



Nelfema Ltd. Bulgaria

How to motivate marginalised groups with various cultural backgrounds to LLL

Roma population in Bulgaria

Roma population is traditionally considered a marginalized group in Bulgaria when the discussion topic is LLL. While reasons can vary, they always refer to the characteristics of the Roma lifestyle that create obstacles to learning. The number of the Roma Population is also a discussion topic and when facts are missing estimates about the numbers are between 800 000 and over a million.

Motivation factors/ Personal experience

My experience with Roma people in various projects about lifelong learning show that the best way to inspire them for learning is through success stories / role models people from their groups. When they see the results in one they get interested to try themselves. The other important element is to see learning as adding value to their lives. Usually learning needs some learning habits that take some time to be established. So learning needs to be made easy at the beginning and with the aim to get people believe that they can do it. A project in this relation has been the so called Second Chance Schools - where adult Roma people were completing primary grades of the educational system and were following professional qualification courses. After completing the courses they were able to find jobs. The results of this project proved that Roma were getting motivated to learn when there was an immediate value.

Arts as a motivation factor

Roma people are famous for their dancing, singing and playing instruments. In this relation I have witnessed the performance of a Roma choir which was blending the natural talents of the singers and music players with some knowledge and an academic approach. There are also Roma groups in Bulgaria (e.i. Karandila) who have become very famous and successful in creating and selling CD albums. In this case learning is perhaps in the refining of the talent, in the polishing of the diamond but it does have a larger motivation for representatives of the Roma population.

General ideas

- Learning is considered to be a benefit in our knowledge based society and as such we value it. We have come to divide knowledge into formal, non-formal and informal, but even when informal learning is valued it is seen as complementing the formal or non-formal learning. One way to approach Roma populations with the LLL is exactly through the informal learning in which every member is involved. Perhaps that way Roma will see themselves as already included in the learning process in one of the aspects and this would entail a sense of belonging rather than a sense of uniquely different.
- In order for the formal or informal learning to be made appealing to Roma population it needs a justification in the value system that they have. The approach of learning as a way to get integrated into the society is in my opinion dangerous as it does not respect the need to be different and to keep close to ones roots. For example last year at a fair I have

seen a group of Roma women selling some hand made head scarves. When I asked them to teach me they were shocked, but happy to do so.

In this way we need to change the paradigm of our thinking: we do not want to teach them, but rather to see the learning process as a mutually enriching partnership where both sides will learn. I believe that motivation will come also through the wish to share ones knowledge and experience and learning will happen naturally as an exchange.

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