

SUMMARY OF THE SPRÅKSAM PROJECT

The Stockholm Gerontology Centre has been awarded 30.6 million SEK. (3 500 000 Euro) from the European Social Fund to carry out language and competence development for employees within elderly and disabled care in Stockholm.

This project includes six municipalities and concerns 21 workplaces in the Stockholm County. 1500 employees, of whom approximately 300 have to increase their Swedish and professional competence, make up the project participants.

BACKGROUND

The majority of those who work within care for the elderly and disabled in Stockholm do not have Swedish as their mother tongue. Some of them have an insufficient knowledge of Swedish that can result in difficulties absorbing the information and skills that are important in coping with their daily employment activities.

The demand for increased quality in care for the elderly and disabled is mounting. Employers in the field have sought to strengthen staff competence to meet these new demands. Many employees themselves have also attempted to improve their Swedish on their own. Unfortunately, it appears that these efforts have not borne the desired results. Socio-cultural and structural barriers, teaching methods that are not suited to the demands in the workplace and the employees' lack of formal education are some of the most influential factors



to consider. A link between education and the workplace must be created so that new forms of work integrated education can be developed. It is reasonable to presume that this development must be based on past experience and current linguistic research. This will then be integrated into the workplace by making it a learning organization.

Many factors are important when learning a new language successfully. The individuals' motivation is the key, but this motivation is in turn dependent on external support. By combining education and work, it becomes easier for the individual to learn a new language, but the workplace language environment also has to be enhanced and developed. Combining language learning with education for the profession increases the motivation. In order to integrate education and work, the workplace must have the necessary tools to help support and develop

learning the common language in the workplace. In order to develop these tools, it is necessary to know the process of language learning. Interaction between research and work is thus a prerequisite for success.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The main idea of the SpråkSam project is to change the view of managing language development in both the working environment and in an educational context. The aim is to support individuals at risk of being excluded from the labour market due to their lack of knowledge of Swedish and professional competence.

This is done by raising workplace awareness regarding the factors that promote language development, clarifying the linguistic requirements needed at work, and adapting the workplace practices to promote language development. The workplace will evolve into a supportive environment for those learning Swedish as a second language and as a result communication between colleagues, elderly and the disabled will improve.

Due to increased demands of language skills at work, SpråkSam's participants are at risk of marginalization even though they are currently employed. There is a need for tailor-made courses in order to increase the motivation to learn Swedish and increase language skills. Therefore, SpråkSam also aims to develop new teaching methods for Swedish as a second language in the health care sector.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

21 work places participate in the project. They are all caregivers for the elderly and/or disabled people in the municipalities of Järfälla, Lidingö, Solna, Stockholm, Sundbyberg and Södertälje. The Department of Scandinavian Languages at Stockholm University and the Faculty of communication, media and IT at Södertörns Högskola are participating in the method development. In each municipality, personnel from Municipality Adult Education (Komvux) and Swedish for Immigrants (sfi) will provide training at the workplaces. When describing the language ability of the participants, the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) is used.

At four of the work places, method development is carried out with support from the two universities. This involves examining, reviewing and developing methods for both increasing employee awareness of language and language use in different work situations, and to promote socially inclusive learning processes in the workplace.

In order to create a supportive language environment the whole workplace is involved in the project.

The director and two more persons at each workplace are specifically trained and educated in matters of linguistic competence, how to support those who learn the language, how to correct without embarrassing, and so on.

The whole workplace is offered various forms of assistance such as information, training, coaching and networking aimed at managers, co-workers, and other local resource persons.

STRATEGY

It is a long-term task to change attitudes and deep-rooted patterns. The project therefore focuses on engaging strategically important organizations as collaborators. Elderly Services Administration (Äldreförvaltningen), Social Services Administration (Socialtjänst- och Arbetsmarknadsförvaltningen) and Education Administration (Utbildningsförvaltningen) participate in the project. Other collaborating parties to the project are care administrations in the municipalities Järfälla, Solna, Sundbyberg, Södertälje and Lidingö, the research and development unit Nestor FoU-center, The County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen) and the Swedish Municipal Workers Union (Kommunal) and The Swedish Association of Health Professionals (Vårdförbundet). The project also cooperates with Denmark Pedagogic University.

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