

Education & Training during Covid-19 : experiences, recommendations, lessons learnt

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Questions and challenges posed by the pandemic in our training

- 1. How to support remote learning processes that facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and skills for working in the Social Services in the criminal justice context?*
- 2. How to avoid distance learning becoming a mere transmission of information?*

Our experience: Training Course for 323 newly recruited Social Workers in the Justice field

“Arianna: the Thread of Social Work”

The Recipients:

323 Social Workers assigned to all Minors/Adult Social Services of the Justice Administration in Italy which we divided into 6 virtual classrooms of about 50 participants.

Duration: January-November 2020

Articulation: 1 week of training every 3 month of work in the office

Our Goals

The aim of this Training Course was to allow the participants to achieve learning of content considered central to carrying out a very complex job that:

- 1. consists in interventions in the social field within the justice system;**
- 2. straddles two different disciplines: legal and psycho-social;**
- 3. is operating under evolving organizational conditions as a result of the reform of the justice system.**

Methodology of the Course

We opted for a **procedural approach** that provided for several **inter-connected phases**, with a view to **accompanying learning** that requires ongoing acquisition with moments dedicated to information/reflection/exchanges and moments of individual work in the office.

Methodology choices

characterized by:

- a) A strong focus on **connecting the course delivery** with what is actually happening in the field, so that everyone can understand what they are being asked to produce;
- b) **Organising group work** that facilitates everyone's active participation and mutual discussion to learn from experience.



***How did we manage to
follow this methodology
at a distance?***

Distance Learning to activate Learning

Processes in relationships

- We have made a different choice from what is currently called '*distance learning*', which favors the transmission of information.
- In our own distance learning method we have tried to invest a lot in inventing every possible device to **preserve a learning setting where relationships are paramount and protected.**

How did we manage that?

- we assumed that we could not propose the same program that we would have offered in presence because the **relational context is necessarily different** when you are connected through a computer.
- We have therefore **redefined all our communication strategies** according to the different teaching and learning settings.

Qualifying and Innovative Elements in Distance

Learning:

1. A substantial and careful **investment of time and efforts** by the Training Staff in the preparation of the video lectures and materials in view of the online usage mode;
2. Instead of providing traditional frontal lessons we used **interviews** of about 50 minutes to a lecturer by a staff trainer, who was engaged in the dual task of **a)** stimulating in-depth study of work content in a way that could be translated into operations and **b)** animating the group of participants to interact with the content proposed by the lecturer;

Qualifying and Innovative Elements in Distance Learning:

3. An investment in **virtual classroom interactions**: training days were articulated with exchanges with teachers and classroom tutors as well as with workshops in subgroups; many meetings with tutors, teachers and staff were planned to prepare interviews and group work; meetings between tutors and participants were held between modules; regular meetings with the head office tutors were held as well;

4. **Ad hoc tools** were prepared to facilitate learning: outlines, schemes and questionnaires to be used during the various activities of the course; outlines and schemes for the development of the project work that participants were asked to carry out between one module and another.

An Ad-Hoc Organization to support the delivery of Distance Learning

- A **group** in the Department's Training Office: administration officials, a scientific referee and external trainers and consultants (9 professionals)
- **Classroom tutors** (18 social workers)
- **Regional tutors** (22 social workers)
- **Head office tutors** (90 social workers)

Digital Platform

It was essential to develop a special Digital Platform to enable:

- a) constant dialogue between the various course participants
- b) collecting materials: teachers' reports, products of group work, etc.
- c) ongoing monitoring and learning assessment.

The outcomes

with regard to the outcomes of the learning acquired by the participants, though an actual assessment will be reasonably carried out only later on, we could already notice among them a growing motivation to engage in their new function, to improve the work with other training and self-training initiatives and also a positive identification with the justice system.



Thank you!

