



Provincia di Crotona



Can be a Musical considered a tool against juvenile discomfort?

By Ms. Anne F. Storz

Musicals are a trend, a consolidated trend evidently. People love them, particularly the young, who loan to be artists and successful Talent Shows and Musicals today (Cats, Notre Dame de Paris, Juliet and Romeo) prove their increasing interest. They give them the chance of a dream.

So then, why don't we use Musicals to deal with an increasing discomfort the young at social risk feel? And give them the chance to transform their dreams into reality and involve them in an innovative, funny and useful learning context?

The EU project MOVING officially started in November 2009; the Provincia di Crotona (*Province of Crotona*) is the Lead Partner and it is from a particular vulnerable area where the young (those talented too) have few opportunities to be involved in a creative world and cultivate their passion.

There are 3 Partner Countries, from 3 areas heavily affected by social exclusion and marginalization; rates of juvenile unemployment are dramatically high, much higher than the European average. The areas are: Calabria (South Italy), South Spain and the area of Liverpool (UK). Partners of the project are: the Provincia di Crotona, the famous school of Performing Arts of Mr. Paul McCartney – LIPA, the regional Government of Andalusia and the Chamber of Commerce of Liverpool.

Our project is surely ambitious: give a motivation back to school dropouts that are not part of any labor sector, through a learning module inspired by scenic arts. Scenic arts are used to encourage the young at risk of social exclusion and those unemployed to be part again of a learning progress so that they can acquire new competences and knowledge through a personalized training.

Data of juvenile Discomfort

Juvenile discomfort and in particular school dropout rates (leaving school with no degree and no job) is still high in Europe. In some Countries, for example in UK, a new and poorly known phenomenon is emerging NEETS - **(NEET = Young people not in education, employment or training)**, which is **young people out of the education system, with no employment or training, in their 16 – 18 years.**

A phenomenon is spreading, which is poorly known at the moment and it is complex. In Europe, UK has only approached the issue with investments in specific programs and initiatives. UK and Japan are the only Countries with a national strategy to face such a social concern. Concrete measures have not had great results so far. It is therefore essential to understand the severity of the phenomenon, its complexity and define innovative learning and training methods, which can reduce Neets Europe wide. Some data refer that Neets represent 10% of teens (16 – 18 aged) in UK - Statistical First Release (SFR), 2007).

As in the latest data of the European survey EUROSTAT (the EU statistic Bureau) about employment in the regions of the 27 Member States, South Italy ranks in the top in Europe because of the juvenile unemployment (aged 15 – 24). **It is a priority of the European Commission to develop new strategies and measures that contribute to the reduction of juvenile unemployment and the number of young people that are not part of any education or training systems.**

After analyzing the achievements in the last 2 years and setting the priorities for the biennial 2008 – 2010, the Bordeaux Communication establishes a new goal: **strengthen the connection between education, professional training and the labor market** – this is part of the initiative under the name “**New Competences for new Jobs**” and the Commission is focusing on that.

Among the challenges in the Bordeaux Communication, two of them must cause some thinking in us: juvenile unemployment rate is still too high in Europe (15.5% in 2007); involvement of the young in training process and the qualification level is still too low, compared to the achievements set by the EU.

Few local Boards reflect on thorny issues such as emergencies and juvenile discomfort, or do not even think about measures against juvenile unemployment. Few policy makers are willing to accept these challenges or to make it into an innovative prospective, use new trends and passions of the juvenile world and elaborate positive solutions. The great challenge is to “transform” the increasing interest of the young in Musicals and Talent Shows into a personal and professional development tool.

Just have a look at the data in the latest Eurispes - Telefono Azzurro survey: “**10th National Survey on childhood and adolescence condition**”; this gives the number of teens that participated in the casting to be part of the most popular TV talent programs in Italy; 40,000 candidates for the 3rd edition of X Factor and 12 posts were only available! For the program “Amici” (2009 – 2010), over 30,000 candidates for 22 participants only in the “game”. In the last TV season, *Amici* had an average of 6 million viewers (mostly teens) with a 25.4% share. These data prove the interest in Talent Shows and Musicals where dancing, acting and singing are harmoniously connected so as to inspire emotions.

Young people nowadays are pretty “disenchanted”, the latest Eurispes – Telefono Azzurro survey reports. They poorly trust in future, there are few job opportunities. The survey describes that the young think it is hard to achieve the goals in an ordinary life: university degree, a job coherent to their curriculum, marriage and children. 33.6% of teen students look discouraged to achieve a university degree, 49.4% to get a sure job and 42.9% to get a job they love. They have therefore prematurely absorbed the uncertainties of the current society, which may negatively affect their future. In some regions in Europe, isolation, precariousness, uncertainty are extremely high.

Core of the ***Moving*** Project – Innovative Method of Vocational Training to re-engage the Neet Group – deals with the integration of groups with employment difficulties, in particular young people with no job, or degree and develop their skills and competences through their creativity, music and gestures.

The *Provincia di Crotona* has been developing initiatives for years, which focus on juvenile social involvement. Let the young be active in education and culture. Thanks to EU-funding, it is possible to invest resources and time for the young; this is essential to let the generation of the future be protagonists of their “*devenir*” (becoming). Investments on the young, on their future, on their professional and personal development in consideration of their motivations and interests must be a local, national and European priority.

The Italian writer Mr. Gianni Rodari was convinced that passion was meant to be core of an educational pathway: “*what is left is the necessity and the duty to give them not only the pleasure of life but also the passion for life, teach them to tell the truth and especially to be passionate for truth. Seeing they are happy cannot be enough for us. We must see them fond in what they do, what they say, what they see*”.

Motivation is the key to success

The Provincia di Crotona and the 3 selected Partners are going to invest on such an initiative and to focus on the motivation and personalization of alternative training modules based on Musicals.

Several international surveys confirm arts benefit learning and development of people in particular of the young. Why Musicals, something that combines singing, dancing, music, sounds, acting and also the “soft-skills” competences (communication, problem solving, team work)? Because scenic arts make learning more interesting, they give **pleasure, curiosity and inspiration**. They stimulate the creative side of the young; they contribute to their personal growth and they let them acquire new competences in order to be part of a working context. They offer a training heritage that is useful to solve daily problems, to work and to interface with the group, to communicate. It is a way to learn while having fun. Through the Musical, we can represent, symbolize and explore what we hardly transmit through simple words.

During the 2-year project, a new training method is planned based on the use of scenic arts, gestures, music and dance, on a personalized process with the young, on play (learning through play) so that they can learn key competences and approach directly the labor world, in particular the creative branch. Giving the socially-discomforted young, those who are not in the education system and in the society an innovative chance to acquire competences and qualifications so that they can approach the labor world.

A musical is a theater show where acting is integrated with songs, chorus, instrumental interludes and songs. In our project MOVING, we use three **pilot projects** to show how positively scenic arts and musicals may influence at-risk young people. We will prove that Musicals, theater and dance contribute to self-esteem, to enthusiasm, to a sense in our life, which the young (and not only) have difficulties to find. In our society, adolescents frequently feel lost; they are not able to imagine a future. Under such conditions, it is easy to fall into emarginazion. The 3 pilot projects will be respectively in Calabria (Crotone), Liverpool and Andalusia.

Art is the expression of the deepest though in the easiest way – Albert Einstein. Arts can help us give a sense to the life of discomforted young people, no matter what discomfort. Musicals, theater and dance let them be in a group, with a role, be creative and be protagonists of their growth. Arts help the young deal with their peers, exchange and reflect about similar values like tolerance, cooperation and fair play. Arts let us share and build together, express our fantasy and creativity. Creating a musical together means fostering new competences, we learn how to solve problems, we can grow; it is a challenge. And we want to win it. We are standing before a project we want to develop. We can invest resources so that the young can express their creativity and their dreams. **Because dreaming has no price.**

Several observations on art therapy, dance therapy for at-risk subjects (prisoners, minors in social centers, drug-addicted, school dropouts and more) have shown excellent results. Using arts as a sort of psycho-therapy instrument can be convincing to acquire self-confidence, self-esteem, confidence with the world.

In literature, arts (plastic arts, theater, dance...) are frequently together with the self-esteem development (see the publications of Madeine Deriaz, just to name one) or as a prevention measure from school drop out (see The Arts and Youth at Risk: Global and Local Challenges, Edited by Angela O'Brien and Kate Donelan, 2008). Arts imply forms of expression that are so far away from those used at school or in ordinary training. Arts mean **acting on intuition**, they let our creativity come out from the deepest in us, express intimately with our gestures, movements. We can be interpreted and we can communicate. This is much more important in the case of a public performance.

Personalization of the Process

Creating and being protagonist trigger off a movement in the individual and let him/her manage his/her “becoming”. We will show that thanks a more interesting learning (because of play, music, dance, theater, sound techniques, scenography and a lot of personal creativity) we can work on juvenile disease.

The transnational project, which has EC co-funding (Lifelong Learning Program), will try to personalize the education process and make it more interesting, to include innovative training

modules based on the creation of musicals. Such modules aim at the hidden talent of each student; their educational process will be then personalized. The challenge has just commenced!

PARTNERS in the PROJECT

Lead Partner

Provincia di Crotona - www.provincia.crotone.it

Councilor of Culture – Dott. Diodato Scalfaro

Chief Officer of the General Affairs Department - Dott. Angelo Marescalco

Counselor of Equality – Lawyer, Ms. Rosa Vincelli

Project Coordinator Ms. Anne F. Storz

Partners

LIPA – The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts - www.lipa.ac.uk

Mr. Ged McKenna Department Chief Officer “Knowledge Transfer”

Junta de Andalusia - www.juntadeandalucia.es

General Direction of Social Services and Social Inclusion

Ms. Mercedes García Sáez – Department Chief Officer

Liverpool Chamber of Commerce - www.liverpoolchamber.org.uk

Mr. Graham Helling Department Chief Officer “Business Development”