

Full Length Research

An In Service Teacher Training Course on Adult Training

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This paper describes an in service teacher training course on adult training. The trainees are Greek EFL teachers who teach in adult education structures like Second Chance Schools, Centers of Lifelong Learning and Vocational Training Institutes. First, the trainees' expectations are assessed and then a daily six hour training course is designed. The course takes place in a Greek public school. First, adult learning principles are discussed. There are several activities aiming at the participants' getting to know each other and then their adult teaching strategies are discussed in groups among them. Vocabulary teaching as well as teaching styles and strategies are put forward and the trainees participate in an activity where they are presented with vocabulary and asked to compose an imaginary text incorporating the linguistic items presented to them. During the last part of the training session, trainees are engaged in problem solving. Case studies of adult learners posing behavior and discipline problems in the classroom are presented and the teachers work in pairs to propose class management solutions. As follow up to the course, the trainees are required to present a description of their colleague peers as well as of the case study scenario they jointly tackled. Also, they will complete a questionnaire where they will evaluate the training course itself.

Keywords: adult learning, Second Chance School, Centers of Lifelong Learning, Vocational Training Institutes, class management, case study, vocabulary teaching, teaching styles and strategies

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INTRODUCTION

The present paper will present an in-service Greek EFL teacher training course. The course will be offered to a group of adult educators of Greek vocational training and lifelong adult education establishments.

Description of the group of trainees

The group of trainees comprises 20 Greek adult educators who teach English as a foreign language in adult education institutes like second chance schools,

centers of vocational training and lifelong learning institutes in Greece. The participants are both women and men and most of them have a teaching experience for at least five years in general and adult education.

Outline of the general aims of the course

The course described here will contain four sections and will last six hours and will be held in a public school.

Upon conceptualizing, planning and organizing the course, the trainer took under consideration a number of parameters (Graves, 1996). First, participant needs had

to be assessed. It is important to see what learners expect to learn from this course. Those are people who have willingly chosen to participate in this training event. Like most adult learners, they are motivated and have certain expectations as far as their training is concerned. This is why it is important for the trainer to be able to address them. In this case, the trainees need to ameliorate their theoretical knowledge on adult education and tackle specific issues like teaching methods and classroom management. In fact, before the course was planned, the trainer had devised and distributed a questionnaire to the trainees which aimed at assessing their needs.

Second, the trainer needs to determine the goals and the objectives of the course. This means the aims of the course and what the learners will need to know in order to achieve these goals. In order to attain the course's goals the educator needs to think about what s/he will include in the syllabus and then develop or select teaching materials and activities. From the questionnaires filled by the participants before the training event, it was found that most of them were interested in managing class discipline and in teaching certain language aspects like vocabulary to adult learners.

The trainer also needs to devise an evaluation schedule in order to see what the participants have learnt and to measure the effectiveness of the course. In this case, the learners are expected to know general principles of adult education and be able to apply them in specific situations.

Finally, the training situation resources and events need to be taken into consideration. In our case, the training event will take place in a public school located in an easy access area near to public transportation media. Still, the school infrastructure is not very high and the trainer only has access to a writing board, a laptop and a projector. A photocopying machine is also available for a limited number of copies.

The course

Section 1

The adult training course will last for about six hours and will take place in a public school from nine o'clock in the morning until half past three in the afternoon on a Saturday morning. There will be a thirty minute participant registration at the beginning and a thirty minute break during the course.

Section one will take about one hour. First, the trainer will welcome the participants, introduce herself and present the aims of the course. She will hand out the course outline (see Appendix). Rogers mentions the need for adults to be in control of what they are learning (In Beaumont, Manolopoulou-Sergi, Ayakli, (2005: 199).

Handing out a course outline to participants help them conceptualize their purpose and keep it in mind.

Among the aims of the course is the participants' knowledge of adult learning theoretical principles. These can be discussed in the form a lectured by the trainer who will also assign recommended reading to the participants. Besides theory, the course will invite participants to reflect upon their teaching experiences and share them with the rest of the class. The course will also include opportunities for the trainees to apply theory to practice by engaging in group activities and discussions.

In order to introduce themselves to their peers, the following activity will be done: the trainees will sit in a circle. One person will start by introducing themselves. Then the person sitting next to him/her will introduce themselves as well and mention the name of the person having spoken before them as well. Each person in the circle will repeat the previous people's names. This is a memory game helping understanding and is also a getting-to-know technique followed in many courses.

Section 2

After having introduced themselves, the trainee teachers will divide themselves in four groups of five. Each group will select its members. They will take some time to get to know each other again and they will share teaching experiences. This means that they will tell each other about their teaching life so far mostly as it concerns teaching adults. Then one person from each group will select a peer whom s/he will write a paragraph about and present to the rest of the class. This is another way to get people familiarized with their colleagues, their teaching backgrounds and their experiences. During discussion within groups, participants are also expected to relate to each other their anticipations from this training program. Adults are usually focused in their learning (Kokkos, 1998 In Beaumont, Manolopoulou-Sergi, Ayakli, 2005: 200) and have pre-set expectations from training programs.

Besides getting people to know each other, reflecting on one's teaching experience and expressing one's training expectations are also ways of raising self-awareness concerning one's view of teaching. Freeman (1989: 34 In Beaumont, 2005: 130) refers to awareness as being one a "unifying superordinate" in teaching. According to this viewing, a teacher's awareness of their teaching attitudes, skills and knowledge is of great importance since it is a step closer to reflection of one's practices. In fact, reflection is a step towards development.

Ho (1995: 66 In Beaumont, Manolopoulou, Ayakli 2005: 284) suggests the creation of reflective lesson plans which include notes on how the activities should be materialized as well as notes on how things went during

the lesson. All this help teachers think about what they propose to do, what they actually do and their actions' effectiveness on learners. This second part of the course will last about one hour too.

Section 3

The third part of the seminar is approximated to last for about two hours and it includes participants' talking about their teaching methods and styles. It will also incorporate a language awareness component—teaching vocabulary.

The trainer will ask the participants to continue working in groups of five. Following a group discussion, each group will suggest ways of teaching vocabulary to their learners. In adult education institutes in Greece people who participate in educational programs usually already have a certain English language level and mostly wish to revise their knowledge or learn more vocabulary on certain semantic areas. For example, in lifelong centers offering language courses in Greek municipalities between the years 2013 and 2016, among the educative programs offered, there have been a number of foreign language courses entitled "Business English" or "English for Tourism". The purpose of those programs was mainly to teach participants specific vocabulary related to the aforementioned areas (2017: <http://www.gsae.edu.gr/el/geniki-ekpaidefsi-enilikon>). In addition, educators in Greek centres of vocational training also focus in teaching ESP vocabulary since they have to teach terminology to a number of vocational disciplines like electricians, information technology experts, beauticians etc.).

Many of the trainees participating in this course have a number of ways of teaching vocabulary. The sources are numerous. One can create their personal notes based on material s/he finds in dictionaries or ESP books or in electronic sources. In more technical specialties, like car engineers, for example, one can find resources in technical manuals. The way each instructor presents and practices vocabulary may differ to a great degree however. This is the reason why course participants are asked by the trainer to work in groups and relate the way in which they usually teach vocabulary to their adult learners. When groups finish discussing, a representative from each group will present some of the teaching methods of the group's participants to the rest of the class.

Following the participants' discussion on ways of presenting vocabulary, the course trainer will present some vocabulary herself. She will have found a reading text on adult education. First, she will write some of the words on the board. She will ask participants to reflect on those words and write down possible meanings and uses. The participants will offer explanations and everything will be written on the board. Then the rest of

the class will agree on the most possible meanings of the terms and the reading text will be handed out to them in photocopies.

After reading the text, the participants will confirm the meaning of words and the instructor will give each group some cues and ask them to make up an imaginary text using as many of these words as possible. Each group will work together and create a story which they will

narrate to the class. The cues given by the instructor will result in five different parts of a complete story which the groups will then have to compose. One of the tasks that will be assigned to the trainees to do after the completion of the course is to each compose the whole story and send it to the course instructor.

The purpose of the previous activities is to sensitize trainees to teaching vocabulary in context in a non directional inductive way. Talking about adult education and vocabulary teaching and doing this through adult oriented vocabulary learning activities is also a loop input activity (Woodward, 1991 In Beaumont, 2005: 236). This teaching process will be loop input because it aims at drawing upon trainees' direct in service experience. It uses a language focus section –teaching vocabulary to adults—that trainees engage in and makes trainees function like adult language learners themselves by attempting similar activities to the ones they would assign their own language learners in adult education language classes.

Section 4

After the four first hours of the course, a half hour break will follow and during the last two hours, the trainees will be engaged in case studies having to do mostly with classroom management.

After examination and analysis of the participants' questionnaires that were completed before the training course, the instructor saw a need for many of them to discuss classroom management problems most of which having to do with learner behavior and discipline.

According to adult education theory, adult learners are assigned a number of roles in the classroom. For example, there is the person called the 'leader,' someone else who is called the 'scapegoat' and many more (Fairchild, 2003: 4). One of the roles is also that of the 'troublemaker'—someone who intentionally causes trouble just for the sake of it or in order to catch the class's attention.

The course instructor will ask the participants to divide themselves in pairs. Each pair will be given a case to study. In each case scenario there will be one adult learner who will create some sort of problem or make noise in the classroom. Pairs will first need to re-introduce one another and then talk about the case, brainstorm on possible ways of dealing with the learner

disruptive behavior and compose a proposition as to the way the situation could be resolved.

The reason why the course instructor asks the trainees to work in pairs instead of in groups is to make them be more focused concerning a specific problem and employ as much of their teaching experience as possible. If more than two people were involved each would have more to propose and it would be more difficult to reach a common decision. The instructor also wishes in this way to make trainees record more individualistic responses to the suggested problems. In this way each participant will be called upon to exploit their individual teaching experiences more. This exploration will be based on reflection and reflection is a means to development (Beaumont, Manolopoulou-Sergi, Ayakli, 2005: 279).

Trainee Assessment

After the completion of the six hour training course, the participants will be given a list of suggested readings for future reference. They will be also asked to send the instructor first, a short text presenting the teaching profile of the peer in the final pair activity. In this way, each trainee will be sensitized to another colleague's experience and to the fact that many share similar experiences which they can draw upon for the solution of similar problems. Second, each trainee will be asked to write up a report based on the case study they had to work with their pair during section 4 of the course. This report will explain the problem and suggest ways of dealing with it. It could imaginarily be addressed to the school administration and it shows the teacher's role not only as instructor but as a participant to policy design as well.

Course Evaluation

As a means of evaluating and attempting to revise her practices, the course trainer will ask trainees to make an evaluation of the course offered to them. This will be effectuated after both the course and the trainee assessment have been completed. The trainees will be sent an evaluation form including both closed question items and open questions where they will complete their comments on the course's strengths and weaknesses as well as make their suggestions for course alterations.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to present and justify an in-service teacher training course offered to adult lifelong education instructors of Greek establishments. It is a six hour one day course which has not been materialized but which can hopefully upon materialization promote trainee teacher development.

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APPENDIX

Course Outline

In-Service Teacher Training Course

Course Description

1. **Title** : Adult training
2. **Tutor**: Effrosyni Giannarou
3. **Time** : 9.00-16.00

4. **Aims**: To reflect upon adult learning principles and teaching methodology employed by Greek EFL teachers and to define best practices in dealing with specific problems

5. **Objectives**: By the end of the course trainees should be able to show more knowledge on adult learning theory, reflection as far as their own teaching practice is concerned and openness to change.

6. **Outline: 9.00-9.30: Trainee arrival and registration**
Section 1: (9.30-10.30) General introduction. Meeting the participants
Section 2 : (10.30-11.30) Sharing of teaching experiences
Section 3: (11.30-13.30) Teaching vocabulary
BREAK (13.30-14.00)
Section 4 (14.00-16.00): Managing undisciplined learners: a case study

7. **Method**: A hands on/ workshop approach will be taken. There will be also some theoretical input including discussion on adult education and recommended reading

8. **Assessment**: Trainees will be assessed on the basis of their involvement and participation in classroom work and by an assignment sent to the instructor after the completion of the course

9. **Course Evaluation**: After the completion of the course and the trainee assessment, trainees will be asked to deliver a descriptive evaluation of the course. This evaluation will be written on a form comprising of a set of closed questions on the course as well as spaces where trainees will express themselves about course strengths and weaknesses.

10. **Recommended Reading**:

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