



SUGGESTIONS - Interview with Vincenzo Scala

Vincenzo Scala

Psychologist and psychotherapist



Here is an interview with Vincenzo who piloted a unit from the HERO Curriculum.

Vincenzo you were one of the members of the HERO international team that developed the training Curriculum. Why did you decide to create it?

Implementing quality housing projects needs high expertise of all the involved actors. The Hero partnership was aware of that. The training Curriculum is a tool aimed at guaranteeing high skills in housing topics for local communities.

So is the Curriculum a support not only for mental health professionals working at Mental Health Departments?

The training Curriculum is made up of 4 Modules and they are addressed to 4 target groups, all potentially involved in the housing projects. The four groups that according to the project represent the local community, are:

1. Users and their families; 2. Mental health professionals; 3. Professionals from other public agencies (school, Municipality social services, etc.); 4. Citizens (volunteers, neighbours, local residents, shopkeepers, etc)

So, training on housing for people with experience of mental health issues doesn't concern merely mental health professionals but people who are involved in different manners and reasons in housing projects.

How is the Curriculum structured? How can we find out what we can use, for instance, if we have the opportunity to spend some time with people with experience of mental health issues?

According to the customer orientation perspective, the Curriculum proposes 4 different training courses – it is divided into four modules. The modules are similar but they differ in order to be clear and interesting for the different target groups. Module 1, for users and their families, features topics, exercises, goals adequate to the needs of the target group. We conducted a survey just to study the training needs of each target group during the Hero project.

Practically, you can select the module according to the target group you have to work with, then you will select the most appropriate unit depending on the topic you'd like to practice.

Help us with an example.

Sure. Thinking about Module 1 for users, if you want to start a housing project in a supported apartment, some units will be useful; if you have to face a conflicted situation in a supported apartment, a different unit will help you, and so on.

For instance unit 5 in Module 1, (module 1 is for users and their families), concerns the topic of “resources for housing”. You will find some practical suggestions in it, in order to share some information on the topic of organising a role-play with the users. It was a nice opportunity to work on this topic, using the tools suggested in unit 5, during a two day trekking in the context of a re-educational activity.

Then, could the training units be independently chosen one from the other?

Yes, of course. You can practice the most interesting one for your group. It's useful to keep in mind both the educational and training meaning of the Curriculum. It's not compulsory to start from the beginning. A formal



training context is not necessary . Look at the content's table of the Curriculum and choose the most appropriate unit for the improvement of your group. Read the selected unit and prepare materials in order to carry it out at the best.

We are speaking about training. Is a formal context not necessary?

A good training organisation should be enough. Units' contents could be shared both in formal learning contexts (University, schools, etc) and in non-formal ones.

So, coming back to your experience, did you use the opportunity of an outdoor event to informally discuss and train a group of people on housing resources?

I implemented unit 5 of module1 during a two-day excursion of the "Mountain Group Eucalipty". This group is still active in one of the eight Centers of Mental Health of ASL ROMA2. It is a rehabilitative and socializing activity based on the interest in attending the excursion in a mountain environment; it could last one or more days.

Who attended the trekking? Why did you select unit 5 of the Module?

The group was made up of 12 users and 4 guides. They were all members of the «Mountain Group Eucalipty».

Some users would like to live more independently, without their families. They were thinking about an autonomous housing away from their families.

In agreement with my colleagues, I decided for unit 5 of module 1 as the most appropriate for the users' needs.

Was it an interesting experience for the participants at the training unit session?

The topic seemed to be very touching. Great involvement from the participants.

A lot of sensitive questions have been faced.

Information on the housing procedures for ASL ROMA2 users has been given.

Something new has been learned both by users and their guides.

We've already recorded a short video on the debriefing phase of the role play we took part in.

Why did it mainly work?

In my opinion the success of the unusual training/educational experience is mainly due to:

Peer to peer sharing on the idea they have on living independently; Non-verbal communication; The use of fiction (the roleplay); Receiving information in an informal way on housing characteristics and procedures.

Did the participants find it interesting?

There was a good atmosphere in the group. Everybody felt involved and appreciated the innovative way to discuss such an important topic. Users were very motivated.