



Cap sur l'école inclusive
en Europe



Best practice

UNISOUND" FESTIVAL

Section of the module /R

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1 Context

One of the major obstacles on the way to inclusion is fear; fear of the Other with his differences, fear of the unknown.

In Belgium, the barrier between the world of people without disabilities and the one of people with disabilities remains quite present. The activities carried out by some are rarely those of others. Their lives are quite distinct. But today more and more initiatives are emerging to narrow this gap and bring these two worlds together. The Unisound festival, discussed here, is one such initiative.

2 Objectives.

This project, conducted in Belgium for 4 years, has as its first objective to offer people with a disability (whatever the disability) the experience of a music festival, because most other festivals are not fully accessible to people with a disability.

The second objective is to bring together, on the same event, people with a disability and others who are not disabled to share a musical and festive moment.

This second objective, when achieved, contributes strongly to reducing the fears of the Other, fears in the face of the unknown, of differences. see resource sheet "Regard sur le Handicap" C Piccininno

Link: www.unisound.be

About twenty students from the 6th secondary (17-18 years old equivalent of the Terminale in France) from the "Education Agent" section of the College Saint Guibert from Gembloux take part in the preparation of this event and in welcoming and supervising the public during the festival itself. Three teachers from these students participate in the whole project and an educator and a fourth teacher come to reinforce the team during the preparations of the festival, the previous week.

Some of these students, during their training, have already completed an internship in an institution welcoming disabled people, others have not, but they are all part of training giving them access to a social qualification, and they have all learned to adapt to different audiences (the elderly, children with behavioural difficulties, adults with mental and/or motor disabilities, adolescents with autism,...). This festival is for them the occasion :

- to use their acquired skills and experiences through an event that can also reach their extracurricular aspirations as "young people" (music, parties, encounters,...),
- to experience an event shared with people with multiple differences; many students testified that thanks to these days, they now had much less apprehension when they met a person with a disability, that they had been surprised to have fun with people with a disability as they could have had with friends of their own,
- to be able to observe/participate in the different steps of design and preparation of such a project, to realize that it is possible, that it is not inaccessible, that it is not necessary to have done a particular training, that it only takes will,
- to be able to practice teamwork by having, by groups, different missions to assume,
- to be able to assume professional responsibilities at the very moment of the festival, while participating in its warm atmosphere.

Many families participate in this festival. The infrastructures, animations proposed, scenery,... are adapted to children and people of all ages. And it is one of the audiences targeted by the organizers. This is also one of the festival's strengths. Indeed, it is very interesting, for example, that all these children can meet disabled people, that they can realize that these people are not dangerous, that we can have fun with them, that they also like music, parties, eating pancakes, balloons, painting,... that they have differences , yes, but also many similarities and especially that there is no reason to be afraid of them.

It is also an opportunity for children to realize how lucky they are not having to live with a disability and to develop their empathy.

In all this, too, this festival helps to promote inclusion, to change the looks and behaviours of future adults, citizens of tomorrow.

3. Run of the « good practice »

Before :

A first meeting between the teachers and the organizers of the festival takes place to draw the guidelines of a collaboration.

The 24 students are divided into 3 groups, each group works on a theme with a teacher (collaborative work; the teacher has a place in the same way as the others, he doesn't lead the group) and with a member of the organizing team :

- Media/advertising" group: design of a flyer, creation of contact listings to reach as many people as possible likely to be interested in the event, distribution of the flyer (distribution of paper, sending emails), contact with local television stations, radio

- Decoration group: think about the decoration of the site, imagine, ask for advice, budget, research the material (material of recovery as much as possible), coordinate the transport and the installation the days before the festival, adjust according to the unforeseen,...

- "Goodies and animations" group: design animations adapted for people with any type of disability, plan the equipment, test the animation, plan goodies (choice of the type of gift, search for sponsors, low-cost printing, order, reception, management of animations and distribution of goodies during the festival)

There are other tasks in the preparation of a festival of such magnitude but in which our students do not participate (reservation of a suitable place, choice of artists, contact with the various associations that support the project, search for subsidies, management of "sound" equipment, rental of the truck for the transport of the podium or tents in which certain activities take place or serving as dressing rooms,...).

Each group distributes the tasks managed by each of its members. There is no qualitative evaluation of everyone's work but the students are empowered; the effectiveness of the group depends on their investment and the effectiveness of the groups depends on the success of the event.

The work is spread over 8 months; each group is free to organise itself in its own way. Some meet, others contact each other by email. The person from the organizing team who is the referent for each group is kept informed of the work done and gives advice throughout the process.

During the festival:

Students and teachers have a volunteer status (volunteer contract between the organizers and themselves). There are many other volunteers present (youth movements, isolated people wishing to invest themselves in the project or wishing to have access to the festival for free and in return giving a little of their time, former participants,...). All the volunteers had signed their contracts 2 months before the festival and announced their availability, which allows the organizers to organize the preparation week, the festival and the storage days.

In advance, the organizing team thus divided the roles of each during the festival (by time slot of one to 2 hours) reception, animation of a stand, help with the installation of the musicians, accompaniment of handicapped people to the sanitary,... This allows everyone to know where they should be and when. This organization is very important for the success of the event. The "positions" that each volunteer occupies are varied, so as to make the day more pleasant and not to have to be in a heavier position (for example; physical help from people with hearing aids) for too long.

After :

In the days following the festival, tidying up is done by the organizing team and volunteers.

Note: the teachers have no specific training to accompany the students, some have already collaborated for this type of event, others have not. There are no prerequisites. As for the students, many learnings are lived in the experience of the project itself. And the organizers take everyone's skills into account when organizing the tasks to be performed by each volunteer.

4. Evaluation of the activity :

The evaluation of the festival itself is essentially carried out by the organising team; number of participants ? percentage of participants with/without disabilities ? easy mobility on site depending on the number of festival-goers ? What problems did they face/how did they deal with them? success of the activities (exchanges with the various volunteers who managed the activities)? comments from festival-goers (via social networks, e-mails, letters, expressed orally during the festival,...)? artists' comments (welcome ? feeling ?) Appropriate drinks / meals offered? in sufficient quantity ?...

The evaluation of our students' participation is done in two steps;

- evaluation by the student himself (the challenges you have taken up, the uncertainties you have experienced, the "good moves" you have made, a moment of pride, the conclusions you draw for a future project)

- evaluation between the teachers and the organising team; positive points of the collaboration, difficulties experienced, etc... assessment; to be repeated? to improve?

5. Perspectives.

We believe that it is exactly events like this that will have a real effect on the inclusion of different people within a society.

One does not force anyone, nothing is imposed; there is no theoretical discourse asking humans to change their habits or overcome their fears but rather a playful experience lived, shared, which offers everyone the possibility to make his way; to question his own representations and broaden his "humanity".



