



Erasmus+



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INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 3 – INNOVATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM - INNOVATION WITH MULTI-CHALLENGED FAMILIES

Introduction

The innovation skills development program (Intellectual Output 3) is based on Intellectual Outputs 1 (Competency framework) and 2 (Knowledge triangle). Those three intellectual Outputs will be tested through a pilot training program which will be implemented over a 12 month period. One central element in the training program is the focus upon practical innovations in social work with families with multiple challenges. The participants are chosen because their everyday work include tasks related to such families. The explicit aim of the training program is to devise new ways of organizing social work that can offer improvements for children and parents.

The framework for the training program:

1. We will hold two international meetings in which participants from all the five partner countries will work together. These meetings will take place in Ljubljana, Slovenia at the end of January 2018, and in Coimbra, Portugal in November 2018.
2. There will be activities involving 100 hours of work in each country 2018 in between the TN meetings.

General Approach

The training program sets out to provide participants with a “free space” within which they can discuss and develop practical approaches to problems that they encounter in their everyday practice with multi-challenged families. It is to be based on *abductive reasoning and learning*. This contrasts with the two more common learning approaches termed *deductive* and *inductive*.

Deductive approaches emphasise structured presentation that starts with basic concepts and then uses examples that demonstrate these. They are as such teacher or instructor-centred. Training in methods or procedures that are systematic and manual-based uses a deductive approach. This can be both effective and efficient provided that that the instructor or trainer knows what has to be done, and the aims for the methods being taught are sufficiently clear.

Inductive approaches are based on a different premise. It is assumed that knowledge is mainly built on a basis of learners’ experience and their interaction with phenomena. So

learners are encouraged to discuss examples of the concepts to be assimilated and applied, and to discuss these. The instructor or trainer provides guidance. Inductive learning can be appropriate in many contexts. Learners have a more active role, and take part in “constructing” the concepts to be learned by referring to their own experience and perceptions.

In the LIFE project we are at or probably beyond the limits of what can be learned using deductive or inductive approaches. Innovation requires actual changes in practice, primarily designed to provide better, more appropriate help for families. Practice is complex, and heavily influenced by a whole series of pressures, and takes place within an arena (an enclave) in which practitioners have to make judgments and decisions in a constant flux. Work with families may be conducted in bureaucratic settings that set out to enforce set procedure and predictability, but there may be a considerable tension between this mode of organization and the demands imposed by maintaining readiness and rapid response, as for example in child protection. Practice is often regulated to secure measurable and preferred outcomes and this regulation may restrict the freedom to reflect or attempt new strategies. In the LIFE project we think that organizations and structures affect the ways in which practitioners perceive and think. This may make innovation at local level quite difficult to achieve.

Abductive reasoning and learning has become popular in various applied contexts of late, for example in work with artificial intelligence (AI). But its roots go a long way back, to the natural philosophy of the ancient world and late medieval/renaissance epochs, before the emergence of modern empirical and experimental science. The simplest way of explaining the concept is that inference from observation and experience is an essential step in developing new ideas and hypotheses, *without undue reliance upon or reference to prevailing doctrines and theories*. Inference in this connection means a summarization and weighing of observation and experience to find likely or plausible explanations for a phenomenon or problem. *Educated guesswork* is the everyday English expression that comes closest. But abductive learning involves more than this, rather a process in which inferences are challenged, and their practical applications discussed in terms of feasibility, and ultimately tested out by using new approaches and devices based upon them in practice. Abductive reasoning may lead to incorrect inferences, but it is still creative and productive in that a range of avenues toward better practice can be opened.

A question that arises is whether abductive reasoning and learning and *critical reflection* as practiced in social work (and many other professional settings) are in effect much the same. Brookfield (1990) explains that critical reflection involves three phases:

1. Identifying the assumptions (“those taken-for-granted ideas, commonsense beliefs, and self-evident rules of thumb”) that underlie our thoughts and actions;
2. Assessing and scrutinizing the validity of these assumptions in terms of how they relate to our ‘real-life’ experiences and our present context(s);
3. Transforming these assumptions to become more inclusive and integrative, and using this newly-formed knowledge to more appropriately inform our future actions and practices.

It is obvious that there are some strong similarities between critical reflection and an abductive learning approach, but our focus in the LIFE training program is upon setting up a learning environment for the participant groups. On the whole, it seems that much use of critical reflection is directed at *individual* awareness. In the LIFE courses, we want to encourage participants to look at the aims, approaches, and constraints agencies of various kinds apply in helping multi-challenged families *in the light* of families' needs. In effect a somewhat "cooler" approach that devotes less attention to the individual social workers' relations with families. It has to be admitted that this distinction cannot be very hard and fast, and perhaps only is to be regarded as a nuance. And it would be undesirable to prohibit use of a critical reflection approach if course leaders have substantial experience of using it. The limitations of time available will restrict very thorough use of critical reflection as an approach in the LIFE training program.

Choice of Participants

Partners' thinking about choice of participants has been dealt with in the Intellectual Output 1 *Competence and Skills Framework*. The important point is that all participants should have their everyday work with multi-challenged families. In practice most participants will be social workers, but some of the partners will include personnel from other occupational groups.

Content of the Training Program

The content of the training program is related to the knowledge base and approach outlined in the baseline study, knowledge base papers, and Intellectual Outputs 1 and 2.

Participants are expected to develop innovative approaches and devices in their work with *the individual families*. Partner organisations and field agencies have given their consent to participant's following the training program, but they will not have direct influence on any of the working methods and approaches proposed by participants. It should be noted that the focus in LIFE is upon low-level innovations that can benefit particular families; our intention is not to work toward sweeping changes and reorganisations, though changes and organisational issues will inevitably be part of the discussions that emerge. Working toward low-level innovations that are useful for families involves a realignment in which the following principles will require attention:

1. A holistic approach to working with the family.
2. Co-creation of solutions with the family, valuing their perceptions. This contrasts with much current practice which tends to assume the families are fundamentally dysfunctional and that their perceptions are therefore of little value.
3. The need for a multi-disciplinary approach to address the fragmented nature of multiple professional interventions.
4. Case Management as a working methodology to understand the challenges this poses on professional and management hierarchies.
5. Understanding innovation in social work in a family environment.
6. Identifying areas with potential for change in the family situation and prioritizing interventions accordingly (being proactive rather than reactive).

7. Practical Skills and Solutions required in implementation and innovation.
8. Generic Skills: analysing needs of families, reflection on theory and practice, problem solving, teamwork, communication.

It should be added that not all partners will want to focus on Case Management.

Basic Components in the training program

The training program consists of three different components:

1. An introduction to innovation theory and practice.
2. Reflection in groups.
3. A written presentation from each participant/country group.

The training program is organized in two transnational weeks and the interim national activities and covers a total of 160 hours of work for each participant.

Transnational meetings:

- January/February 2018 In Ljubljana, Slovenia (approximately 30 hours)
- November 2018 in Coimbra, Portugal (approximately 30 hours)

National:

- February - November 2018 (approximately 100 hours)

Each partner will have to organize introductory meetings before the first transnational meeting in Ljubljana and collect information and viewpoints from participators and to give some tuition relating to innovation theory.

Each partner may choose how to best organize the activities in the interim period in the light of their own circumstances.

Activities, Leaders and other Contributors

The brief description above will make it clear that there are some important choices to be made about training program leadership and specific contributions. These can be summarised as follows:

1. We need a general research-based introduction to innovation issues as a part of the introduction meeting in Ljubljana and discussion of this topic in the partner groups to identify innovation issues and problems that can be specific to each partner.
2. The major components in the training program are the activities in the transnational meetings combined with the work in the participant groups, about 160 hours in all. In the work in the national groups the participants have to reflect upon work with particular families, including analysis of needs, shortcomings of services that have been offered, seeing the families as a whole, and looking at information and viewpoints of family members themselves. Not all the families that each group has selected can easily be dealt with fully, though there may be common needs and issues affecting several families. The focus must be firmly upon change first and foremost.
3. It is valuable to make a rapid transition to a situation in which the participants make decisions and judgements about their own process. The *abductive* learning approach we

want to use requires that participants “own” their learning process and pursue it without input from authority within their own agency/institution. The idea is to recruit a variety of resource persons who can contribute, both at transnational meetings and in the interim national part of the program.

4. A leader role is necessary to help participants “move along” and identify knowledge areas and approaches that can be explored. The proposition is that Mari Nordstrand gets the task of being the overall leader of the training program.
5. We want to leave each partner free to define the leader role in the national part of the training program. A role that is feasible and “right” for their particular situation. The national leadership can be just couple or a small group of resource persons who work together to support the participants. Local circumstances and resources will have to be taken into account.
6. Other contributors to the training program are at the discretion of partners, whether these have supporting or advisory roles or actually take part in the training program meetings and presentations.
7. It is of course very important that the actual organisation of the training program runs smoothly with proper information about meeting times, agendas for each meeting, reading requirements etc. being made available for participants. The groups should be set up as networks with Email addresses being distributed and participants should be encouraged to communicate with one another, and identify common issues/problems.
8. The training program leads to a written presentation from each participant that should concentrate on one or two innovations. These have to be described clearly and their relation to the agency setting made explicit. It is desirable, but *not* mandatory, that these be tried out in the training program of 2018. Each participant’s presentation should outline issues relating to implementation of the chosen innovation(s). A more detailed template for these presentations will be provided in the spring 2018. The presentation is not an examination or written test: its purpose is to enable participants to work out their innovation ideas and to allow us to monitor the products of the training program. Presentations will be written in participants’ own language and we will have to consider how these can be translated for monitoring purposes.
9. The fundamental issue that arises in connection with the training program is the “degree of freedom” each partner needs to be able to provide that is relevant to local and national conditions, *and* fulfils the conditions and requirements set out in the project description. We want to have regular feedback in order to be able to help partners if they encounter difficulties. This feedback enabling is a task allotted to Mari Nordstrand in Trondheim who will keep in touch with partners throughout 2018.

Preparation and other matters

At the Transnational Partnership Meeting held at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana in October 2017 a number of issues were discussed and agreed upon.

1. Recruitment of Participants. Each partner must recruit 5-7 participants. A list of Participants is to be finalised by November 2017, including a participant from each country as a Lead English language participant.

2. There need to be agreements with both the employers and individual participants regarding their availability and commitment to complete the program. Employers need to commit to replace participants if they drop out in the early stages.
3. Structure of Programme. Each participant shall undertake to organise at least 100 hours training nationally, at least 50 percent of which would be direct contact. It is suggested that the national groups could meet approximately once per month / 6 weeks to ensure that they do not lose contact with the programme. Each participant should have a named mentor.
4. Language barriers. Each national group shall include at least 1 fluent English speaker to enable them to interpret for the others if necessary.
5. Each participant shall be given a pre-course induction so that they are clear on the objectives and requirements of the programme. A common document is prepared by the lead partner (the R&D Centre Linköping) to be used by all national partners.
6. Detailed Program, Learning Materials and Tools. The individual partners will need to assemble this so that they are available for circulation to participants prior to the start of the program in January.
 - Detailed Program for 1st Week of course
 - List of participants and List of Researchers / Mentors
 - Practical information on hotels etc.
 - Learning material for example:
 - The Baseline Study
 - Family Pilot, Sweden
 - Presentation / Case Study Report
 - 1 Case Study from each other partner country
 - Analytical and other learning tools.

Ljubljana University 29 January – 1 February, 2018

Schedule

Dates and time	Title/content	Responsible/ resource persons	Comments
Monday 29 January	Theme: Innovating with multi-challenged families		
09.00	Welcome, practical arrangements and introduction to the programme	Nina Mešl, Tadeja Kodele, Ljubljana University, Mats Eriksson, R & D Centre Linköping, Mari Nordstrand, NTNU Trondheim	
09.30	What is the practice experiences/actual challenges of multi challenged families' situation in the partner countries/organizations?	National groups gives presentations. Led by Mari Nordstrand.	Presentations with power points and hand outs
11.30	Lunch		
13.00	What does research tell us about the situation for families with multiple challenges? The importance of an everyday life perspective, what do we mean by this?	Graham Clifford, NTNU, Trondheim	The New Child Welfare, Families in social services, Ljubljana study, LIFE Baseline study
14.00	National groups discuss the challenges families face. Do existing approaches and methods help? What are the gaps in knowledge about, and gaps in services for the families? Summary in a round table presentation.	Round table led by Mari Nordstrand and Nina Mešl.	Each national group make a documentation from the reflection
15.50	Round table summary of the day	Mari Nordstrand, Nina Mešl	
16.00	Closing of the day		

Dates and time	Title/content	Responsible/ resource persons	Comments
Tuesday 30 January	Theme: Innovating with multi-challenged families		
09.00	Innovation: what competence and skill are required for work with multi challenged families? What do we mean by innovation?	Skender Redzovic, NTNU, Trondheim + expert from the partners about the competency framework.	Based on LIFE Competency Framework
10.00	National groups discuss need for new approaches to multi challenged families. Summary in a round table presentation.	Round table led by Mari Nordstrand and Nina Mešl.	Each national group make a documentation from the reflection
11.30	Lunch		
13.00	Plenum session with reports from national groups.	Skender Redzovic	
15.00	Practice knowledge and Research knowledge in work with multi challenged families	Edgar Marthinsen, NTNU, Trondheim	In plenum based on the LIFE knowledge triangle
15.50	Round table summary of the day	Mari Nordstrand, Nina Mešl	
16.00	Closing of the day		
19.00	Dinner for participators and project teams		Paid by each person

Dates and time	Title/content	Responsible/ resource persons	Comments
Wednesday 31 January	Theme: Innovation approaches and challenges		
09.00	How can the national groups approach their task?	Led by Graham Clifford, Edgar Marthinsen with contribution from the partner teams	
10.00	Innovation research and challenges in Slovenia and Italy	Input from research and practice Nina Mešl, Tadeja Kodele, person from Italy	In plenum. E.g. based on Co-creation, Family by Family
11.30	Lunch		
13.00	Innovation research and challenges in Sweden, Portugal and Norway	Input from research and practice	In plenum. E.g. Family Pilot
15.00	Round table summary of the day	Mari Nordstrand, Nina Mešl	
15.15	Sightseeing in Ljubljana		

Dates and time	Title/content	Responsible/ resource persons	Comments
Thursday 1 February	Theme: Evaluation and Research		
09.00	Research Components in the LIFE project	Graham Clifford and others from the partners	
10.30	Conclusions and next step	All and led by Mari Nordstrand, Nina Mešl	
11.00	Closing of the week		