

DEVELOPING VOICE AND MOVEMENT THROUGH DANCE, THEATRE AND SINGING

A comparative analysis and training programme based on creative methods and experiences for the development of vocal and body presence of adult educators



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INTRODUCTION

Between March and May 2022, the 5 partner organisations involved in the VOICE project, Élan Interculturel (France), CESIE (Italy), The Grotowski Institute / VoiceLAB (Poland), In Touch (The Netherlands), and La Xixa Teatre (Spain) organised trainings in their respective countries, that were aimed at working with innovative tools and sharing them to help professionals working in adult education improve their verbal and non-verbal communication, their presence, and impact.

The idea of developing and offering such training opportunities on body and voice came from experience in different workshops for professionals working in adult education, in which it was found that some people have an almost 'magical presence' that seemed to fill the room and capture everyone's attention, regardless of the content of what they were saying, while others – whose message was powerful and exciting – received no attention, causing the interesting content shared to be lost. Some people attribute these differences to 'charisma', or even to some form of 'sex appeal', some to an innate quality that one either has or does not have. On the contrary, in the VOICE consortium we believe that it has a lot to do with awareness and training, which is why we decided to combine our efforts and methods to create a programme that would offer new tools aimed at improving the presence, communication skills, and impact of educators.

Each partner organisation, while maintaining the same objectives, tried out different methodologies when working with their

groups. Despite their differences, all those methodologies were art-based and specifically adapted to the purpose of the VOICE project. In the following pages we will provide a short description of each method, of how they were used during the training, and of the experience of our participants.

Before embarking in the organisation of these trainings, the consortium identified seven main dimensions that deserved to be addressed during the process: breathing, voice, grounding, space, movement, relating to others and a transversal dimension fully dedicated to the role of the educator. These dimensions represented the common basis that the organisations used to plan the training and the activities to be carried out.

On the following pages, you will find:

In chapter I you will find an explanation of why the use of art-based methodologies such as theatre, dance, clowning, among others, provides interesting tools to develop multimodal communication, presence, and impact of educators.

In chapter II we provide a contextualisation of the training sessions carried out within the framework of the seven dimensions and the use of our methods to work on each one of them.

1.

WHY IS ART GOOD TO WORK ON MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION AND PRESENCE OF EDUCATORS?

Human beings learn when they allow themselves to explore things that they are not familiar with, even though it might be challenging or scary at times. The learning process itself is one in which each person accepts to take risks and, to a certain extent, to fail. Indeed, learning is not about getting things right; instead, it is about being curious to explore new territories, to acquire new knowledge and skills, and eventually to integrate them into our practices. According to the experiential learning theory, learners do not need to be fully aware of the learning process in order to integrate new information; on the contrary, after a different and maybe challenging experience we find ourselves with new knowledge and skills, although we might not be fully aware of the moment we learned them.

Given this small introduction about learning processes in general, we feel compelled to share with the reader why we decided to rely on art for our VOICE training programme. We understand art as a powerful tool that allows us to experience, learn, feel, and welcome diversity. Art gives space to the heterogeneity of voices, it fosters innovation through the deconstruction and reconstruction of (sometimes) obsolete educational models and it opens to the possibility of collectively building creative and more inclusive alternatives. We are aware that to some, this set of tools can represent a challenge and seem somewhat abstract, distant, or unfamiliar. However, in the words of the famous pedagogue and philosopher Paulo Freire, education is an art and "every educator is an artist... the educator remakes the world, he redraws the world, repaints the world, recreates the world, dances the world" , so even if you are not fully aware of it, the 'simple' fact of being an educator makes you an artist...you breathe art in your profession, you speak art, you move art, you create art.

On the other hand, although it may seem obvious, it is important to keep in mind that the first and most obvious communicative tools that educators have and use in their profession are their own body and voice. This means that the impact that they have on their learners necessarily passes through the art of communication, both verbal and non-verbal. If we agree with this basic concept, we must also agree that training our voice and body for a more coherent and at-ease communication should also improve our impact on the groups (or individuals) we work with.

In addition to this, recent contributions of educational science underline the needs and specificities of adult learners for more active, engaging, and sensory learning experiences.

In our view, the art of educating and communicating should integrate these methodological approaches and learning experiences; this assigns an even greater importance to the quality of presence of educators as well as their communication and relationship with their students. Art provides not only valid tools to explore and be more aware of one's own patterns and styles in terms of communication, presence and impact, but also to work on those that one might feel that need improvement or work in order to feel more at ease.

Artistic methods, such as theatre, dance, or singing, among others, give absolute prominence to the body and voice, generating a learning process through art and creativity. In our work with educators, we use

those methods taking out the 'burden' of necessarily having to be a great artist. Art is a tool to work on the competences and skills that educators not only already have, but also use in their daily profession.

It is a matter of reinforcing them and making educators more aware and confident about the use of their body and voice. The work starts from very simple and accessible exercises that focus on breathing, on the use of voice and space while teaching, as well as on posture, to then pass on to movement, to the relation with the others, and the role(s) of the educator.

According to Marian López-Fernández Cao (2008) , any immersion in artistic creation has the potential to achieve competences linked to the management of feelings, doubts, decision-making, individual work, as well as collaboration. Through art, it is possible to find a more authentic and immediate way of expressing, connecting with one's own personal resources, and sharing them with others, creating something new in a collaborative way.

Artistic methods can help us to be more aware of our breathing and voice, but also to experiment and stimulate them, in order to use them better and gain more control over them. On the other hand, dance and other methods based on movement and corporal expression encourage bodily awareness and exploration of new possibilities in non-verbal communication. According to neuroscience, movement facilitates and accelerates learning processes.

"By studying action, we have realised how motor patterns and their layering are not only necessary for our everyday activities, but for all cognitive activities, including perception.... Among the various neuroscientific investigations that have corroborated this hypothesis from a physiological point of view, the research on the mechanism of mirror neurons is highlighted."

Learning through the body and movement also allows for the recognition of space and the relationship with the environment. Theatrical tools allow us to explore the educator's relationship with their role(s), the challenges of being present and those determined by the interaction with the learners. In the case of the Theatre of the Oppressed, the focus is on physical and intellectual demechanisation. "To demechanise is to seek possibilities, to investigate what exists beyond appearances, to discover oneself as potentiality" . Through art and theatre, the aim is indeed to "stimulate the opening of creative channels, the activation of potentialities and discovery" . The Clown method opens different levels of self-knowledge and acceptance. Clowns accept and welcome mistakes; they continuously incorporate failure into their work, they like to be laughed at and from the difficulties they build new creative opportunities through the power given to them by their sense of humour. Art can also be used as a method to describe, document, analyse, and interpret human movement as suggested, for example, by the Laban/Bartenieff Movement System. Art can provide valid tools to recognise and 'measure' the impact of educators through their multimodal communication, presence and relation to the space and the others. After all, the profession of the educator is one of "communication and performance" (Cadet p 191) .

In the article of Pérez & Valencia(2011). Maestros narrados en el cine: una mirada entreabierta sobre la escuela, el saber y la formación. Magis: Revista Internacional de Investigación en Educación, 4(7), 187-198 names Paulo Freire, philosopher and educator on page number 6 of the following document: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=4434782>

Marian L. F. Cao, Conición y Emoción- el derecho a la experiencia a través del arte, 2008.

Gabriele Sofia, Las acrobacias del espectador. Neurociencias y teatro, y viceversa, trad. de Juana Lor, México D. F., Paso deGato y Artezblai, 2015. p 80.

Bárbara Santos, Teatro del oprimido Raíces y Alas, 2017. p.228.

Bárbara Santos, Teatro del oprimido Raíces y Alas, 2017. p.228

Marion Tellier et Lucile Cadet (dir.), Le corps et la voix de l'enseignant : théorie et pratique, Éditions Maison des Langues, 2014, 310 p.

All the methods briefly presented above and that will be analysed in more detail in the following chapter were used with the same objective within the VOICE training programme: feeling the physical experience of the voice within the body and knowing the full potential of our body as an instrument for the voice. All our methods have a playful feature that stimulates creative thinking, multimodal communication, and

presence. We strongly believe that art has a vast potential for the growth of individuals and communities as it generates critical and practice-oriented knowledge. It is an inherently transformative tool that fosters personal and collective development, which is why through the VOICE training programme we decided to promote learning through artistic, creative and dynamic experiences.

2.

THE SIX IDENTIFIED DIMENSIONS:

Comparative analysis of methods and creative experiences for the development of the vocal and bodily presence of adult educators

Before diving into the description of each dimension and the method(s) applied to work on them, it might be helpful to offer the reader a contextualisation of the training programmes implemented in the partner countries within the framework of the VOICE project.

The training focused on fostering self-awareness and development of multimodal communication and the impact of educators in their professional environments. We started by working with educators on their habits and patterns in terms of the use of voice and body. They were invited to film themselves, observe and analyse their way of communicating (both verbally and non-verbally). Once they had reached a higher level of self-awareness, they were invited to explore and experiment with their body and voice. They also learned relaxation exercises to combat stress, as well as exercises to improve their presence and allowing to reflect on their role(s) as educators.

The groups of educators who took part in the training were very heterogeneous in terms of gender, origin, age, and profession. There

were music, yoga and language teachers, sports trainers, cultural mediators and social workers, among others. The groups were quite diverse also in terms of knowledge and proximity with art-based methods. Some participants had already taken part in voice, movement, dance, theatre training and workshops; for others, it was the first time. In terms of motivation, most participants were interested in improving their role as educators, especially in stressful/difficult situations. Some of them had more specific objectives towards improving their breathing and being more aware of their voice and being able to make it more audible.

All partner organisations worked on more than one dimension, however, focusing specifically on their area of expertise and applying their methods. In the following pages, the reader will be briefly presented with the dimension, some of the methods applied, and the experience of the participants.

BREATHING

Breathing is the basis of all action. We might not always be aware that how we breathe influences the way we use our voice and body, both in our movements and posture, but also in how we deal with stressful or difficult situations. For this reason, throughout our training programme, we sought to approach breathing as an easy and accessible tool both to detect tensions in our body and our voice, and to release them in order to favour fluency and ease. The Grotowski Institute / VoiceLab training carried out in Poland focused on breathing awareness and self-regulation. Breathing was used as a tool for relaxation, as well as recognising and reducing tensions. Particular attention was given to the way the air passes through our entire body while we breathe and to how it vibrates and resonates in our bodies.

According to VoiceLab, "initially, long sessions are necessary, but later on they can be gradually shortened, as the nervous system uses a priming mechanism, where the body 'remembers' the process and its outcome and can respond to a certain stimulus more quickly the following times". Working with relaxation takes time as the body gradually learns to relax more and more, and some basic exercises were shared in order to start this process.

When participants were asked about their experience and new knowledge, some of them stated:

"I think that when we speak in public, we are not necessarily aware of what is going on with our body and our breathing and, in my personal case, I often think more about the content than the form and the body and the breathing. The activities in the training...were really helpful in

becoming aware of everything that is going on with the body, the voice, the emotions and the breathing."

"The importance of a calm and conscious inhalation. Remember that you don't have to produce the sound; it already exists".

"For the first time in my life I felt more conscious as I relaxed my body and my breathing".

"I have discovered that breathing and voice are inseparable parts of the process of being aware of oneself".

Other partner organisations worked on breathing, especially as a tool to recognise tensions. An educator taking part in the training carried out by CESIE commented:

"I was not breathing well...Being a very anxious person, I had a truncated breathing, not full but muffled and short...Now, being more aware of it, I try to breathe as deeply as possible, inhaling and exhaling deeply".

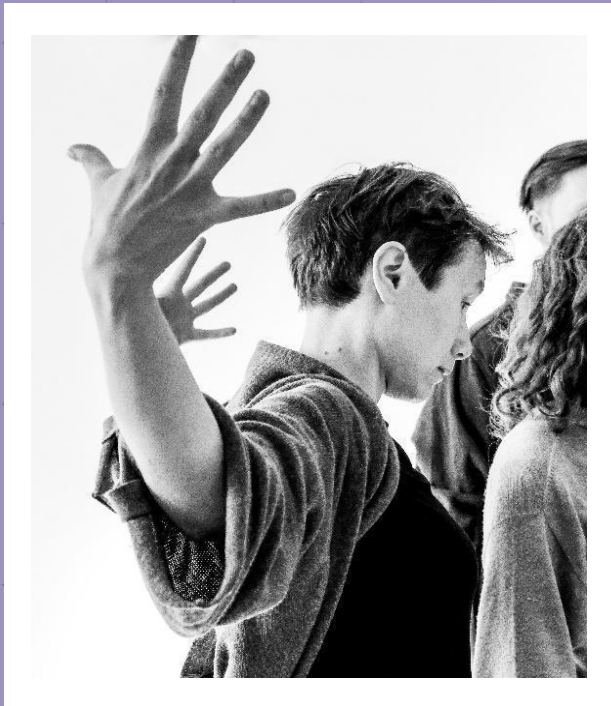
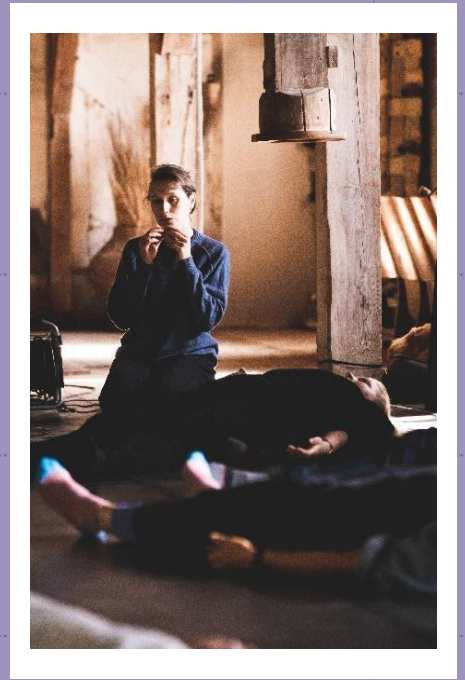
The VOICE training programme allowed participants to become aware of what bodies do spontaneously, (e.g. breathing), and of the impact that seemingly 'basic' things have on everyday life: how they affect the voice, the body, as well as emotions. Apart from breathing, concentration, relaxation, resonance, sound and vibration activities, the participants also worked a lot with imagination. Free breathing equals free voice and a free body. Becoming familiar with one's own breathing – to understand its nature and organisation – is a great tool for understanding ourselves. This is especially important when it comes to establishing our presence as adult educators.

VOICE

Vocal expression and the use of speech are our main channels of verbal communication. Through our voice, we convey much more than the basic meaning of words, and the way we say things is just as important as what we say, if not even more.

The educators participating in the training offered by the Grotowski Institute / VoiceLab were eager to work with their voices in order to have a 'stronger' voice, to learn how to project it, and how to use it in order to inspire trust in their learners. The facilitators proposed to start by deconstructing and reconstructing the relationship between the body and the voice and reinforcing their connection. The body, in fact, not only serves as the source of the voice, but it is also a resonator; the way we use this resonance box inevitably influences the way our voice sounds. Once the participants became more aware of such connection, they could also use their voice in an 'easier' and 'fuller' way.

On the other hand, through the training, the participants came to realise that the voice is a very sensitive instrument that can easily react to the most subtle states and emotions. A very significant element that influences the voice, for instance, is represented by stress, a common and well-known factor among some participants. VoiceLab's approach to working on the voice dimension took into account the fact that the voice is very susceptible to the psychological state, and that any stress or strain is immediately reflected in the voice since emotional discomfort generates tension in the body which, in turn, influences the voice. Therefore, developing the ability to recognise tensions in the body was an important and integral part of the work carried out.



At the beginning of the training, some participants had stated that their voice would get quickly tired or fatigued. It was a success when by the end of it, one of them recognised that:

"I have discovered how easy it can be to use my voice when my whole body is relaxed".

When asked about the changes that they had observed in the use of their voice, they said:

"More sonority, liveliness of voice; my voice is deeper, sometimes I can feel it surrounds me and spreads around me".

"My voice is relaxed, I feel it all over my head, it feels well grounded, I can utter sounds without much effort".

"Relaxation of voice and free flow".

On the other hand, some participants felt that their voice is something odd, like a stranger separated from the body. Some felt discomfort listening to their own voice, which is why many explorative exercises, both on individual and choral singing, were carried out. Throughout the training, some of the participants noted that their voice became more sonorous and that they began to feel their voice differently in their bodies as they spoke. An educator who participated in the training carried out by Élan Interculturel commented:

"I hate my voice, but there I could listen to my voiceless voice without judging it or criticising it, I felt lightness instead of tension and stress, I felt a lot of pleasure while singing".

SPACE

This dimension invites reflection on how educators use and inhabit space during their work and how their awareness of space affects their style, patterns and impact.

During the VOICE training, the participants were invited to explore their relationship to physical space, personal space and interpersonal space. The work carried out by In Touch was based on the Laban/Bartenieff Movement System, applied through grounding, movement and dance activities, which demonstrates to be very successful in addressing this dimension.

Space was not experimented solely as a physical element, but indeed also as a symbolic one, concerning the one that educators create while working with their learners, which we recommend to be open, available, safe and 'courageous' enough in order to foster learning. In this sense, the participants discussed ways in which the educators might relate to the 'norms' of the learning space and how their role integrates the element of 'holding' the space for the learners.

On the other hand, CESIE proposed some activities that helped explore one's perception of space (shape, diagonals, centre, periphery, etc.) and sense of orientation. Both inner and outer space were central in their training, with a special attention in encouraging experimentation and creativity, based on the assumption that our bodies are in a continuous 'dialogue' with the space and that the connection between the inner and outer space is so strong that once we bring more attention to the

inside of the body we are also able to communicate in a clearer manner with the outer space. The opposite is also true: the more we are aware of the space we inhabit, the more we can organise the space in our own body. If one accepts the idea that movement occurs in space, the greater the sense of space we have, the greater the range and variety of possible movements we can make and play with. And the greater the range and variety of our movement vocabulary, the more we will be able to respond to a diverse range of situations (human relationships), circumstances (time, emotional or personal constraints) and environments (physical world). A participant commented on this:

"I became more aware of physical space: in terms of sitting position, eye contact, use of space, measurements of space.... The piano is a fixed instrument, but there is a lot of 'space' around it that I can experiment with."

For educators, it is fundamental not only to be aware of how they use space, but also to be able to detect which are the preferences of their learners. In learning environments, it is also important to take into account how the context, the norms, the culture enter into the game of the use of space (especially the inter-personal one). The cultural norms and the ones we ourselves set (with or for the learners) determine how we organise and act in the learning space.



GROUNDING

The human body is designed to stay in the vertical plane with minimal effort. The ability to stand with ease allows us to see and be seen, to connect with our surroundings and to act creatively in the world. Being grounded is an optimal condition for moving organically and without too much effort, and it can favour a sense of self-confidence during the teaching process. When well grounded, the educator feels at ease, connected and ready to interact.

While working in this dimension, the participants were invited to carry out activities aimed at rediscovering an easy relationship with verticality, as something essential to free their energy, put it at the service of their intentions - connection, communication, transmission - and give a certain form to it - movement, word, creative gesture.

"For me, feeling grounded means that I feel connected bodily in a joyful way. I enjoy being in my body and I can achieve a special quality of awareness that helps me stay in this quality, but does not distract me from listening to others or from the activity I am doing. During the pilot process I explored all the physical activities/daily routines I do - and how these help me feel grounded and connected every day".

The activities developed by In Touch and Élan Interculturel focused on the natural dynamic balance between attraction and repulsion: the balance of the body between the ground and the sky, between its weight in gravity (downwards) and the opposite energy of buoyancy (upwards). Through movement and dance, a balance was sought between grounding and a sense of upward and resistant push towards verticality, which helps educators to achieve an open posture that provides flexibility and mobility. This state allows educators to be more available in the learning environments and to respond creatively to different situations.

An educator who took part in the training offered by Élan Interculturel

commented,

"I was able to feel more grounded because of the activities. Before I was swaying by putting my body weight on one foot, then the other, or standing on my tiptoes... and I didn't realise it, but because of this awareness and Peter's enlightenment, I finally felt more connected to myself than to the anxious projections that were being made on the group".

"The connection with gravity, weight force, levels, helps to foreground the notion of being present".

As mentioned above, for experimentation to take place, it is first necessary to work on self-awareness, as opposed to self-judgement. Being 'neutral' gives us a settled and grounded space to be aware of what is possible at any moment and choose wisely, moving away from our centre without losing connection, being able to return with ease and move with whatever arises next.

Participants recognised practices in which they can apply what they learned about this dimension in their daily life while keeping working on it in a more continuous and permanent way.

"Physical activity, barefoot walking/ritual, making tea, doing my morning exercises, yoga, meditation, walking, swimming or gardening, activities that help me organise my body and mind for the day. I explored how to be more mindful, how to choose which of these best suits my needs at each moment. If I am stressed, I like to run, shake, dance; these kinds of movements literally shake the stress out of my cells. Or when I need to 'slow down'...by walking barefoot I have to slow down."

MOVEMENT

The work of educators is, above all, a work of action and communication, and a large part of communication takes place in the non-verbal sphere. Preferences of gestures or postures, repetition of sequences of actions and our dynamic involvement determine the nature of our non-verbal communication. Mostly unconsciously, we integrate our movement patterns in our teaching activity.

As for all other dimensions, our work within the VOICE training programme started by making the participants more self-aware of themselves. In particular, In Touch, which worked with participants mostly on an individual level, asked the participants to record videos of themselves at work, during their daily professional activities. During the following individual sessions, such videos were analysed by each participant with one of the facilitators who helped detect their patterns and distinctive aspects of presence and/or non-verbal communication. Depending on the results of this observation exercise and analysis, and the aspect(s) that participants wanted to work on, they were assigned a set of 'homeworks' which required them to record themselves while carrying out certain exercises suggested by the facilitators, mostly on movement and breathing. This was a crucial element to understand in detail the physical activities, practical work and daily routines of each participant and to create accordingly exercises and observation tasks that better matched their habits and needs, while working on self-development.

Afterwards, the participants were asked to go back to the preliminary questionnaires that they had filled out before starting the training and to carry out a self-assessment of what had changed. According to their self-assessment, the participants learned more about how they can apply the Laban/Bartenieff Movement System and the body and movement practices they had learned in their work. According to one of the facilitators

"...dance goes from taking a breath, moving an arm or performing a complex dance performance; movement allows us to connect with our inner world, to understand that we are part of this world, part of the earth, part of gravity and part of everything and everyone who is alive, and to interact and communicate from this embodied place. Our body has many stories to tell. I believe that the story of life, a person's story is reflected in the body. Through dance and movement we can connect with stories, understand the voice and body of adult educators through their patterns and change them if they wish to."

A participant commented:

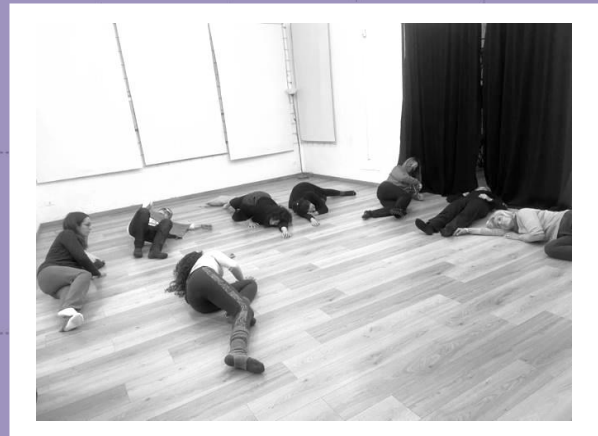
"I realised the need for a more playful and energetic attitude and bigger movements in (sports) classes...a lot of relaxation and grounding exercises to loosen up and relax. I have become more aware of the need to do these kinds of exercises...as well as the need to maintain my personal limits during the classes."

At Élan Interculturel, to tackle the movement repertoire of participants, we invited the approach of the "5 rhythms" dance. This could be seen as a form of dancing mediation, based of free movement, where facilitators propose a musical landscape that has five distinct styles. The intention was to explore a greater embodiment of different roles, postures, sensations that educators experience and relate to, and the possibility of learning new ways of expression when we dare to explore the unfamiliar and the disliked.

1. FLOW - participants start "at home", moving with what they experience on the inside as they invite the qualities of each role, and let the body move freely.

2. STACCATO - participants open and connect to the world. How does each role move when it meets the outside environment?

3. CHAOS - how do the different roles move in unstable, shifting situations when attachment to get things right is a hindrance to creative communication? What do we need to let go of to stay present and responsive?



4. LYRICAL - exploring the possibility of play in each role and the participant's ability to shift without reflection from one modality to another in response to changing circumstances.

5. STILLNESS - arriving in a place of the present embodiment in the role, where the participant can hold a balanced connection to themselves and to the world, expressed through a clear, repetitive movement and to which a clear affirmatory verbal phrase is connected. This final phase can subsequently be used as a touchstone for evoking the qualities and capacities of each role.

Most of the participants dived into the 5Rhythms dance work with enthusiasm and worked with commitment as they explored the different roles they inhabit (or don't) as educators. This was an extremely positive experience for the women, one in which they could freely express themselves, explore sometimes difficult territory in safety and creatively, to arrive at a place of play and then clear grounded connection to each of the explored roles. The quality of "embodiment" became tangible.

RELATING

There are different ways of relating to oneself, to another person and to a group. When speaking from the point of view of an educator, one should take into account at least three aspects: horizontality versus verticality, relational intentions depending on what the objective of the relationship is and the connection that is generated by the relationship.

Relationship work is permeated by dialogues between authority and submission, fusion and separation, proximity and distance. By exploring these dynamics in the VOICE training, participants were invited to take risks to step out of their comfort zone and to negotiate their space and proximity with others in what we define a 'safe and courageous space', especially in terms of rejection and exposure. One participant commented:

"I have learned a new and more conscious way of relating to others".

In the experience of La Xixa Teatre, one of the main methodologies applied to address this dimension was the Clown. This tool allowed us to work on body, expression, improvisation and sense of humour, with the aim of recognising oneself (self-awareness) and the others, together with the diversities and roles present in the group.



Participants felt that the training was useful for connecting with each other, for creating a safe learning environment in which they trusted they could experiment new things and share their own experiences and ideas.

A participant commented:

"I think that some of the best things were the trust games...letting us take care of each other and at the same time being taken care of. Seeing the diversity of the group itself and the way we relate to each other helps me to be more aware of the diversity that surrounds me in my daily life."

During the training, the participants improved their self-confidence and communication skills, the combination of which is believed to have a positive impact on relating with others.

"The activities have made me more aware of group work, of moving in space, of concentration, of respecting the space of others, of synchronising breathing and movement. I have found weaknesses and strengths in my breathing and movement. I have obtained tools to work on these 'weak' points".

Élan Interculturel, using dance and improvisation, also explored this dimension. The participants were given a shared dance vocabulary, which made them feel more secure since they had a structure (even those who had no previous dance experience). During the process, they felt part of a group, which helped them let themselves go. At first glance, these types of exercises may seem to focus primarily on movement and space, but it is above all a relational activity. The key ingredient is, in fact, how participants relate and react to each other, how they authorise themselves to initiate, accept contact, follow someone, join or separate from a group.



EDUCATOR

In a learning environment, there are many factors that educators have to take into account at the same time, such as the external environment, the learners, the context and conditions, etc. While the information that they wish to convey may be clear, the above factors are likely to be constantly changing and have an impact on the group and our relationship with it. Therefore, the educator has to learn to navigate in this ever-changing landscape, adapting to the circumstances in order to maintain a positive connection with the learning group, without losing sight of the intended end goal(s).

While addressing this dimension during the training, the aim was to help participants become more aware of the role(s) of the educator and of how their understanding of it influences their behaviour and experiences. This self-awareness work was intended to then unblock rigidities caused by the representations and imaginary around the role(s) of the educator and free spontaneity and freedom in their professional life.

When asked about their motivations for attending the training, in fact, some participants said that they wanted to be more aware of their impact as educators, others were more kin to embarking in a process of self-development through body awareness, expression and posture which would lead to a higher self-confidence. Everything begins and ends with the individual, with the ability to connect with oneself, to learn to be at ease in one's own body and with one's own voice. Being aware means knowing our possibilities and limitations. However, self-awareness should not be confused with self-judgement; awareness is a neutral knowledge, a 'simple' fact. For this to be possible, we need to know and choose to put our own prejudices and interpretations on a side. For this, the body must be relaxed, the mind clear and the voice available.

In both training experiences offered by Élan Interculturel and La Xixa Teatre, the participants were given space for self-reflection and dialogue about their own personal experiences, role and impact as educators and how the activities carried out could be useful in their daily work.

At La Xixa Teatre, this was done mainly through body work and theatrical exploration, which gave the opportunity to explore in depth the role(s) of the educators, the relationships, the professional context and the

feelings related to group facilitation. The main methodology applied was the Theatre of the Oppressed in combination with Process Work and the main objectives of the training were to investigate the internal and external diversity of educators and the systems of power. At the same time, improvisation and the aesthetics of the oppressed were worked on through the implementation of theatre games and through the process of creating forum theatre pieces.

Élan Interculturel approached this dimension while working on and understanding the other dimensions and how they entered into dialogue with the role of the educator. Their activities started with the exploration of the roles with which the participants had a high level of familiarity and confidence, continuing with the roles with which they had some confidence and ending with the roles that they considered far from them, that they believed they would never assume. Each of these roles was worked on in a sensorial way, exploring them, playing with them, combining them through movement, especially dance.

Recording tools were also used, so that through observation, participants could recognise the roles and analyse them.

After the training, some participants expressed their motivation to continue exploring the different roles of educators and facilitators through individual and collective activities and to continue working and discussing on the topics covered in the sessions: how to face challenges and the difficulties characterising this role, how to recognise and give value to the diversities present in the groups being aware of the different axes of intersectionality, and last but not least how to be fully aware of the impact they have on learners.

In the words of one of the participants:

"I am very satisfied with the session, as acting is something new for me. A totally different field and the facilitators teach it very well, they help us a lot and make us focus and be aware of our bodies, movements and rhythms. They also teach us to be aware of our voice and to regulate it according to our needs and the situation... so that we can have a powerful impact."



CONCLUSION

As a result of the VOICE training programme conducted in the partner countries, all participants felt that they had gained a greater awareness of the use of their body and voice, both in everyday life and in their professional environments. Once awareness is raised, the range of options available to educators expands, each dimension presenting a world to explore one's surroundings and experiment, within a wider range of possibilities and limitations, strengths and weaknesses.

However, to encourage experimentation, it is necessary to go through demechanisation, to break free from patterns and routines and to find new areas of curiosity and pleasure. As one participant mentioned:

"I came with the idea of learning techniques to control my body and I got so much more. To open up, listen and connect. To discover different possibilities of expression."

The arts and the tools shared encourage this kind of experimentation and creativity and lead to a deeper self-knowledge of the body, voice and emotions, the development of communication skills and above all the capacity for criticism and action.

"I liked the idea that this learning process is based not only on body and voice awareness, but that the facilitators invited us to work with art. I am an amateur photographer and during the pilot course I took pictures of myself, which was a great way to see what I like about myself and the present moment."

The applied arts allow for a broadening of perspectives and have the added value of going beyond theory, with an approach that is ideal for learning by doing. It is not necessarily about establishing truth, or generating perfect and exact processes, but about finding the most effective way through which ideas, feelings and perceptions can be communicated.

The VOICE training programme was created in order to improve educators' communication, presence and impact, helping them to be fully present, in a position of giving and receiving, of speaking and listening, a natural state of continuous adaptation, like a conversation, a dance.

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