

Key competences for Lifelong Learning within Vocational Training for Care Assistants

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Resources

- *The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework is an annex of a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18th Dec 2006 and was published by European Communities 2007*
- *The European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) was adopted by the European Parliament and Council on 23 Apr 2008*
http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/lifelong_learning/c11090_en.htm
http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm

It is a great honour for to present the results of the LEONARDO partnership „TCSPD“ here at Palermo University, a place where over centuries cultures from east and west, north and south have met and formed a spirit of scientific and humanistic perspective. These were some of the objectives of our partnership

- To exchange knowledge different educational methods in training of care staff for people with disability.
- To make a preliminary step for improving an e-learning course on training of care staff for people with disability - decision: 4 month half-day training
- To determine the competencies or qualifications that care staff should have. (Education level, age, etc....)

TCSPD was a partnership with many perspectives

- A parents organisation and rehabilitation centres from Turkey, offering a vast range of qualified services to children and adults with disability
- A „network“ association from Denmark planning and realising inclusive projects on communal and regional level (ecological, social and economical, infrastructure-planning and education)
- A German welfare association and a neurological rehabilitation clinic / Day care centres for persons with disability, providing services (diakonia) in Christian responsibility
- A User organisation from Greece, putting „Disability now!“ on the agenda of national and international politics
- A Bulgarian organisation specialised in drawing up and disseminating training and education schemes, giving marginalized people a „Second Chance“
- And last not least from Palermo the CEIPES project hotspot

Looking for items of an assistant's vocational training we found and „brainstormed“ a lot of points (about 100). The question was how to sort them out and bring them into a system usable for training providers preparing a short training without „preconditions“. Here categories from the European Reference Framework were useful. The documents (see above) define

- 8 Key Competences
- 8 Reference Levels
- 9 (10) basic definitions

Some definitions, which were important for the results of our partnership work are:

COMPETENCES: “a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes / Proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations in professional and personal development, described in terms of responsibility and autonomy”. We notice the way an attitude of “personal development” is part of this concept.

KEY COMPETENCES: “those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment”. In relation to handicapped persons, the need for social inclusion is important, together with the notion that their key competences have to be enhanced by suitable means for this goal.

The EU document mentioned above lists up as Key Competences:

- 1) Communication in mother tongue,
- 2) ... in foreign tongues,
- 3) Mathematical / science / technology c.,
- 4) digital c.,
- 5) learning to learn,
- 6) Social and civic c.,
- 7) sense of initiative and entrepreneurship,
- 8) cultural awareness and expression

The 8 reference levels for „competence” supported by these EU documents are

1. Work under direct supervision in a structured context
2. Work under supervision with some autonomy
3. Take responsibility for completion of tasks / adapt own behaviour to r in solving problems
4. Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change / supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
5. Exercise management and supervision in contexts where there is unpredictable change / review and develop performance of self and others
6. Manage complex or professional projects ...
7. ... taking responsibility for reviewing the strategic performances of teams
8. ...substantial authority, innovation, professional integrity ... at the forefront of work or study contexts including research

When you ask what level of competence is needed for an assistant to disabled persons to enhance the assistance users' above mentioned key competences, even if the assistant is only trained during a short curriculum, one comes at least to level III. Any person with disability will rely on the need that her/his assistant is able to complete tasks given to him/her and adapts his/her behaviour in a way that their tasks could be accomplish. Perhaps it is necessary to ask back or to explain what

person is unable to do, but the assistant must not leave job un- or half-finished. This result is found again when looking at the definition for Level III at the other competence groups.

The definition of LEARNING OUTCOME is “what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process ... defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences”. The definition of “competence” is given above, the others are:

- KNOWLEDGE: “a body of facts, principles, theories and practises that is related to a field of work or study ... described as theoretical and/or factual”.
- SKILLS: “ability (to apply knowledge and use know-how) to complete tasks and solve problems ... described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)”.

Level III is defined as “knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts in a field of work”, more than “basic factual knowledge” (level II), less than “theoretical knowledge in broad context” (level IV) and as “a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish task and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools materials and information”, more than “solving routine problems using simple tools” (level II) , less than “skills required to GENERATE solutions” (level IV). The relationship between assistant and assistance user is clearly defined here, because it is the disabled person who “generates” the solution for his/her problems or tasks.

Using the framework of these concepts, the TCSPD partnership proposed the following types of learning outcomes of assistant training:

- I) Practical skills to give assistance in certain fields of activity
- II) Knowledge of basic facts for understanding situation, abilities and rights of assisted persons and the surrounding structures
- III) Competences of communication and cooperation with assisted persons and their family, colleagues at work ..., assistants from other professions ... (*these competences might be skills, knowledge and attitudes*)
- IV) Attitude of self-development in adapting oneself to the faculties and assistance needs of other persons without losing sight of own situation

In the same way, we propose four principal points as Assistants' Fields of Activities:

- A) Delivering personal services
- B) Assisting persons with handicap in their tasks in household, place of education / training, work or leisure places
- C) Promoting assisted person's inclusion in society
- D) Organise own work as needs of assisted person might require flexible work in special surroundings and time frames

When putting these two categories into a cross reference scheme and analyzing the about 60 items chosen relevant for our training curriculum, the result (including multiple mentioning of an item) is as follows:

		Practical skills	Basic knowledge	Communicative competences	Attitude of self development
A	Personal Services	9	16	13	14
B	Assisting Tasks	8	13	16	9
C	Promoting Inclusion	3	12	14	8
D	Organisation of own work	5	12	11	7

To train an assistant for persons with disability means to train her/his competences to communicate and his attitude to adapt and develop her-/himself. This attitude is, again, mostly acquired and developed by communication – it is a way „to learn how to learn“ To train skills and knowledge is important, she/he has to know and be able to do a lot, but without good communicative competences these learning outcomes would not be helpful and not appropriate to the context.

Assistance is communication. Training assistance means training communication!

Any assistance training scheme, and there are a lot of them, should be looked at whether it is able to adapt to this perspective.

I'm sure there is a lot to do in any of our countries.

I'm proud and glad to present such a result in this place and I thank all participants of our meetings and the many people who supported our partnership