Experiences from the pilot training in Vidzeme, Latvia

Notes related to the SEMPRE Guidebook for Empowerment Training

Participation/ reification – pp 10 Guidebook

It was important that the persons involved in the process have a common problem or agree (are able to agree) on some certain problem. For instance in our learning group from Cesis – participants agreed that it is a communication with carers and parents of social service user group (persons with intellectual disabilities in Day care centre) that was not working well, and was not collaborative for the good of their clients. The learning group consisted of those who were primarily working with the persons and were in contact on everyday basis with the parents/ carers. All of them were concerned about the same issue.

Pictures from the Kick – off seminar

Pictures from the Kick – off seminar

The local and the global: pp 11 Guidebook

Example SEMPRE Vidzeme – empowerment training for social service providers

Our empowerment training was organized in the context of ongoing reform so called *Deinstitutionalization process (it was a "global insight")* – new way of services shall be developed for persons with intellectual disabilities and other persons being institutionalized before. Our training group consisted of social service providers – social workers, community leaders and even educational institution representatives directly and indirectly taking the responsibility on service development. Local concern was that they had not really systematically worked with such service development before and had no experience, thus they needed to learn new practices. Therefore in empowerment training module we combined exchange of experience (visited different practical places) and continuously continued to work on their own practices. Reflection part evolved both reflection on their own experience as well as they had to reflect on what were the new insights/ learned from practice they approached during the practical exchange visits. The learning process evolves to try and test new methods, tools and search for practical solutions both in the learning group, as well as individually or in collaboration with other learning groups in the class.

Picture: Learning group discussion about DI plan in Latvia, day care center idea.

Picture: Complexity of change- Alsviki searching for new ways in work with students at school.

Picture: Group house example – exchange visit in Maarha Village, Estonia.

Identification and negotiability pp 11 Guidebook

In our case all participants from the learning group could not attend the in-class training session or other action learning seminars. In some cases some learning groups decided to involve other important colleague in order to contribute to the whole learning process. In some cases it was important to bring in managers, politicians and leaders so that the process can continue (both top-down and bottom-up). Learning group participants are making decision how to work internally (in organization) and how to work externally (which stakeholders are important) on the problem in search for solution. For instance, we asked to join the learning session the professional in supervision, mediation and group conflict, as well as we asked to join experience of exchange visit responsible for the Deinstitutionalization process regional expert and responsible representative for service development from Ministry of Welfare. At one learning session we asked to join lecturer in social work methods.

Picture: Session together with senior expert Kristine Lasmane, Ministry of Welfare

Picture: Learning group from Smiltene together are working with Mazsalaca – as they agreed with common problem

Picture: Taking part in education training for person's with intellectual disabilities in Maarja village

Picture: Training on professionalization – what nowadays means to be a social worker?

Picture: Warm – up workshop and team work training.

End-seminar: pp 15

The learning process at the "end seminar" may not be completed. The process shall continue, but in our case we discussed the first results. For instance, in communication with the client's careers/parents. The learning group presented the new ways how they interacted with the group and how they practiced participation/ reification (they were organizing common events together with end-users, parents and social service providers). They were searching/ finding new ways on how to build a trust and to proceed with interaction with the social service user in more collaborative way. In the end-seminar it was decided to continue with learning sessions and proceed to exchange of different study material (in common folder created), keep to find new methods, ways of how to work on. It is good if somebody takes the initiative for continuity – update the information and communicate with the groups (we had several groups that were interested to keep collaborate).

Picture: Cesis learning group presenting their new ways in coomunication.

Example on script.

We used Template 2: It was important to provide information what is the purpose of the activity etc. We just had to change the times due to the reason of summer holidays (we thought that it would be possible to held one seminar in July, but it did not worked as several groups could not participate). After the first session with Gundi we planned the detailed script, but some of the themes we changed during the learning process as we find out that they had specific/ concrete needs. We used information from follow up so that be more prepared and also change the right theme for the next session. So, it is good to say in the beginning that Script is changeable if they have a need for it.

Role of Trainer -

As a trainer I and my colleague Hanna did not have previous experience to work in that way. So the "train the trainee" and Gundi was a good start for us to start with "know-how". During the process it was important to listen what are the learning groups concerned about – what is their considerations, problems or challenges as well as to hear what work well. Not all groups were working in the same tempo, not all of the learning group individuals are able to work on themselves in the same manner. It is important to accept the difference. Some groups may need more support other less and in different situations. So it is important to respect the learning group and to facilitate in a manner so that they find out the best way by themselves. For instance, one learning group was working on group house development – they had to find some examples (drawings) on how to make those houses. We just gave them ideas whom they shall contact, where to search information on web and in group discussion they were defining who are the professionals they shall bring into the process. Other group was looking for specific communication tools and social work tools. So for one learning session the lecturer on

social work methods gave some knowledge and we also asked to look on their own ways/ methods they or their colleagues are using – what is working well, why not or what can be improved etc. Other groups came with suggestions. So it was a common learning platform.

We also as a trainers learned to become facilitators by reading/ studying on empowerment (discussed the human right perspective in everyday work, P. Freier, cultural or political backgrounds/ contexts, social innovations, empowerment tools etc.) and critically reflected on our own work (we were two). After the training we always discussed what was the empowerment and what was not- when we missed something, what kind of info comes out from follow-ups and how shall we use that information. It was important to be sensitive both on direct info – when they were asked for to give some proposals, as well to indirect – when we understood that they have faced some difficulties, or when we saw that their way of thinking/ working is not following the principles of empowerment. Therefore time to time it was important again to talk about the common understanding and what is thought with this module. That we are not the once who will give the answer, that they have to search for the answers. We took rather active role in organizing the supportive events in the training (out of their proposals), but actually looking back we shall try to involve the learning groups more actively into the process. We had a good example when one of the learning groups invited us to their event (visit to Maarja village in Estonia) and afterwards we decided that we could make a learning session there. I think that it would be great if we could work on an idea to "train them as a trainers" as well. For instance, by allowing them to prepare one specific learning session for others. We did not managed in that way because of not knowing how it will look like (it was a pilot), but now I see that it would be actually possible. Also we had to little time for own preparation – we actually needed more time for learning. Action learning time was different for each of the groups and it was rather difficult for us to adjust to all 6 groups. But it is important that each group has their own time. One group for instance did not managed to work on because their manager was opposing and not allowing to attend the learning (even though they liked it). So we actually shall proceed to work with them and try to find the way how to work with manager and the group. So "trainers' have different practical, organizational challenges as well as need some time to "grow" (own role).

Model for a description of themes: 3.5. about training modules starting on pp 16- 21

Workshop theme (full-day exchange visit in Maarja village (Estonia)

What are the new/ alternative social work methods in work with person's with intellectual (ID) and functional disabilities?

Empowerment process means that participants are more actively engaged in decision-making process and their own life. One of the theme that shall be covered during the action learning course is the theory/ practice in work with person's with ID: communication, social work methods and general vision on services that shall be developed in Vidzeme region.

The purpose of the workshop

To get theoretical and practical knowledge about social services for persons with intellectual and functional (multiple) disabilities from independent living and quality of life perspective (education (learning), home, employment/ employability, social life domains).

Content

The contents of the workshop are:

Exchange visit in Maarja village (Estonia) – practical experience and discussion with the service providers;

One plenary for social workers (practicioners): Exercise and example from the own experience – how we are/ planning to work with the social service user group (ID and with other FD) in our municipality? Professional identity and role in engaging/ motivating the social service users and career's? (lead by lecturer from Riga Stradins Unviersity Social work department)

Second plenary for managers, local municipality political representatives: Discussion with K.Lasmana – from Minsitry of welfare, about Deinstitutionalization process, role of professionals and municipalities in service development, engagement, expectations;

The workshop was carried out in Estonia – a community level service delivery; visible place that is covering all the necessery items (education – learning, home – living, employment/ employability and social life domains). It was important to bring in professionals – social work lecturer to work with the groups on their own identity, role as service developers; and expert from ministry was giving the overall picture of where we are going in the deinstitutionalization process in Latvia, what is expected from the municipalities and the managers on social service departments.

References

Summary from discussions, video and work material (examples from Finland and Sweden) stored in common google folder

Reflections from the visit and decisions for the next workshop/ seminar

What is new/ unknown- what did you learned?What are the next steps for solving your own defined problem?

What kind of expertize/ tools/ instruments are needed?

Methods used

Team building (LEGO Serious Play: a Duck story – participants from different level/ municipalities were building the ducks; then they were going around and comparing their duck with others and in the end-came to the conclusion that all ducks are different (as their services) and they are working on very different services, but they are swimming in the same "lake" anyway – so have to work together: see example https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCDDgxv7NVM), we also had group discussion, visualizations – drawing own experience, exchange visit in Maarja village)

Some tips on: pp 30

The idea of how to evaluate the flow and form of the course

In our case we were evaluating the process as a whole after each meeting/ seminar and workshop (a questionnaire and feedback); there were some items that were important to learn/ know-how in the beginning but later on it was important not to focus on the subjects or themes that were defined from the beginning, but it was important to understand whether their own process (at home in the office) is possible to carry out, what kind of help/ assistance they need, what we can bring to them both on individual and group level. So the focus in learning changed from educational/ teaching to collaborative way. For instance we tried to find solutions in other groups that were on specific items more experienced and bring in the persons (external expertize) that could help with concrete theme or issue.

Pictures: Continuity and further work on empowerment.
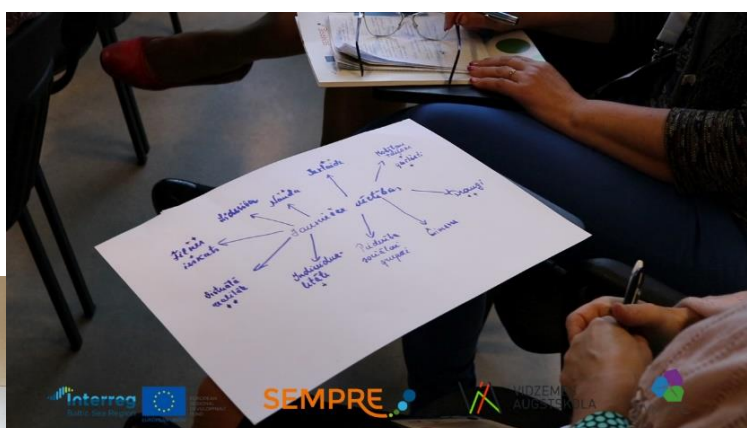
The idea of how to evaluate the content of the course

The content of the course (or the process)

In our case the course content was evaluated in traditional way – by answering on questions both sent in by Helen as well as our own questionnaire. However, it is clear that if the content change then the evaluation of it may change. The most important was to measure if they received the knowledge they asked for, and whether they could use the knowledge in their daily work. In the final seminar when we listened to their final presentations (in different formats) we could say "yes" they have received and they used a lot for their work to change their own practice. As I wrote before – they did not finished the process, but we could identify that they have worked on their problems and searched for solutions. Already in mid-seminar they were asked what works well/ and what does not – how to proceed and what shall be changed from our side as trainers. Then we made some changes, some items were taken out for later and instead we put more emphasis on social work tools/ methods. Yes, and in the beginning the topics – themes were more generally stated, only later we were specific out of their view what is important to learn or how to learn.

Examples from pilots more in details.

For your own consideration what can be useful to present as an example.

Learning group	Defined Problem	Challenged methods/ process	Main results	Comments
Cesis municipality (4 persons- social workers) working with persons with Intellectual disability at day care center	How to improve communication with participants of Day care center and their relatives (careers)?	Communication tools Environment - where to meet, how to talk Other stakeholders (moms support group, NGOs etc.); Socialization activities.	Improved communication techniques (get knowledge about alternative communication methods - primarily); changed meeting places with parents, socialization activities expanded - outside inst.	On general institutional level they are working with Deinstitutionalization process, but at the action learning module they were focusing on how to find other ways of how to improve communication, interaction and collaboration with parents/ relatives.
Smiltene municipality (3 persons - social workers)	How to improve social/ education services available for persons with physical/ mental disabilities?	Case study of Kaspars (34 years old) after car accident. No services (education, living, social) are available for young person in rural area. The only option is elderly home (institution) where to get basic needs.	During the action learning training they found solution for his education (2 years) and living. They were arranging socialization activities during the summer.	Still the question remains about Kaspar's future (and similar cases)- what can be improved from quality of life perspective; when Kaspars will finish studies and will return home (what kind of living place to offer and what kind of services shall be developed in general). Supportive measures and work on networks - friends, community and family has been discussed as a priority to work on in the future.
Valka municipality (2 persons - Social workers)	How to develop comprehensive social services (as a system) for persons with intellectual disabilities - group houses, day care	At the moment communication and interaction with parents (careers, family) was poor; there were no	Communication activities (meetings, individual conversations, discussions with other on different levels) were organized in order	At the moment the process is organized in realm of Deinstitutionalization. There is a need to increase internal management capacity,

	center, individual work/ communication?	services available before.	to get better knowledge now to develop and what exactly is needed; exchange visit and practical training (SEMPRE and other) helped to broaden the horizons about facilities needed for person with ID.	understanding about the process on municipality level (external factors that are realized to be important in the process). They did not managed to do more due to time consuming activities relating to in-house visits and work with the end-user evaluations. I
Priekuļi (social workers - 7 persons)	How to increase the participation of the adult end-users (with addictions, other hardships) in activities offered by social work department?	Borderlines - red lines in work with end-users; more time for clients (to discover the facts, control; use of participative methods); more often to evaluate the process (reflect on activities that were carried out). External factors - legislation, manipulative relationships with social workers, lack of inter-institutional collaboration. Use of classical methods, lack of knowledge on humanistic approach (human right approach). Concentration of power/ knowledge on managerial level.	During the training the group worked on change in their own professional shift - instead of problems they were searching for solutions. Case of person with amputated leg. Instead of just "giving" they helped/ supported him in getting the services (medical) available for him. Several trainings were organized in order to change the shift (mindset) and exchange visits in different community based practices in order to expand their knowledge and understanding. Some activities were held on management level and discussions in use of participative methods.	This group was most difficult and there can be identified changes in their own development. Still the hardest work is on themselves, therefore it is long way to go.
Kocēni municipality (4 persons - social workers)	How to establish social enterprise - integrated working places for persons with Intellectual disabilities by evolving the end-user's representatives?	Open for changes, already established network and support on municipal/ political level. Need for practical knowledge how to develop particular service - organizational form. New legislation - lack	Renovated locals for social enterprise (municipality as a holder). Interest to attract other in realization - leaders, private sector, initiatives. Practical experiences abroad increased	There is a need to go ahead. One of the main challenges remained is personnel capacity and share of responsibility of all involved parties (school (person's with in ID, parents, local entrepreneurs, other leaders and

		of practical experience in Latvian case.	knowledge about the service user group, their needs and options.	municipality). They are still afraid to rely on free market economy - general principles.
Mazsalaca municipality - one person, teacher/ mom of ID person	How to develop and promote services for person's with ID in Mazsalaca community?	No social services (Day care center, short-term care services etc. There is a need for qualitative services for persons with ID. The municipality offer such services on distance (50km).	She got in contact with several moms and initiated to establish form of NGO (or initiative group-support group), exchange visit in Liepāja, Riga Organization for Independent living and Estonia was crucial for confidence to work on it further. The capacity building is in its development process. She started to be more active (publicity) - talked about her experience on TV, in training group, published in local newspaper. Her other son made a communication tool - T-shirt with film in order to raise awareness about people's with ID needs. In SEMPRE trainings she was sharing her own knowledge and experience with other social service providers.	This is interesting case as she was only one. The social service providers attended only some meetings with us in early beginning but were not interested to proceed. She needs more supportive activities in order to form organization and build the capacity that is needed. It is planned to extend the network - to engage other moms in surrounded areas that are interested in qualitative and comprehensive service development.
Alsviki professional training school for persons with Intellectual disabilities (school teachers, professionals from the Latvian Academy of Art (social design)	How to improve collaboration between students and enterprises (employers) in order to provide supportive working places adjusted for the student needs?	After finishing the professional education only 10-15% were in the labour market having the job. Vidzeme Planning region initiated the project "Break the stereotypes" - the idea was to bring the students closer to the employers. During the Empowerment	Some students already are working and have got practical training place in their living area. School is willing to create own working places but have difficulty to enter the Deinstitutionalization process (that is in its mid-way). New solutions have been approached	There is a need to continue to work with internal capacity. Many teachers/ personnel have been working their for 20 years and have their own routines. It is rather hard to initiate the changes in so institutionalized environment - with laws and regulations. Headmaster is open for new solutions and

		training module the teachers and other professionals were working on their own professional understanding on capabilities. The Latvian Academy of Art with students were coming with social design idea and developed practical individual presentation tool (Portfolio) that was presented for employers. All partners together were searching for solutions in their own defined area. Then we had common discussions with students, presentation and seminars in order to understand the shortages (lack of knowledge) etc.	in learning process and exchange visits.	has been activated to search for new collaborations.

Own experience with the end-user (applied Action learning method)

Learning group	Defined Problem	Challenged methods/ process	Main results	Comments
Liepa SEMPRE group	How to increase the capacity of social-service users to decide over their own lives (general) - motivate for work, engage in socialization and practical learning settings?	Socially isolated, low-income, unemployed, lonely moms children and persons with low level of education are not realizing their own capacity/ capability (locked in their vicious circle);	By questioning the social service users about their interests, what kind of activities they like, and what can they do - we were responding to those interests. We started with cooking (common prepared meals), hand crafts, social events, dressing etc. During these trainings we were working with their "imagination", dreams and were discussing the resources that they have individually, or as a group etc. In those meetings it was important as facilitator to build a trust (not by	Action learning process is not finished and now we are planning to work on in more structured way (in our case it was a pilot and we were not very confident on how it works). Now we are very confident and believe that it is only way how to work in the future.

			promising "heaven"), but by listening and not judging, be patient and respond to their small wishes). Example, one mom said that she would like to try decoupage - that she saw that those items are very interesting and could be used as presents. No one had tried it before and so the group decided to try. We found one mom that could teach another. Interesting fact is that we searched one who were known as being social worker. She was also important actor in minoring the gap in relationship between social service providers and social service users. In action learning process it is important not only to search for solution but to search for best solutions, knowledge and social innovations in all settings/ aspects. During the process it was important to work on human/ social capital resources (to increase it) - knowledge, skills, networks, relationships, support tools, leadership, etc. Empowerment process is powerful as its content is build from so many insights, experiences on different levels (individual, community and group level). Resources were mobilized by sharing the knowledge between each other and by searching for new knowledge. Still it is important to know that not all in the group are at the same speed (tempo) and facilitators have to feel it (when there is a need to slow down).	