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1. eStrategies and territories
2. Media Literacy skills for adults
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4. Media Literacy skills for adult learners

Summary:

By offering Media Literacy courses for adult learners PAKK has taken part to reduce digital diving between all aged of learners. Feedback from learners has been very positive and they have got skill to survive in the information society. This model was developed in MediaL-project which was partly funded by ESF. At the moment PAKK is disseminating and mainstreaming developed model around Finland and it seems to included part of especially the labour market training.

Background:

Many of the adult students have never – or at least not so much – worked with computers before because there maybe was no need for it in their professions and schools didn't teach computer science at the time they were there. Others may worked already with computers in their professional life, but owing to the tense job situation they have partly been a long time out of work already and perhaps missed therefore the recent developments. To just drop them into the E-learning course without a preparation stage would mean fatal difficulties for them.

Objective:

Pori Adult Education Centre (PAKK) is concentrated on improving the net-learning skills of the students (media literacy skills). At the beginning of the online studies the Media Literacy package (4 credits) procures to the students the computer skills needed to enable them to study fluently in the online environment. Furthermore in this first stage they get to know "learning" in general and specifically the particular features of E-learning. Constitutive for net-learning are also communication skills, so reading and writing are practiced and the students are introduced especially to critical reading and the writing process. The preparation phase is settled at the beginning of the courses and takes four credit units, which means ten percent of the total course time.

Furthermore most of the participants worked already many years so that their last time as students was long time ago and they are not used to this kind of learning anymore. In addition E-learning is quite a new educational form that requires in part different skills than the contact education. Reading and writing play an overtopping role when the computer is the only communication media. To refresh and extend the students' learning skills particularly concerning E-learning is therefore essential for a successful attendance.

One aspect that accompanies all subjects of the preparation stage is to strengthen the students' self-confidence. To start an E-learning course is for the already mentioned reasons a difficult step for many participants and they are often afraid of not being able to handle the new challenges. Therefore a main target of these first four weeks is to make the students trust themselves to master the course. They shall feel comfortable in the E-

learning matter and be encouraged to take their own view and not be too shy to say what they think.

Another general aspect of this first stage is, that it gives a huge social benefit to the students. While learning only online it is easy to feel “lost in cyberspace” alone in front of the pc. During the preparation stage they have the chance to get to know the group, make friends there, exchange addresses and phone numbers. By this means it is easier to reach group coherence and enable trustful interaction with each other also online.

The preparation starts with the basics of computer handling. The students shall get used to working with computers and lose the anxiety that often occurs in connection with using computers for the first time. They get an insight into the structure of a computer and the connected components, learn how to use essential programs like for example Word for Windows and Excel, how to connect to the Internet and find their way there and how to use E-mail programs, forums, chats etc. Furthermore they deal with design matters. The students learn how to create a website or a presentation using Word for Windows and PowerPoint and to design graphics with Adobe Photoshop.

Though all topics can be handled only shortly during these four weeks, the students shall get a basic knowledge that makes it easier for them to go into detail. When the job-related phase starts they shall be able to manage all the necessary computer actions sovereignly.

After these basics are understood, the attention is focused on the topic of “learning”. The curriculum contains for example an overview over different learning styles and motivation strategies. Especially for E - learners it is often difficult to find suitable ways to absorb information and to motivate themselves because learning online means to learn most of the time alone at home “staring” at the computer. The students have to deal with their own learning habits analytically and get suggestions how to improve them to such an extent, that they fit best to their personality. Furthermore they get introduced to different kinds of teaching and tutoring and are encouraged to make own suggestions for the teaching style.

Another main topic during these weeks are reading and writing skills. On first sight this matter appears trivial as adults usually don't need such a training. However in this context not the technical skills are inspected, but the specific use of words and pictures to gain and produce information.

One aspect is for example media literacy. The ability to use, understand, create, analyze and criticize all kinds of media is of the first magnitude in today's information society. Especially studying online requires a critical dealing with media. The Internet offers indefinite possibilities to change the appearance of reality. A trained and exact view on material found there, for example concerning the reliability of sources, is indispensable. Only a person who knows how media influences opinions can for example read texts and watch pictures and graphics in an adequate way and create own media the way that the striven targets are achieved. Particularly in an E-learning course, where a student can show his/her knowledge and skills exclusively in written works, the skill to create media in a cogent way is decisive.

Last but not least the students are familiarized with the rules they have to take into account in the Internet. They learn the basics of the admittedly difficult but absolutely essential copyright laws and of the “netiquette” – the rules of good behavior explicitly in the Internet.

All subjects are presented in such a way, that the students do not just get the ready knowledge, but have to work on exercises, wherein they develop the important facts themselves and find information in the Internet. Like this they constantly practice the use of computers and Internet and acquire the necessary routine. Besides this it is always easier to remember what you find out yourself than what is just

At the end of these four weeks the students should be ready to start the job-related E-lessons and solve the learning assignments tasks without any problems resulting from the E-learning form of the course.

Conclusion:

eTeaching was almost an unknown factor within adult education employment training three years ago. At that time Pori Adult Education Centre started a project of developing eTeaching within adult education employment training. The name of the project was MediaL. MediaL was partly financed by Satakunta Employment and Economic Development Centre and ESF. Three pilot training courses were accomplished during the project. The purpose of these training courses was to search for practices for eTeaching modules of employment training. The pilot training courses consisted of Further Qualification in Institutional Cleaning, AB Computer Driving Licence and Vocational Qualification of Plater-welder. The courses were divided into three overlapping sections. One third of each course consisted of contact hours, one third of e-learning and the last one of practical training.

The eLearning centre (ESF-project) disseminate the results of MediaL-project and one part is to mainstream the ideology of Media Literary study model for adult educators. The project coordinates with Employment and Economic Development Centres, employment offices and adult education centres of the county of Western Finland. eLearning Centre supports other participants in publishing, planning, realization and counselling of their eLearning courses. We offer theme courses and data packets according to wishes and needs.