

Supporting Potential Development: the Romanian experiences

Presentation of the European Grundtvig Programme: organization, implementation, results and perspectives

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■ Abstract

The article presents the Romanian experiences in the planning and implementing the European Grundtvig Programme. It includes the following aspects: how the project team was composed; which was the background in which the activities were made; how do we set our activity and how we motivated your learners; which techniques had been used; the analysis of the pre-test and post-test graphics; a possible development of the intervention and methodology according to the European objectives and about the function of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

■ **Key words:** *action methods, adult education, empowering, learning helplessness, research.*

Supporting Potential Development: le esperienze romene

Presentazione del progetto europeo Grundtvig: organizzazione, implementazione, risultati e prospettive

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■ Sommario

L'articolo presenta le esperienze romene nella programmazione e nell'implementazione del progetto europeo Grundtvig. Include i seguenti aspetti: come era composto il team del progetto, quale era il contesto in cui sono state implementate le azioni, come sono state preparate le attività e come sono stati motivati i partecipanti, quali tecniche sono state usate, l'analisi dei grafici del pre-test e del post-test, il possibile sviluppo dell'intervento e della metodologia in base agli obiettivi europei e riguardo alla funzione del Lifelong Learning Programme.

■ **Parole chiave:** *metodi attivi, educazione degli adulti, empowering, impotenza appresa, ricerca.*

One of the goals that is in accordance with the key competencies of initiative and entrepreneurship of the European Commission “include personal, interpersonal and intercultural skills and relate to all forms of behavior which allow people to participate effectively and constructively in the social and working life, and particularly in increasingly different societies, and as well as solve conflicts where this is necessary”. We as partner tried to fulfill this through the main means of psychodrama, we are talking here about the action methods that became, in this case, an intervention tool.

The Romanian team was composed of five trainers formed in psychodrama method, recognized by Romanian Association of Classical Psychodrama: Luiza Vasilescu and Carmen Mecu for Bucharest; Daniela Munteanu, Liviu Gaja and Radu Vulcu for Sibiu.

The activities were conceived using psychodrama which “...is a method of psychoterapy in which clients are encouraged to continue and complete their actions through dramatization, role playing and dramatic self-presentation. Both verbal and non-verbal communications are utilized. A number of scenes are enacted, depicting, for example, memories of specific happenings in the past, unfinished situations, inner dreams, fantasies, preparations for future risk-taking situations, or unrehearsed expressions of mental states in the here and now. These scenes either approximate real-life situations or are externalisations of inner mental processes. If required, other roles may be taken by group members or inanimate objects. Many techniques are employed, such as role reversal, doubling, mirroring, concretizing, maximizing and soliloquy. Usually the phases of warm up, action, working through, closure and sharing can be identified.” (Kellermann, 1992).

In Romania, those who can use psychodrama in adult education are the specialists qualified in psychodrama, willing to use their knowledge gained during training with their trainees. In this respect, every third person involved in psychodrama training has connections with the field of adult education, but we don't have any written evidence of whether (and if yes, how) the gained knowledge, attitudes and skills are used or not in educational activity. The field of adult education in Romania is still in the making. On the other hand, the research found that adult educators are highly motivated in acquiring new competences and applying psychodrama methods.

The activities were structured as followed: identification of the target group and establishing the main subjects; selection and translation of the materials and tests; choosing the location where training will take place; making the presentation maps (description of the project, themes, schedule of training meetings); establishing the contacts with target institutions from Sibiu and Bucharest, presentation of the project based on the maps that we prepared and then signing the agreements and last but not least identifying and the selection of the individuals that were willing to participate (based on CV-s received from them). After the selection we formed two groups, one in Sibiu and other in Bucharest, both composed of ten learners. The training sessions consisted of ten modules three hours each.

Learning sessions

The modules were structured as follow:

- module 1* (February 2011) – signing individuals contracts, pre-testing, regulation for efficient function of the training (gathering the pre-testing results and transmitting the information to the project coordinator from Italy);
- module 2* (March 2011) – respecting personal subjectivity and active listening;
- module 3* (March 2011) – warm-up;
- module 4* (April 2011) – creativity and spontaneity;
- module 5* (April 2011) – role theory;

module 6 (May 2011) – sociometry and social/personal/professional atom;
module 7 (May 2011) – self efficacy and empowering;
module 8 (June 2011) – learning helplessness;
module 9 (June 2011) – mirroring and being heard;
module 10 (July 2011) – post-testing, feed-back, participation certificates.

For each module, we had a theoretical part (power point presentation), practice part (applications of the techniques) and feed-back. After every session of training, we exchanged reports of activity between Sibiu and Bucharest trainers. Other activities were the preparation of the Torino mobility (Italy, July 2011) and organizing the meeting between GRU partners and training learners in Craiova (Romania, October 2011).

Motivational techniques

In our opinion the key elements for increasing learner's motivation were: the gratuity of the training; information about a new method which stimulated their curiosity; focus on practice and concise theory and the opportunity of personal and professional growth.

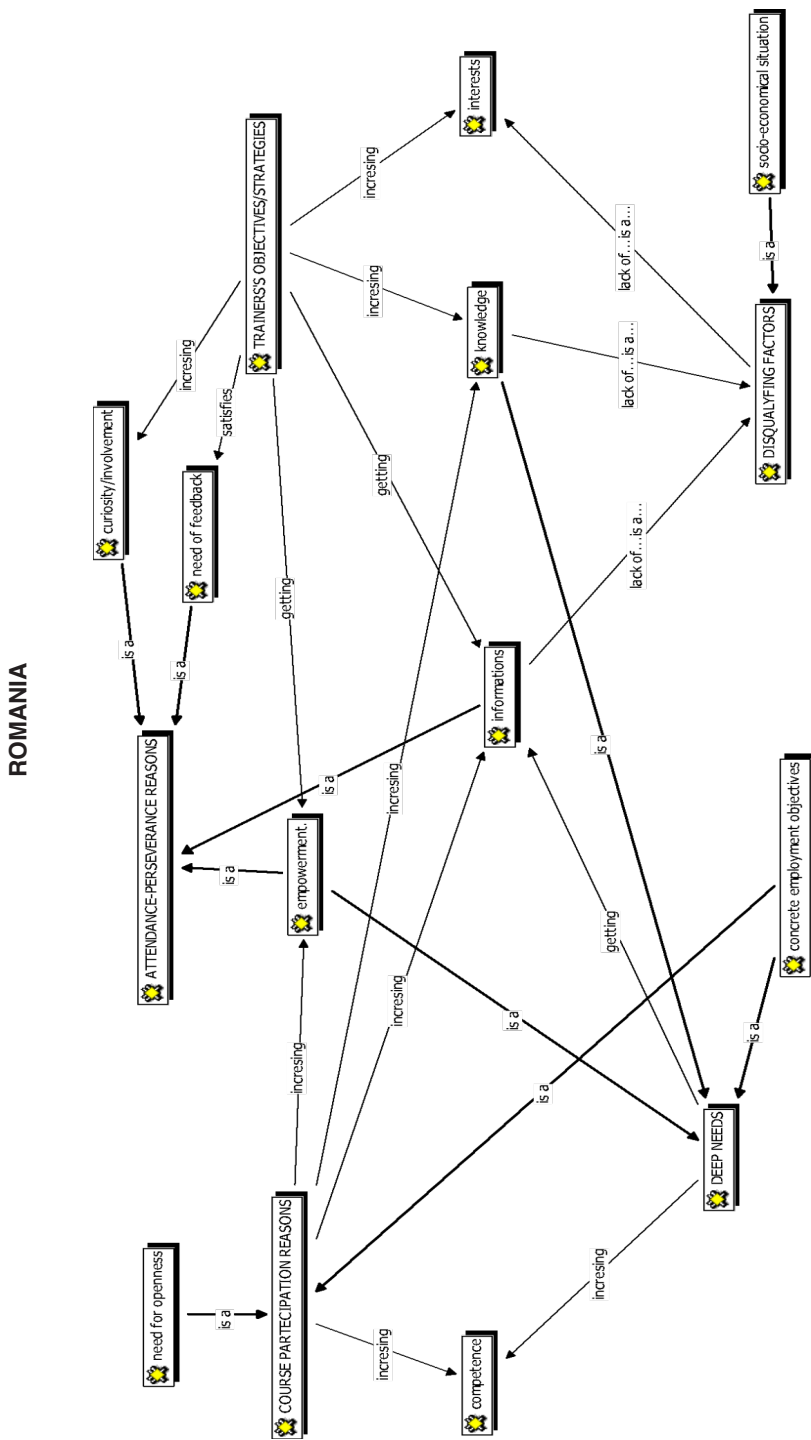
The Bucharest group consisted of four speech therapists from inter-school centers; three psychologists, two teachers and one school educator for children with vision impairment. The Sibiu group contained five support teachers from placement centers of Child Protection Agency, three psychologists working in NGO's and placement center and two social workers from NGO's.

Psychodrama techniques used in education are lying on the foundation of the psychodrama leader – so the adult educator understands the application of psychodramatic tools. The techniques which have been used were: role reversal, role playing, mirror, double, concretizing, warm-up, sociometry and social atom.

Analysis of the pre-test results

Amongst reasons to participate to training (*Graph 1*), romanians identify the possibility to experiment with new methods and techniques and the openness need (to overcome bureaucratic and rigid patterns that make workers learning to be passive). This need is linked to empowerment, which is one the course participation and perseverance reason as well as a individuals deep need and training target. Other reasons to join are the knowledge of self and others, professional retraining, the need to increase knowledge and skills. A network central node connected to all five macro factors, is information. Seems to emerge an idea of bureaucratic organization, where it is essential to fill information gaps. Romanians identify some factors that determine courses participation limiting the possible training abandonment feedback need, having credits, empowerment, curiosity and information need. Proposing personal and career growth and strengthening capacity are central aspects in dropping-out prevention. The importance of keeping alive curiosity is recognized just from Romanians trainers as an essential feature to encourage courses participation. Among deep needs they

Graphic 1 - Analysis for Romanian pre-test results.



identify specific employment objectives, themselves and others knowledge, self-esteem, professional development and knowledge, information and expertise need. Disqualifying factors are: fatigue, lack of time, difficult socio-economic situation, lack of knowledge and self-sufficiency illusion. Describing the training strategies proposed Romanians are more detailed than others and suggest the need of practical courses that provide tools like increase of information, curiosity, motivation, interests and empowerment.

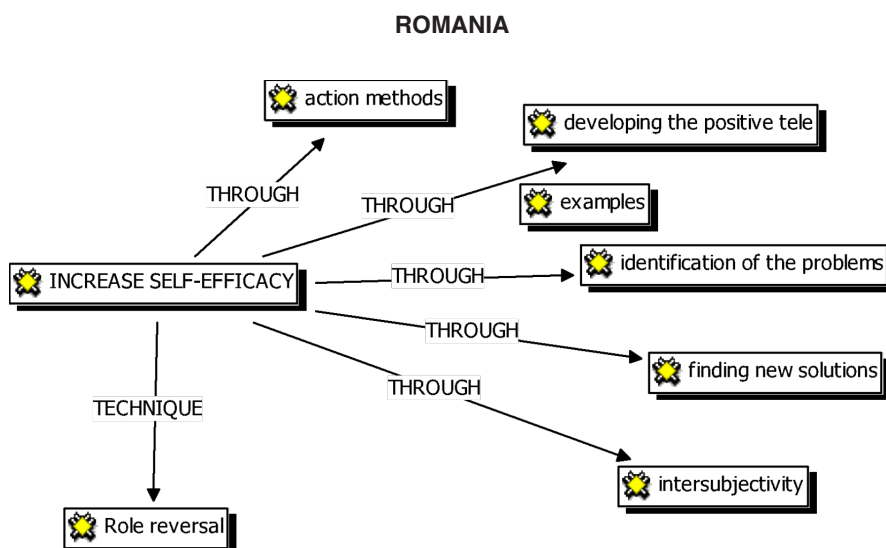
Analysis of the post-test results

The University of Padova research team that handled the Grundtvig project thought to submit some questions during the post-test phase even to trainers that guided and led courses. These questions want to investigate the psychodrama and playback trainers efficacy perception. It was then asked:

- to indicate the ways in which educators believe they have changed their students self-efficacy perception;
- to indicate at least one technical psychodrama and playback theater aspect they found useful for changing students self-efficacy perception.

A graph was drawn for each country partner and from these graphs, a new summary one that could answer, in a comprehensive manner, to the two questions. All trainers involved answered they believed to have contributed to the change of their students self-efficacy perception. In particular we can see forward how trainers believe to have contributed in every country. In Romania the active methods help people to develop a positive and intersubjective attitude (*Graph 2*). All this allows to identify more clearly problems and find new solutions, because it develops spontaneity and creativity.

Graph 2 - Analysis for Romanian post-test results.



Conclusions and possible future directions

It is generally accepted that applying psychodrama methods requires at least a basic training in psychodrama, in order to be able to handle with care discretion the impact of the techniques on the group members and to avoid flattening the creative potential of psychodrama (Wittinger, 2000). That's why psychodrama is not merely a question of technique, it is a way of being in relations, and as Marcia Karp expresses is a way of practicing living without being punished for making mistakes (Karp, Holmes, Bradshaw, Tavon, 1998); that is to say, practicing growing up while you are doing it.

The learning atmosphere created by psychodrama is another basic resource in favor of education and personal development. Being mainly a group method psychodrama can produce an adequate learning environment by stimulating group cohesion, an atmosphere of confidence and safety, in which the learner can effectively handle anxiety related to the learning situation, teacher or other group member. Most of the problems reported by educators they are confronting in their work (e.g. lack of motivation, drop outs) can be handled more efficiently if more attention is paid to development of group cohesion and creation of an adequate learning environment (indicated in the article 29 paragraph 1 of Decision on the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP): "to help provide adults with classes which improve their knowledge and competences").

A European network was created that consisted of seven associations which use action methods (psychodrama and playback theatre) to foster an exchange of good practices, a greater mobility of teachers and students and a joint research in this subject. So, the European goal that implies the sense of harmony, integration and improving the practice of adult training through the psychodrama and the playback theatre was reached (article 29, paragraph 2 of the Decision on the Learning Standing Program (LSP) "to improve quality and increase the cooperation among the organizations involved in adult education across Europe"). Employment growth has been achieved to cope with problems (empowerment) by action methods used (the inversion of the central role), which generated a positive tele and inter-subjectivity as the background for achieving creative solutions. They identified specific problems, and gave examples to stimulate creativity, new solutions were found within the group focused on the force of practical application. So learners have received declarative and procedural information, and have developed openness and ability to formulate goals and find ways to solve the discussed problems. It would be necessary to include assistance for the implementation of the program taught in any course for life long learning. Psychodramatic methodology helped people to re-discover their own resources and capabilities leading to the discovery and exploitation of their spontaneity and creativity. It started, within a secure and reassuring environment, a perceptible, active and constructive dialogue between the different aspects of life. The person comes to a higher level of self-awareness and confidence, and gets access to more spontaneous and creative ways to relate to others. The psychodrama is a method of self development based on 'putting into action' of the contents of the internal world. In psychodrama the person 'plays', acting his/hers mental representations. In a psychodrama, the person involved in the personal research finds the support of the group through which he/she learns to communicate and interact with others,

respecting the views of others and seeing different ideas not as a threat but as a precious. The person is actively engaged in knowing him/her self and developing his/hers resources and listening to different parts of his/hers internal and relational world, like doubts, questions, talent, blocks, desires, needs, and so on.

In doing so the person starts an internal dialogue that leads him/her to grasp the possible solutions to the conflicts inside or with the outside world. Doing this he/she finds motivations and support in the participation to the psychodrama and to the group. This approach aimed at improving interpersonal relationships allows, through the use of different techniques (reverse role, double mirror, soliloquy, sociometry...), to release crystallized and repetitive emotions, to solve problems and crisis, to search and discover alternative options respectful of themselves and of others. With this method the person may, by developing an active dialogue, take that path of change that leads to empowerment and creative spontaneity. This analysis can lead to a personal (self-knowledge and harmonization between internal needs and requirements of reality) and professional growth - gain greater competence in managing professional and interpersonal relationships (article 29, paragraph 2 of the Decision on the Learning Standing Program (LSP) “to give proper tools to professionals involved in adult education, in serving others, in conflict and personnel management”; “to improve pedagogical methodologies and organization management of associations operating in adult education. Facilitate the access to personal and team creativity”).

We selected some eloquent comments from the learners.

“After attending this course I feel more spontaneous and creative. That led to an improvement of my activity as a teacher. I used part of techniques learned there to make children more active in their education and to increase their spontaneity, creativity and ability to getting to know themselves. Children ability to relate and communicate with other mates and teachers has improved as well. I also used these techniques to increase the self esteem level in my pupils. I used the following techniques: role reversal, mirror and double. I used them in short, warming-up activities prior to daily routine activities. I also used them in more elaborate counseling activities. I practiced role reversal both with class teacher and with mate children. I used the mirror technique to help children express the way they perceive their mates and I insisted on positive aspects (children often tend to mirror especially negative aspects). I used double help children that could not express their thoughts and feelings. In November Alexandra Marin and I will present to my colleagues from our school the techniques we learned and some possible activities for the class.” (Monica Popescu - teacher).

“I used the warming-up technique, because that make more easier to focus the children's attention. Another theing that I used it was the mirror technique that need to know each other better; the reversal of roles for shy children to help them to open themselves, be more cooperative and relaxed.” (Cristina Iganea - psychologist).

In his book “Lo psicodramma classico”, Boria sustains that “...the practice and the psychodramatic literature emphasize that the application of psychodrama spread all over both in the clinical-therapeutic as well in the educational areas.” (Boria, 2000, p. 17); that's why the usefulness of psychodrama and sociometry in education often leaves the doors open to the creative applications of his methods in many domains of social life. That's why now,