

PARENTAL EDUCATION TOGETHER WITH IT - SUPPORT FOR THE NEW GENERATION

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Abstract

It is a common truth that the Internet is almost impossible to control and thus provides opportunities for illicit acts directed to a sure category of victims who are the under age. If they are relatively well protected by the laws in the real environment, the situation is different when it comes to the dangers that threaten the under age in the cybernetic territory.

That is why we consider that it is very important that the adults (parents) with educational disadvantage should be able to protect their children from the aggressive content of the Internet by means of a fully aware supervision. In this sense it is absolutely necessary that they have basic knowledge in using the Internet.

Keywords

Parental education, Internet, life long learning, skills, educational models

I. Introduction

Family and school are the main institutions responsible with the education of the child. The distribution of responsibilities between the two institutions is possible if both are equally prepared to undertake the educational role they have.

In Romania in the last 17 years the attention of the governmental institutions was focused mainly on preparing the school to face the changes that appeared in the society, neglecting the support towards the family in its effort to ensure the personal, social and professional success of the children.

The parents are facing nowadays numerous problems in the education of their children that most of the times they don't know how to tackle in order to find the most efficient solution with positive effects on the long term. They face the daily reality of life that supposes another type of family education culture, a lot more different than the one they lived in their own families. The parents are often in the situation of having to decide without knowing what the most appropriate decision is and they sometimes risk becoming incoherent, unconscious and contradictory in their actions. This generates a state of insecurity of the child and self-discontent of the parent (that can be reflected also as discontent with the child) or as abandon by exaggerating the competence of the school institutions.

Thus the child does not dispose of a responsible family that should have as main focus the interest of the child and promote the authentical values, and so the child won't be able to acquire family identity and cultural dignity and therefore won't be able to assume responsibilities towards himself/herself, family or society.

The Internet is an unlimited tool for knowledge for the young people but at the same time it represents an enormous danger for the children. Even if the parents and the laws are doing their best to defend the children in the everyday life, at virtual level the situation is completely different. The situation is even harder to control as many of the parents who are disadvantaged educationally and economically do not have the basic knowledge for working with the computer and thus neither with the Internet.

For this purpose the partners of the project have considered it is vital for the parents to have the possibility to supervise their children by protecting them from the content of the Internet.

The PETIT project is co-financed by the European Commission within the Lifelong Learning Programme, Grundtvig Action (reference number 134771-RO-GRUNDTVIG-GMP)

The varied partnership allows the creation of a relevant mosaic at European level on the real situation of lifelong learning, education of adults (parents), and, by means of partnership cooperation, are working on finding most suitable methods to motivate the adults (parents) to become “consumers” of lifelong learning education.

2. Aims of the project

The project *aims* consist of elaborating alternative models for adults (parents) with an educational disadvantage, able to respond to their training needs for becoming more responsible parents and also to provide an alternative perspective upon lifelong learning.

The partners of the project aim at inducing a positive opinion upon the target group towards the profitable consequences of lifelong learning so that they can encourage at their turn their children to follow their example. Partners expect the project to have a strong impact upon European family learning, due to the development of educational models that can be applied and transferred to other different groups with similar needs.

The overall objective of the project is: to offer the educationally disadvantaged parents the opportunity to become responsible parents with regard to the psychological, relational and behavioural development of their own children, by improving their abilities, knowledge and skills needed in the family environment.

Specific objectives:

- improving the family climate through better communication between parents and children
- creating, developing and implementing a series of innovative and strategic methods that should act upon the educationally disadvantaged parents as it follows:
 - induce a positive attitude towards lifelong learning
 - make them acquire information and knowledge necessary for understanding child behaviour, communication and discipline techniques, so that they can educate their child in a fully informed way, by providing him/her the support needed for becoming a responsible adult
 - fostering access for acquiring basic skills in using the information technologies (the Internet) in view of supporting and protecting the children in their relation with the network;
- Acquiring, structuring and promoting educational good practices at European level.

The project target group is made up of adult people (parents) aged between 20 and 55, with educational disadvantage, who have completed first level of education.

Their main needs are related to knowledge of the psychological, relational and behavioural development of their own children, so that they can improve their abilities, knowledge and skills necessary in the field of Internet, so that they can support their children in the problems they face in contact with the Internet.

3. Pedagogical and didactical approaches

The pedagogical and methodological concepts the project will rely on are:

- Analysis and syntheses of the good practices models existing at European level, in the field of parental education;
- Analysis of the situation of adults (parents) with educational disadvantage, aged between 20-55, in the European countries partner in the project;
- Analysis of target group’s needs, at the level of the group chosen by each project partner;

- Direct approach: through direct dialogue, interviews, questionnaires, case studies, etc. on the target groups;
- Employing a flexible communication platform, allowing real time communication among partners;
- Devising a discussion forum on the project web site;
- Elaborating an educational models at European level: in conformity with the analyses accomplished;
- Implementing the achieved educational models upon the target group and assessing the impact these educational models have upon them; the evaluation will be both internal and external.

4. The results of the project

1. Analysis of the good practices models existing at European level, in the field of parental education

When analysing the good practices and models existing in the field of parental education in PETIT –partner countries it became obvious that most of these practices were targeted to improve the family climate and better communication between the parents and children.

At least most of the practices included these kinds of elements though better family climate through better communication hadn't been their main focus. 22 practices of 25 presented ones were voted in this category.

The partners were sent some criteria; questions according which they analyzed the good practices and models of the partners.

Firstly the partners assessed which of the presented practices do:

- improve the family climate through better communication between parents and children
- induce a positive attitude to adults (parents) towards lifelong learning
- favour the necessary knowledge of adults (parents) in view of understanding the behavior, communication and discipline of children
- favour the acquiring of certain basic knowledge in using the information technologies (the Internet)
- promote other good practices at European level

Secondly the partners were supposed to find out which of the presented practices seem to be most sustainable and which ones most transferable practices.

All the answers had to be argued (by questions In what way? Why?) too.

2. Analysis of the situation of adults (parents) with educational disadvantage, aged between 20-55, in the European partner countries

The research showed that there is mostly no *specific* data about the situation of educationally disadvantaged *parents* available in the partner countries. But - as the parents make a high share among disadvantaged people - the following results and conclusion can be made from the found information on educationally disadvantaged people in general:

- All partner countries face a relatively high share of people with educational disadvantages in terms of school degrees compared to the whole population of the country.
- The situation of migrants is often specifically bad: they are coming into the countries often with a low level of qualification and face domestic language problems. It can be concluded

that especially migrants face a high risk of poverty, social exclusion and low-level education.

- In a lot of countries, like e. g. Germany there seems to be a correlation between the educational level and the number of children: the childlessness raises with the educational level of the women and vice versa: Women with a low educational level have more often three or more children.
- With regard to the employment situation, it can be seen that especially the insecure, “precarious” employment is more related to the lower qualified jobs.
- It can be seen that in all countries the tendency is that the family structures are breaking open: In general terms, single-parent families are considered with a higher risk of social exclusion, they need often to leave the labour market or have permanent problems with the reconciliation of private and family life.
- The child care among educationally disadvantaged families is organised in the partner countries in a different way: In the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and Spain the majority of the parents take the own responsibility to take care of the children. Only in Germany and Finland it is the normal situation to use the public child care, whereas in Germany it could be seen that with the decreasing educational level the use of public child care is also decreasing (because of the limited budgets).
- It is in all partner countries evident that the educationally disadvantaged families are often depending on different kind of financial benefits of the governments.
- The research showed that there are in none of the partner countries special legislation regarding support for the improvement of the training of the specific target group of the project.

3. Analysis of target group's needs, at the level of the group chosen by each project partner

In each of the 6 partner countries one workshop took place.

Main goal: to help parents with the development and improvement of necessary abilities and attitudes for a better role in their parenthood. Workshop helps families learn about child development and how to support them.

The method for achieving this goal is moderated discussion with educational and social experiences that increase the use of positive parenting practices, which create an environment that facilitates the development of caring, competent, and healthy children.

In this respect, every family has the potential to support and improve also the school achievement of its children.

Second goal: Fill in questionnaires and gather information about target group needs.

The inquiry was completed by 79 respondents from 6 European Union member countries. Questionnaires were submitted to respondents within a workshop. The questionnaire contained 3 blocks. 1. Data on respondents, 2. Lifelong learning, 3. Learning Interests and needs.

Analysis of parents (adults) with educational disadvantage needs has proved an important fact that the demand for education among in target group is large. Particular needs and requirements of the target group regarding further education have been ascertained. Results of the analysis also showed differences in the approach to the lifelong learning, usage of PC and awareness of the education offer in the target group of adults in individual partnership countries.

4. 6 educational models (1 for every partner country) regarding concept, implementation and

evaluation by the participants

The educational models will be developed in the coming months of the project, following the needs analysis among the target group of the project.

The 6 models will combine the pedagogical part with the IT part.

After applying the questionnaires, it resulted that the parents are interested in the use of the computers, but also in emails, web browsers and search engines.

5. Analysis of the implementation of the “educational models”

The analysis of the implementation of the educational models will be carried out following the phase of testing the created models on a number of 15-20 persons from the target group, so that they can be improved at the suggestions of the trainers and the target group.

6. “Educational models” evaluation: self evaluation and external evaluation

The evaluations of the educational models created have as main aim to improve them in view of obtaining products of high quality and in accordance with the EU norms.

The internal evaluation will be carried out by each partner organization according to their own concept, while the external evaluation will be performed the external evaluator of the project, according to his criteria.

7. One project website- <http://www.srep.ro:800/petit/>

The website of the project contains useful information about the project concerning background, objectives, target group, outcomes.

At the same time the website contains a restricted area for partners and also a discussion forum that will be activated in the second part of the project.

At the beginning, half and end of the project, newsletters will be developed in order to keep the visitors informed with the evolution of the project.

The first newsletter is already on the website and is available in English and also in the languages of all the project partners.

The website will be improved throughout the project and will contain information about the stage of the work of the partners.

8. Good practices guide

The most complex product of the project, it will contain information on all the products and outcomes developed within the project, partnership, useful experiences and expertise for those interested by the field of adult education.

The guide will be ready before the end of the project.

At the same time, the project and its main outcomes will be evaluated internally and externally throughout their development.

All the partners will contribute to the national and European dissemination of the project, having at their disposal different materials for this purpose (flyers, brochures, posters, CDs).

At the end of the project a dissemination conference will be organized in Romania where all the interested people and organizations will be invited to participate in order to discuss and exchange experiences in the field.

5. Conclusions

For the East-European countries the problem of parental education among educationally disadvantaged persons has not been a priority.

The experience of the central and Western countries can represent a starting point for developing qualitative educational models that are also specific to each country separately.

Unfortunately in Romania the educationally disadvantaged parents don't have access to ICT and even less to Internet.

The participation of the parents to lifelong learning can produce changes in their way of perceiving education and can lead to their motivation to become involved in improving their own abilities and implicitly in finding some better paid jobs.

At the same time, it is important that the parental education is included in the curriculum of as many adult education centres.

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