

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME GRUNDTVIG

Workshop RETHINKING CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 6-10 June 2011, Lithuania

ABOUT WORKSHOP ORGANIZER

Siulaikiniu didaktiku centras (Modern Didactics Centre, further – MDC) is working in the field of adult education for 10 years. One of the main activities is organizing training courses, workshops, seminars for adults. MDC has experience in organizing national and international courses in country and abroad. Majority of them have been part of the international programmes and projects, some – separate, independent activities. MDC is certified adult training centre by Ministry of Education and Science. It means that its certificates are recognized officially by the government.

MDC also consults adults on teaching and learning strategies, planning and evaluation processes, project writing and management. MDC also provides expertise on various methodical books development, implementation of innovative programmes and projects, strategic planning. It has around 30 experienced trainers and experts that work on subcontracting basis.

Particular focus is on programmes that require long term efforts, but have long term impact as well. Those programmes focus on continuous learning activities, life and practice based instructions and are directed toward learners motivation raising for self directed learning process, critical analysis and self-reflection. Majority of the programmes have been developed as a result of certain projects. Main focus of the centre is **"didactics"**. It means learning / teaching/ strategies & methods.

MDC is proud of its "brand quality" programme – Development of Critical Thinking. It is rich, comprehensive, internationally developed and tested programme, which serves as philosophical and theoretical background for other programmes and projects. Current workshop will be based on critical thinking methodology as well. Main topics of MDC programmes are: citizenship, transparency and accountability, advocacy, anticorruption education, democratic values, planning & assessment of learning/teaching/process, critical reflection, educational policies and strategies, professional development of educators, other innovations in education.

MDC has experience working with different group of learners – school pupils, universities students, school and universities teachers, school consultants and advisers, social educators, school psychologists, counselors, parents, senior learners, learners from disadvantaged geographical areas, etc. Especially successful have been those courses where learners from different cultural and educational environments and with different learning/teaching/experiences, come together. Then courses are enriched by variety of knowledge and experience, sharing, learning from each other.

MDC from the very beginning works with international partners in EU, USA, Canada funded projects and programmes. It has wide partnership network in country and abroad. MDC is member of such networks as: ATEE (Association of Teacher Education in Europe), LITDEA (Lithuanian Development Education Association); RWCT IC (Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking International Consortium); LSSA (Lithuanian Adult Educators Association).

More about the MDC <http://www.sdcentras.lt/en/index.htm>

SUBJECT AREA

- Active citizenship, democracy, human rights
- Intercultural education
- Strategies for stimulating demand for learning

TARGET GROUP

Any adult learners, interested in personal and professional development, continuous self-improvement, eager to learn new learning strategies, innovative methods and searching for new ideas.

AIMS

The programme is intended to provide content materials and instructions that will enable participants to think critically about contemporary issues. It means that participants will learn to think thoughtfully, carefully, coherently, consistently about complex problems comprised of multiple elements and varied solutions. The programme will revolve around the topic of Contemporary Issues. From this central theme a number of sub-themes will be presented for group deliberation. The course is not intended to be an in-depth study in logic, data analysis, argumentation or philosophy. Rather is a practical introductory course in critical thought designed to improve participants understanding of how to think, how to organize thoughts and present sound arguments, to form rational opinions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

• **Improvement of the quality and accessibility of mobility**

Programme invites and is open for all adult learners, with no cultural, educational, national, sexual, age or other limits. Quality is going to be ensured by design, content and delivery of the programme that will lead to further promotion of LLL process and mobility among adults.

• **Improvement the quality and to increase the volume of cooperation between organisations**

Participants that represent certain institutions will have excellent opportunity to establish contacts with local and other organizations, plan further joint activities, create networks on interested topics and issues.

• **Facilitation of the development of innovative practices**

It is not about concrete activities, but about the methodology of the programme. It is built on sharing individual practises and experiences of participants, building "common knowledge, wisdom", transferring it to own organizations and countries, adapting, acquiring new skills.

• **Improvement of pedagogical approaches and the management**

Critical thinking methodology in itself carries improvement of personal and collective pedagogical/ didactical/ instructional approaches towards learning process, its organization and management.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

1. To get acquainted with theoretical and philosophical background of critical thinking;
2. To practice critical thinking framework as key scheme of the methodology;
3. To learn more about contemporary issues by sharing and learning from each other;
4. To reflect critically gained knowledge and understanding;
5. To model different learning activities applying critical thinking methods and strategies.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

Participants will learn and be able:

- to practice critical thinking framework as key scheme of the methodology;
- to model different learning activities applying critical thinking methods and strategies;
- to share their own learning practices and learn from each other;
- to develop and support independent positions and take responsibility for them; value expression of individual, independent, reflective opinion;
- to value cooperation, variety & cultural diversity;
- to find and use successfully different learning opportunities;
- to model, plan their own learning activities after the programme end.

BACKGROUND OF THE WORKSHOP

Background of the workshop is internationally recognized programme Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) The programme started in 1997 and is successfully implemented in more than 30 countries. The programme has developed 120 hours in-service training course for adult learners and 60 hours course for trainers. Programme has certified national centres in all network countries and certified team of teachers, trainers and certifiers.

MDC is one of those national centres and has also certified team of programme implementers. Critical thinking programme has been already tested with European teachers' audience during Socrates/Grundtvig courses in 2003. The programme is considered to be very important and has to do with the urgent and long term learning process issues, such as: motivation to learn, self directed and independent learning, critical reflection, democratic, social values and responsible citizenship, freedom and responsibility, integration and etc.

Programme and its courses are valued by learners. Sociological surveys performed by MDC in Lithuania in 1999, 2009 and 2010 and American Institute for Research (Evaluation of the RWCT Project, 2001, Impact and Institutionalization study of RWCT Programme, 2006) prove the real impact on learners' achievements (more about in http://www.sdcentras.lt/en/proj_kmusr.htm).

In today's world we are confronted by many conflicts, contradictions, moral, political, cultural, environmental and social dilemmas, legal questions about justice and rights, personal decisions about who we are and what we want to be. Most of these dilemmas are complex, their answers elusive. In a rapidly changing world with shifting cultures, norms we more and more want rely on our capacity to analyze, and understand situations clearly and to formulate solutions, that will have practical relevance for our lives and for our societies. Democratic societies require individuals to make complex decisions and inform governmental leaders for those decisions. Democracy is poorly served by citizens who step aside so others might decide for them. In such case, critical thinking as universal value and skill is always on agenda: people need to learn understand processes going around them make connections, analyze and reflect, make personal decisions. In spite of learners age, education, social status, culture, nationality it is valued for its personal approach based on learners existing knowledge, understanding, appreciation for individuality and diversity, practical application, stimulation for independent and continuous learning.

Citizenship and contemporary issues topic is "old" and "new" as each time it opens new perspectives, provides new insights, brings urgent topics on the stage, reflects contemporary issues, promotes universal democratic values, and unites people from all over the globe.

INNOVATIVE ASPECTS OF THE WORKSHOP

1. The workshop will present, analyze topic of contemporary issues in modern world, active and responsible citizenship using "expertise" of participants themselves, will build new meanings on existing knowledge and experience, later on will connect them into one and reflect new ideas. In such case "individual wisdom" will grow into "collective wisdom" and will transfer again into personal enriched with others life and learning experiences;
2. The workshop is built on two participation levels: participants as learners and participants as evaluators and reflectors of teaching-learning process;
3. The workshop is built on original critical thinking development framework with variety of innovative strategies and didactic methods, learning materials;
4. The workshop enables participants to be responsible for their personal learning in life long learning perspective.

PEDAGOGICAL AND DIDACTICAL APPROACHES

Critical thinking development methodology will be background of all workshop programme. It includes teaching and learning processes going in parallel at one time. Those processes require a set of characteristic behaviours: capacity to reflect, respect for other voices, ability to obtain and evaluate information from the multiple sources, independent opinion formation, ability to work collaboratively; ability to reach consensus, problem solving skills, willingness to share, active participation and contribution to the larger community, etc.

The workshop is designed to model interactive instruction and learning. It is built around demonstration activities, with opportunities for discussions, practice and questions. Strategies used during the course: I.N.S.E.R.T. clustering, cinquins, cubing, jigsaw, demonstration lessons, corners, paired learning, roundtable, gallery tour, role play, key terms, the prediction chart, discussion web, etc. Emphasis is on shared inquiry, developing independent positions on topic concerned, and supporting those ideas by reading, writing, and thinking, debating, questioning and reflecting. ICT will be used as one of alternative informational sources for search of necessary course materials during the workshop.