



# **LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME GRUNDTVIG LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS**

## **ITALY**

**“I learn all my life:  
the joy of learning through experience”**



### **1. LEARNING BY TEACHING**

The difference between adults' education and children's education is the fact that adults carry with them their experiences and history. By making adult students responsible for leading a class, it may happen that: 1) they will bring their experiences and history during the interaction with other students; 2) students will perceive the contents closer to their life; 3) one-day teacher will perceive his experience as a value for continuing to study.

Today a main issue, which is raised in the field of education, is the need of making students active protagonists of their personal and cultural growth. This need of making students active protagonist of their growth is underlined by a sort of experiment made in Pinerolo. In the summer of 2006, the Municipality of Pinerolo registered an increase in robberies in elders' houses. To solve this problem, the Municipality of Pinerolo made two courses held by Guardia di Finanza which involved elders, who suffered robbery, as teachers for other people; moreover, an interactive network was set up among people who participate to the courses in order to support each other. This case of "Learning by Teaching" brought to a decrease of robbery in the Municipality of Pinerolo, in the summer 2007 and 2006, while in Italy the percentage of robbery, in the same period, increased.

"Learning by Teaching" shouldn't be confused with lectures held by students, as they convey a certain content and choose their methods and approaches in teaching classmates that subject. Differences between "Learning by Teaching" and "Teacher-Centred" classroom are: more motivation, more efficiency, teamwork, social learning and planning activities; less time for introducing the method, more work for teachers and more pressure for students. About the method, it is based on the acquisition of skills required by modern society. The criteria used to evaluate students' learning progresses in the field of "Learning by Teaching" are the level of knowledge, the ability to transmitting knowledge (methodology) and the ability to fixing knowledge (efficiency).

Participants of this program would prepare presentations which would be held in schools by themselves.

What emerges from these researches is the fact that the first step of "Learning by Teaching" is **motivation**.

Motivation is very important in "Learning by Teaching" because it represents an incentive for people aged 50+ and it is also strictly connected to **methodology**.

Methodology is personal because it is based on teacher's own experiences and knowledge; it also copes with interaction between teacher and students.

Motivation and methodology are both linked to **results** which represent the last step of "Learning by Teaching".

The process of “Learning by Teaching” is a personal one because it involves teacher’s personal experiences and knowledge which interacted with students’ experiences and knowledge.

**GOOD PRACTICES:**

- One of the good practices could be the interaction between teacher and students. This, in fact, could lead to an improvement students’ self-confidence, skills and knowledge;
- People aged 50+ should be motivated to teach to other people with the same age in order to lead to the elimination of psychological barriers;
- The evaluation of students’ progresses should be done on the basis of the ability of acquiring and transmitting knowledge; it become an instrument to improve self-confidence and to eliminate psychological barriers.

## 2. COMPUTER AND THE INTERNET?- OVERCOMING INTER-GENERATIONAL BARRIERS”

ICT are a crucial instruments for contemporary societies. Unfortunately, most of those societies show high levels of digital divide. One of the main cleavages bases upon the ages. In fact, traditionally youth are more into ICT than older people. Though, the Italian statistics show that among the over 50s, the interest rate for Computer and Internet has much increased in the last years, at a rate higher than the national average.

According to the literature, three are the reasons why older people choose to take part to any course: professional growth, active citizenship and sociability.

Statistical data and our experiences show, that the main reasons to take ICT courses for over 50s, are active citizenship and sociability.

In fact, ICT for professional reasons involves more young people or immigrants, because too big is the financial, time and energy effort to achieve any official certificate.

On the other side, over 50s need to learn how to use PC and web in order to easily access to public services, news or information. Furthermore, the sociability is enhanced in two ways: from one side they get mastery of effective ways of communication (email, chat etc.), on the other they share intense intellectual experiences with their mates, and can set up with them important social networks.

### **Good practices:**

- Most over 50s do not have a high level of scholarisation and, even less do they are familiar with ICT terminology and features. Thus, the early part of each course devoted to ICT should consist of a general explanation of what ICT are, what one can do with them and what the main terms are.

For example, the first lecture should imply to explain what „hard disk“, „software“, „processor“ etc. are.

- In a class, the learning capabilities, as well as the educational backgrounds, can be very differentiated. This implies that, in classes where the professional motivation is so low, the less proficient need more attention by the teacher, otherwise they risk getting discouraged and withdrawal from the class. On the other side, the students provided with higher learning skills, risk getting bored if the learning process has to stop too many times.

A good strategy is to involve the best students in the learning processes, having them devote time and energy with the learners that show more difficulties. So that they are pushed to review and complete their learning path, by creating new explanation strategies, just focused on the mate that they are to help out. On the other side, this mate would have more different explanation and practical examples of the ICT operation to be learnt. At the same time, they would take their own time in studing any issue, with no worry of slowing down the whole class activity.

- one of the main difficulties for ageing people that learn ICT, is to understand the function and the use of the mouse. Thus, another early stages for basic courses should be devoted to this.

A good strategy seems to be in giving easing tasks that imply a major use of the mouse: the typical example is to use Corel Draw to have the students create shapes and color them just by the mouse.

### 3. LEARNING THROUGH ACTION

Learning Through Action is an educational strategy, that bases upon the learners' direct experience. Of course, LTA better fits to those subjects, that are too complex to arrange into a systematic theorisation. Furthermore, LTA refers to all those subjects that require a strong emotional/intuitional participation.

A typical example of LTA practice is the professional stage, for young people in need of a specific professional experience; also the training path for achieving soft skills –leadership, self-esteem, problem solving etc.- require a wide use of LTA, for they needs lots of case simulations.

Within this framework, it is clear that LTS is not just typical of third age; in fact it is mainly used for professional training and for Adult Learning or Vocational training policies.

Though, part of the classes, that third age people habitually take, such as music, drama, art, foreign languages, iCT etc. widely require LTA practices. In those contexts they may become crucial, as the literature states that practical experience does help the learning activity of ageing people: in fact they need to learn by basing upon their own experience context, as the knowledge, that they acquire is the result of an adaptation process between real life and abstract notions.

With reference to the reasons for elderly to start a learning path, it can be assessed that LTA for ageing people is more important for the *sociability* purposes, as the *professional learning* uses LTA in earlier phases of life cycle; *active citizenship* is related to theoretical subjects history, law etc- and only require LTA to achieve those informatic skill that are essential for interacting with contemporary institutions.

Good practices:

- Because the LTA process can be emotionally very intense , it is important that the teacher is able to overcome the unavoidable resistance of an adult or a third age people to engage his/herself. Warming-up techniques should take place, in order to create an atmosphere of reciprocal trust and openness among the learning community members ,that should perceive he other learners as peers that are not going to take advantage from the possible shortcoming that might arise in the LTA process.
- The LTA activity is always about very complex and uncertain domains; thus, the learning process can only take place by a set of attempts and feedbacks. In other words, the failure is not only unavoidable but even necessary; the teacher should overcome the possible fear of the learners to make mistakes; furthermore, the teacher should always stress the importance of each failure, because it always brings new information about the problem.
- Because LTA always imply simulation and problem solving trials, the teacher should be guessing the cultural/biographic background of each learner and to set the simulation according to this background; this will make the learning process easier and more effective.



## **4. ACTIVISATION AND EDUCATION FORMS FOR PERSONS AGED 50+**

Italy, today is the only country among the developed countries where its adult population is marked by the widespread presence of low schooling. The 49,2% of population has got junior school diploma.

The existence of almost one third of population of adult people with a low schooling shows a worrying situation and doubts of the capacity of Italian schools to grant a good level of teaching and training.

But, there are three kinds of participation to training activities:

- Activities which are organized and structured like school course ( formal education );
- Training courses ( non – formal education );
- Activities like the informal learning which have the precise purpose to being taught with the only intention of learning.

Adult people don't take part to any of these activities and self-training has a fundamental role.

The majority of Italian population hasn't got the cultural tools in order to take advantage from the opportunities offered by society. This happens because there is a lack of linguistic competences, of training and culture.

Today, we have two levels of training offer:

- Permanent Territorial Centers;
- Evening courses in high school.

These Centers offer the population a lot of training opportunities while the evening courses offer the opportunities of learning.

Lifelong Learning works mostly in non formal and informal learning sectors. The first type of learning is related to activities developed out of the structures and ways of learning and education; the second type refers to different activities of free time, culture and every day life.

Nowadays, in Italy, people attend Third Age Universities to improve their skills and also to widen their knowledge and meet new people. It represents a way to improve abilities and to go out of solitude too.

### **GOOD PRACTICES:**

- Adult people should attend Third Age University to improve their skills and knowledge. Through the attendance of courses, they could still learn even if their rate of scholarisation is low;
- In the class, each person could teach to other people through experience and knowledge, and he/she could learn from other aged 50+ students;
- Another good practice could be the involvement of students through training courses as languages labs, exhibition, theatre, etc... .

