



REPORT

On the dynamics of development and implementation of the project activities in Palermo, Italy

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This report aims to present a summary of the workshops with visually impaired children and young people in Palermo, during the implementation of the VISION project.

The practitioners involved in the VISION activities (Casimiro Alaimo, Stefania Vitale and occasionally our concert master Silviu Dima), first discussed the agenda and the group organization with Valentina Filingeri, the Psychologist of UICI, the Italian Union of the blind and visually impaired people. Our meetings took place at the Union or at the Institute of the Blind of Palermo, depending on the needs of the children.

From March 2015 to December 2015 a group of 20 people joined us to discover the world of theatre games, exercises and exploration of the self. The group was divided into two smaller groups, basically because of the age difference. We worked with ten children (age 8 - 12) on Tuesdays for two hours and with ten young people (13 -19) on Thursdays for three hours. We had 10 meetings with the first group (20 hours) and 18 meetings with the second group (54 hours) in 2015.

For most participants this was their very first approach with drama and they were eager to start, but they also felt shy and insecure. VISION meetings had the objective to work on self- confidence and self - esteem and soon became every participants' favourite activities.

The group of ten children decided not to continue after December 2015, because it was difficult for them and their families to keep the commitment on a regular basis for a long time. Some of them, who really, really wanted to continue, decided to join the group of young people on Thursdays. From January 2016 to May 2016, 12 meetings of two hours and a half (30 hours) took place.

I, Stefania, dealt mainly with relaxation and concentration exercises and also with lead in movement exercises to let them explore their relationship with space, posture and gestures. Casimiro dealt with trust exercises and improvisation.

So we shared the magic of living the artistic experience of human emotions and sharing through movements, sounds and team work with these enthusiastic children and young people, who often started our classes with some hesitancy and always finished with a happy smile.

Theatre is about pushing yourself just outside your comfort zone in order to learn more about yourself. By engaging in unique and fun new experiences, nearly all aspects of life are positively impacted.

This is exactly what it happened to VISION participants. The most rewarding thing to us was their feedback, which always came spontaneously at the end or at the beginning of the meeting: expressions like "Yesterday I felt so good and relaxed right after your lesson!", or "Can we do this exercise once again?" were very frequent.

In order to report the results of our activities in the most direct and genuine way, I'll transcribe here below some of our participants' final feedback.

The last time we had a consultation with them was on 18th July 2016. That was our last meeting before VISION multiplier event (which took place on 22nd July 2016) at the Institute of the Blind of Palermo and we were really pleased to notice that the changes in their attitude towards the world were not temporary. They still looked more open, self-confident and eager to learn and to share.

Federica:

"I remember when Stefania said during our very first meeting - Theatre changes your life- . I didn't know how true it could be. After these meetings with our practitioners I have a completely different approach to everything I do in everyday life: difficulties and troubles with studying, singing lessons and also with my friends don't appear such big obstacles to me anymore".

Silvia:

"I'm much more self-confident now, I manage to do things I thought were too difficult for me. Before our meetings I used to judge before trying. It was very hard to put me to the test with something new. Now I know it's worth trying and make new experiences. To do theatre exercises with the full group was really amazing."

Marta:

“Before doing the exercise I was always afraid to fail, but as soon as I started moving my fear vanished. I had a lot of fun and every time an exercise ended I wanted to do more and more.”

Maria:

“At first I was very shy, but then I understood it was funny to play with movements and sounds. I learnt many things and I wish these theatre meetings would never end.”

Roberta:

“I find that what we learnt during these theatre classes is very useful in everything I do. I feel more self-confident and I’m no longer afraid to fail as I was before.”

Federica:

“When you play an instrument you must be perfect no matter what, as there aren’t many ways to play. There’s only one way that is considered “the right way”. In theatre, instead, all you do is “right”, because it is your way to do it and can’t be wrong.”

Silvia:

“In theatre you create your own music and your own movement. I learnt to accept myself. If there isn’t only a right way to do things, there is no reason to be afraid to fail.”

Marta:

“Certain things appeared to us very difficult, almost impossible to do. I know now it’s worth trying. Sometimes everything is much more simple than it seems.”

Our participants have proved to trust their ideas and abilities. They managed to convey their feelings with great simplicity and joy and we are grateful to have had the opportunity to add value to the VISION project and we thank all the fantastic team that has been part of it.

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