



Vitamine creative – Creative Vitamins: Arts and Creativity Pathways to Enhance Professional Identity

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1. Introduction

At the inauguration of the European Year of Creativity – 7 January 2009, Prague –, Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Training and Youth, said:

"Both creativity and the capacity to innovate are key human qualities - they are inherent to all of us, and we make use of them in many situations and places, whether knowingly or not. With this European Year, I would like to see that the citizens of Europe understand better that by promoting human talents and the human capacity to innovate, we can actively shape Europe for the better, to help it fully develop its potential, both economically and socially".

The aim of the Year was to promote creative and innovative approaches in different sectors of human activity and contribute to better equip the European Union for the challenges ahead in a globalised world.

Within this context and taking into account the wider attention reserved to those themes by all the European key actors, Creative Vitamins was initiated as a concrete local answer.

The financial source selected to accept and implement, in our small region – Umbria, the challenge launched by the EU Commissioner, was through ESF funding, as it allows local governments and other local stakeholders to experiment original solutions to enhance creativity and capacity for innovation both in young people and adults.

In Italy for the period 2007-2013[1] ESF is being channelled into five priority areas: Adaptability, Employability, Social inclusion, Human capital, and Transnational/regional projects. Convergence regions are benefiting from extra help under a separate priority entitled Institutional Capacity.

Within Priority Human Capital, there are four different fields of activity:

1. Focusing on the quality, governance and integration of education, training and labour systems
2. Rolling out certification and evaluation schemes for training bodies to ensure better education and training
3. Improving higher education through networks between universities, research centres and companies, thus addressing the needs of the knowledge economy

Measures to cut early school leaving (under the convergence objective)

Umbria Region for Human Capital priority receives about 50 millions of euros [2], mainly addressed to lifelong learning, research and innovation as a kind of transversal measure aimed at improving higher education and integrating education, training and labour systems.

Within lifelong learning, Umbria Region, due to its demographic profile, characterized by high presence of old low skilled workers, especially women, has programmed to mainly invest in computer literacy, foreign language – English, French or Spanish – and courses in entrepreneurship, health and safety in the home, social and communication skills.

The positive experience in this field of activity has pushed Umbria Region and the Province of Perugia - which received from it a part of the ESF funds, to experiment innovative approach to lifelong learning, which can be able to assure the development of key competences as well as knowledge and intellectual curiosity, bringing adult to discover new opportunities to succeed.

Thus, computer literacy and foreign languages are still a priority in lifelong learning strategy, along with other kind of interventions mainly focused on different key competences, as defined by the EU Commission in Learning, such as the improvement of Interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competence, Entrepreneurship and Cultural expression.

The Province of Perugia decided to experiment new didactic approach for adults starting from culture as a general favourable context in which curiosity, knowledge, different points of view, creativity can more easily be developed, assuring the achievement of the above mentioned key competences.

2. "Creative Vitamins" Project

The project started in 2009 and lasted 12 months. It involved 385 learners, 203 Female and 82 Male. The average age of the learners is about 40. It is structured in thirteen courses, mostly lasted about one month.

Tab.1 Courses and duration

1) Read reality by mean of cinema language	20 hours
2) Read reality by mean of documentary language	20 hours
3) Analyse and represent: the social documentary	50 hours
4) Basic course of screen-play	30 hours
5) History and critics of contemporary art	30 hours
6) Communicate by mean of photography	45 hours
7) Comics: tool of mass media communication, expressive art	40 hours
8) How to re-invent "Vintage" in fashion	30 hours
9) Guide to listening to musical genres	22 hours
10) Theatrical performance	48 hours
11) Discovering itself by storytelling	48 hours
12) Tai Chi: how becoming more self-confident	48 hours
13) Body language: Dance as a language	48 hours

It has been developed from a previous more experimental activity, named "Atelier of Creativity", promoted within the ESF 2000-2006 programme, in which the artistic component was more stressed, by the presence of different kind of training courses: creative writing, Italian history of fine arts, film-making.

This element was overcome in the new edition (Creative Vitamins) due to two different factors:

- the new ESF policy 2007-2013 pushed all the Member State in investing more resources and programmes to assure employability and success in the labour market for both youth and adults. This means more concrete actions, brief training activities and a combination of guiding services, work experiences and training to assure immediate employment opportunities;
- by the evaluation of the previous activity (Atelier of creativity) the most required training courses were focused on drama, body language and performing arts as a concrete way for adults to become more self-confident and improve their self-esteem, also at the workplace and generally in approaching the labour market (e.g. unemployed).

As a consequence, Creative Vitamins became more focused on those key competences (Learning to learn, Interpersonal, intercultural, social and civic competence, Entrepreneurship and Cultural expression) which can be effectively approached through drama, body language, performing arts, tai –chi, storytelling.

The project aims at strengthening and enhancing the basic competences of no-professionalized adults in cultural and performing arts, drama and general artistic field, in order to support them succeeding at the work place as well as seeking new job opportunities.

The training programme was structured referring to two different target groups:

1) those who want to become more self-confident and able to practice social, intercultural and interpersonal competence as well as entrepreneurship and Cultural expression, as effective means to succeed in the labour market, independently by their specific job and position. These participants are interested in acquiring new approaches and methods to enhance their own personal background to better compete in the labour market and to succeed. For instance, in this case artistic skills are not necessarily the main focus on which they want to invest. They are intended as tools to acquire knowledge, awareness, self-esteem and some of the eight key competences thought to be necessary to succeed both at the workplace and in the daily life.

2) those who have already developed basic artistic competences, as amateur, and wanted to improve their basic level to use these competences as a mean for both succeeding in the labour market (like the target group mentioned above) and be protagonist of some concrete artistic experiences as drama, contemporary dance



performances, tai-chi. In this case the artistic component is lived as an unavoidable part of the training activity and not as a mean to achieve other results (like some of the key competences already mentioned). This means also that Creative Vitamins represent for them a concrete opportunity, free of charge, to verify the possibility to succeed in the artistic and cultural expression field, overcoming the difficulties of being admitted in expansive training courses organized by institutional schools and training centres.

The mix of the two different target groups guarantee a “professional” approach and a rigorous didactic scheduling, even if the learning environment was always friendly and socialization-oriented. For this reason, as usual in adult education activities, indirect benefits obtained by the course, were friendship and convivial atmosphere, which characterized the lessons and the relations among learners and between learners and trainers.

The professional approach was assured by the involvement of some of the most relevant cultural and artistic associations and private institutions at local level, which are used to artistic training organization and production of performances and shows.

In this way Creative Vitamins represented also a concrete opportunity for these associations to improve and disseminate their cultural and artistic proposals and training activities. As already mentioned, in Italy the culture-based economy does not generally receive enough financing to assure subsistence to all the several subjects. In this framework, it is important to offer a concrete economic support to those who want to improve their cultural offer at local level, trying also to keep their roots in the regional context.

The positive results obtained are demonstrated by the high percentage of attendance. About the 82% of the participants ended the training activities with success, achieving the final formal certification (Tab. 2)

Tab. 2 Participants per courses and gender

Courses	Total	Male	Female
1) Read reality by mean of cinema language	19	7	12
2) Read reality by mean of documentary language	19	7	12
3) Analyse and represent: the social documentary	18	6	12
4) Basic course of screen-play	19	10	9
5) History and critics of contemporary art	19	7	12
6) Communicate by mean of photography	20	10	10
7) Comics: tool of mass media communication, expressive art	17	7	10
8) How to re-invent "Vintage" in fashion	20	1	19
9) Guide to listening to musical genres	13	6	7
10) Theatrical performance	20	4	16
11) Discovering itself by storytelling	20	3	17
12) Tai Chi: how becoming more self-confident	24	6	18
13) Body language: Dance as a language	16		16
TOTAL	244	74	170

3. The methodology

Edutainment can properly represent the main didactic method to which Creative Vitamins refers. Referring to Marshall McLuhan statement: "Those who make a distinction between entertainment and education may not know that education should be fun and fun should be educational" and to other concrete experiences with adult learners [3] we think that edutainment (education and entertainment) can be a strategy to attract especially adult learners at risk of social exclusion.



Adults can have fun while they learn more about both theoretical contents and practical knowledge.

Creative Vitamins is the combination of traditional lessons and practical and performing learning situation, created both by teachers/trainers and learners by themselves. Traditional lessons represent the theory basis by which teachers can assure the rationale and logical framework of the education process. As the training program is addressing adults, it is very important to pay attention at the same time to the conceptual framework and the concrete application, which give them the required references they need to go in depth if they want and to be sure to receive the expected directions, concretely applicable and spendable.

Of course the practical lessons were focused on experimenting the artistic skills needed as, for example, acting, exercises for the voice, gymnastics, dance and movement in the space, etc..

The practical lessons are organized both for individual and small group exercises, during which learners can practice under the teacher supervision and confronting with the others improvements, difficulties, methodologies. These practical sessions assure more fun and the possibility to experiment a 'learning-by-amusing' approach that makes adult education more attractive and effective.

It is also thought as a preliminary test, before the official final performance in which learners can concretely show the results achieved with the training activities. The final trial is not only the public occasion in which all the learners can show to friends and relatives their artistic skills, but also a test to concretely verify how can they manage the new competences developed, in terms of intercultural and interpersonal competences, cultural expression and, moreover, how to face a public audience, without stress and anxiety.

Adults seem to prefer avoiding this public situation, as they are afraid of public exhibition on the stage. In Creative Vitamins logical framework it is however a step to be done as a part of the improvement required in both artistic skills and key competences development. It is also a way to share the results and the learning outcomes with all the other VET stakeholders, that can concretely appreciate improvements and effectiveness of the ESF funded training courses.

References

[1] <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=386&langId=en>

[2] POR – (Operative Regional Programme), 2007 - 2013

[3] (McLuhan 1964) and http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/docs/it3_en.pdf