



BEST PRACTICE IN ADULT EDUCATION FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Wesign

Civic Education and Green transition
Programs for Deaf and Sign-language
Speaking Individuals

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Co-funded by
the European Union

Wesign

– Civic Education and Green transition Programs for Deaf and Sign-language Speaking Individuals

Context and Initiative Details

Name of the initiative	Wesign
Geographical scope	Local, Örebro Municipality
Sources of funding	We sign was a project funded by the Swedish Inheritance Fund
Duration of the initiative	2011 – 2022
Target audience	The project was aimed at deaf and sign language-speaking individuals.
Goals of the initiative	<p>The project's goal was to empower deaf individuals from a language perspective to increase their democratic influence in society and their ability to participate in political processes on important societal issues such as the green transition. Additionally, their access to public services is limited. They are excluded from society, and their reception in the community, the private sector, and the public sector is restricted due to language barriers rather than a one-sided approach. The laws concerning the rights of deaf individuals to sign language interpreters are limited.</p> <p>Educational content on green transition has been a part of the project and covered the following areas:</p> <p>Basic Environmental Knowledge: Understanding fundamental concepts of sustainability, ecological balance, and environmental protection.</p> <p>Climate Change: In-depth information on the causes and effects of climate change, including global warming and its impact on various ecosystems.</p> <p>Renewable Energy: Teaching about different forms of renewable energy, such as solar, wind, and hydropower, and how these can replace fossil fuels.</p> <p>Waste Management and Recycling: Practical tips and methods for effective waste management, including composting and recycling.</p> <p>Sustainable Consumption: Information on people's consumption</p> <p>To promote democratic participation within the framework of green transition, Wesign focused on:</p> <p>Social study: Education about civic rights and responsibilities, and how deaf individuals can participate in and influence democratic processes, particularly in environmental policy.</p> <p>Network Building: Creating networks between deaf and hearing individuals to increase understanding and cooperation on various issues, including environmental matters. These networks served as platforms to exchange ideas and collaborate on different initiatives.</p> <p>Advocacy Training: Participants were trained in how to influence decision-makers and participate in political debates on various issues, including environmental matters. This included training in writing letters to politicians, attending public meetings, and using social media to spread their message.</p> <p>Practical Experience: Participants were encouraged to take part in local environmental initiatives and municipal decisions, providing them with practical experience of democratic participation and a deeper understanding of how they could influence societal development.</p>

Good Practices Description

Stakeholder engagement in the process

Örebro Deaf Association and ABF Örebro County

Methodology used

During the project's three years, a conceptual approach was used, which proved to be very successful: working together with the target group, never FOR or ABOUT them. This approach yielded excellent results – with grounding and trust in both target groups (the deaf community and the hearing community), WeSign was able to pave the way for national sign language interest organizations, offer ABF as a neutral venue for various actors, including authorities and individuals, and above all, spread knowledge about culture, language, Knowledge of society, green transition, and processes through adult education.

WeSign used a range of pedagogical methods to engage participants and make learning effective:

Interactive Workshops: These workshops were designed to be highly participant-centered, with group discussions, role-playing, and practical exercises to explore and understand green transition.

Popular Education: This method emphasized active participation where each member contributed their experiences and knowledge. It created a democratic and inclusive environment where all voices were heard.

Visual and Auditory Aids: Use of sign language interpreters, visual presentations, and video materials to explain complex concepts, ensuring the content was accessible to deaf participants.

Practical Projects: Participants were engaged in practical projects that had a direct impact on their local environment, such as tree planting and recycling initiatives.

To ensure that the content and methods were tailored to the target group, the project management and participants in WeSign made several adaptations:

Customized Educational Materials: Facilitators found educational materials that were visually rich and adapted for sign language users.

Inclusive Pedagogy: Facilitators used an inclusive pedagogy and were aware of the specific needs of deaf participants.

Direct Involvement of Deaf Individuals: Deaf individuals were actively involved in the design and implementation of educational sessions to ensure their perspectives and needs were considered.

Flexible Teaching: Teaching plans were flexible to adapt to participants' needs and interests, making learning more relevant and engaging.

Teaching approaches

Popular education is characterized by learner-centered instruction that takes place in small groups. The focus is on active participation, where all members contribute their experiences and knowledge. This creates a democratic and inclusive environment where all voices are heard. The leader acts as a facilitator who supports and guides the group rather than teaching in a traditional manner. The content of popular education is often tailored to the interests and needs of the participants, making learning relevant and engaging. The pedagogy of popular education promotes independent learning, collaboration, and the practical application of knowledge.

Challenges and outcomes

Key factors contributing to success

The success factors of the project are that the deaf associations, together with ABF, have broadened their perspective from a previously one-sided disability perspective to recognizing that they can actively change their conditions by working together and actively trying to strengthen themselves as individuals and organizations. From there, they can create networks for citizens interested in Swedish Sign Language and culture. Within this network, they can form a competency capital, find door openers, enablers, and coordinators, act as a link between the deaf and the hearing, and thereby become involved in democratic processes such as participating in the green transition and advocating for that issue in Swedish society, as well as among the deaf. This will lead to the deaf strengthening their significance with various authorities and cultural institutions at both local and national levels (the infrastructure for marketing sign language events in the country is lacking), becoming bearers of democracy – the list can be long..

Encountered difficulties and challenges

The difficulties for deaf individuals lie in the availability of competent sign language interpreters and the fact that government support for everyday interpretation in the workplace, school, leisure activities, politics, and debates on issues such as the green transition is insufficient for deaf individuals to have the same opportunities as hearing individuals. They are also affected by poor attitudes from people who should have known better, considering their profession.

Recommendations

The success factors lie in the continued efforts to create various networks between deaf and hearing individuals to increase understanding of the challenges faced by the deaf. These networks then successfully work to influence decision-makers at local, regional, and national levels.

Impact

The project is now a permanent operation within ABF Örebro County and Örebro Municipal School of Culture. As a result of WeSign's work, Örebro declared itself the Sign Language Capital of Europe on February 2, 2010