PILOT COURSE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Hamburger Volkshochschule, Germany

ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS

The Hamburger Volkshochschule is the largest publicly funded adult education organisation in Hamburg and the second largest in Germany. The percentage of learners in German as a second Language (GSL) is comparatively high, around 20 percent. Until 2017 we could offer a course that was combining language acquisition and vocational preparation for migrants in order to enter the job market. Most of the migrants are refugees, and they lack an understanding of the German job situation, including what soft skills are needed in Germany, regardless of the occupation. These courses were not funded anymore after 2017 and we felt that the participants were less prepared for the challenges they face in the search for a job. So, from the beginning of the project, we thought that the outcomes of the project ICARO could create a very good opportunity for this target group to brush up on their Soft Skills, and even before improving them, being made aware of the fact that their education did not provide them with the right set of skills for the German labour market.

1. LEARNERS SELECTION PROCESS
    a. Number of learners

When the selection process started, we thought about this group and how we could attract them. Thus we started a Facebook campaign, because the followers of Hamburger Volkshochschule are very often of migrant status. But this did not work out well, almost no applications came in. We informed many organizations working in the field of German courses, and they were all highly interested and distributed our leaflets, but again there was almost no reaction. So we resorted to a different approach: we went into 4 of our own courses "German as a 2. Language" on a B 2- level that were in the second half of teaching (the course has 400 teaching hours) and gave the participants a very thorough introduction to the course and what they could expect. And this was obviously the solution: within 2 weeks we got 45 applications, all coming from these courses, but the learners indicated that they still need time to finish their course. We had to take that into account by shaping the duration of the course and the times when face-to face (f2f) sessions could be held.

    b. Distribution by sex and ages

The distribution between women and men was 22 to 23. Their countries of origin are Arabic countries like Afghanistan and Syria, but also Iran an Iraq. Some come from European

countries. For most of them, German language and especially the scripture was new when they came to Germany. The age range goes from 20-50 years. As a rule, we do not ask for any information regarding age, because German data protection law does not allow that.

c. Level of qualification

Their educational level was mainly low, compared to German standards. They have mostly little experience in work and almost no experience in working in Germany, due to their language skills.

2. PLACE AND DISTRIBUTION OF FACE-TO-FACE SESSIONS
a. Distribution of face-to-face sessions: number of sessions and duration

Regarding the equipment we faced a problem: the group is so large that they do not fit in any of our rooms which are mainly for 20-25 students. They all have WiFi but not stationary computers. That is why we set up the course as follows:

The introduction to the course was done in the original 4 classes for GSL, during the normal hours. After the enrollment, each class got additional hours in f2f sessions to show the process of setting up an account at the Moodle platform and how to work the themes and modules. The order of the modules and their structure was explained and how the participants could go to work.

The group activities were done in the original GSL classes with all their participants, including those who did not sign in to the ICARO courses. But that way it was possible to have enough time to cover those activities and at the same time check whether the understanding of the content poses problems for the participants. The main teacher is responsible for the contact to the 4 tutors in order to help them and support them.

Since the participants have many problems with the language and the cultural context of the course content, the course will still run at least until the end of June 2019.

The f2f- sessions all in all were 24 and 16 additional hours were used for introduction and explanation, including a feedback session at the end. Each session has 4 teaching hours, the distribution was in 10 parts, starting in the middle of March 2019 and will go on until June .

We provided 40 additional hours of online tutoring.

The learners will need at least 150 hours to finish the course.

b. Equipment and support

We used our own rooms; they are all equipped with WiFi. The participants used their own computers, or (in case they do not own one) they went to the public library in order to use those facilities. This in another problem why progress in slow: the access to computers.

The main teacher did a thorough job in online tutoring: she was available from day to day to help via mail or phone in case there are problems technically or with understanding. This online tutoring is still going on.

3. TUTORS PROFILE
   a. Number of tutors

We had 5 tutors, with one being the main teacher, who did the introduction in the courses and worked as an online tutor in case of technical or other problems.

The 4 tutors next to her were the trainers of the courses that the participants came from.

   b. Profile

All of the tutors are well experienced trainers of GSL, with special knowledge in GSL for vocational purposes. They teach work related topics, like:

- World of work, laws and regulations
- Behavior at work
- Language at work; formal and informal
- Application process
- Writing your CV

and other related topics. They are all women and have been with Hamburger Volkshochschule for several years.

THE PILOT COURSE:

1. COURSE CONTENT
   a. Appropriate level: appropriateness and relevance of learning outcomes, appropriate and relevance of content for target learners, level of complexity for learner to use self-directed

The level of the materials provided is adequate, but for our learners the gap between their knowledge and this level is wide. All material is relevant, especially the first theme: digital competences. In the process of seeking a job this is the first competence they need. The complexity of the material is very high, especially for those who have not been born and educated in Europe. The requested prerequisites in knowledge about the vocational sector and the workforce are not always there.

b. The structure: sequence of materials, presentation and structure of the curriculum, length.

The length of some of the documents was quite long and the participants complained of this since it used up a lot of time. The problem with some of the provided material was that it was not usable in Germany due to the language, and there was no adequate replacement available in German for free. Sometimes we had to use material that did not cover quite the same topic, e.g. youtube videos covering communication or intercultural learning. In these cases we used material of our own developments or appropriate free material catering to the needs in Germany. The sequence of the material was fine, but in our opinion the part "Digital skills" should be shortened. Some material is presented in a clear and structured way, some has a different layout and that can be disturbing. Sometimes too many colours have been used and that makes for an uneasy viewing experience.

c. What could be missing in contents and activities?

In our opinion, there could be more content related to "working abroad" since all over the EU the percentage or migrant workers is high, regardless of their origin.

d. Group activities: interaction between learners, group dynamics

The group activities were carried out in the original GSL classes and the participants know each other well and do not have trust issues. The interaction was good, they liked the activities and the dynamics improved through the lessons of ICARO, because they tackled issues that were neglected so far, e.g. online application, job portals etc.

2. MOODLE PLATFORM:
   a. Access issues login, contact with the tutors

There were no issues about access or login, because most of the participants are computer affine. They had a tutor to help them, which they all know. She was and still is available by phone of mail. The tutors for the f2f-sessions are their own teachers of GSL, they know them for many months now and have a trusting relationship.

b. Usability by tutor and learner, ease of use

The usability is good, there was no complaint so far from tutors or learners. The platform is fast, and has a good surface.

INCIDENTS AND RESULTS:
   a. Overall assessment of results

This is a valuable course for the targeted group, but resulting from our experiences, the need to survey which material is too hard and which is suitable should be a next step. But the

appreciation was good, especially since the participants do not have any other offer for free they could learn the same competences in.

b. Incidents: dropout, complaints

So far, we did only have 2 real dropouts , but we have not yet finished, this is still to be experienced. The complaints are all the same: that the language is hard to understand, that there is no translation. But what is really meant by the participants is: they do not understand the context of the questions, articles and activities. Their experience is a different one, and their time working in Germany mostly very little and in menial jobs. Their aspirations are very high and they want to learn what is needed but it is very hard for them.