



GUIDE ADVICES GUIDE IMPLEMENTATION

- *Partner: Onda Urbana - Italy*

1. How did you implement the method adopted (popular education) in your local activities, thanks to project experience?

Onda Urbana aims to:

- favour meeting between different cultures
- sustain social integration for women and young people who live at the margin of the society, not only foreigners
- improve self-consciousness through meeting with peers
- support parents dealing with social and professional troubles, because the prevalence of these social problems has a direct impact on how children grow and experience their lives.

The methods to achieve this goals are different, because we choose the most effective tools for individual and social growth of our beneficiaries, as popular education and empowerment.

We consider the learners as the SUBJECT, not the OBJECT of the learning process, and through this approach we support our beneficiaries to becoming the subject of society.

The educators and the learners are equal participants in the learning process – all are the producers of knowledge. The learning process is developed through a continuous dialogue between the educators and the learners.

The objective of learning is to liberate the participants from the social pressures and internalized ideas that hold them passive in conditions of oppression – to make them capable of changing their reality, their lives, and the society they live in.

2. The achievement of project objectives realizes together with the direct involvement and participation of target groups to every activity, in order to sustain their educational path, overcoming integrative difficulties and promoting their entrance in the social context.

How did you involve the beneficiaries in your local activities?

Onda Urbana Onlus Youth Association carries out a number of projects addressed to:

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- children and young people, both Italians and immigrants, especially the ones who live in the suburbs and in condition of social marginalization
- immigrant women, especially victims of human trafficking
- refugees
- parents dealing with social and professional troubles

We direct involved beneficiaries in our activities, in order to sustain their educational path, overcoming integrative difficulties and promoting their entrance in the social context. The association organizes free courses of initiation into Italian language and citizenship for immigrants and workshops on the European CV, examples of application letters to seek a job. Onda Urbana also manages a Center for social integration of children and young people. We use the method popular education as a collective effort in which a high degree of participation is expected from everybody. Teachers and learners aren't two distinct groups; rather, everyone teaches and everyone learns! We support learners to being able to make decisions about what they are learning, and how the learning process takes place. We consider staff as facilitators who is needed to make sure that new ideas arise, progress, and don't get repetitive, but this isn't at all the same thing as a teacher. In popular education, then, we can't teach another person, but we can facilitate another's learning and help each other as we learn.

3. *The project means empowerment as the process of social action through which beneficiaries, organizations and communities gain competences about their life, in order to change their social and political environment to improve equity and lifestyle.*

Which kind of competences beneficiaries, organizations and communities have experienced thanks to the project?

In popular education, the learning process starts with identifying and describing everyone's own personal experience, and that knowledge is built upon through various activities done in groups. After the activity, a debriefing process allows us to analyse our situation together; seeing links between our own experience and historical and global processes in order to get the "big picture". Through the generation of this new knowledge, we're able to reflect more profoundly about ourselves and how we fit into the world. This new understanding of society is a preparation to actively work towards social change. In fact, in popular education, the education process isn't considered to be complete without action on what is learned; whether it be on a personal or political level.

The agenda of popular education is democratic change and the empowerment of the disempowered. Some principles which make popular education different from mainstream, teacher education are:

- everyone teaches; everyone learns
- learning begins with the learner's own experience
- people want to learn where the knowledge is relevant and valuable to them
- adults will make time for learning that has immediate results
- learning is a cyclical experience of knowledge, reflection, action.

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The belief that all people have the capacity to become critical thinkers and to work to solve their own problems lies at the heart of popular education methodology. Participants in a popular education setting are active subjects, not passive objects. Taking an active role helps people learn better. It helps them care more about what they are learning. A facilitator who works this way becomes a co-learner with the participants. Indeed, the facilitator should take guidance from the participants throughout the planning and workshop process.

4. Have you any advice to other European organizations concerning the adopted method (popular education)?

We suggest to other organisations to adopt popular education as method of participatory education where groups of people explore and exchange their lived experience and ideas about social, political and economic problems. The explicit purpose of popular education is for groups to gain understanding of their common problems and to develop, implement and evaluate solutions.

The underlying implication of the traditional approach is that students are "uneducated" and in need of knowledge that can come only from teachers or experts. This need creates a dependency and reinforces a sense of powerlessness. People learn to distrust themselves, their own knowledge and intuitions and this can lead to confusion. They often feel there is something wrong but they are not sure what. Popular education method encourages participants to see themselves as a fount of information and knowledge about the real world. When they are encouraged to work with the knowledge they have from their own experience they can develop strategies together to change their immediate situations.