social mobility by virtue of its role as a foundation for educational attainment and access to employment. Literacy has an impact over the life course, such as future employability. Early intervention is the most effective way to improve outcomes and minimize impact, both socially and economically.

In Slovenia 42 % of adults have achievements on the first level of reading literacy, 35% on the second level of reading literacy which is not sufficient for modern society requirements. Thus, in Slovenia, 77% of general population does not have achievements on the level that is necessary for living in contemporary society. (Knaflič in drugi: Temeljno znanje in spretnosti mladih, bresposelnih in staršev šolskih otrok. Raziskovalno poročilo. ACS 2001)

Aims and objectives

The project DanceLit will be about alleviating functional illiteracy and will be targeted to different vulnerable groups. Functionally illiterate people are themselves a marginalised group, though it is difficult to identify functional illiterate people since they are dispersed. But they are more likely to be found within other disadvantaged groups: handicapped people, older people, roma people, dyslexics etc. The DanceLit project will be taking into account specific nature of these groups

Target groups and their issues

Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)

The share of individuals with specific learning difficulties in general public is about 20% in prisons more than 48% argues Katherine Currier Moody (2000) Prevalence of Dyslexia in Texas Prison Inmates. Specific learning difficulties have a decisive impact on gaining literacy, reading skills being just one dimension of literacy skills.

Brain injuries on specific locations of the brain can lead to poor reading -these injuries are mostly named acquired dyslexia- as well as certain neurologic differences and such individuals with reading difficulties have to be taught with methods adapted to their specific characteristics. Namely, despite relatively high levels of reading comprehension, individuals with specific learning difficulties (dyslexics) show inaccurate and particularly slow word-recognition skills. Dyslexics do not use age-appropriate, and in some cases reading-level-appropriate word recognition processes. They rely heavily on the use of spelling-sound information, syllabic information, and context for word recognition. Word-recognition difficulties reflect poor knowledge of spelling-sound correspondences. Adult dyslexics' patterns of performance are most similar to those of beginning skilled readers and to dyslexic children. The term arrest rather than deviance or delay best characterizes the word-recognition skills of adult dyslexics". (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA)

Individuals with specific learning difficulties learn in their own way. They also do things in their own way. Their literacy level in general and reading skills may be poor. But on the contrary, they are often good at finding original solutions to problems. Each individual with specific learning difficulties has a particular combination of symptoms therefore mentors' understanding reading and other difficulties as well as individuals advantages are needed.

Slovenian Third Age University and its staff as well as the staff of other organisations in other EU countries will specifically contribute to the intellectual outputs (smart phone application, written manual + mentors 'manual) planned in the Dancelit project its expertise in the field of dyslexia and poor reading in young adults with specific learning difficulties, its expertise in literacy as well as its expertise concerning mentoring and mentoring relationship (Characteristics of Older Adult Education, UTŽO Ljubljana, 2012, Andragoška spoznanja, 2012, letnik 18, št. 2.)

It will also run a pilot course (other organisations as well) for its older students, retired experts, interested in taking on the role of mentors to young adults with specific learning difficulties. Thus Slovenian Third Age University will take on and further its educational activities in the field of volunteering of older adults.

Moreover, knowledge about reading in individuals with specific learning difficulties will contribute to understanding and bettering literacy skills in all individuals.