

Revue internationale Animation, territoires et pratiques socioculturelles
International Journal of Sociocultural community development and practices
Revista internacional Animación, territorios y prácticas socioculturales



Sculpting stories project: An action research with sociocultural animators for promoting digital storytelling within socioeducation paths

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Numéro 7, 2014

Animation, s'engager dans quelle direction ?
Sociocultural community development: Commit in which direction?
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URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1100232ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.55765/atps.i7.548>

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Éditeur(s)

Département de communication sociale et publique, Université du Québec à Montréal

ISSN

1923-8541 (numérique)

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Citer cet article

De Rossi, M. & Restiglian, E. (2014). Sculpting stories project: An action research with sociocultural animators for promoting digital storytelling within socioeducation paths. *Revue internationale Animation, territoires et pratiques socioculturelles / International Journal of Sociocultural community development and practices / Revista internacional Animación, territorios y prácticas socioculturales*, (7), 85–99. <https://doi.org/10.55765/atps.i7.548>

Résumé de l'article

« Sculpting stories » est un projet national financé conformément à la loi No. 383/2000 qui a permis l'approbation de projets expérimentaux pour faire face à des situations sociales d'urgence et pour faciliter l'application de méthodes avancées d'intervention pour développer l'autonomisation personnelle et sociale. Le groupe cible du projet était des enfants caractérisés par un handicap socioculturel dans des établissements de soins résidentiels. Le besoin d'améliorer les interventions éducatives pour des enfants âgés de moins de 18 ans est déterminé par la configuration de système de protection sociale italien qui prévoit une diminution des mesures de protection sociales pour les jeunes lorsqu'ils atteignent la majorité. L'orientation de la recherche-action reposait sur la relation entre le processus de transformation de soi lié à l'utilisation des méthodes d'animation socioculturelle, l'éducation en tant qu'outil de changement et de construction d'identité et les nouvelles perspectives offertes par l'évolution technologique.

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Expérience

Sculpting stories project: an action research with sociocultural animators for promoting digital storytelling within socioeducation paths

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« Sculpting stories » est un projet national financé conformément à la loi No. 383/2000 qui a permis l'approbation de projets expérimentaux pour faire face à des situations sociales d'urgence et pour faciliter l'application de méthodes avancées d'intervention pour développer l'autonomisation personnelle et sociale. Le groupe cible du projet était des enfants caractérisés par un handicap socioculturel dans des établissements de soins résidentiels. Le besoin d'améliorer les interventions éducatives pour des enfants âgés de moins de 18 ans est déterminé par la configuration de système de protection sociale italien qui prévoit une diminution des mesures de protection sociales pour les jeunes lorsqu'ils atteignent la majorité. L'orientation de la recherche-action reposait sur la relation entre le processus de transformation de soi lié à l'utilisation des méthodes d'animation socioculturelle, l'éducation en tant qu'outil de changement et de construction d'identité et les nouvelles perspectives offertes par l'évolution technologique.

Mots-clés : projet d'animation; éducation; enfants marginalisés; Italie.

'Sculpting stories' is a national project funded by Law No. 383/2000 which allowed approval of experimental projects to meet important social emergencies and to facilitate the application of advanced methods of intervention for developing personal and social empowerment. Target group of project was children with sociocultural disadvantage in residential care facilities. The need of enhancing educational interventions for children under 18 years old is determined by the configuration of Italian welfare system that provides for the decreases of social protection measures for young people when they come of age. Theoretical assumption that has guided the action research was the relationship between self transformation processes due to the use of methods of sociocultural animation, education as a tool for change and identity construction and the new perspectives offered by technological evolution.

Keywords: animation project; education; marginalized children; Italy.

'Sculpting stories' es un proyecto nacional financiado por la ley Núm. 383/2000 que permitió la aprobación de proyectos experimentales para responder a problemas sociales urgentes y para facilitar la aplicación de métodos avanzados de intervención para desarrollar la autonomización personal y social. El grupo referido por el proyecto era niños caracterizados por un handicap sociocultural en establecimientos de cuidados residenciales. La necesidad de mejorar las intervenciones educativas para niños de menos de 18 años es determinada por la configuración del sistema de protección social italiana que preve una disminución de las medidas sociales de protección para los jóvenes cuando alcanzan la mayoría. La orientación de la investigación-acción reposaba en la relación entre el proceso de transformación de sí vinculado a la utilización de los métodos de animación sociocultural, la educación como instrumento de cambio y de construcción de identidad y las nuevas perspectivas ofrecidas por la evolución tecnológica.

Palabras clave: proyecto de animación; educación; niños marginados; Italia.

Training for animator competencies

How can we define a sociocultural animator ? The question is not simple because it means that first of all we have to agree on the meaning of the term “animation” and in what kind of contexts it might be used.

If we consider the role, an animator in this context is a social operator but at the same time an educator who works using styles and methods appropriate to cultural animation. This means fostering participation, social inclusion, the activation of personal and community resources to bring about social and cultural change (OPA, 1990; Gillet, 2006).

However, when we consider what is required for the creation of courses for the training of animators, we find a series of problems for which answers have to be found.

Looking at the prevalent trends in Italian society – individualism and fragmentation of communities above all – one can feel how much need there is for more social relations (as explained in the program of Associanimazione).

Sociocultural animation has the potential to play a fundamental role in understanding and analysing the tensions and needs which necessitate the setting-up of courses to help people and groups to become aware of how much they can do by themselves and how valuable their actions can be.

It is a mistake to believe that sociocultural animation is of little lasting value, that it is something just tagged on to everyday life. On the contrary, it is in the sociocultural and sociopolitical spheres of everyday life that animation can and should operate. This realization impacts the choice of methodologies and strategies, which cannot be superficial or improvised.

The only way to guarantee quality of results is to ensure the use of a number of essential elements: careful planning, codified method or methods, preparation of appropriate tools, expert and professional figures with specific competencies. Such an approach would reveal animation to be exactly the right practice to help people express themselves and to increase their awareness of their power of action.

Such intentional action leads to change, to the realization of what is possible (Bertolini, 2000; Bertin, Contini, 1983; Iori, 1988), which is what transformation essentially means. This is what intentional action is based on. The training of a sociocultural animator requires, therefore, a well-structured course, and for some years now Italian universities have answered this requirement by providing 3-year degree courses coherently planned for the promotion of this professional figure (D.M. n. 270, 2004).

The proposed areas for intervention cover the whole and complex picture of working socially: questions of feeling at ease, uneasy or indeed at risk in the contexts of formal and informal situations as they occur. The focus of this training is on the construction of integrated knowledge and skills in order to prepare for using methods and putting strategies into practice in a creative fashion.

Sociocultural animation for the development of processes of exchange

Many studies have attempted to produce a reference model for animation beginning from the various types of possible combinations of the different social and cultural functions that enables the development of personal and community empowerment. There are two particularly interesting macro-models for animation, which stipulate the presence of professional sociocultural animators (Gillet, 2000; Zimmerman, 1999).

The first area might be defined as the “consumer” model that is a type of animation in which individuals or social groups are presented with pre-prepared products, even of an educational nature, which have been designed purely for consumption.

The second model, on the other hand, can be considered to represent the sphere of actions more closely related to the question of “exchange value”, where the core issue is not the “consumption” of the product but how it comes to be used in the construction of a network of social bonds made up of processes related to relationships and projects.

We need to resolve, however, this terminological dichotomy, and this can be done by maintaining that the sign animation is at the centre of a system of signifiers, made up of two derived signifieds. Now, even though these signifieds are in opposition, they still belong to a whole, namely the sphere of social action and how this is qualified.

Working in animation means responding to one of the fundamental aims of the European Union, the development of social and civic competencies for all the community (Recommendation of the European Parliament 18/12/2006).

Indeed, the implementation of the key competencies constitutes added value in various sectors: from the labour market to social cohesion, from active citizenship to personal development. Achieving key competencies makes for flexibility and adaptability, motivation and the feeling of fulfilment. Since these key competencies should be achieved by everyone, the recommendations implicitly mean the adoption of operational and methodological tools that can ensure full strategic, political and contextual integration.

A particularly significant and important aspect in this regard in this day and age is the key role of digital competencies. As one of the eight fundamental sets of competencies, these refer to the ability to use with ease and familiarity, as well as with a critical eye, information and communication technologies. As such, they are an additional support for a person’s critical thinking, for the development of his creativity and sense of innovation.

The transformational value of the act of sociocultural animation

The term “animation”, as used here in the phrase “sociocultural animation”, expresses quite clearly the guiding principle of the action undertaken, no matter what kind of context we are dealing with or what kind of objective we are trying to achieve. The word is made up of two very fundamental terms, “anima” or “animare” (which in Latin means to give life and energy, to encourage) and “actio”, meaning the ability of men to alter the external world, producing effects (De Rossi, 2008).

Understood in this way, “animation” cannot but refer to practices of change that have the power really to transform by using methods and tools able to bring about social and cultural empowerment. (Perez Serrano, 2006; Gouguelin, 1996). Educating by using the style of sociocultural animation

means contributing significantly to processes of an individual's personalization, of acquiring awareness and a sense of responsibility. Seen in this way, the individual is always in a condition of tension, and, existing in relation with others, able to attribute meaning to his own existence and to that of others (Cadei, 2001). Thus, simple "agents" become "actors", indeed protagonists, in the processes of educational action, and this happens through practices that take shape thanks to a constant process of interpretation shared by all those involved (De Rossi, 2008).

During all his life a person always finds himself, in fact, as part of a dynamic context of relations, and in order to fulfil himself he needs not only the right tools to understand the world around him, but also the means to modify this world. It is only by becoming active in this role that a person can be transformed into an actor and producer of culture (Lewin, 1972). Generally speaking, such a transformation comes about through communication, which is seen as a mediation between experience on the one hand and the outcomes of processes of interpretation on the other. For this reason it is essential to make use of methodologies that focus both on two different abilities: the first to understand stories of a social and cultural nature that refer to distinctive contexts and periods, and the second to create new stories of personal and collective relevance. Considered in this way, stories become the currency of a culture (Bruner, 1997).

It is in this sense that sociocultural animation can play a fundamental role: by devising and creating opportunities to express oneself and one's actual development so as to increase the knowledge of different kinds of language, to stimulate moments of enriching exchange and debate, and to generate creative and authentic reinterpretations (Floris, 1996).

To be able to reach this goal sociocultural animation has made use, over the years, of a number of different methods and techniques that have progressively added to the "toolbox" of educational professionals. One of these methods is that of narration, which today avails itself of technology to enhance it, in particular using web 2.0 tools.

Why use narrative methodologies to promote change?

Over the past ten years both national and international literatures have dedicated a good deal of attention to the question of narration, reflecting on its significance for education, personal development and self-learning. The fact that man is capable of learning by himself (*auctor sui*), that he can enrich his self-awareness (*conscious sui*) and the awareness of the times he is living in (*conscious temporis sui*) through private conversation with himself and thanks to dialogue with others – this is not something we have realized today (Milella, 2000). In cultures that have reached a high degree of social, and therefore intellectual, complexity, people have always felt the need to tell stories about themselves (Demetrio, 2008). In the history of mankind it seems that tales have always existed (Barthes, 1966), yet, even though they have served different purposes (transferring knowledge, bearing witness, preserving memory, caring for oneself etc.) stories have always fulfilled tasks: they have to reach an objective and it is for this reason that "they are never neutral, they are not born to reproduce something but to create something new: a new order in the state of the knowledge and relations existing between interlocutors" (Fasulo, Pontecorvo, 1997). It would be a mistake to believe that the "past" dominates in the act of telling. This does not take into consideration the fact that in the moment that a narration occurs we are carrying out a process of reflection that has an influence on our present (by consolidating the awareness of our identity) and on our future, by opening up to questions of a teleological nature. This is another reason why narration, and in particular autobiographical narration, has nothing to do

with questions of looking for absolution. It should be seen as a way to stimulate experience, observation of experience and the consequent insights into generating development (Castiglioni, 2012). It is clear that “remembering” is a fundamental phase in this, yet the real keystone in the process of transformation is interpretation. By setting in motion processes of objectivisation and subjectivisation, the analysis of the chronological series of events makes it possible to identify the most salient passages. These pivotal moments possibly have not been afforded the importance they are due, but it is likely that, in the very moment in which they were lived, they created an opening for narration, as they represent subjects of discussion, possibly even of verbal conflict with people near to us or again stimulus for our secret diaries (Demetrio, 1996).

From the point of view of sociocultural animation, then, what counts is not, or rather is not solely, the text that is produced. What is more important is the process of reciprocal influence that begins between thought and narrative discourse. This process means that while thought organises the subjective and interpersonal experience, the discourse formalises the reflections through the use of forms of language that determine cultural interpretative systems (Bruner, 1997). It is thanks to this organisation as discourse that narrative thought becomes comprehensible, communicable, memorable and open to interpretation, and it also this organisation that enables us to pass from self to others, setting up or consolidating relations that are essential for our existence as people: the sense of being there, of being present to ourselves and the world, understanding that the outside world becomes part of ourselves through how we live and experience it (Dilthey, 1949).

When it is put to use with a sense of responsibility and awareness, this capability to organise and reflect can be considered as an “adult” ability, in that it belongs to the sphere of maturity, and as such can and should be developed and refined, especially in the light of today’s dominant post-modern condition and of the growing complexity that the act of narrating has been undergoing in the past few years (Meadows, 2003).

The potential of digital storytelling (DST) in sociocultural animation

The text that is produced by narrative thought being made explicit in narrative discourse takes on various forms that correspond to different modes of consumption. Today the traditional single-medium oral and written modes (cfr. Bruner, 1993; Ong, 1993) are being supplemented more and more by the use of multimedia.

The fundamental passage from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has indeed brought about a paradigm change. This means that now people have the means and tools both to tell their own stories and to disseminate and share them with ease and rapidity. In this way, the narrations of an individual, personal point of view on the world are made open for discussion, thus generating an interactive process of exchange and feedback that profoundly changes the nature and direction of the flows of communication (Petrucchio, 2010; Lister, 2003), and leads people to assume an active role in the process of co-construction of knowledge, rather than the role of a simple consumer. This change of role can be clearly seen in blogs and wikis, but more than this it is in “digital storytelling” that the need to tell stories also about oneself has come into its own.

It has been defined as the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling (Ohler, 2007) and consists in “using digital media to create and enrich stories (“media-rich”) to tell, share and preserve” (Digital Storytelling Association, 2008). It is exactly these three moments that prove to be important for the development of processes of sociocultural animation. Stories become

an “organizing device” that forces us to put our thoughts in order and organize them in a clear, comprehensible and communicable way. Storytelling is always an act of cognition and reflection, and calls upon higher thinking skills, but it is also an act of dialogue (where the dialogue is addressed to “another”, who according to the context could be an individual, a group or an imaginary other) that is seen as being the projection of ourselves or the personification of an object or problem (Smorti, 2000; Orr, 1996; Bakhtin, 1988). In writing a digital story we become aware of the importance acquired by the feelings and emotions related to the event that for us has become meaningful by virtue of its deserving to be told and shared. What is important, therefore, is not only to create a video, but to reflect on something that has happened, consider it from your own point of view and then re-elaborate it so that it can be shared with others. (De Rossi and Petrucco, 2009). It is important to point out that what is being told is a representation of self and of how the subject’s role remains active during all the phases of production. If the storytelling were part of sociocultural animation project it would be better for the productive phase of the digital story to be preceded by a phase of reflection and warm-up sufficient to establish the kind of atmosphere that would be conducive to the narration. As regards the methodological choices to be made, it is important to remember the following components, which are essential for narrative, autobiographical discourse (De Rossi, 2008):

- the hermeneutic component, through which the subject has the possibility to re-read the story but at a distance (the process of objectivization) and to understand that his tale is nothing but the interpretation of events (the process of subjectivisation);
- the emancipatory component, thanks to which once the subjectivity of the point of view has been understood, the subject can try to move away from the centre and identify with the other characters, reading the story from their point of view (plurality of perspective);
- the experiential component, which consists in reflecting on the experience with planning or future transformations in mind.

A workshop experiment to promote sociocultural animation through digital storytelling

Introduction

“Sculpting Stories” is a national project, carried out between 2011 and 2012 and funded through the Law 383/2000, which made provision for the approval of experimental projects to deal with particular social emergencies and to promote the application of advanced methods of intervention which could bring about empowerment in the people and groups involved. The target group were minors living in community centres who came from socially-disadvantaged backgrounds and had been emotionally deprived. The need to reinforce and intensify educative measures for young people up to the age of 18 derives from the particular nature of the Italian welfare system, which reduces protective action once the young come of age. This is the reason for the request for projects aimed at setting up at an early age the kind of reflection-enhancing courses that could lead to greater independence and the initiation of decision-making processes. The project consisted in a complex and participatory research action, which saw the creation of a work group made up of very different members: a sample group of sociocultural animators of the CNCA (Comitato Nazionale delle Comunità di Accoglienza) and expert researchers from the University of Padua, who were responsible for the narrative, autobiographical and decision-making methodologies using a Web 2.0 (and particularly DST) technological approach. The theoretical premise that guided the action was the relation between the transformational processes of the sociocultural animation methods

and education, seen as the instrument for change and for the creation of identity (Gillet, 2004). In this perspective, preference was given to actions that adopted methods and techniques that focused on the person and on the relations that were established by that person: dialogue and discussion, together with active listening constitute, therefore, the “tools of the trade”, together with the awareness that narration is a powerful tool for the development of reflective skills, and that stories provide frames of meaning and the means that the mind creates to process, explain, memorize/recall reality (Bruner, 1993). The technique of DST, by increasing the potential of traditional narrative methods, requires that today professionals in the field of sociocultural animation reflect profoundly on the methods they use (McDrury, Alterio 2003). This is particularly important in relation to the new possibilities and the new contexts of communication that permit the creation of new and more complex forms of narrative. Indeed, thanks to the low cost of digital devices and the supports that are now available, the number of different ways of building and sharing stories is in constant growth.

The structure of the action research

It is necessary to pose some questions about the pedagogical validity of the inclusion of technologically-mediated narrative instruments in the practice of sociocultural animation, and such questioning should be the focus of the research action, which would be organised in several phases.

1. The preliminary phase involved an exploration of the world of social education and sociocultural animation in order to obtain information about the perception of and trends in the use of narrative methodologies and technologies as part of fieldwork. For this reason a group of 15 coordinators from associations and cooperatives important at a national level were interviewed in depth as privileged witnesses. The analysis of the results led to the definition of the workshop format and the research tools for the other phases of work to be carried out by the sociocultural animators of the Coordinamento nazionale delle Comunità di Accoglienza (CNCA).
2. The first phase consisted in the training of 20 animators (10 men and 10 women) in familiarising themselves with the methodology, so that they could then use it and adapt it in the project dealing with adolescents. The 16-hour blended training workshop was held in November 2011 in Padua and had been planned using indications given by Joe Lambert in the book “Digital storytelling cookbook” (2007) and bearing in mind the methodological indications on the work regarding autobiography. The intention was to get some experience working on a full autobiographical narrative, passing from oral to writing, from pictures to multimedia. The final part of this phase concentrated on using the software necessary for the production of DST, in particular Photostory and Audacity.
3. The second phase dealt with following the methodological work together with the 5 regional groups (from Veneto, Basilicata, Umbria, Sicily, and Lombardy) that were involved in the national project “Sculpting Stories”. Discussions were carried out both at distance by using the Moodle platform and also during periodical debriefing meetings. The groups’ experience lasted from January to May, and led to the collection of 32 digital stories that were produced by the young people during the workshops.
4. The third phase concentrated on the evaluation of the effects of the work carried out so far on the planning of the subsequent actions. The opinions and perceptions of the

sociocultural animators were collected by means of a series of open questions once the project was concluded.

5. In the fourth and final phase the training experience in which the professional sociocultural animators had been involved was transferred to a university context for a group of 70 students, who were following the sociocultural animation specialisation course as part of the 3-year Degree Course in Educational Sciences. The aim was to introduce the digital narrative methodology in order to develop competencies for sociocultural animation. Since the students were at the beginning of their university career it was of course necessary to begin the workshop activities by referring to their own personal experience in order to help them explain the reasons for the direction to be followed and reflect upon their decisions. For this reason their autobiographies would focus on their choice of profession. The workshop was an extremely important for their training since through this direct experience of the methodology of animation the students assimilated professional insights and expertise that would be useful for the development of their competencies.

The format of the workshop

The format of the workshop was the cornerstone of the methodology used. The new technologies helped to prepare procedures, phases of work and tools that would be necessary for the adoption of the autobiographical narrative methodology. The final objective was that the participants should construct DST products that, in each of their different cases, would express the essence of their story, their determination to tell it and interpret it by means of reflection. The theme proposed to all of the different participants in the course of the entire project (professional sociocultural animators, students at the beginning of their university career, young people living in centres) was of an autobiographical narrative nature, but whereas for the first two groups the focus was on professional motivation, for the last group it regarded their life experiences.

In today's society, and also in that of the future, being able to narrate oneself, trying to assume points of view other than those at the centre of any given experience – and here we are referring to almost always traumatic experiences – involves a significant straining towards conscientization that helps develop very important powers of resilience.

We will now summarise the steps that were followed in the workshop, developed in a blended format. The first step (8 hours), carried out in face-to-face meetings, concentrated on activities necessary for the preparation of the stories, while the second (about 8 hours, done online) was for the production of the digital product. The online activities made use of the platform as a shared workspace in which the different groups could become more of a community by working together. In the case of the young people in community centres this phase was carefully followed and supported by animators thanks to feedback given in a forum.

The steps of the workshop

Step 1 (in person): warm up. Individual and group autobiographical games were proposed to induce reminiscent, reflective and analytical processes with respect to events that have characterized the life of participants. In this manner we were able to outline a series of "timelines" with particular emphasis on some special "years" in which something significant happened. Everything was carried out via oral storytelling.

Step 2 (blended): autobiographical narration. From an oral narration we switched to the creation of an iconic storyboard to better convey the narrative metaphors. In this manner the narrative thought is transformed into a narrative discourse (Bruner, 1993). Individuals were given the freedom to choose a narrative tool: those that had difficulties in drawing could describe the image, insert photos taken personally or create a collage with existing images. In each case the storyboard had to be created in a paper format.

Step 3 (on line): multimedia writing of story (DST construction). Final selection of images, words (for example, key words, parts of the speech, metaphors), music and overall assembly of the different parts.

Step 4 (blended): web writing. The DSTs were posted on the network using an open space limited to the group of participants and closed to others. Later a self-assessment assignment was carried out followed by an exchange of the finished products and ended with an evaluation conducted in small groups (debriefing) that was supported by filling out the quantitative forms.

Results

Introduction and data analysis

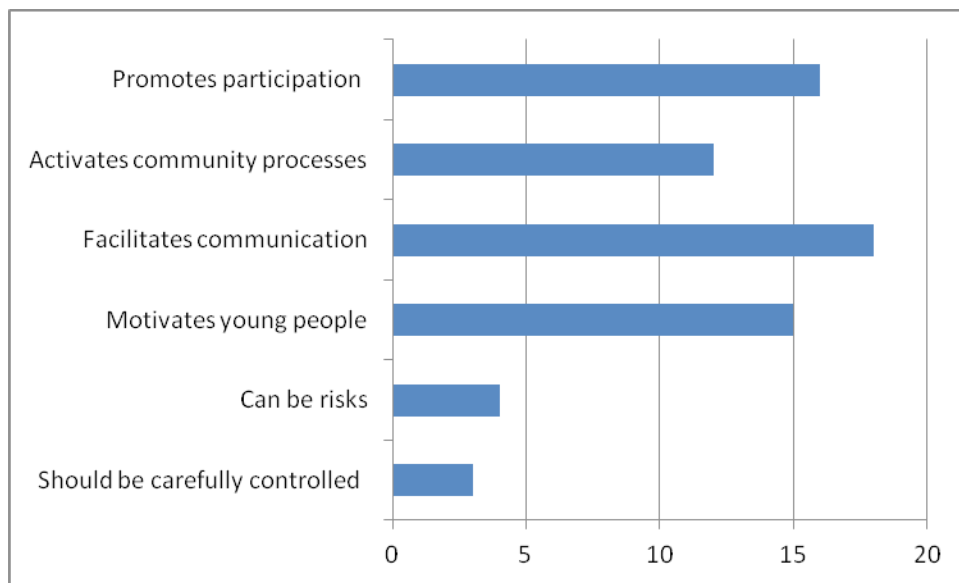
The fact that the participants were free to write as they wished was meant to help them communicate and give better feedback on their experience. They were encouraged to pay particular attention to four fundamental themes for the action research: the use of web 2.0 technologies in the work of animation; the use of narrative methodologies (including both more the traditional forms of language, spoken and written, and also multimedia forms): what they learnt about DST as a tool for this methodological study; experimenting with a blended working format. The questions were submitted online after the design phases and the workshop experiences were finished, even for the regional groups working with young people. This was done because it was necessary to evaluate the impact on the way that the sociocultural animators worked after the conclusion of the experience carried out with the support of the research group of the University of Padua. The following results were drawn up using the data of their own perceptions on the work they had done in the field. A qualitative analysis of the content (Tuzzi, 2003) was used to analyse the texts that were produced by the participants in their answers and to identify the concept categories that had been used to describe and attribute qualities to the themes and topics presented in the questions. It is important to underline that the people working in the groups had little knowledge of the application of web 2.0 tools used in the field, they were using traditional narrative forms with unsatisfactory results (they had in fact pointed out the difficulties involved in using the spoken and written word with young people from community centres) and they knew little or nothing about DST. They had been through various forms of training: Arts degrees (Philosophy, Sociology, Educational Sciences), degrees in Psychology, and a significant percentage of the older ones had no degree but had only followed training courses run by associations of sociocultural animation.

The construction of concept categories was done manually, considering the small number of the participants, concentrating on progressively more specific levels of reading and following the ex-post approach, which consists in extrapolating from a given body of text written after an experience the concepts used to describe the phenomenon being investigated. In this way grids

were made of the resulting categories grouped together for the separate questions. The frequencies shown are related to absolute values.

As regards the perception of Web 2.0 technologies in sociocultural animation (Graph 1), the categories that come out with the highest results are activating processes of participation, facilitating communication and consequently establishing relations between people. A particularly interesting aspect upon which many educators agree is motivation, which seems to increase with the use of these tools, with the additional implementation of community processes.

What also emerged were the problems related to a misuse of these tools and there the need to have adult control over them; this viewpoint was however expressed only by a small number of educators.

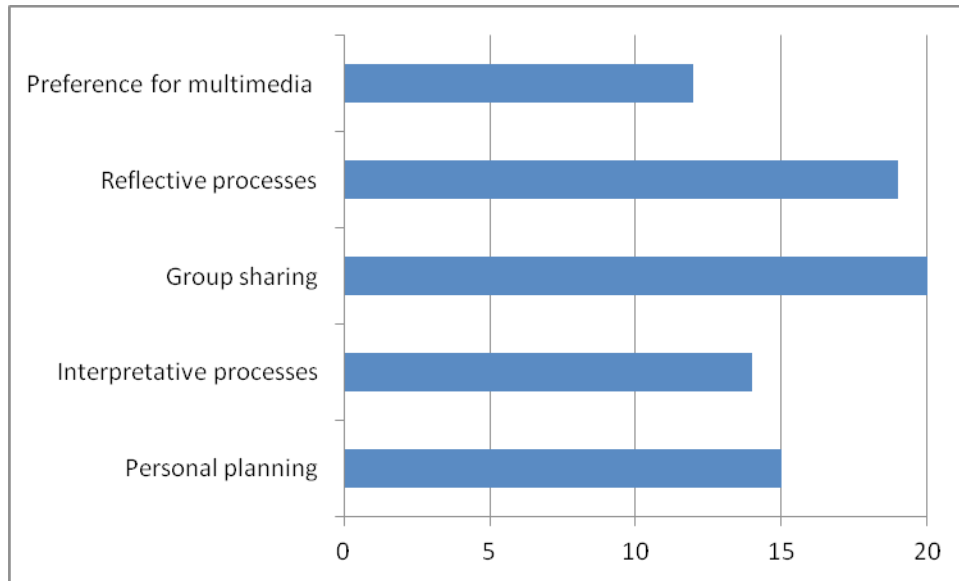


Graph 1: Perception of the use of Web 2.0 technologies in the work of sociocultural animation.

After their experience in the field, during which narrative methodologies were adopted with a view to the implementation of technologies and therefore going beyond traditional written and oral narration, the element of group sharing was the one pointed out by most of the participants. Narration appeared, then, to be methodologically very suited to work in the educational field (Graph 2) in that it implements processes of interpretation, planning and reflection on oneself in relation to others. For our purposes it is interesting to note that a large number of participants expressed in answer to this question a preference for using multimedia in narration.

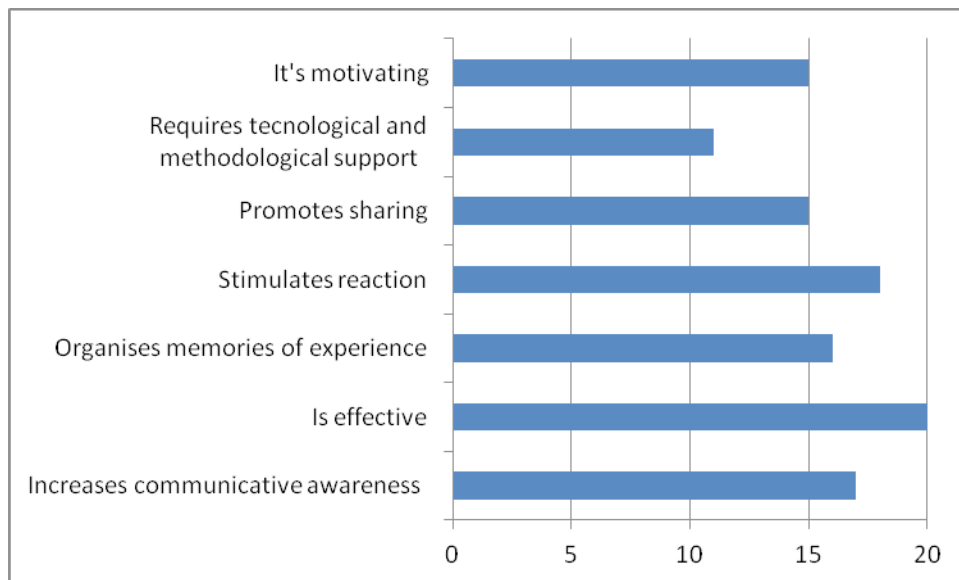
The impact of the work with DST

Working with young people, DST seems to contribute to the development of relations, to increasing communicative awareness and above all to effectiveness, despite the fact that it requires technological and methodological support (Graph 3). In consideration of the fact that before this



Graph 2: Perception of the use of narrative methodologies.

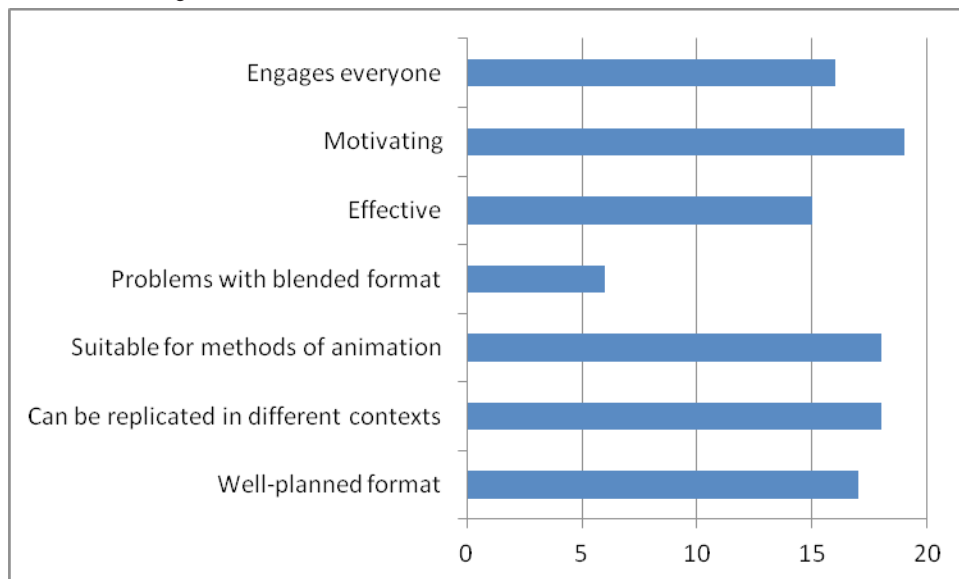
experience the sociocultural animators knew nothing of the use of this tool as a working method, it is to be noted that the categories that emerged all had positive connotations, and there was no reference to the view commonly expressed in other contexts that DST is nothing but a tool to throw together videos to be put on YouTube: it is clear then that its educative value was fully appreciated.



Graph 3: Perception of the use of DST in working with young people.

The last two graphs (4 and 5) deal with aspects related to the ongoing training of sociocultural animators. On the one hand we wanted to assess the impact of this workshop as a training model, while on the other the questions were meant to bring out how the sociocultural animators perceived their own training needs in relation to the use of Web 2.0 technologies in their work in the field.

The answers to question 4 (evaluation of the workshop) revealed positive judgements both regarding the potential of this way of training to engage participants and also to achieve effective training results that correspond to the objectives required for sociocultural animation. The format proposed by university research team was highly appreciated especially because it was found to be quite simple to replicate the experience in other working contexts, as was shown by the ease with which the animators working alone were able to repeat and rework the experience with the young people involved. The answers to question 4 revealed a problem, which, although not voiced by many, nonetheless is of some significance. It regards the use of the blended format (the mixture of online and face-to-face meetings) since a good deal of training and support is needed to make users feel able to get the best results.



Graph 4: Evaluation of the autobiographical workshop with DST production.

This point clearly relates to question 5 about training needs, which here emerge distinctly. What emerges first of all is the need for training which would help to build tools that can be shared and which can be integrated with approaches to planning as well as with the use of technologies. Even as far as methodology is concerned, more training is asked for, specifically with a view to building consensus about how to create a clear profile of the professional community of sociocultural animators. In this regard, there was a distinct call for expert support, in this case a call to universities, which should assume the responsibility for training animators or organising self-training activities.



Graph 5: Training needs.

Participants' answers tended to give positive judgements on the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies in the work of animation, and in particular on the use of DST as a narrative methodology. This emerges from the analysis of data from the next phase, where the workshop format was adapted to the context of initial university training for sociocultural animators.

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