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MODEL OF FOLK HIGH SCHOOL PEDAGOGY FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

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Abstract. The paper presents the first results from the implementation of a European, Erasmus+ project. Seven partners from five European countries (Poland, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Bulgaria) will implement in practice the ideas of Grundtvig (Danish philosopher from XIX century) for democratic way of education in a project titled "Building key competences and folk high school pedagogy in XXI Europe". The Erasmus+ partnership is working together to develop curriculum and handbook for Organic agriculture course, which later will be implemented and evaluated by the project coordinator – Polish association Ziarno, using Folk High School methods. There will be two other outputs from the project: (1) guidelines on building key competences through Grundtvigian pedagogy – tools, examples, good practices; (2) a publication which will summarise the project – Folk high schools in Europe in XXI century: past, present time and future in modern Europe. During first project year curriculum with 4 theoretical blocks was developed (Earth/Soil, Plants, Animals and Human beings). Varied practical work is foreseen for participants. The course, which will last for two years, is going to focus on young students, aged 18-25 years.

Keywords: Grundtvig pedagogy, Folk High School, Erasmus project, Organic Agriculture curriculum

Introduction

Today's world is changing quicker than ever. Economic globalization, climate change, technologies and social realities require knowledge-based economic development, which influences the needs for improving our skills and competences. If people don't continue to develop and follow the modern pace of life they will soon be left behind. In the EU, this has been acknowledged for several years (Laal and Salamati, 2012). European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2006 focus on key competences for lifelong learning, philosophy based on creating a well-functioning 'knowledge triangle' of education, research and innovation and on

helping all citizens to be better skilled for competitiveness, growth and jobs as well as for equity and social inclusion. Initial education and training should support the development of these key competences in all young people. Adult education and training should give real opportunities to all adults to develop and update their key competences throughout life. Good opportunities in this direction give the "Folk high schools", institutions for adult education that generally don't grant academic degrees. Most of them have an area of expertise – sports, music, arts, agriculture, etc (Byczkowski, 2003). They are most commonly found in Nordic countries, in Germany and Austria. The concept originally came from Grundtvig (1783–1872) – Danish writer, poet, philosopher and pastor (Folk High School, *Wikipedia*). The folk high school movement was an act against the conservative education and culture. An act against the traditional book-learning and the use of language unknown to common people, where the primary relation was between the individual and the book alone. Grundtvig fought for a public education as an alternative to the university elite (danishfolkhighschools.com/about/history).

The modern folk high schools today vary significantly, but they are still "Grundtvigian", which means that their focus is on enlightenment, ethics, morality and democracy (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_high_school). When in XIX century Grundtvig was developing the concept and philosophy of Folk high schools in Denmark he was addressing similar challenges as we face in modern Europe, though in a historically and economically different context.

The aim of the paper is to present an international project of the Organic Production Folk High-School as an innovative method of young adult education by using some methods of Gruntvig pedagogy.

The main objective of the project is to prove that Grundtvigian educational concept is still alive, totally align with modern needs and challenges and could be creatively adapted to different European backgrounds. The concrete topic for exploring and adapting folk high school methodology will be done through realization in Poland of two pilot courses of two years duration for two groups of young students (together circa 40 people), aged 18-25 years.

The partnership will work together to develop curriculum and handbook for this course, which later will be implemented and evaluated. Two other outputs will be: (1) guidelines on building key competences through Grundtvigian pedagogy – tools, examples, good practices; (2) a publication which will summarise the project – Folk high schools in XXI Europe: past, present time and future in modern Europe.

Coordinator of the project and the organization which is going to implement the results is the Polish non-governmental organization – Ecological-Cultural Association ZIARNO (www.ziarno.grzybow.pl). Other partners in the project are universities and Folk High Schools. These institutions are cited below the title of the paper, as their representatives are co-authors.

Additional partner is the School inspectorate from the local community of Plock

town. The students willing to receive official certificate proving their education under the project, should pass exams organized by this state inspectorate.

NGO Ziarno has experience in Folk High-School pedagogy, as the idea dates back to 2001, when the first Folk High-School courses were offered for local women.

The results are coordinated with another activity of the Ziarno association which gained grant from Danish foundation Velux for construction of the new building for Folk High School, where students will study and live. One peculiarity of Folk High Schools is that students and sometimes teachers study and live under one roof.

Development of curriculum

During the first year a curriculum was developed. It is not typical curriculum. Except lessons directly connected with agricultural knowledge, considerable emphasizing is done on personality development of the students – communication skills, studding of English language related to agriculture and farming, art activities – music, arts and crafts singing, painting, team work, etc.

The theory of the study process will be done on five blocks distributed in two years. Each block lasts 3 weeks, 6 day per week and 8 hours per day. Only introductory block will be shorter – 1 week. Main subjects included in the study blocks are:

Block 1 – Introductory (31.08.2015 – 04.09.2015 – time for realization of the first course)

The education begins with some teambuilding measures;

Documentation and Log-Book - methods of documentation and their importance in the self-developmental learning process;

Basic knowledge on ecosystem, ecology, environment;

Types of soil and wildlife plants;

Basics and history of organic and biodynamic farming, principles, guidelines, control organizations;

Block 2 – Soil (09.11.2015 – 27. 11.2015)

Soil forming process - mineral and organic components of the soil; humus development.

Soils and Soil Physical Properties. Soil Chemistry and Fertility.

The living soil – diversity of soil organisms. The effect of soil biological activity on plant nutrition. Creating a healthy soil.

Plant nutrition

Soil tillage and cultivation practices;

Mechanization of work processes;

Construction of stables and other farm buildings.

Block 3 – Plants (15.02.2016 – 04.03.2016)
Arable crop growing in organic farming;
Horticulture in organic farming (vegetables, fruits, herbs);
Perennial grasslands;
Crop rotation in organic farming;
Irrigation.

Block 4 – Animals (07.11.2016 – 25.11.2016)
Organic Animal Husbandry;
Breeding in organic farming;
Feeding in organic farming;
Welfare in organic farming;
Housing in organic farming;
Rearing of different species.

Block 5 - Human being (06.02.2017 – 24.02.2017)
A farm as a seed rooted in a concrete place (analysis of the cultural, environmental and social background of the farm, how to build good ties and communication with local community, how to discover and use cultural, social, natural resources of the place);
Agricultural policy (EU, national and local);
Market requirements and value chains in the sector of organic agriculture and food production;
Marketing in organic farming;
Farm conversion, startup and management of a new farm;
Social aspects of organic farming (Working with handicapped personnel or alcoholics/drug addicts);

Each block includes classes connected with building of personal competences of student:
English language related to agriculture and farming;
Active democracy - weekly forum to debate/talk about living together, and other themes from mutual interest;
Genius Loci - refers to a location's distinctive atmosphere, or a "spirit of place";
Music and Singing - have joy in singing together;
Communication skills:
– daily communications/conversations (e.g. talks in person with other producers, clients or over the telephone); typical conflict constellations (with team members, clients, family, etc.) as well as conflict resolution (with clients, family, etc.)
– Social media - pros and cons, role of social media at present – modern methods of communications, important role played by digital, social media;

– How to develop and prove your own opinion? Oxford debate activity;
"Walk and talk about animal ethics";
Arts and crafts:
– Movie/Video (Start of a video project on the course, How to do video)
– Pottery (Work with clay)
– Painting with Plants (Learn how to make colours out of plants and paint with it)
– Poetry (Learn about Haikus and prepare their own about animals)

Every subject of curriculum has more detail description (table 1).

Table 1. Example of subject description

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Topic/Subject: Basics and History of Organic and Biodynamic Farming in Europe</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Number of lessons</td><td>Thematic Area</td><td>Teacher:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">4</td><td>1/E</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Teaching methods:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Lecture: 40%; Practical: 30%; Self-study: 30%
Proposed methods: seminars and lectures, team work and oral presentations</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Content:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Lecture: history of Organic Farming in Central Europe, outlines of important people: Rudolph Steiner (first lectures on Agriculture in 1924 as a basis for biodynamic farming), Hans Müller and Hans Peter Rusch (organic farming). Principles of organic and biodynamic farming. Development of EU directives to the present. Control system of ecological farming.
European Organizations like IFOAM, the worldwide umbrella organization for the organic agriculture movement: International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, Farmers' association Demeter, Research institutes and societies (ISOFAR - The International Society of Organic Agriculture Research; ORCA - The Organic Research Centres Alliance), etc. Development of the organic sector in Central Europe (area, farms, market, etc.).
Practical: team work on different subjects (see above and the situation in Poland) and presentation of each group.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Learning goals:</td><td>(%)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Professional Competence</td><td>Knowledge</td><td>Overview of history, principles, EU-regulations, control system, and development of the organic sector in Central Europe.</td><td>55%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Practical skills</td><td>Students capable of giving a speech/presentation</td><td>10%</td></tr>
</table>

Key Competence	Communication in the mother tongue	Students learn to communicate in their language through group work.	10%
	Communication in foreign languages		
	Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology		
	Digital competence	Students are able to search information for their presentations and prepare presentation them.	10%
	Learning skills		
	Social and civic competences	Students learn to work in small groups.	5%
	Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship		
	Cultural awareness and expression	Students will understand the cultural context of Organic Farming in Central Europe and Poland.	5%

The Gruntvigian approach of education includes and emphasized on practical and outdoor teaching (Rotaru, 2014). Main practical education for every student will be realized in farm. Every student will work in specific farm between theoretical blocks. Additionally all course participants will participate in 8 three days practical education evenly distributed over the study period. This education will be done in 17 diverse farms from all over Poland. Specific description of the farms could be seen on page http://www.eul.grzybow.pl/kursy/nasi-gospodarze. Production lines of these farms cover all branches of agricultural production and its processing:

Plant production – cereals, leguminous and other arable crops, horticulture (small and large scale vegetable production, green house production, fruit and berries production) and herbs.

Animal production – cattle, goats, horses, laying hens and beekeeping (stationary and mobile).

Food processing – cheese and cottage (soft cheese) making, juice production, bakery.

At farms students will get to know what direct sale is and how it is applied, as well as with other ways of trade. They will visit Agricultural Advisory Center for organic farming in town Radom.

Another important activity which diversifies farmer's activities is Agrotourism. The students will have possibility to visit several farms which offer such type of service.

At the end of the course a Final block (09.08. - 11.08.2017) is foreseen. During this three days meeting students and teachers will make summary, conclusions and outlook of the implemented training.

Those students who would like to have official certificate proving their education need to pass state exams at the local educational authorities. This certificate will give them rights to work as farmers and they can apply for financing from state's and European's programs supporting agriculture.

Conclusions

Under the frame of Erasmus+ projects, a nontraditional two years curriculum for Folk High School in Organic Agriculture was developed. The curriculum is divided on 6 main theoretical blocks (Introduction, Earth/Soil, Plants, Animals, Human beings and Final block). Practical education is divided on two parts. In the first part most of the students will work in one specific farm. The second part of practical education includes 8 short 3-day visits on 17 farms with different production lines – plant, animal production and food processing.

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