

Writing about the action

Title : Look upon the world and window on the other

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I. Description of the action

The PPCP (Projet Pluridisciplinaire à Caractère Professionnel/ Multidisciplinary vocational project) « Look upon the world and window on the other», implemented in the Sophie Germain vocational upper highschool in Thionville, started with a humanitarian project which concerned Afghanistan. To help the Afghanistan-Lorraine Association, registered in Metz, we proposed the pupils to help finance the building of a school in Afghanistan (in Astana, in the Panshir valley). In 2005/2006 we organized activities all year long to get some funding for the building of the school.

In 2006/2007, the second team continued the action to buy equipment (tables, chairs, furniture) for the school, which was achieved during the summer 2006.

At the same time, groups made some researches on this country.
Here are the studied themes:

- History and Geography in Afghanistan ;
- 25 years of war ;
- War chiefs;
- Taliban ;
- Women ;
- Education and schooling for boys and girls.

Expositions and photo exhibitions ended up this project.

For the second project « Window on the other », we went to a geriatric hospital every week for two hours, the Kem, situated near the school. The pupils organized different workshops.

To us, these two projects have a common goal and are indisputably linked, but we will focus on our action in the geriatric hospital because it seems to be the more innovative part of the project.

II. Context

This project concerned the last year pupils of the vocational diploma « secretary courses » in a vocational upper high school of a small country town.

Initial result:

We noticed the following characteristics concerning teenagers in general and more specifically concerning pupils in vocational schools:

- Lack of motivation ;
- Lack of self-confidence due to school failures, teenagers' discontent ;
- Lack of open-mindedness and curiosity (TV culture) ;
- Lack of tolerance ;
- Lack of opportunities (no travels, history and geography lessons not appropriate) ;
- Lack of personal work in class and at school ;
- Apathetic or disruptive behaviour : agitation, aggressivity, no ability to concentrate;
- Truancy ;
- Inadequate school results ;
- No personal prospects leading to school refusal, troublesome studies and no job security.

III. Goal of the action

We always have difficulties to agree to the pupils' unfitness for school. This would mean that school failed in its primary mission and moreover we know that school unfitness is closely bound to social unfitness.

What can we do? Can the PPCP be a way to integration and socialization through totally different activities than those proposed inside the class?

To put it concretely, the two parts of the PPCP tried to:

- Make pupils aware of daily realities : of another country or culture ;
- Know another geopolitical, cultural and religious world ;
- Train the pupils to make them citizens by opening them to the world ;
- Teach how to become a citizen thanks to a humanitarian relief ;
- Speak and write correctly ;
- Develop their group spirit and their initiative.

We also know that results take time and opportunities. We had both thanks to the staff at the geriatric hospital in Tionville called the KEM <http://www.alpha-sante.com/pages/etablisements/thionville.htm>

Here are our goals.

On the one hand we wanted the pupils to be aware of some very difficult jobs that exist and that it is necessary to respect some codes: clothes, time schedule, politeness, hygiene, voice, vocabulary, distance.

And on the other hand we knew that working with old and sick patients would make a strong impression on them for a long time as they are all in good health.

IV. Chosen demarches

The actions:

- Implementation of workshops :
 - Stories of life
 - Beauty care
 - Card games
 - painting
- party with music
- Participating in « LOTTO » afternoons and songs with the band VMEH
- Outside walks
- Photo exhibition.

Description of the work-shops :

- Stories of life: in groups of two or three our pupils talked with a resident in the geriatric hospital and recorded her story. They asked questions about her past, her family, her wedding, her job. The resident agreed to be recorded and her answers were written to be read to the rest of the class.
- Beauty care: beauty care workshops were really successful. The ladies came with pleasure every week for a manicure. A few pupils would take turns to lavish endless care to the resident (hand massages, manicure, nail polish). These sessions were good to them as they really felt prettier. One of them really enjoyed the make-up sessions : some blusher on the cheekbone and a touch of powder blue on the eyes.
- Card games: a belote table, a « Schwartze Peter » table, The 7 families game table according to the residents' will. The belote table actually lasted longer and is still there : 2 pupils still go and play with their old partners.
- painting: with the painting materials from the hospital and the help of our pupils they created objects for Christmas and Easter
- Party with music : One of our pupils was very musical, she brought her keyboard and played traditionnal popular songs according to the residents' demands. Pupils and residents all sang along.
- Participation to « LOTO » afternoons and songs with the band VMEH (visite des malades en établissement hospitalier <http://www.vmeh-national.com/> /visiting sick people in hospitals) : These volunteers who visit patients in hospitals integrated some of our pupils in their activity groups to organize « lotto » and song sessions.

- Outside walks : When the weather was fine, some pupils went on a walk with the residents who felt like going out.(on foot or on wheelchair in the hospital garden).
- Photo exhibition : We regularly took photos of the workshops. A selection of them was put on show in the hospital hall. These photos were annotated by the pupils.
- Visitors and families could see all the work done by the pupils of our school. We had much positive feedback because most families and parents were touched by our action.

V. Look upon the action

If we keep our focus on school we can say what follows :

- Did the pupils change their initial behaviour?
 - Did they build their own project ?
 - Did the relationship between the pupils and the involved teachers change ?
- To the first question, we could say our pupils changed a lot ! they act in a more open and responsible way now. Some of them showed hidden skills: commitment, taking decisions. They were happy to come to the hospital and they communicated their enthusiasm. They definitely got rid of their first inhibitions. Their energy and enthusiasm was a pleasure to see, whereas in class they aren't often motivated. Even better ! Some pupils even went and visited « their » grannies when they were not in class or even at weekends, and many went there until their final exam.
- To the third question, we must answer YES without any doubts. Trust, better communication. This is what we would put forward. The relation we built during this project is our main achievement.
Does it help in class ? Yes, thanks to these better relations we have, the work we ask is better accepted by the pupils.
- We cannot answer the second question as we would need more time to assess what long-term effects there might be.

Let's let the pupils talk about what they experienced :

Anne-Sophie : *« the first time, I was really moved, it was a fabulous encounter between 16 to 18 years old teenagers and much older people. They have memory loss and this is what touched me the most. But today, I spend two beautiful hours with them, so to all the residents in the Kem, I say thank you. »*

Prescillia : *« If you came every day to see me you would change my life » these are an elderly person's words which pleased me but also moved me deeply. »*

Khadidja : *« At first it wasn't easy for me to go to the Kem... but now, it's a real pleasure for me and for these people, I think, because they look happy. I will only keep good memories of this beautiful experience which brought me many satisfactions. I think I will go there on my free time to see the people I made friend with. »*

Anaïs : *« This experience is very enriching, we create deep links with these old people even if they are not family. It's not always easy to look after them, but the happiness we bring into their lives is worth it. It changes us and now I'm all the richer for that experience. »*

Lisandre : « *This experience brought a lot. I loved knowing each person's story. We also spent time together in small groups : manicure, painting, board games. It was a pleasure to spend two hours with them and I think my presence was also beneficial for them to take their minds off things*»

Ericka : « *We attach to these people because they give us a lot of joy and happiness. It's a real pleasure to listen to their lives, their stories, their past... »*

Daisy : « *At first, I was a little scared because I didn't know how it was going to be, but after a few afternoons I really attached to these people and after two hours spent with them I really didn't want to leave them. This experience allowed me to look at these people in a different way. »*

Jessica, Fatima : « *We found this experience really interesting : talks, games, songs, manicure...Everything was there to spend really nice moments with them ; We enjoyed speaking with these people a lot. Thanks for having this experience with them. »*

Karima : « *Helping these old people made me the greater good !! I learnt a lot and I hope I gave a lot to them ! »*

Vanessa : « *Today, with some perspective, I can say I'm looking forward to these Tuesday afternoons when I go to the Kem. »*

Mélina : « *This experience was very enriching as I can look at old people in a totally different way. »*

Lorraine : « *I got really involved with the residents. We talked a lot: they told me their lives before entering the Kem, their families, their worries, but also their moments of joy... »*

Olivia : « *I think this was a very enriching experience because I had the chance to talk with these people. Listening to their past stories gave me the impression to know them better. It was a real human experience. »*

This is only one part of the results, a very good moment to live... Too many factors are to be taken into account just to be self-satisfied with this experience. We can simply affirm that, humanely, it was worth living.

➤ Our difficulties :

Testing and evaluating the pupils : How to elaborate unbiased tests ? : That's our main concern for next year project(2007/2008).

We got in touch with the COP (careers adviser) who was very interested by our project and who proposed to help. This part of the project was not finalized, but it will be taken into account for next year.

VI. Evaluating the action

This was done in different ways :

We proposed three moments for self-evaluation : at the beginning, during and at the end of the experience in order to see if the pupils noticed any evolution in their behaviour.

We created an identical self-evaluation tool (cf. annex) for two periods : the first and the fourth visit. It was split in two parts

- The arrival ;
- Contacts with the residents ;
- Involvement in the activities.

How did you react ?

- Seeing them ;
- Talking to them ;
- Listening to them ;
- Touching them ;
- Helping them ;
- Making them participate ;
- Staying with them for two hours ;
- Going back.

For the third evaluation, the pupils had to place stickers on a humoristic board, to simply express their state of mind after a two hour session in the Kem. The ladder went from a sad Titeuf (cartoon character) to an exuberant Titeuf. Most of them were on the exuberant side.

VII. Actions in line with the project

- Participation to the nondiscrimination week :
 - Introduction of two posters made by the pupils ;
 - Active participation to the forum « discrimination and elderly people », organized by the REGEME (gerontology network in Moselle) and a hospital geriatric hub.
- A file written in English, including some photos from the Kem, was made by the pupils. They used it for their modern language oral exam for their vocational diploma.
- Photo exhibition in the hospital hall. At first it was supposed to last ten days, but the Kem found the idea very interesting and asked us to leave the photos until the end of the school year. Many families really appreciated the demarche.

VIII. Perspectives

The project will go on next year as we received the agreement from the geriatric hospital board and from our school headmaster.

IX. Transfer/ broadcasting/circulation

Article in our local daily newspaper *Le Républicain Lorrain* (6 April 2006, Thionville).

Week of nondiscrimination : conference and debate with school pupils ; casino public conference hall in Thionville.

Exhibition : during the nondiscrimination week and at the Kem.

Oral report for our colleagues at school.

This PPCP led to a certain cohesion inside the class that's why we intend to extend this concept of action outside school and to all of our first year classes. This could be done during an integration day or weekend, or even a school sports event or cultural outing. This would take place at the beginning of the school year to develop a team spirit.

Brigitte Albertus and Marie Henrion
July 2007

X. Annex
Annexes and documents

**PPCP “look upon the world and window on the other”
How do you feel regarding your involvement in the activities at the Kem?**

	impossible	hard	Do-able	easy	great
<i>The first visit:</i>					
• The arrival					
• Contacts with the residents					
• Involvement in an activity					
<i>How did you react?</i>					
• Seeing them seemed					
• Talking to them seemed					
• Listening to them seemed					
• Touching them seemed					
• Helping them seemed					
• Making them participate seemed					
• Staying with them for two hours seemed					
• Going back there seemed					