

**Interview with Dr. Astrid Krake,
Head of Department of Language and Integration at the Bavarian Association for Adult Education**

Interviewer: EPALE, NSS Germany, Munich, 22. February 2016

audio no. 2

Can online learning programmes help to reduce the deficiencies?

Not to reduce the deficiency as such, maybe later within the course, but firstly you need a course trainer to get started. The participants have different educational backgrounds, they come from different countries, some of them are literate, others not. Some do have experience with media, others not. Just telling them “here is your learning platform, you can learn on your own” – this does not work. This works at a later stage, but not with the first lesson.

You need an introduction into the media before you can immerse. Certainly, there are learners who could get started straightaway with an app if they have the educational background, but you cannot take an app as a replacement for a course with a number of participants, the background of whom you do not even know. This is because participants are not allocated to the course according to their educational background, but according to their residence and their arrival time and when they can start with the course.

This creates a situation with very heterogeneous groups. If this distribution took place in a different way, it would be possible that somebody who already has learned English or another foreign language, that this learner could get ahead with such an app quickly, but within these heterogeneous groups it is very difficult. You need somebody who guides that from the language point of view and who introduces the programme.

What is really positive compared to the situation we had about 10 years ago, when many educational institutions, not just adult education centres, were looking for possibilities to apply online learning, and many made use of Moodle, for example or of other tools. Yet, there was an empty “classroom” waiting to be filled by the course trainer or by another person. Often, this meant many hours of additional work, that could not be remunerated, and there was no guarantee that you will find enough participants for the excellent course you created, say the for the Italian language course. The big question was, whether the course would pay off.

The consequence was that many people started highly motivated at the beginning, but this often turned into frustration, because you had the impression that the workload was too much and that you will never be paid for these many working hours. Or, the course could not take place, or you realize that you always have to continue working on it. Something that never finishes.

Today, this kind of work is reduced due to a lot of material already being present in Moodle. This is the case with the standard school books for German as a foreign language - you may use the online learning as supplement - as well as for other material. So, this work has been overtaken by publishers or by other organisations who can produce quality in this field and who have the necessary human resources to do that. With the help of the online platforms you find or with the Moodle products from publishers, you are in a different position. You “only” have to use the material, instead of starting producing it from scratch. That is a great advantage.