



PRO-SKILLS

basic skills for lifelong learning

Requirements
for educational
policies concerning
the empowerment
of socially
disadvantaged persons



FOREWORD

The number of people from a difficult social background who are without any training or who are only able with difficulty to find a job in their first profession is constantly increasing. Adult education is intended to provide these individuals with an opportunity to complete courses of further education and thus improve their qualifications.

Experience and studies from different parts of Europe show that adult education and lifelong learning offerings are predominantly taken up by individuals who already have a certain amount of training. The socially disadvantaged in particular are seldom represented among the trainees. Every person and every institution engaged in adult education and lifelong learning is responsible for reaching learners who are in particular need of them and adjusting their offerings to meet their needs. Politicians, stakeholders and other individuals in positions of responsibility for education should take this situation into account and contribute to overcoming unequal access to lifelong learning.

THE PROJECT

By promoting personal and social skills as well as self-management skills - so-called basic skills - the European Pro-Skills project is helping to promote lifelong learning for the socially disadvantaged.

The project is supported by the European Commission's Grundtvig programme. It combines institutions from eight European countries and partners contributing expertise from the most diverse fields: adult education, addiction prevention, health promotion and sports science.

We invite you to adopt the Pro-Skills project's ideas so as to support equal access to education offerings for all citizens. **This brochure articulates education policy requirements arising from the Pro-Skills project and the June 2008 European conference in Luxembourg.** It also discusses the necessity of lifelong learning as well as the need for and importance of basic skills.

You will find additional information, practical instructions and concrete training modules at www.pro-skills.eu.

EDUCATION POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Based on the above-mentioned expertise and experience from the European project, the Pro-Skills partners and participants in the June 2008 European conference in Luxembourg have defined the following requirements for education policy and lifelong learning:

- ▶ **Every person is entitled to equal access to education offerings. Social disadvantage** and its consequences must not diminish lifelong learning opportunities.
- ▶ **The provider is responsible for all interested parties having equal access to his education offerings.** Institutions and those in positions of authority who are active in the educational arena or who work with potential target groups should take account of, and minimise, potential barriers for these target groups.
- ▶ **Every learner should be empowered for self-regulating learning.** Adult learners in particular should be empowered to plan and implement their own individual learning process independently and on their own authority.
- ▶ **The imparting of personal and social skills as well as self-management skills (so-called basic skills) should be included in all forms of educational offerings.** Basic skills are essential for learning of any description, for lifelong learning, active citizenship and mental health. They should therefore be an integral part of childhood and adolescent education and developmental processes in all their forms. Moreover, opportunities need to be created for adults to be coached in missing social skills in a protected environment. Deficiencies have to be detected at an early stage and addressed with appropriate training offerings.

- ▶ **There is a need for customised education offerings for the socially disadvantaged, ensuring equal access to lifelong learning.** Unfortunately, it is rare for adult education offerings to reach those learners who most need them: socially disadvantaged people. New pedagogical approaches, such as productive, cooperative and experience-based learning as well as a customised training context take account of the target group's needs and prerequisites and can contribute significantly to making good this deficiency.
- ▶ **Promoting basic skills is not just a matter for educational institutions but for all institutions working with the socially disadvantaged.** Institutions involved in the social work, health and leisure fields should use their contacts with the target group to promote basic skills and offer appropriate training courses. The importance of NGOs with regard to informal education should be recognised and reinforced.
- ▶ **People who work with the socially disadvantaged or in the educational arena should receive training or further educational opportunities for promoting basic skills.** To that end, basic skills and pedagogical approaches conducive to imparting these skills should be integral to the training of social workers, youth and childcare workers, teachers and other professional groups engaged in the education and social work fields. The existing framework for training NGO volunteers should be optimised and promoted.
- ▶ **The interconnectedness of all participating organisations is assuming greater importance.** Specialists and institutions should develop capabilities and networks at local and regional level in order to disseminate the notion of lifelong learning and basic skills.

Background information on lifelong learning and on basic skills

LIFELONG LEARNING

In the conclusions of a special session in March 2000 the European Council set itself a very ambitious goal for the next decade: The European Community is to become “[...] *the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economic area in the world*”, an economic area [...] “*capable of achieving sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.*” (European Council 2000). Lifelong learning is seen as one of the fundamental strategies for achieving this goal, “[...] *not just in terms of competitiveness and employability but also in terms of social integration, active citizenship and personal development.*”

Why are lifelong learning and its pedagogical approaches so relevant?

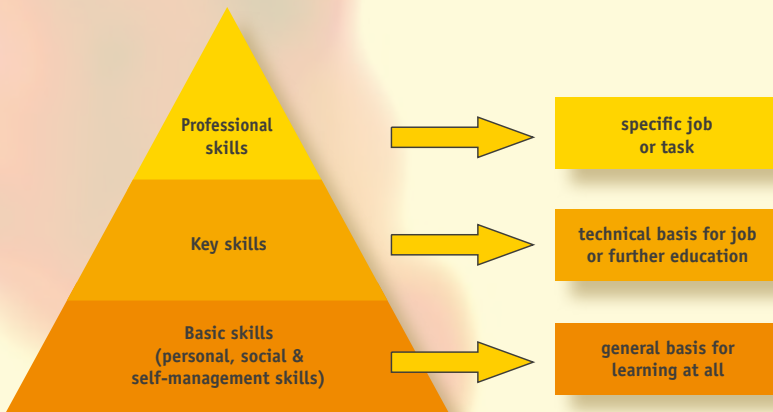
- ▶ **The explosion in knowledge and new information technologies:** Technical, scientific and social developments in recent decades have resulted in a breakneck expansion and rapid obsolescence of knowledge. Thanks in particular to Internet and multimedia presentations, the learner has access to an immense wealth of information and knowledge. In order to be able to exploit the advantages of these new resources to best effect, the challenge for the learner is to organise and manage his learning process by himself.
- ▶ **Active citizenship:** Lifelong learning enables citizens to play an active part in social and economic life. In addition to the purely economic aspect of a qualified workforce, lifelong learning contributes first and foremost to the social integration, and thereby to the social cohesion, of the individual and to promoting his psychological health and wellbeing.
- ▶ **Mental health:** Learning, active engagement with one’s environment and the readiness to develop one’s own self are essential indicators, among others, of mental health which is defined as “*a state of well-being in which the individual can exploit his capabilities to the full, cope with the normal stresses and strains of life, work productively and fruitfully and be able to contribute something to his community*” (WHO 2001). Promoting the willingness to learn and promoting health are thus interlinked.

BASIC SKILLS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Lifelong learning is a very complex process: the learner must set himself relevant and realistic goals, seek out and select learning opportunities and offerings, may possibly have to contact institutions, teachers or trainers, must cope successfully with the learning process, maintain his motivation, overcome difficulties and obstacles etc.

In the absence of basic skills and resources to match, organising and putting all these processes into effect is very difficult, or even impossible. They constitute the actual basis of any kind of learning process and personal development.

Large sums of money are spent on training the socially disadvantaged but without promoting basic skills and without taking account of the social context, there is little to show for it.

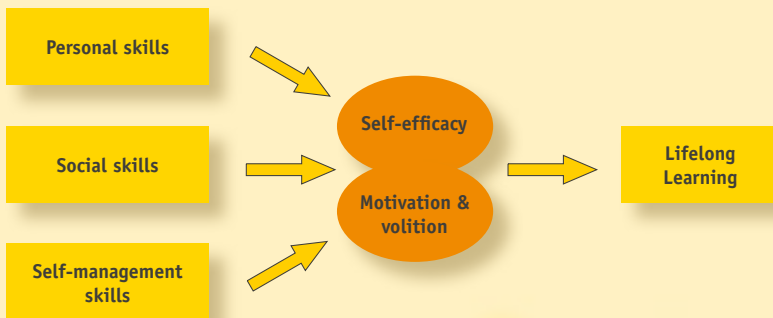


We differentiate between three categories of basic skills:

- personal skills such as emotion regulation, cognition and identity regulation
- social skills such as cooperation and communication
- self-management skills such as goal setting, evaluating resources and obstacles, effective planning etc

Basic skills also influence the motivation to learn and the **expectation of self-efficacy**. Motivation is a complex interaction of emotional and cognitive processes. Man assesses his skills and resources in relation to anticipated requirements and weighs up the prospects for success of alternative courses of action (self-efficacy).

The mere intention to achieve a goal is usually not enough to take action for real. Once the decision in favour of a course of action has been taken, skills are required to translate the intention into concrete action and to maintain motivation throughout the entire action process. To this end, the actor needs to mobilise resources, overcome unforeseen difficulties and defend the intention against alternative courses of action.



A further aspect of motivation concerns an individual's values and identity. The motivation to learn and to expose oneself to novel situations will be higher if the learning objectives and the way in which one learns are compatible with one's own identity. It is a particular challenge for the trainer to **integrate the value of lifelong learning into the value system of the target group in question**.

There have been four Pro-Skills pilot training courses to promote basic skills among the socially disadvantaged. The training concept has already proved its efficiency and shown itself to be worthwhile.

Appropriate education policy strategies and incorporating basic skills into curricula are critical to the more widespread dissemination and long-term promotion of basic skills.

PUBLISHER

Centre de Prévention des Toxicomanies
(CePT)
8-10, rue de la Fonderie
L-1531 Luxembourg

Zentrum für empirische pädagogische Forschung (zefp)
(Centre for Educational Research)
Bürgerstr. 23
D-76829 Landau

© 2008 CePT, Luxembourg

AUTHORS

Cristina Bergo, Claudia Jung, Uwe Ch. Fischer, Ann-Mari Bergström, István Bogdándi, Eva Hegyiné Gombkötő, Matej Košir, Thérèse Michaelis, Bernadette Morand-Aymon, Dorothee Nägele, Angela Passa, Carlos Paulos, Jan Ries

PARTENAIRES PRO-SKILLS



**Centre de prévention des
toxicomanies (CePT)**
Luxembourg (Luxembourg)



Zentrum für empirische pädagogische Forschung (zefp)
(Centre for Educational Research)
Landau (Germany)



**Azienda Sanitaria
Locale (ASL)**
Milan (Italy)



**Fédération suisse pour
la formation continue (FSEA)**
Lausanne (Switzerland)



**Protasi-Movement
for another lifestyle**
Patras (Greece)



**Institute for Research and
Development "Utrip"**
Grosuplje (Slovenia)



**Hochschule Fulda, University
of Applied Sciences**
Fulda (Germany)



Wilde Bühne
Stuttgart (Germany)



Irti Huumeista Ry
Helsinki (Finland)



**Megyei Egészség Kulturát
Koordináló Alapítvány (MEKKA)**
Nyíregyháza (Hungary)



This project is supported by the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor anyone acting on its behalf is liable for the further use of information originating from this brochure.