

SPSM EMPLOYABILITY IN EUROPE: AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT

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Motto: «*A man is truly a man only if he is free: he is free only if he works* »
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Abstract. *This article aims to present the problematic, the approach and the results of the Project Santé Publique - Santé Mentale (SPSM). The Project SPSM - Employability brings together academic actors and those from the health and social sectors of 5 European countries. It refers to the practices of professional accompanying to work of people with psychic handicap. In Public Health, it constitutes an interventional research. SPSM - Employability aims to put in place a training module intended for socio-professional integration specialists and to ensure each country's durability. With duration of 3 years, the Project SPSM encourages the return of experiences and exchanges between partners in Romania, France, Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg. It produces knowledge through the conception and implementation of a pilot training action for socio-professional integration specialists. Co funded by the European Funds Erasmus+ Strategic Projects, it illustrates the current issues of the research in mental health promotion in a participatory, communal and international approach. The SPSM Project aims to find a better adequacy of training between the new realities of employability in companies and administrations and the mental health sector. The aim is to go beyond the local 'know-how' (skills) in order to provide a more open training perspective, adapted to the tendencies observed in Europe.*

Keywords: *mental health, socio-professional integration, specialists, SPSM Project, Erasmus + training.*

Introduction

The Project SPSM-Employability brings together academic actors and those from the health and social sectors of 5 European countries. It refers to the

practices of professional accompanying to work of people with psychic handicap. In Public Health, it constitutes an interventional research: this last one has as «*objectives to demonstrate the effectiveness of interventions, to analyze the levers of mobilization, the mechanisms of interventions, their terms and conditions of implementation, their reproducibility and durability*» (Alla & Kivits, 2015). SPSM Employability aims to put in place a training module intended for socio-professional integration specialists and to ensure each country's durability. With duration of 3 years (2014 - 2017) the Project SPSM encourages the return of experiences and exchanges between partners in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Romania and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It produces knowledge through the conception and implementation of a pilot training action for socio-professional integration specialists. Co-funded by the European Funds Erasmus+ Strategic Projects, it illustrates the current issues of the research in mental health promotion in a participatory, communal and international approach (Gavrilă-Ardelean & all, 2016).

Erasmus+, Strategic Projects of the European Union for education, supports several European partners in order to design, implement and evaluate (2014 - 2017) a pilot seminar to train socio-professional integration specialists for people with psychiatric disorders. This program is intended to perfect the training of 75 health and medical-social specialists from the 5 European partner countries, through a program of theoretical and practical courses and exchanges with homologues from other countries.

Mental Health, a Preoccupation

The professional insertion of people with psychic disability is a major preoccupation in Public Mental Health and concerns all socio-professional integration specialists. In the European context of employment crisis and complexity in the relationship between economical and social world, we take up the challenge of proposing a reflection, an approach and an innovative conception of training socio-professional integration specialists for people with psychic handicap.

The SPSM Project aims to find a better adequacy of training between the new realities of employability in companies and administrations and the mental health sector. The aim is to go beyond the local 'know-how' (skills) in order to provide a more open training perspective, adapted to the tendencies observed in Europe.

The Aims of Research

The aims of the project are divided into 4 axes of action:

1. Completing the qualifications of socio-professional integration specialists;

2. Strengthening the attractiveness of professions related to Mental Health;
3. Establishing a link between the specialists and researchers in Europe through the transmission of knowledge;
4. Facilitating the integration and socio-professional monitoring of beneficiaries.

Issues and theoretical framing

The Project SPSM- Employability is part of the approach that considers the traditional «medical or bio-medical model» a basic but insufficient element to approach, all by itself, the issue of socialization and professional integration of people with mental illness. Cognitive deficiency due to illness hinders the autonomy, and the remediation has a handicap-reducing effect. But the «bio-social model», promoted in Public Health, considers that individual determinants and environmental determinants displace the look of the specialists to open the accompaniment and to act in a multi-disciplinary way. The term "model of overcoming disability" is used to recognize the essential role of environmental or situational determinants. Non-biological factors, broader than the medical perspective, constitute a specific and complex field of investigation and intervention. *“Empirical researches are about the predictive factors for returning to work, or about assessing the functional repercussion of psychiatric disorders. They emphasize that the assessment of psychopathology and cognitive performances is insufficient to realize the professional reintegration opportunities. This returns us to the need of specifying the other relevant dimensions”* (Pachoud, 2009). The complexity of factors involved requires, for our interventional research project, a multi-disciplinary approach and consideration. According to the Ottawa Charter, (WHO - 1986) it is necessary to act in an intersectorial way and in living areas (work, school ...) to promote good physical and mental health, and social integration of vulnerable people.

On the issue of accompanying people with psychological illness to employment, a review journal showed that there are few jobs and workplaces at international level. However, the experiences and accompaniments at professional insertion are carried out in the countries that compose our project. Therefore, like in other European countries, psycho-social structures and services exist and propose to people with psychic handicap some transition and monitoring paths in terms of professional insertion, to which ESAT solutions are added in France, Protected Workshops in Belgium and in Luxembourg.

On the other hand, several Anglo-Saxon researches that were published highlight, with traditional methods, other major models of accompaniment:

- “Supported employment”: according to comparative studies (controlled randomizations), the employment support model gets an insertion

rate, in the ordinary work environment, at least two times higher than the traditional methods (Bond & all, 2001- Drake & all, 2012)

- “Individual Placement and Support”, IPS: Professional integration with an individualized accompaniment is defined by seven principles (Greacen & Jouet, ASDP, 84-2013). While the insertion rate is usually 24% in traditional methods, it is about 60% after 18 months, according to several met analyzes. (Bond & all, 2008). This method reverses the traditional methods of "train and place" and replaces them with a "place and train" process. The role of the professional "job coach" is primordial in searching for a job, in insertion, and in supporting the user.

- The Corbière publications in Quebec show that in 23 compared programs, the variations of the results of insertion rates of 27% to 78% depend mainly on the quality of the accompaniment and more particularly the competences and the aptitudes of the "Job coach" professionals (Corbière, 2002).

These last very pertinent works show that it is not the users' characteristics and behaviors that are decisive for the success of professional integration and keeping a job, but the mode of accompaniment and the qualifications of insertion specialists who put in place optimal conditions for the success of insertion.

These performing methods of accompaniment require skills, knowledge, know-how and competences of the insertion specialists who accompany the users. What is their nature?

The Project SPSM focuses on the need to identify the competences required for insertion specialists. It is based on the concept of "empowerment" of people with psychiatric illness for their access to and maintenance of employment in the ordinary working environment on the 1st market. Our project aims to question the competences implemented by the insertion specialists. How do they respond to problem situations which present themselves like obstacles to realize the final mission of maintaining users in employment? What competences do professionals need? From the cross-view perspective of users, bosses and team leaders, what competences have to be identified to accompany and maintain this specific population in employment? In what contexts are they exercised? Which are the brakes? How to overcome them? What do the insertion specialists say about the exercise of their competences in this field? Do they find them sufficient, relevant and adapted to the new economic situation? Do users, bosses and insertion specialists identify gaps in terms of training to cope with problem situations?

After examining the scientific and professional literature (SPSM literature review) and relying on the experience of the project partners, it seemed relevant to us to complete the corpus of knowledge with preliminary field

surveys in the 5 countries that make up the project (Kelemen, Fond-Harmant & all, 2015).

In order to be able to elaborate pilot training seminars in the different project partner countries, we have identified the training needs in terms of improving the insertion specialists' competences, to produce a training referential, a base of analyzes and an indispensable tool for structuring pilot training activities.

Because we are studying complex situations, it has been necessary to decompose the professional practices and to identify the new qualifications required for integration specialists.

Research Methods

Research method use the co-construction of 3 data collecting tools to reference the training needs.

After having collected documentary and bibliographic data, we constituted a reflection committee composed of insertion specialists and researchers in Public Mental Health and education, from the 5 partner countries: Switzerland, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Romania.

The general objective of our demarche was to identify the adequacy between the users' needs and the enterprises' needs in terms of employment, and the perimeter of the function of the professional integration jobs in terms of competences.

From a methodological point of view, it was necessary to create, in common, 3 data collecting tools to reference the training needs in order to improve the insertion specialists' competences:

1. **Collecting tools for users' needs:** Which are the users' needs to cope with the 1st job market? Which criteria to retain?

2. **Collecting tool for the training needs of insertion specialists:** What new competences do the insertion specialists need?

3. **Collecting tool for the competences expected by companies:** What is the position of bosses and team leaders in terms of competences needed to accompany at employment and keep the jobs of people with psychic handicap? Which competences are expected in terms of knowledge, soft skills and know-how for the employment insertion specialists?

We federated and collected our points of view argument with the knowledge and experience of each of the European partners of the SPSM project. We have has reflected on the appropriateness of developing an individual grid and / or an audition grid to be realized in focus groups.

What is the competence?

Several definitions of the concept of competences retained in the specialized literature guide our approach work:

▪ The competence... “An integration of skills, knowledge and capacities required for the application of a specific task” (Voorhees, 2001).

▪ The competence... “The combination of a set of relevant resources (knowledge, know-how, qualities, resource networks) to manage a set of professional situations” (Le Boterf, 2004).

▪ The competence... It is “A complex learns act... based on effective mobilization and combination... of a variety of internal and external resources... within a family of situations...” (Tardif, 2006).

Analysis of Training Needs

The analysis of training needs is an indispensable step in the development of a pertinent pilot program. In order to construct training referential, we have determined the essential elements of the professional competence, mobilized for accompaniment in the professional insertion and work of users suffering from mental illness (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2015).

We organized ourselves in 3 mini-workshops to identify the needs of 3 groups of major actors in the employability process of the users:

- Users themselves,
- Work integration specialists,
- Bosses and team leaders.

For the analysis, we relied on Urie Bronferbrenner's "nested system levels" (1979) whereby the systems: Micro / Individual, Meso / Relational, Exo / Communal, Macro / societal + chrono / temporality system, constitute grids of pertinent lecture of the ecological model.

These subsystems include individual activities and collective behaviors (users, professional integration specialists, bosses and team leaders) in interactional and interactive processes depending on each other. This systemic approach leads us to examine the situations as social dynamics and constitutes benchmarks for the action and the intervention in training. It serves as a conceptual lecture tool to seize the complexity of situations (Kelemen, Fond-Harmant & all, 2015).

The fundamental issue is to know, through an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, the practices and professional organizations, the mobilized competences and / or those that should exist, and how to develop and improve them (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2015).

This work constitutes a first step in elaborating a common training referential. In 2015 and 2016, it was completed by visits and exchanges in each partner country, in order to refine a definitive Program of Pilot Seminars realized at the end of 2016 and in the first semester of 2017.

Results

Our survey results allowed us to develop a job referential that we have published (Gavrilă-Ardelean & all). This approach led us to elaborate the training referential of a 5-day module, organized in 5 pilot seminars in the 5 partner countries of the project.

Over the period from November 2016 to June 2017, 75 professional integration specialists will be trained.

The results of the 180 investigations of people interrogated through interviews and auditions, in the 5 countries of the project, show the "expected functions" of the professional insertion specialist, from the point of view of users, enterprises, and specialists themselves. On the triptych: level of action - level of people - level of information, Mintzberg (1984, 1995) proposes to define the professional function in role. It distinguishes 3 main types of roles:

1. Interpersonal Roles,
2. Roles related to information,
3. Decision roles.

Thus, for the function of professional integration specialist, we have declined the prescribed roles: the expected posture, regarding the actors (users and enterprises), an explanatory description, and identifiable activities.

We have conceived a proposal table of classification for all the data we have collected in order to structure them with a competence referential according to the Mintzberg model. This classification was discussed and amended in a steering committee to fix a definitive text.

From all this process of surveys, auditions, analysis of the lands of the five partner countries and our exchanges since the beginning of the project, there are already six main thematic axes, in terms of training needs:

1. Business strategies and business culture,
2. Managing the impacts of mental illness,
3. Preparing the user to enter in the enterprise and to keep his job,
4. The modeling of inclusion factors,
5. The position of the professional integration specialist in psycho-social accompaniment,
6. Methods and tools.

It includes the emergence of three axes of knowledge: conceptual, relational and technical, which form the foundation of the construction of the training referential for professional integration specialists:

1. **Conceptual knowledge:** they are based on competences of adaptation to cultural knowledge that form the mental structure and favor a strategic and global vision of situations. They favor a macro and systemic lecture of events and develop the adaptation to environmental evolutions and

allow self-adaptation. They also relate to organizational competences and regroup the collective, individual and managerial organization.

2. **Relational knowledge:** they concern the social competences internally, externally and in the relationships with the hierarchy.
3. **Technical knowledge:** they are based on the know-how, linked to the experience and the acquisition of methods and tools useful for professional activities.

Discussion

How is SPSM an innovative project? The interventional approach since the beginning of the project is, at the same time: a communal (professional insertion specialists, users), multi-disciplinary (sociologists, psychologists, educators, psychiatrists, managers, social assistants) and multi sectors (social, research, education-training) approach. It is a mad challenge to bring together, for 3 years, this diversity of European partners, to build a common issue, and to find methods of action and research tools, corresponding to the competences and resources of everyone. It is a successful challenge to meet regularly in common interpretations of our results, while our disciplinary languages could separate us. We were able to build and federate around shared values on the necessity and the urgency to respond to new European challenges in terms of training of professional integration specialists, in order to help the development of practices in our professional and geographical fields (Kelemen, Fond-Harmant & all, 2016). We are in the process of realizing Pilot Seminars, and this is our final step towards achieving our project objectives. Regarding the interventional research approach that founds our activities, we know that it places all the actors of the SPSM Project as actors of change, as well as that the research finds a relevant social role for the modification of professional practices.

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