

SPAIN - ACTION RESEARCH, CASE STUDIES

1. Volunteering and ecology

Introduction

The main goal of this activity is to promote IG relationships, with the aim of bringing people of different age groups closer and enriching links and mutual knowledge. In this case, information and communication technologies (ICTs) were used as tools of interaction on the topic of ecology between the different age groups. The groups involved were 3 to 8 year-old children from the Cappont Play Centre and seniors from the Santa Cecilia care home for the elderly, both of which are in Lleida.



Most of the children using the playground come from immigrant families and have little contact in their families with older people. At the same time, many seniors in the old people's home had little contact with immigrants. In order to find senior volunteers to participate in this project, a meeting with the elders of care homes for retired people and the elderly was held to explain the project and what their contribution would be. At the same time, the educators of the children's play centre presented the project to the families to know if there were people interested in it. The answers were positive.

The activities leader carried out training sessions with the group of voluntary seniors. They in turn, with the support of activities leader carried out the workshop with children on the subject of voluntary worker and ecology using ICTs as a tool. On the Web page (www.actividadintergeneracional.com/voluntari_cat.html) we can find the videos, games, didactic explanations and interactive questions and answers that were used in this project.

How did the different generations benefit?

In order to investigate this initiative, we interviewed an advisor on social action of La Caixa Foundation, a coordinator of Lleida Municipality and a member of TASCA, a local organization which advises on the design and management of educational, cultural and social projects. Moreover, we also interviewed a representative of the Cappont playground.

The following motivations and perceived benefits of the project were identified by the organizers and sponsors.

- the need to open retired homes to community
- to value the social capital of elder people
- to improving the community social cohesion
- to enrich learning process of young and seniors
- to work with children regarding the importance of respecting environment.

The young participants were positive about the activity:

"I want to repeat the activity" (Yaris, 5 years)

"I've learnt a lot and I had fun" The seniors also reported positively on the activity,

"I liked their games and that they explain us how to clean the Earth" (Alejandro, 7 years old)

"Train memory, physical and motor activity. Not being blocked at home, not becoming mentally old, make an effort to do something, and as a whole, feeling useful." (Magda, 57 years old)

"Satisfaction as they can feel more useful for society and feel solidarity" (Conchita, 67 years old)

"Children seem happy when finishing the activities and they do not have prejudices" (Blai, 72, senior volunteer). ***"Children are curious about us but in fact I have learnt some things about their culture"***. (male, 74, senior volunteer)

"Grandpas are transfers of knowledge and experiences" (Lourdes, 57 years old)

"Flow their knowledge correctly for the everyday activities in this world full of aggressiveness and teach their life philosophy" (Félix, 65 years old)

"People along life acquire knowledge and it is positive having the chance to transmit them as part of history to the younger ones. They can share and compare personal experiences" (José Luis, 72 years old)

Constraints and Challenges

The following constraints and challenges were identified by interviewees:

- Work on self esteem.
- Need to open up retired homes to the neighbourhoods.
- Financial crisis.
- Need to promote a change of attitude towards the elderly and challenge the stereotype of the old age.
- Need to cheer up seniors, through an active and healthy life, promoting creativity and maintaining an innovative spirit.

2. Regina's Tale

Introduction



Regina's tale is a space in Balafia's playground (Lleida), where seniors and children share knowledge and experiences through the telling of stories (with images and puppets) and produce art work linked to the stories. The involved organizations are Balafia neighbours association, Balafia playground and a retired home from the neighbourhood. The activity takes place in the playground and in a local library, part of Balafia's social housing scheme, enables the participation of children from the neighbourhood who do not participate in the children's play

centre and stimulates the participation of seniors from the neighbourhood in the lives of young children. The overall goals of this activity are to improve social cohesion in the community; enrich children and seniors learning processes; stimulate positive self esteem amongst seniors. Twenty four children aged between 3 and 8 years are involved, and 3 senior volunteers, two male and one female.

Everything started when Regina, a retired pre-school educator and grandmother who took her grandchildren to the children's play centre, talked to the educators there and that she get involved. The initiative of telling tales to children was born. In order to be able to carry out the activity the families of the children who usually went to the children's play centre were contacted and it was also explained to the neighbourhood association and the retired home association in case they wanted to take part.

A meeting was organized between the seniors, the educators and Regina discuss the activity was about, which methodology would be followed and what would be done. It was also important to decide on and agree which values should be transmitted to the children.

The stories are linked to spaces and places of Lleida as well as to the neighbourhood where the children live. These are classic and traditional stories, but often, to introduce the story they told their most personal experiences. After the story telling all participants, seniors and children illustrate the story in drawings and paintings which are hung on the walls of the children's play centre.

How do the different generations benefit?

The identified benefits include:

- Transmitting values and ways of life,
- break stereotypes,
- create a space of affective contact with the elderly
- soften the path of active work life to the retirement
- improve health

- being active
- feel useful
- avoid loneliness

This is how the senior volunteers captured their feelings about being involved:

"It is necessary to spend my free time doing something, not being alone. Now I have duties to go out and things to explain." (Jose Luis, 74, senior volunteer)

"People do not value what we can really provide, they should not be surprised about what we can do". (Felix, 65, senior volunteer)

"We have low educational level as we were born during post civil war period. In other countries of Europe the idea of old people can be different, (they are) better valued and more positive, we must to take advantage of these experiences (others countries, etc.)." (female, 70, senior volunteer)

"It's positive for old people since it gives life to them and they like telling stories a lot." (Teresa, 34 years old)

"I've always been a teacher, and it has been totally vocational, so during all my entire life, while health respects me, I need to be in contact with children, being a teacher is part of me. Being and becoming old doesn't mean that I lose my vocation" (Regina, 68 years old)

"Grandpas should be instructed about kids capacities and in that way create activities suitable with kids knowledge" (Quim, 43 years old)

"Willingness, empathy and communication competence of volunteers is very important" / "A dynamic organization is required, attractive and that knowledge is appropriate to children" (Mireia, 30 años)

"If someone has never told a tale, maybe it should be necessary some help during the tasks. It must be difficult for someone who has never spoken to an audience" (Yolanda, 40 years old)

"Playing computer games is fun for them since many of them don't have the chance to do it by themselves" (Mireia, 30 years old)

"They are people without ties, they have no family around since the majority of them are from other countries, they have travelled a lot and with this activities kids can contact old people" (Quim, 44 years old)

"Kids create ties and a social relationship with the elders and this enriches them" / "Elders find themselves tied again with the world" (Yolanda, 40 years old)

Constraints and challenges:

We identified the presence of stereotypical attitudes towards seniors, such as: "seniors don't know about modern things", "they aren't active members of society". ***"Activities are for the purpose that kids see that grandpas can follow properly their way of life"*** (Lourdes, 57 years old)

"What makes me feel sad is that when you think in general terms, old people are not valued properly for all that they can contribute to society. People think that these kind of activities are good to entertain kids and elders spend their time, but people don't understand that they can contribute to learning, not just having fun and not being bored" (Helena, 67 years old)

Moreover, another challenging factor is represented by the low self esteem of seniors, and seniors not feeling valued.