

Education as a Driver for Change

Enthusiasm for Education! Workshops for New Multipliers

The **in.education** project aims at developing strategies to increase the participation of educationally disadvantaged people, especially those with basic educational needs, in adult education programmes.

This paper is aimed at people/organisations who want to extend their access to “hard to reach” educationally disadvantaged groups.

As a first step, the project **tried out ways of gaining access to these groups through new multipliers/intermediaries**. They can act as a link between adult education institutions and educationally disadvantaged people. In this context, “new multipliers” are understood to be people from the social environment of educationally disadvantaged people e.g. parents, family, non-family caregivers, works council members, social workers or other professionals whose work brings them into contact with educationally disadvantaged people.

Potential new multipliers were identified in Austria, the United Kingdom and Ireland. Workshops were organised in these countries to familiarise the new intermediaries with the following **core elements**:

1. Attitudes to education (personal level, social environment, gender, ...)
2. Barriers to education and how to overcome them (real and perceived barriers) e.g. discrimination, stigma, gender...
3. “Educational disadvantage” and how people become educationally disadvantaged (causes)
4. Benefits of education (providing the new multipliers with arguments for their outreach work)
5. Concrete offers of education for educationally disadvantaged people considering the mentioned barriers (educational programmes, training offers)

Through the workshops we aimed to prepare them for their new role as intermediaries in identifying the needs of people who are educationally disadvantaged and supporting them.

What worked well in identifying and recruiting new intermediaries:

1. To recruit new multipliers, it should be clear how they fit in. Thus, arguments for becoming a multiplier need to be clear from the onset and should be clearly communicated.
2. Exploiting existing contacts who have direct and trusted relationships with new multipliers to initiate the communication.
3. Nominating a person whom you know personally within the multipliers to help you bring together similar people.
4. Sufficient time should be given to stakeholders to familiarise themselves with educational disadvantage.
5. Emails in conjunction with personal contacts were also very effective.
6. Email as the outreach channel works when
 - a. in the first instance, not a lot of commitment is asked of the participants,
 - b. when the recipients have had some contact with the organisation sending the email beforehand and when the content of the email is relevant to them.

How can workshops for new multipliers be successfully organised:

In practice the workshops took a number of different formats:

- 6-hour split workshops (with a week in between) including follow up networking meeting
- 6-hour long workshops
- 3-hour long workshops
- 1-hour workshops with linked activities and follow-up
- 1-hour webinars with linked activities and follow-up

Lessons learned – good practice:

A workshop for new multipliers works best when it is split into two sessions with sometime between them (a week is ideal) with “homework” because it allows the participants:

- a. To reflect on what they have learnt
- b. To put what they have learnt into practice
- c. To clarify difficulties during the second part

Recommendations:

1. When working with new multipliers that don't know much about the topic, provision of information or content coupled with discussions is invaluable to develop step by step a common picture of education, unequal access and barriers to participation.
2. The organiser is the expert and therefore should try to stick to his/her planned agenda to ensure information transfer.
3. For people who find it difficult to identify with the topic, it might be helpful to think about their own experiences or the experiences of other people in their environment.
4. In order to keep the new multipliers engaged, it is important that their long-term role is clearly defined from the start, and that they can see how they and people they know will benefit.
5. Familiarity and concreteness help bring the issue down to earth.
6. Workshops run more smoothly and discussion is easier if participants have something in common – e.g. people from similar organisations, people of similar ages or backgrounds.
7. Thought should be given to practical considerations – cost, keeping travel time to a minimum, avoiding long waiting times, group sizes that enable free discussion – in order to keep up attendance and motivation.
8. Follow-up activities:
 - In general, a total of 6 hours of workshops turned out to be only a first step in developing new multipliers. Follow-up activities are essential to establish lasting links between potential multipliers and adult education providers.
 - A regular meeting of multipliers from different backgrounds can increase their motivation and knowledge in this new role.
 - Having a concrete offer which people can identify with.

The full report *“Education as a Driver for Change: Enthusiasm for Education! Workshops for New Multipliers”* can be downloaded here: www.isop.at