INSTRUCTION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED LEARNING TRAINING

Project
Old Guys Say Yes to Community

1. INTRODUCTION

This online learning course was developed in the *Old Guys Say Yes to Community* (Erasmus+) project. This online course is intended for local communities, representatives of civil society, educators and all others based on recommendations, who is interested in this topic.

2. TECHNICAL PREDISPOSITIONS FOR USING OER TRAINING COURSE

Online learning course is designed and offered in a Moodle LMS platform on the project domain (learn.oldguys.si), but the whole Moodle package is available as a free download on the Old Guys OER portal (https://oer.oldguys.si/). Online learning course is free to use and is licenced with Creative Commons license CC BY-NC, that allows others to redistribute, edit and build upon the content, but not commercially (the original authors must be credited).

3. ANALYSING THE NEEDS IN LOCAL COMMUNITY

Before the start of the training, educators must carefully consider what are the specific needs in their local community. In any case, it is advisable that they do this analysis on their own, and, of course, the lessons learned from the Old Guys Say Yes to Community project can help. The analysis carried out in the project showed that learning is influenced by many variables, such as educational background, gender, level of income, geographical isolation, digital literacy, foreign language proficiency, etc. While preparing the topics for discussion of the online learning course, we need to understand the patterns that appear when analysing learning according to gender, local contexts, and historical practices. Statistical data shows that male participation in adult educational programmes is lower than female participation. Moreover, men's participation in adult education is showing a slower increase on average than women's participation, including at EU level (Eurostat, 2017). As was the case in some other past studies (Golding, Mark & Foley, 2014), it was discovered that men are becoming minority participants in some spaces and sectors of education and that various national provisions, policies, and structural conditions of the population make difficult to produce homogeneous explanations of the fact. In the project, we examined different causes of this issue in our own countries and in a variety of contexts and searched for explanations that could provide some practical recommendations to the communities. The goal was thus to consider society and the role that men's learning can play in it more closely. Previous research conducted in Slovenia,

Estonia, Malta and Portugal showed that there is a big diversity of informal, non-structured spaces where older men feel secure and where various activities had a direct and indirect influence on their well-being that (Jelenc Krašovec & Radovan, 2014). It becomes clear that the informal spaces where men interact have the ability of building a sense of belonging that ties them with community and of allowing older men to contribute positively, in some way, to their communities. It is within these informal spaces in the community that the importance of socialising is crucial for older men. This is coherent with McGivney's (1999) claims that education is especially successful when taking place in informal community spaces. Interacting socially is a way to fight back the natural, progressive deterioration of social networks associated with ageing. It also can prevent isolation and loneliness that, associated with other factors, can eventually reduce men's well-being. These are some of the aspects of the needs' analysis in individual local communities, which are described in more detail in other project's documents (e.g., Toolkit, IO9 and in the National recommendations for local authorities and community organisations, IO5 and IO6), which should help educators conduct learning activities.

4. PLANNING ACTIVITIES

The aim of this online course is to introduce community workers' and NGO stakeholders' strategies for how to improve the participation of older men (aged 60 years or more) in the local community and how to encourage older men's socialisation, informal learning and inclusion in organisations which are not primarily meant for education and learning in the third and fourth life stages.

Therefore, this course suggests how to develop bottom-up strategies for community activities targeting older men, and direction for networking community organisations. Besides this, it tries to raise public awareness of the social isolation of men aged 60 years or more; build the capacity of national and local institutions/organisations to address (self)marginalisation and poor health of older men, through social innovations and alternative approaches fostering community learning, doing and socialising; disseminate research findings through diverse educational programmes and public discussions (with all generations, with NGO representatives and other stakeholders in civic society, adult education and policies) to better cope with the demanding issue of social isolation.

Structure of the course is two-fold and it takes the form of blended learning:

- Online learning takes place in Moodle classroom that includes 4 themes/modules to train participants in the core knowledge and is 4 weeks long. Each module consists of introductory reading materials and presentation of good practices that were collected internationally.
- The face-to-face part of the training takes place as the workshop at the beginning and after the completion of the online course. Special attention is needed for the second workshop where participants are invited to evaluate training course and reflect on their community strategies.

RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

Course is intended for 15-20 participants.

TIMING

Online course consists of four modules that introduce participants to the topic of older men's learning and with a focus on concepts, particularly relevant in contexts their well-being and social participation. Each module corresponds to one week with a workload for participants of approximately 5 hours per week. Online course, therefore, will have a total workload of 20 hours for the participants. These hours consider not just reading the information contained in the modules and watching the videos, but also the complementary readings, carrying out the assessment activities and participating in the forums.

The workload for each module is thus:

- reading scientific literature = 1h
- reading examples of good practice = 1h
- reflection on their own practice = 1h
- participation in the forum discussions = 1h
- watching videos = 30 min
- completing quizzes = 10 min

5. IMPLEMENTATION

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course content is structured into 4 modules linked to the themes of the project's "Toolkit" (IO9).

THEME 1/WEEK 1: Pluralisation of transitions to retirement and ageing

LEARNING CONTENT:

In this module, participants become acquainted with the characteristics of the transition from retirement to employment. These have changed in the European Union in the last few decades, as the higher retirement age, working age is longer, and pensions are reduced, which no longer provide decent living.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this module participants learn about:

- different transition to a new life span,
- the importance of community-based activities for older men,
- factors that affect the health of older men.

MATERIALS:

- Interactive e-learning material (Book 1)
- Activity in a discussion forum
- Suggested readings:
  - o Schmidt-Hertha, B., & Rees, S.-L. (2017). Transitions to retirement – Learning to redesign one's lifestyle. *Research on Ageing and Social Policy, 5*(1), 32–56.
  - o Peak, T., & Gast, J. A. (2014). Aging Men's Health-Related Behaviors. *SAGE Open.*
  - o Golding, B. (2011). Older men's wellbeing through community participation in Australia. *International Journal of Men's Health, 10*(1), 26–44.
- Self-assessment test 1

THEME 2/WEEK 2: Absent bodies and invisible lives

LEARNING CONTENT:

Several studies have confirmed the low inclusion rate of men aged 60 or over in organized learning programs and other leisure activities, and this is linked to the quality of life of men who are worse than they might be. In the modern debate about aging, men often describe in the third and fourth stages of life through "absent bodies" and "invisible lives" (Fleming, 1999). Consequently, concepts such as aging, social sex and handicapping can be interpreted and understood by studying the body in old age.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this module participants learn about:

- the characteristics of the mental health of men in the working environment,
- the impact of the loss of the significance of gender-based identities on the psychological well-being of men,
- the reasons why men are so sensitive during the third and fourth stages of life.

MATERIALS:

- Interactive e-learning material (Book 2)
- Activity in a discussion forum
- Suggested readings:
  - Canetto, S. S. (2017). Suicide: why are older men so vulnerable? *Men and Masculinities, 20*(1), 49–70.
  - Gleibs, I. H., Haslam, C., Jones, J. M., Alexander Haslam, S., McNeill, J., & Connolly, H. (2011). No country for old men? The role of a 'Gentlemen's Club' in promoting social engagement and psychological well-being in residential care. *Aging & Mental Health, 15*(4), 456–466.
  - Oliffe, J. L., & Han, C. S. E. (2014). Beyond workers' compensation: men's mental health in and out of work. *American Journal of Men's Health, 8*(1), 45–53.
- Self-assessment test 2

THEME 3/WEEK 3: Re-defining masculinity and gender capital

LEARNING CONTENT:

Increasingly, research shows that manhood is not easy to define, since gender-based practices change due to the influence of historical as well as social, political and economic structures. In addition, hegemonic masculinities are often based on stereotypes and structures that influence how men behave and how they think, and what they attach to the meaning of "being a man". In this chapter we will learn some stereotypes about men and find that manhood is becoming more inclusive, egalitarian, non-traditional, and active today.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this module participants learn about:

- the characteristics of the social construction of masculinity
- the meaning of the term 'social capital'
- stereotypes that influence the thinking and behaviour of men

MATERIALS:

- Interactive e-learning material (Book 3)
- Activity in a discussion forum
- Suggested readings:
  - Golding, B., & Foley, A. (2017). Men and Boys: Sharing the Skills Across Generations. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 15*(1), 52–63.
  - Huppatz, K., & Goodwin, S. (2013). Masculinised jobs, feminised jobs and men's 'gender capital' experiences: Understanding occupational segregation in Australia. *Journal of Sociology, 49(*2–3), 291–308.
  - Mackenzie, C. S., Roger, K., Robertson, S., Oliffe, J. L., Nurmi, M. A., & Urquhart, J. (2017). Counter and Complicit Masculine Discourse Among Men's Shed Members. *American Journal of Men's Health, 11*(4), 1224–1236.

THEME 4/WEEK 4: Community-based learning, action, and spaces

LEARNING CONTENT:

In this chapter you will learn about the importance of community education and informal learning. Although researchers often focus more on formal rather than non-formal learning, the learning environment can with informal learning offer essential information, and in this case, people are involved in community activities.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this module participants learn about:

- the importance of community learning,
- the role of non-formal education and informal learning
- stereotypes that influence the thinking and behaviour of men,
- opportunities for involving older men in community programs,
- the connection between cognitive abilities and aging.

MATERIALS:

- Interactive e-learning material (Book 4)
- Activity in a discussion forum
- Suggested readings:
    - Canetto, S. S. (2017). Suicide: why are older men so vulnerable? *Men and Masculinities, 20*(1), 49–70.
    - Gleibs, I. H., Haslam, C., Jones, J. M., Alexander Haslam, S., McNeill, J., & Connolly, H. (2011). No country for old men? The role of a 'Gentlemen's Club' in promoting social engagement and psychological well-being in residential care. *Aging & Mental Health, 15*(4), 456–466.
    - Oliffe, J. L., & Han, C. S. E. (2014). Beyond workers' compensation: men's mental health in and out of work. *American Journal of Men's Health, 8*(1), 45–53.
- Self-assessment test 4

6. STEPS IN EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Evaluation in education is understood as the systematic use of research methods to evaluate different segments and aspects of the educational process. We recommend providers of online learning course to use evaluation systematically, because we believe that participants feedback is important for the further development of the quality of the education program. As a framework for evaluating we recommend the use of the Kirkpatrick model (1994), which is also widely used to evaluate online learning programs and consists of four levels/steps of evaluation: reaction, learning, behaviour, and results.

Level 1: Reaction. At this level, we identify the attitudes and opinions of the participants in the education they participate in. We are interested in how they are satisfied with the curriculum and its derivation. This information in the course can be after the completion of each learning unit (module), either through a discussion in a forum, a discussion in the final workshop, or as a survey already part of the "Old Guys" online classroom.

Level 2: Learning. At the level of learning, we measure what the participants acquired (learned) in the learning process (from the perspective of knowledge, competencies, skills). This is traditionally an area of evaluation for educational organizations and is derived from exams. In online learning course, this level of evaluation is easy to implement with the help of quizzes and other tools, which are also available in the learning environment developed in the project.

Level 3: Behaviour. By evaluating at this level, we want to find out what changes have led learning to the participants. We are interested in whether the participants have improved or gained some new skills and competences or are performing more efficiently and better. The formal grades expressed by the points achieved in the tests are not relevant at this level of evaluation. In "Old Guys" online learning course, we suggest that this evaluation is carried out with various simulations, practical task or case studies done by participants.

Level 4: Results. The fourth level of evaluation evaluates wider learning implications, e.g. effects for the organization or local community. The goals on this level is to identify which outcomes or benefits in the local community are most intricately linked to the training, and to produce an effective way to measure these outcomes in the long term. Because it is the most demanding for evaluating, it is still quite rarely implemented.

7. REFERENCES

Eurostat (2017). Adult participation in learning by gender (%), available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&lang

Fleming, A. A. (1999). Older men in contemporary discourses on ageing: Absent bodies and invisible lives. *Nursing Inquiry*, *6*(1), 3–8.

Golding, B. Mark, R., & Foley, A. (Eds.) (2014). *Men learning through life*. Leicester: NIACE.

Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1994). *Evaluating training programs: The four levels*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Jelenc Krašovec, S., & Radovan, M. (Eds.) (2014). *Older men learning in the community: European snapshots*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts.

McGivney, V. (1999). *Informal learning in the community. A trigger for change and development*. Leicester: NIACE.