Young Migrant Integration Leaders [EXEMPLAR]

IO1 – Integration Leaders Curriculum

Modul 5: Engagement Strategies

Self-directed Learning Content

Introduction to the Module:

This is the fifth module of the Integration Leaders Curriculum Manual. This module addresses the topic "Engagement Strategies", which includes definitions of important terms; an overview on what we understand as "engagement" with whom we tend to do so and why; an explanation of the multiplier role and why it essential for the right implementation of EXEMPLAR; an overview of engagement strategies' best practices and, last but not least, the text will cover leadership skills, why they are important when it comes to engaging people and which are essential for this purpose.

In scientific discussions on civil society development, engagement and integration, it is largely agreed that civic engagement is a suitable indicator, but also an engine for the integration of migrants (Thränhardt, 2010). Anyone who engages civically and voluntarily and thus participates in society assumes responsibility in social contexts such as family and neighborhood, as well as in the local community, in associations and initiatives, in social and cultural projects and at the same time receives more participation and integration opportunities.

This module is focused on providing a basic theoretical foundation of relevant topics that are related to people's engagement, as well as stimulating reflection on these topics, and sharing a number of frameworks and best practices regarding engagement strategies and tactics. Of course, as EXEMPLAR brings an innovative approach to this field, it is of great significance to point out that these frameworks and best practices are provided in an inspirational context and as a basis to develop ideas and experiment with them so as to produce new creative, efficient and effective approaches for civic society engagement.

Learning Outcomes Achieved:	Knowledge: understanding the meaning of "engagement" and what it means "to engage"; learning about basic patterns of human interaction, with whom we tend to interact with and why; quick overview on social networks; what do we understand as engagement strategies; overview of engagement strategies frameworks/best practices/tactics; understanding the role of multiplier.
	Skills: strategic thinking, creative thinking, critical thinking, leadership skills, organization, management, research, integration, being able to reflect on social networks, the nodes they are composed of and our position in it.
	Attitudes: Willingness to cooperate, creativity, empathy, reflection, innovation, acceptance

Theoretical Content:

The main theoretical content of this module will cover two topics: how we engage people in our current society and leadership skills.

The core idea of people's engagement is human interaction and motivation, for which is necessary to create but also maintain these interactions. However, people's engagement is not something that just happens: when it comes to keeping these interactions and motivation going, many other variables apply. In order to reflect on this issue, we will quickly discuss the importance of social networks from a sociological perspective, how they work and their main variables. This will lead to the importance of homophily as a concept within the framework of social networks. An overview of engagement strategies' best practices will provide the basis for clarifying what exactly an engagement strategy is and also, some best practices in this field.

Engaging people is the first step of the creation of a small-scale network of motivated people willing to engage. But having some knowledge and reflecting on our social networks is not enough in order to engage and serve as multiplier. It is also important to know and to be aware of the skills that could be useful when it comes to engaging people and creating small scale networks, this is, leadership skills. Therefore, this text will also cover different leadership skills frameworks, especially those related to youth leadership and the specific context of small-scale networks of young people.

Definitions of Terms:

In order to have a better understanding of the text, it would be interesting to define some of the key concepts before getting started Important concepts. The following are of special importance:

Rapport: rapport is a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well (Oxford Dictionary).

Engagement: engagement, in the context of EXEMPLAR, is about creating and maintaining relations with people, but also motivating them to participate and get involved. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.

Community Engagement: community engagement, also termed citizen or public engagement or participation, is an umbrella term that encompasses numerous methods for bringing people together to address issues of public importance (Nabatchi and Amsler, 2014: 63S). Other definitions highlight the deliberate, strategic nature of community engagement, since its objective is to ensure that people outside of government are involved in, and can have influence over, decision-making for policies and services, and that it is therefore closely related to notions of empowerment (Holmes, 2011; Morgan-Trimmer, 2014).

Social network: a social structure composed of interconnected individuals and institutions that shares and distributes information.

Homophily: Homophily refers to the tendency of individuals to establish relations with those who are somehow similar to them. According to social network analysis, it turns out that the more things we have in common, the higher the probability of creating bonds between people is. According to the experts, age, race, gender, etc. are important variables when it comes to homophily, however, the things we have in common with other people, or the assumption of

sharing certain ideas and characteristics, have an essential role in creating and maintaining relations: attitudes, believes, abilities and aspirations.

Diversity skills: the ability to recognize, appreciate and live, without bias, in a society full of diversity. In addition to being able to acknowledge awareness of power and discrimination, as well as learning to interact with others in full respect of their diversity, it is also essential to have a set of practical skills, social skills and strategies when it comes to dealing with diversity. For instance, the diversity of human biographies, lives, behaviours, identities and capacities in daily life, social settings and the working world (University of Göttingen).

Unit 5.1: Social Networks and Engagement Strategies

The title of the fifth module is "Engagement Strategies". We understand **engagement** as *creating and maintaining relations with people and also motivating them to participate and get involved.* Therefore, to engage people, this is, creating networks, implies human interaction. The main purpose of this module is to reflect on how we engage people and skills we need in order to do so, as being aware of the potential one has is the starting point for improving and developing our abilities.

EXEMPLAR is about human relations and acting as multipliers. It is therefore important to know and reflect on how, why, when and with whom these interactions happen, so that EXEMPLAR's Leaders have a basic understanding of this sort of phenomena, which will allow them to maximise their impact and the impact of the project itself by promoting the participation of the people around them.

5.1.1. Social Networks

One of the most important theories of the last decades claims that we are currently living in the network society. To put it in a simple way, the network society is based on the idea of a complex and interconnected structure that distributes information and knowledge through the nodes of a network (Castells and Cardoso, 2005). The role of technology when it comes to distributing information and knowledge is obviously essential, since internet plays a fundamental role in our everyday life social interactions.

Many argue nowadays that internet and internet-based social interaction is isolating people, especially youngsters, this is, those who grew up and socialised using technology, the so-called Generation 2.0. However, according to Castells and Cardoso, this is pretty far from the truth. "We know, from studies in different societies, that in most instances Internet users are more social, have more friends and contacts, and are more socially and politically active than non-users. Moreover, the more they use the Internet, the more they also engage in face-to-face interaction in all domains of their lives (Castells and Cardoso, 2005, 11). In other words, we are talking about a highly interconnected and social society in which internet-based interaction plays, as stated before, a rather important role. Sociability is, nowadays, built along "self-selected communication networks, on or off depending on the needs and moods of each individual" (Castells and Cardoso, 2005, 12).

This is, nonetheless, the macro-sociological perspective. We have been talking about engagement and social networks, but what is the relation between these two? **To engage people**, in the context of EXEMPLAR, could be considered as a synonym **of creating and maintaining a network of participative people**. In this case, we are referring to a **small-scale network** composed of a few nodes interconnected in the same way as explained above. Naturally, fewer nodes means interconnection between fewer people at first instance, but more

people are to get involved thanks to the multiplier role of the main nodes, this is, EXEMPLAR's Leaders and the people they directly interact with.

In this regard, it is important to understand how, why and with whom we establish and keep interactions, the starting point if we want to engage people.

According to social network analysis, it turns out that the more things we have in common, the higher the probability of creating bonds between people is (McPherson et al., 2001). In other words: "similarity breeds connection" (McPherson et al., 2001, 415). This leads to the concept of *homophily*. Homophily refers to the tendency of individuals to establish relations with those who are somehow similar to them (McPherson et al., 2001). The homophily principle is related to different variables, such as age, race, sex and gender, race and ethnicity, religion, etc. (McPherson et al, 2001). However, we want to give special attention to the category "attitudes, believes, abilities and aspirations". This category is known as "value homophily". It turns out that "attitude, belief, and value similarity lead to attraction and interaction" (McPherson et al, 2001, 28). This is to say, the things we have in common with other people, or the assumption of sharing certain ideas and characteristics, have an essential role in creating and maintaining relations. In other words, how we engage people, how we create and maintain networks, is largely influenced by the things we share and have in common.

5.1.2 Strategies for Community Engagement

For people to be engaged and play full and active role in their communities so as social inclusion to be enhanced, greater cohesion to be achieved and radicalization risk to be reduced, more opportunities should be provided for a diversity of voices to be heard on issues that matter to them.

Community engagement has many positive aspects. Except of the fact that gives the opportunity to the public to share the "stage" and actively participate in the decision-making, which means that direct democracy is promoted and of course implemented, it helps to build stronger communities and practical issues/problems to be addressed in a more effective way.

When it comes to develop a strategy for engaging a certain target group in specific community projects, initiatives or actions, two are the main questions that should be posed:

1. What is the main reason, the purpose for engaging this target group and what are the goals?

2. What tools and resources best align with the purpose and the goals?

Different models/frameworks have been tested so as public engagement to be implemented in a more strategic way and successfully.

5.1.2.1 Proposed Frameworks for Community Engagement

There are two proposed frameworks that could contribute as a basis for EXEMPLAR's Leaders to develop effective and efficient engagement strategies for their target groups. These two frameworks come from the field of public governance and environmental activism.

The TIERS Public Engagement Framework

The first one comes from the Institute for Local Government that operates in California, U.S.A. and has devised a five-pillar framework named TIERS, to plan and implement inclusive engagement strategies. Each pillar provides step-by-step directions and companion resources to build a comprehensive public engagement plan. Further information could be found at: TIERS Public Engagement Framework.

The Engagement Pyramid Framework

The second one comes from the Groundwire Organization that helps environmental organizations build better strategies for engaging people. Groundwire developed a framework for mapping the different levels of engagement entitled: "Engagement Pyramid." This framework builds on ideas from the fields of community organizing, relationship marketing and fundraising. More information can be found at: The Engagement Pyramid

Unit 5.2: Leadership Skills in Engagement Strategies

This unit will serve as a transition from the overview on engagement strategies and social networks to the skills that play a big role when it comes to the praxis. In other words, we move from the theory to the practice.

If we now think about the multiplier role of EXEMPLAR's Leaders, it is based on the idea of engaging and motivated people by creating and maintaining small scale networks. In other words, to act as the main nodes of a small group of interconnected people. It is about distributing information and knowledge through the nodes of the network, constituted by the people EXEMPLAR's Leaders engage.

However, the aforementioned ideas are not enough in order to engage people. In addition to this background information, it is also important that EXEMPLAR's Leaders have a certain set of soft skills and demonstrate agile leadership behavior.so as to inspire the vision, show the way and enable others to act. This is the only way to create bonds, as well as to establish and maintain healthy relationships with their fellow human beings. Thus, the position of EXEMPLAR's Leaders in the network, as main nodes, requires leadership and rapport building soft skills. The reason for this is that some of them play an important role when it comes to engaging people and acting as multipliers. Moreover, rapport building could be of great help when it comes to engaging people.

Leadership skills is a broad and popular topic. For this reason, there are many different approaches towards this field. In fact, most of the times leadership skills are considered from the perspective of management. Nonetheless, the "engagement strategies" module is not related to management itself, but rather to how EXEMPLAR's Leaders engage people in their social lives. In other words, not every single leadership skill applies to this module to the same extent.

According to Badger et al (2007), the most frequently mentioned leadership skills after surveying literature in this regard are:

1. Communication skills – oral & written
2. Technical expertise in own field, technical skills
3. Motivating and promoting
4. Honesty & development of trust
5. Self-awareness, emotional balance, understanding of values
6. Problem identification and solving
7. Team work, delegation
8. Flexibility

Another perspective is the strataplex model (Mumford et al., 2007), whose approach is based "on leadership in terms of cognitive, interpersonal, business and strategic skills" (Kalargyrou

et al, 2012, 41). Out of these, four categories, two of them are of especial interest if we take into consideration the context of this module:

> *"cognitive skills* refer to thinking, conceptual, and communication skills such as gathering and processing information, speaking and listening skills, and adaptability to new environments, information, technologies, etc. The category of *interpersonal skills* is centered on interacting with and influencing people through social awareness and interpersonal understanding" (Kalargyrou et al, 2012, 42).

A Youth Leadership approach, on the other hand, focuses on leadership, but not from the management perspective, but from the team work perspective. According to the World Assembly of Youth (2016), the main leadership skills are: honesty, communication, confidence, inspiration, positivity, commitment and creativity.

Furthermore, conflict and diversity management skills are of great importance. Our current societies are diverse, and so are the social networks we are part of. As in any other society or group, conflict may arise as a natural social phenomenon. Therefore, it is important to be aware of these essential characteristics of societies and groups of people and to have the needed skills in order to be able to solve the conflicts that may arise.

Last but not least, Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is of great importance for a leader. A growing body of research shows that Emotional Intelligence helps leaders to (Grant, 2014; Grey, 2016):

- Develop strong networks

- Cooperate successfully

- Motivate others and themselves as well

- Take responsibility of their actions

- Achieve more effective results

- Be in a state of well-being

- Make better decisions

- Form stronger relationships

- Handle their ego effectively

- Be positive change carriers

- Communicate effectively

- Be more self-disciplined

- Live based on a moral code that consists of respect, trust, openness, honesty, authenticity, a will for continuous learning.

- Be successful, defining success as the situation in which personal achievements have a positive impact on others.

- Be creative in a human-centered way

- Manage conflicts effectively

- Be lifelong learners

- Be focused on the important things

- Achieve win-win results when negotiating

Emotional Intelligence is a competence that enables human beings to understand and manage effectively their emotions as well as the emotions of others, so as to live in harmony with themselves and with their fellow human beings (Goleman, 2005).

Emotional Intelligence comprises of five dimensions, five skills, which are:

1. **Self-awareness:**

   It concerns the ability to understand how we feel, to acknowledge our mood and how we think about this certain situation. It's about recognizing an emotion as it happens, it's about knowing what creates an emotional response for us and how this condition affects us.

2. **Self-regulation:**

   It concerns accepting what we feel and controlling our emotions so as to direct our behavior. It's about taking responsibility for own performance, being flexible and open to new ideas and change.

3. **Self-motivation:**

   It concerns the ability to motivate ourselves for chasing our dreams and fulfilling our purpose. It's about willing to improve ourselves or to meet a standard of excellence by committing to clear stated goals, by being positive and optimistic, by demonstrating grit, by seeing the opportunities behind any problem and by living in the flow.

4. **Empathy:**

   It concerns the ability to understand the emotions of others, to put ourselves in someone's else shoes. It's about sensing what others need to progress or to overcome a difficult situation, discerning the feelings behind the needs and wants of others, "reading" a group's power relationships and leveraging diversity.

5. **Social skills:**

   It concerns the ability to develop good relationships with others and live in harmony with them. It's about managing others' feelings, communicating effectively sending clear messages, inspiring and motivating others, managing change in teams, negotiating and resolving disagreements, building strong bonds, collaborating successfully and building strong teams.

The abbreviation for Emotional Intelligence is "EI" and it's measured using the **Emotional Quotient- EQ.**

Emotional intelligence is a learnable skillset. How emotionally intelligence we are depends on our experiences, the way we grew up and our beliefs. And all these could be changed.

Conclusion

There is not a unique approach towards leadership skills that fully fits the context of EXEMPLAR project, nor there is an engagement strategy that specifically sticks to its purpose. The purpose of this module is to provide basic information about how people interact and engage and what kind of skills are needed in order to promote participation and engagement, as well as to stimulate reflection on these issues. Therefore, the solution, this is, the strategy,

has to be tailor-made based on the given situation, for which EXEMPLAR's Leaders have to think critically; analyse the context and the target group; take into consideration what engaging means, how it works and the skills that are needed; and elaborate a specific answer to a specific situation.

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