

Learning methodologies in iAge

A myriad of approaches!

Introduction

By gradually developing activities in workpackage 3.4 (sustainable employment) and 4.3 (long-life living), we found out that there was an important shared aspect in the different pilots undertaken by partners in the iAge project. It seemed to be valuable to conduct a transnational comparison /research to map succes & failfactors in learning methodologies used in teaching the elderly IT skills. UCL in Denmark and the Province of Drenthe in the Netherlands cooperated to collect insights from all the iAge pilots where teaching the elderly in one way or another had been at hand. UCL developed a survey and Drenthe developed some overviews (tabels). This short report is written to bring the research-outcomes together and to make some recommendations for future projects in the field of learning methodologies for the elderly.

The pilots investigated were:

Norway	"Grandma on Web" – Vennesla "IT courses for the elderly" in Lillesand"
Netherlands	"Doeboek-training" by STAMM in Drenthe "Screen-to-Screen instruction" by Oosterlengte in Groningen "Vitaal Vechtdal" by Hardenberg
Denmark	"Train the trainer and the immobile elderly" by UCL
Belgium	"Big programm –wwwworld" Kortrijk + longitudinal research in Citizen First"

Different characteristics of the pilots

Pilots were very different with regards to scale, target groups and specific goals. For example in the pilot of Drenthe a smallscale homebased training in using a tablet for making video calls was given to 20 -25 elderly people and their informal caregivers. In Kortrijk the follow-up (longitudinal) research of European Citizen First was part of the iAge project. In 2006 all residents of Kortrijk were offered basic IT training for free and 3500 participants took part; amongst them a big group of senior (mostly retired) citizens. For an overview of characteristics of the Dutch pilots see the enclosure. Due to these profiles of training in the different pilots it is hard to draw some firm conclusions on what really works in general in teaching the elderly ICT skills. That is why in the following pages we merely describe some valuable remarks about the experiences of the different pilots. If you want to get an impression of the different pilots and training methodologies used check out the film, which is in the iAge toolkit.

“To join or not to join” - recruiting and seducing the elderly to join!

The first question in weighing to join or to pass any training-activity is: What's in it for me? This of course depended on the pilot. Mainstream objective in the pilots was e-inclusion of the elderly. Teaching them IT skills to include them in the social and economic society (Kortrijk, Lillesand & Vennessla, UCL). Oosterlengte (ZIF), Hardenberg and the Province of Drenthe focussed on using (and developing) specific applications/tools/websites; thus promotion of the training was especially targeted on the use of these tools (for example videophone and tablet).

The “e-including” programmes varied widely in their approach of seducing the elderly to join. From the bigscale campaignlike strategy of “Citizen First-2006” (which is evaluated by a longitudinal research in iAge) in Kortrijk to the intimate approach of “Grandma on web” in Vennessla.

In Kortrijk 1000ths of citizens were reached and trained, which was a big succes! In Vennesla 30 elderly people (grandma's and dad's) took part in the training, organized in the classroom of their grandchildren. This is also considered to be a very succesful pilot!

In Lillesand (Norway) and Hedensted (Denmark) the approach to seduce the elderly to learn more basic IT skills, was somewhere in between formal and informal. In those relatively small communities courses were promoted in the local newspaper and through informal networking. In the end this resulted in about 100 participants in Lillesand. The objective in Hedensted (UCL) was slightly different; they tried to recruit "resourceful elderly" to help other (immobile) elderly to improve their IT-skills. They succeeded in finding about 15 volunteers.

For the "tool-driven pilots" efforts were made to convince the endusers of the advantages of using these new tools. This was mostly done and only succesful in a very personal approach. For example: In the Oosterlengte pilot, homevisits were organised by the professional homecare teams to recruit the elderly for the pilot. In Drenthe informal networking and contacts were used to find the test couples (client and informal caregiver). Tools for videocalling like Doeboek (Drenthe) and Zibber (Hardenberg), do appeal on feelings of safety and need of contact closeby. As noted by ZIF (Oosterlengte pilot on videocalling):

- *They could have a safe feeling by being contacted: Did you wake up properly? Are there any changes in your health situation?*
- *Can be reminded to take their medicines and being watched to take these.*
- *The videophone enables the home care nurse to help the elderly plan their day, and remind them of any activities or plans they may have. Or need advice about their health or a referral to another health professionals*

Of course there is a lot to say about motivation to join courses or activities in the iAge pilots. However this requires a more in dept analyses, which is not within the scope of this research effort.

In Belgium they did a big valid survey on participation of the “wwworld-project” (part of Citizens First) where 3500 people were interviewed and asked for motivation and experienced barriers in joining courses.

Memorable are the recommendations how to overcome barriers to participate in the IT-training of this scheme (research 2006):

SENIOR CITIZENS FACED WITH SOCIAL EXCLUSION:

- Mobility
Shuttle service for senior citizens living at home (by volunteers or by other participants: strengthening the social tissue) or organizing the trainings in a day care center or nursing center for those senior citizens that don't live at home anymore.
- Suspicion to new projects
To counter the resistance of older citizens towards new projects, we can organize an information session in a familiar setting where they can meet the trainer. It's also important that the group is homogenous, so participants don't have to fear that the content of the training will be too hard. We can also try to reach these people by intergenerational projects (grandchildren teaching grandparents how to use a computer and internet).
- Social isolation
Both informal as professional caregivers can play an important role in the recruiting of socially excluded senior citizens.

CITIZENS FROM OTHER ORIGINS:

- Language
The project “wwworld” was announced through an article in the city paper and a leaflet in the Dutch language, which is not the right way to reach this target group, because they see it as advertising and don't trust it when it's not in the native language. That's why it would be worth it making leaflets and articles in the native language (French, English, Arabic, Persian, ...). The training has to be in Dutch, but with special attention to the compilation of the group or an intergenerational project the barrier for citizens from other origins can be lowered.
- Gender related issues
In a lot of cultures it's important that there are separate groups for men and woman. For integration purposes, it's desirable that the groups per gender contain both Belgian citizens as citizens from other origins.

A last short remark on motivation/barriers. In most pilots the IT training was for free. But in Norway –Lillesand a small contribution was asked for; this didn't seem to be a problem there. In general the courses within iAge were fully funded by subsidies to keep barriers low as possible.

The role of the teaching setting

An important factor in teaching elderly IT-skills seems to be the specific setting in which the training was given. By setting is meant: location, groupsize/formation and trainingskills/professionalism of the teacher. A wide variety in approaches is seen in the iAge pilots.

As for location; in Kortrijk (Belgium) and Lillesand (Norway) was chosen for 8 surfcorners and adult training centres, whereas in Vennesla (Norway) the training was at the school premises. On the other end of the spectrum were the homebased training efforts in Hedensted (Denmark), Municipality Aa en Hunze (NL), Hardenberg (NL) en Oosterlengte (NL). The impression is that location isn't a critical factor as such but should fit into the total approach. A conclusive remark on homebased training in Hedensted:

“It was motivating for them, that the teaching took place in their own homes and that they didn't have to learn among others, but had the time and space to learn at their own pace”

Special thoughts should be given to the location-aspect in the case of training immobile elderly, as was done in the approach in Denmark and was concluded in the research in Belgium!

Groupsize & groupformation is another element of the teaching setting. The tool-driven pilots (Doeboek-Drente en Screen-to screen-Oosterlengte), chose for an individual approach by instruction on an one-to-one basis. The UCL pilot in Hedensted also chose an individual approach aimed at developing higher IT skills in general for immobile elderly.

“The end users in the UCL pilot had different physical difficulties, but the individual approach did not only make it easier for them to receive the teaching it also made them more self-confident and gave them the motivation and desire to learn even more afterwards.”

The other pilots used more formal structures, organizing courses in group settings varying from 8-30 persons. A very special setting was created in Venesla, where grandchildren (aged around 14, 15) invited their grandparents to come over to their secondary school to teach them basics in IT.

The enthusiasm to participate in this programme was great! So personal relations do offer advantages in recruitment and motivation, which is not such a big surprise.

“The evaluation of the course in Venesla showed that ICT use learning was an arena for an intergenerational experience. One of the key elements found was the role that the young students played as an informant of the course and as an incentive for such attendance. The relationship between the young teachers and the elderly students, e.g., relatives or acquaintances, increased the overall student’s satisfaction with the course. “

A cautious conclusion from the stories of the pilots is that groupsize may vary as long as teaching capacity is organised accordingly. With a preference for smaller groups and individual approaches in handling IT-tools.

The teaching skills of the instructors/lecturers varied widely throughout the pilots. In the case of the tool-driven pilots, where volunteers with limited IT & training skills gave instructions, this didn’t seem to be a big problem. In the bigscale project in Belgium IT-professionals/teachers did the job and this wasn’t even elaborated upon in the evaluation. In Lillesand the pilot focussed on this aspect by organising 6 courses in three teaching-models:

“ In Lillesand, three different models were tested: The lecturers were students from Young Entrepreneurship in the lower secondary school (1), volunteers from the Centre for the Elderly (1), and from the Centre for Adult Education (4). Each course consisted of two hours of instruction each week for three weeks.”

They concluded that the wide range of basic IT skills of the elderly which joined the classes, challenged especially the younger (also in Vennesla) and not professionally educated teachers. So more structure or professionalism is needed in those classes, where the teachers are youngsters or less skilled volunteers.

Learning points about the lessons and instructions itself

To start with some connotations on the implementation of Doeboek, the Screen-to-Screen application, and Zibber (Hardenberg). Although the mentioned tools were (by our standards) very simple to handle, one instruction moment + handing out a manual, wasn't enough. Some sort of helpdesksetting and repetitive training is absolutely necessary to make implementation of such tools succesful for elderly, not-IT-skilled people. The group sessions aimed at general IT-skills in Norway provided a combination of demonstrations on a big screen and one-to-one instructions on items that were chosen by the elderly. This worked in a setting with the schoolchildren (Grandma on Web) helping the elderly out with questions, but was difficult in Lillesand where the instructor was alone. As said before, more structure in lessons could be helpful. This could be done by developing some kind of roadmap or detailed learning plan, in combination with offering free choice in what to learn (banking, internet, emailing etc.). Better preparation was a learning point for our Norwegian partner:

"A questionnaire might be sent in advance to the future students asking questions about ICT experience, motivation for participation, what they would like to learn and interests/hobbies. This information can contribute to the course program planning and improve teachers' preparation to cover elderly students' needs."

Duration and intensity of the courses varied form 3 times 2 hours in three weeks till 7 times 3 hours in 7 weeks. What the most effective rhythm is, can't be said in general. This depends on the content and the learning goals of the specific courses.

Results – what approach is recommended?

The pilots in iAge which tried to reach out to include elderly in the modern ICT world were successful; people joined the programmes and tested and used tools that were offered. Overall the elderly reacted positively on the training sessions and individual homebased-instruction visits. The individual learning results however weren't measured, neither directly after the training nor on the long term. And it was sometimes very hard to motivate elderly to participate in the schemes. As said before, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions in this descriptive highly qualitative analyses, but we did learn! On the basis of the different pilot stories we recommend future projects in this field to:

1. Use informal networks to recruit the elderly and if needed the volunteers.
2. Get to know your targetgroup before starting the training; their needs, hobbies and of course their level of IT-skills.
3. Think about a good structure, planning of learning, besides possibilities to let the end-user rule during class.
4. Use abundant coaching (or helpdeskfunction), during and after the training/instruction. This is especially important in the case of implementing tools (which always have to work!!)
5. Give thought to the other side of motivation- experienced barriers to join: lack of mobility, inherent suspicion to new things, language and gender related issues.
6. Organize the right amount of teaching capacity – don't underestimate educative skills needed!
7. Remember for this targetgroup the approach must be very straightforward and simple, simple and simpel.

With these remarks in mind it should be possible to e-include more elderly people in our modern society in Europe!

More information:

- Attachment – three tables with an overview of characteristics of the three pilots in the Netherlands, which were tool-driven and focussed on distant (informal) care issues
- Toolbox iAge, see [www](#).
- The filmregistration – an impression of the methodologies used in the iAge pilots can be found in the toolbox of iAge.

INFORMAL CAREGIVERS											
three pilots about informal caregiving in iAge											
Target & tools									Results and recommendations		
Targetgroup	Aimed at	Stakeholders	WP	Activities	ICT-tools	Methods	Motivation	Results		Recommendations	
age/role/specs	goals		iAge	in one sentence	short description of functionalities	method/methodology	motivation to participate	success factors in the pilot	failfactors in the pilot/ system	what did we learn?	
Drenthe Doeboek	working caregivers and their beloved, clients are 50+; basic ICT-skills for elderly;	facilitating the combination of work and care	SME's, organisations for informal care; municipality; Chamber of Commerce	3	testing prototype of Doeboek-app on notebook and/or mobile phone	app on notebook and/of mobile phone for video-calling, shared agenda and logbook	individual training for using a notebook at clients home	for caregivers: to experience that Doeboek allows them to combine caregiving and work/private; for clients: less dependence	more understanding for the elderly in using ICT (simple)	technical problems, due to lack of ICT-knowledge a lot of personal support to be given	a little bit of ICT-knowledge required, system too complicated; first invest in raising awareness for sme's and ic's (start publicity campaign in april 2014)
Oosterlengte videocalling	informal carers of home care clients form Oosterlengte that receive telecare	providing informal care support (answering question on daily living, welfare, informal care, voluntary home care, activities in neighbourhood)	primary: welfare organisation, voluntary organisations, Municipality, housing corporations. Secondary: hospital, general practitioners	4	making and answering videophonecalls	videophone	professionals as kind of ambassador to enthuse the client/enduser	personal contact, less dependence	easy to use application, clear instruction, good preparation, no ICT developping only implementing	passive attitude of some stakeholders, no sense of urgency	easy to use application, clear instruction, good preparation, no ICT developping only implementing
Hardenberg SWIP	75+ (50 persons)	care and social support on demand (OP MAAT); participation in a new social network	municipality, welfare organisation, insurance company, GP's, informal care givers	4	life long living online', walk-in sessions	SWIP	to use the existing walk-in session to get in contact with the client/enduser 75+	live longer independently; less dependence	to learn from other elderly in using ICT; social cohesion; lower care and service costs	great difference by elderly in knowledge and experience with ICT; passive attitude of some stakeholders; no sense of urgency	follow up to maintain the attention for the target group