

9 Case study PL

Title: Developing of creativity of THE OFFICE OF PERSONAL BELONGINGS THEATRE



Introduction

In 1998 theatre section was created within the framework of Sesame Club of Polish Association for Mentally Disabled People in Gdynia. The participants were mentally disabled adults and a professional director of theatres for children and youths Zbyszek Biegajło was employed. The starting point to develop creativity of disabled was to bring from home unwanted, found by them things. They brought umbrellas, telephones, lighters etc and spontaneously created scenes taken from life without any structure. The aim was to allow free activity enabling unfettered creativity.

The main aim of the project was to develop social competences of mentally disabled adults and help them integrate into the society. It was realized through preparing the plays and giving performances to the public. Both the theatre group and general public are involved in informal learning: the first through developing such competences like self-esteem, communication, team work and the latter – tolerance, knowledge about life and situation of others, willingness to interact with people from other groups, willingness to accept diversity and neglect discrimination.

Setting

The project was implemented during 12 months in Polish Association for Mentally Disabled People: KOŁO Gdynia - the venue of the Theatre and different places around the region. The target group was 10 adult (between 26-56 years old) disabled members of Office of Personal Belongings Theatre who were the authors of the play and its actors. They finished their education at the level of primary or basic vocational education and they stayed at home. The project gave them the opportunity to socialize as well as develop their skills.

Project Activities

They prepared performances in their venues. All of them had the possibility to bring in their ideas what they want to tell people mostly through gestures and music chosen by their director. To help the audience understand their message the actors brought different objects from home. They involved the audience in their performances to show that they are able to create and communicate and teach the society how to accept differences. To most active and friendly audience were the students of secondary schools. They also gave performances in hospitals, old people homes, children homes and other places in our region.

5 Level 5 Evaluation Scheme Applied to the Project

What topics did you choose? What evaluation methods did you choose?

To show the real impact on the direct beneficiaries of the project, knowledge and skills of three people were evaluated twice – for the first time at the beginning of the project. The assessment was repeated twelve months later, after the last phase of the project. As this

was a very special group also the team work was evaluated in the same way. The evaluation strategy was elaborated on the basis of the LEVEL5 evaluation scheme.

Below there is the characteristics of learners in short whose skills and competences were assessed.

Barbara: 27. Born in Vienna, when 5 months old emigrated to Australia and had lived in Sydney till she was 18. She was diagnosed with moderate mental disability. Attending school in Australia she learned to speak English and Italian. She was brought up in different culture so she is more brave, self-assured and open than her colleagues in the theatre. In a difficult situation she could be temperamental, quarrelsome and tearful. At the beginning she was more an observer than participant. Gradually, she became more active, creative and involved in the activity of the theatre. During excursions she chooses a young woman whom she favours and gives her presents.

Marcin: 35. Completed 5th year of special school – considerably disabled. Since 2000 has attended Workshops of Occupational Therapy and in Theatre since 1998. He is very quiet and taciturn, very often instead of words uses gestures. He never starts conversations only gives the answers using one word. His real involvement began during holiday outing after 3 years being more an observer. He showed then that he could take care of himself and his place in the Theatre radically changed. He performs more frequently thanks to his own activity. He takes his roles very seriously getting totally involved. With the help of gestures and movement he is able to express his emotions.

Tomasz: 38. Completed education in Special Vocational School as gardener – considerably disabled. In Theatre he is very outstanding person from the beginning, able to improvise for the given subject or create it himself during activity. Creative in collective and individual scenes, can come across half Poland for the rehearsal and he is very proud of being a part of the team. In safe situations he is able to talk about importance of the theatre in his life, self-esteem, willingness to act and create. He puts down his ideas at home and brings them to rehearsals.

There were the following topics for the LEVEL5 assessment selected:

- team work as group evaluation
- self-esteem, communication and acceptance for individual evaluation.

To choose the best method that could be used for the evaluation of the progress of members of this target group is quite essential and important. Therefore, different levels of learning progress were described in an individual reference system for each topic. For this target group only possible method of evaluation was observation.

Below in the tables you will find competences chosen for individual and group assessment:

Project Impact

The impact of the project depended on the ability of the person. Though, for people who hardly left home and lived on the margin of the society the impact was really great. They strengthened their cooperation and improved the team work. For some of them learning how to accept themselves helped in their performances and talk to people different than their families or members of the group. Developing such competences like self-esteem and communication not only support their acting skills but functioning in society copying with their daily duties.

Discussion & Perspectives

LEVEL 5 provided methods of measuring the impact of informal learning. For the first time, the progress of the group and some individuals was described, measured and presented. It took time to identify individual levels and indicators in each dimension, but once it was done it showed how good it was to reflect and measure the impact of the work of the leader and development of the group and its members. The LEVEL 5 can be used, but micro-project leaders need some training to be able to implement it.