



Pestalozzi

Training Resources

Education for Linguistic and Cultural Diversity (DIV)
Transitions in education → transitions in life:
Keep an eye on it!

by

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Editor: Ildikó Lázár



The Pestalozzi Programme
Council of Europe Training Programme for education professionals

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Theme: Benefiting from diversity through understanding major transitions in life

Expected outcome

- to benefit from cultural and linguistic diversity in every educational and/or learning environment;
- to raise awareness of the existing barriers in the national educational system concerning; cultural, linguistic, social, gender, and religious diversity and its impact on teachers' decisions about young people who are dependent on this system;
- to make it obvious how difficult it is to understand the existing reality in our educational systems especially for people without a high competence in the language of the country where they live;
- to raise teachers' awareness of how important education is in our societies in order to have equal chances for a good job and for full acceptance by society.

Target group

Type of training	School level	Subject area
Initial training, in-service training, NGOs, social workers	Primary level, secondary level, trainer training	All humanities, social sciences, psychology

Brief description of the unit

When people go through major changes in their lives this situation is described as “transition” in the current scientific literature. This term means “transformation, a big change in life, to live across borders”¹ and was mentioned first in the late 1990s in studies done by the Anglo-American scientific community, especially in the field of social sciences. We can find transitions in

¹ (Furch, E.: Transitionen - Bildungsbarrieren für Schülerinnen und Schüler mit Migrationshintergrund. - In: Erziehung und Unterricht, Österreichische Pädagogische Zeitschrift, Heft März/April 3 - 4/06, öbv & hpt, Wien, S. 330)

everybody's school career: a change from kindergarten to school, from one type of school to another, from one class to another, or from one national educational system to another. In one's private life a transition could also be caused by migration, by a change of languages and/or cultures, a change of jobs, marriage, a new member in the family, etc.

To overcome the artificial and sometimes invisible barriers and challenges in everybody's life, it is essential to raise awareness about them, esp. among professional educators and social workers. The following training session aims to show that many transitions exist and have to be passed by everybody. Professionals are advised to develop strategies to help their pupils/trainees to become able to pass these diverse transitional phases successfully. The following activity aims to serve as an eye-opener by looking at all the transitions in people's educational and professional career as well as changes in their private lives, including changes in their roles, group membership and language use.

Methods/techniques used

Recalling transitions in life, reflecting on changes in pair work, presentation and whole group discussion, debriefing.

Time approximately 190 minutes

Introduction	▶ 30 minutes
Timeline 1 – Educational career	▶ 30 minutes + 10 minutes for debriefing
Timeline 2 – Professional life	▶ 30 minutes + 10 minutes for debriefing
Timeline 3 – Private life	▶ 30 minutes + 10 minutes for debriefing
Timeline 4 – Any other field of interest (or alternatively one debriefing session of 30 minutes at the end)	▶ 30 minutes + 10 minutes for debriefing

Tips to trainers on the overall unit:

- Talking about transitions in one's life can be a very personal and sensitive issue. As with every "inner journey", some very intimate reflections might surface, which can result in very difficult situations for the participants if they do not know each other well. Therefore, this activity is not appropriate as a warmer or icebreaker with a new group.
- For the same reason, it is not appropriate to collect the task sheets at the end of the session. Those should be regarded as pages in a very private diary.
- The trainer himself/herself has to be well informed about "transitions" and read extensively about the topic before starting this session.
- It helps if the trainer fills in these work sheets about transitions in his or her own educational, professional and/or private life before the session.
- It is useful to start the introduction with some input about transitions and clarifications about the aims of the session. It makes the follow-up easier if the trainer can present some examples during this introductory phase (30 minutes).
- Everybody has to work individually on the 1st timeline (20 minutes) followed by a discussion in pairs (10 minutes). The same procedure should be followed with the second/third/fourth timelines.
- A short reflection and debriefing session could be held after each timeline or alternatively a longer one (30 minutes) at the end of the last session.
- You should never do the activities concerning transitions suggested below all at once! Please select the relevant one(s) according to your target group.

Activity 1 Transitions in education → transitions in life: Keep an eye on it!



190 minutes

	Notes
<p>▶ General aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To raise participants' awareness of the number of transitions that individuals in our target groups have gone through and to understand what these transitions mean for their educational, professional and personal careers; ➤ To become aware of our own communication skills; ➤ To become more respectful and careful in contacting students/pupils/parents because in most cases we only know a fraction of an educational/professional/private career. <p>▶ Specific aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To see how transitions influence everybody's life; ➤ To become able to change educational concepts and methods to ensure individual support in heterogeneous settings – e. g. in preparing tests, exams; ➤ To become more sensitive to differences in the needs of students; ➤ To develop our own sensitivity in dealing with people in general; ➤ To be aware of the different contexts and variety of changes everybody has to deal with; ➤ To be aware of the influences of different barriers/transitions/changes in diverse contexts; ➤ To think about further concepts in order to break down barriers in our educational systems (e. g. through research, projects, co-operation). 	
<p>▶ Practical arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Form a circle for the introductory phase – whole group ➤ Separate tables for individual work & pair work ➤ Form a circle again for reflection and debriefing (or smaller circles of 4 – 6 if the whole group has more than 20 members) 	

► **Materials needed:**

- 4 size A4 sheets per person – 1 for each timeline (see example in Appendix 1) over a period of several sessions
- 4 pencils in 4 different colours – 1 for each timeline

► **Procedure:**

Introduction: Hold an input session, including a definition of “transition” and its significance in one’s educational and professional life and in the private sphere. Examples from the trainer’s life can be enlightening. For further ideas and references, see the list of publications at the end of this unit.

Activity:

1. Have participants fill in the work sheet, indicating the starting point of their educational career as well as all the different changes/transitions they have gone through up to the present (individual work for 15-20 minutes).
2. Participants discuss their educational timeline with a partner (pair work for 10 minutes).
3. Elicit some of the pairs’ stories as a whole class activity and hold a debriefing session using (some of) the questions below (10 minutes).
4. Participants fill in another timeline, this time about their professional career, indicating major changes/transitions they have gone through up to the present (individual work for 15-20 minutes).
5. Participants discuss their professional timeline with a partner (pair work for 10 minutes).
6. Listen to some of the stories and debrief the activity using the questions below (10 minutes).
7. Participants fill in another timeline for transitions in their private life (individual work for 15-20 minutes).
8. Participants discuss their transitions in their private life with a partner (pair work for 10 minutes).
9. Listen to some of the stories and debrief the activity using the questions below (10 minutes).
10. Fill in a fourth timeline for transitions in any other area that you feel is appropriate for your trainees (their daily life, their children’s or parents’ life, etc.)
11. Participants discuss these transitions with a partner (pair work for 10 minutes).
12. Reflect on your discussions in a debriefing session by answering the questions below.

► Debriefing/reflecting:

- What did you learn about yourself and your partner/pupil/student after having done this activity?
- How could you use this knowledge in your educational setting?
- Were you aware of the difficulties/important changes in the life of your partner/pupil/student before doing this activity?
- Could there be a relationship between powerful feelings resulting from transitions in a person's life and his/her behaviour?
- What would like to change immediately in your educational context?
- Now that you acquired this new knowledge about the people you are working with, what kind of training do you think you need e. g. in-service training to handle transitions and react in a professional way, more knowledge about new methods, or a course in communication skills?

A variation:

After having discussed one kind of transition, you can add another line: an “emotional” line of the special personal feelings in connection with having lived through these changes. It could be made obvious with another colour drawn on the same sheet of paper where the timeline of a certain kind of transition has been written. Positive feelings could be drawn up to the top of field 1, negative on the bottom of field 3 – always connected with this phase of life in the first timeline display.

If you add this “emotional” line, you will need much more time for the discussion in pairs than mentioned in the description above.

This variation can only be done if the trainer knows all group members very well so that there is no lack of trust or feelings of disrespect within the group.

Evaluation and assessment

Title of training session:				
Date of training:				
			Please mark: -- - + ++	
How professional were your trainers?				
Trainer(s):				
How useful was the training session for you?				
1.	Do you know more about your pupils / students / other persons after having done this training session?			
2.	Could you use the knowledge about transitions in your daily job?			
	If YES, in which way(s)?			
3.	Do you know now exactly what “transition” means?			

4.	Have you been aware of the difficulties / changes / barriers in the life of your pupils / students / other participants before this training session?				
5.	Could there be a link between powerful feelings resulting from a certain transition in a person's life and his/her behaviour?				
6.	Would you like to have more such trainings?				
7.	If possible, what would you like to change in your professional context immediately as a result of your knowledge about transitions?				
8.	What kind of training would you personally need as a follow-up to this session (e. g. in-service workshops to acquire more knowledge about individual learning, training in communication skills, innovative ways of examining pupils, testing methods, etc.)?				
9.	<p>Further comments:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!</p>				

References

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- http://specialchildren.about.com/od/specialeducation/a/transitioneipk_3.htm
- <http://jcd.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/35/2/107>
- <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/guaranteeing-futures/pathway>
- http://www.ihf.bayern.de/en/?Research_areas:Transitions_school_%96_higher_education_%96_work

Appendix 1

Work sheet:

On the two dominant lines in the middle of the task sheet, you should mark the starting point of your educational career and write down the stages in a chronological order up to the present as in the example in Appendix 2.

<i>Kind of transitions:</i>	
<i>Name:</i>	
<i>Date:</i>	
	<i>1. Facts, institution:</i>
	<i>2. Year:</i>
	<i>3. Your age:</i>
<i>My most successful transition / change / challenge (only one!):</i>	
<i>My least successful transition / change /challenge (only one!):</i>	

Appendix 2

Example for a filled-in work sheet:

<i>Kind of transitions: My educational career</i>		
<i>Name:</i>		
<i>Date:</i>		
<i>1. Facts, institution:</i>	<i>2. Year:</i>	<i>3. Your age:</i>
Kindergarten Primary school 1 Primary school 2 Secondary school Gymnasium Pädagogische Akademie University – Diploma University - PhD	1960 1961 1962 1965 1967 1973 1992 1998	5 years 6 years 7 years 10 years 12 years 18 years 37 years 43 years
<i>My most successful transition / change / challenge (only one!):</i>		
<i>My least successful transition / change /challenge (only one!):</i>		