Netherlands

Good Practice: NL GP1

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"Coding Skills Development Programme"

Main features of the GP programme:

Type of programme	Type of organisation	Field of practice for organisation	Programme scope	Programme duration	Programme occurrence/ frequency	Type of funding for GP
Vocational programme Retraining	Non-profit organisation	Adult education	local	12 months	Ongoing	Participating companies through scholarship and sponsorship

1. What – Focus (theme, orientation)

NL_GP1 is a coding skills development programme, which aims to support young adults at risk of social exclusion (specifically refugees and migrants). The programme lasts for 12 months and is made up of three phases. The first phase consists of three months in a coding 'Boot Camp'. It starts with learning various coding languages (e.g. Html, CSS, Java). During this phase, the programme also organises Masterclasses for the students by technology companies such as Facebook, Google or Booking.com. In the next phase, the learners become Guides [mentors for new starters] for three months. In the Guide, period students learn more advanced programming languages. The final six months consists of an internship with a company as a developer, and these companies are often able to provide scholarships for students. The programme has been described as very intensive (10 hours per day) which involves regular peer/self-assessment and self-directed learning, incorporated into the programme.

2. For whom – Target group(s)

The main beneficiaries are young adults from refugee, migrant and low-income backgrounds, and those who are currently under-represented in the technology industry, including women.

3. Requirements and access

The admissions/recruitment process involves a set of challenging tests and tasks, but as noted by one of the co-founders, it is 'meant to be hard' because the programme organisers want students to 'to feel like they've achieved something big when they get in'. As part of their application process, applicants are required to submit a video in which they outline why they want to learn about computer science. Those applicants, who are selected for interviews, are required to spend a day at the camp where they are given a scenario and have to talk about what they would do in this situation.

The majority of young adults find out about the programme through other people, for example an employment advisor, friends or family, rather than accessing the information themselves. However, some young adults also access the information about the programme as a result of browsing online. The programme uses different channels in order to reach young adults such as Google marketing or through Facebook groups. The programme is free to access.

4. Elements of good practice

The vision of the programme, as described by one of the co-funders, is about giving young adults a second chance and enable them to have a successful career. The programme is characterised by the drive to ensure that students come from diverse backgrounds, which is also, in part, a response to the current lack of diversity within the IT industry (including gender diversity).

The programme has a strong focus on the development of socio-economic competences (focus on work-related skills development). Accomplishing something that will 'later serve the community' characterises the the programme vision of being

an active citizen. There is a strong sense of 'duty and giving back to the community and society' within the programme (including paying back taxes). Cultivating APC through equipping young adults with job-related skills and connecting them to work has been perceived as critical elements of active citizenship. One of the distinctive features of the programme is that it will accept people who are still waiting for their refugee status to be accepted or rejected (thus facilitating their access to employment sooner). Within the programme, socio-economic citizenship is also enhanced through the provision of workshops on interview preparation.

The diversity of young adults' backgrounds contributes to the development of socio-cultural competences. The programme setting, a space for Social Enterprises, provides opportunities for learners to network and make new contacts, thus enhancing their socio-cultural skills. Furthermore, encouraging learners to practice their acquired competences both within and outside the class is considered another important strategy to facilitate socio-cultural competences (e.g. through developing communication channels (apps): one example includes the development of a language app which included some simple phrases to enable communication between Eritrean refugees and Dutch speakers.

One of the critical pre-requisites of taking part in this programme is the ability to speak the local language in order to be able to participate in Dutch society. This has been highlighted as the political commitment to ensure integration through local language.

The educational approach aims to develop self-motivation, commitment and resilience in learners. It is based on the principle of self-directed learning and peer to peer learning (i.e. learners taking the main responsibility for their learning success). Exposing learners to the reality of being in a technology organisation is another important element of this programme's good practice (e.g. the six months' internship that greatly improves an individual's socio-economic capacity). In addition, instead of 'teachers', the programme often uses business professionals and actual developers from companies, thus facilitating school to work links.

5. Perceived challenges

The programme is intensive and while the majority of VYAs have regarded it as positive, the intensity of the programme can cause problems for some participants. For example, as noted by one of the practitioners, committing 10 hours a day is difficult for someone who has family commitments. In addition, the style of self-directed learning, is proving to be challenging and sometimes daunting for some learners, especially for those with low levels of confidence.

Funding has been cited as another challenge, as well as the lack of government investment. These issues have been linked to the current social challenges related to the public resentment towards migrants and refugees (with populist views that 'money should be spent on [local] citizens').

6. Testimonials

The first answer is duty. As they give us we should give back.

Doing/ accomplishing something so he can later serve the community with it.

...even though it feels sometimes like we're stuck as a group, in the end at some point we'll get it right, so there's always that. And once I get something then I can explain it to the next person ... So it's kind of like a nuclear chain reaction, it's a marble that gets shot off and then information explodes within the classroom.

Helping the city with something. Volunteering. I don't know I never heard about this but I am just guessing.

And this is the first time I hear about this one, but I guess it means like it's not people who are just here and taking money from the government and not doing anything with their life ... trying to get a job, study or do anything which is good for them and the society. I don't know if it means that.

7. More Information

EduMAP project's publications:
Books and articles
Academic publications that address key themes of the EduMAP project
Deliverables and reports
EduMAP's official deliverables, related reports and publications
Good practice cases
Key features from 40 'good practice' cases from 20 countries
Working papers
A selection of findings from desk and field research in 20 European countries
Other resources
Other types of resources made for the project (illustrations, comics etc.)