

The power of video clips in including the autistic voice

One of the reasons why I was particularly interested in participating in this project was because for the first time in Greece, people with autism would be included in the process of creating educational materials and their opinions and experiences could be heard. As part of my involvement in the project I was responsible for interviewing and filming people with autism regarding their school experiences and their views on effective education. The making of these videos was a unique experience for me and one of the most defining moments during the whole project so far. At first, I was very scared because this was not something I had done before and because finding people with autism in our country to speak on camera seemed very difficult, almost impossible. Eventually, two people agreed to do this. On the day of filming, I felt scared and excited simultaneously. I felt proud that the views of these people with autism would be recorded and potentially heard, and I was anxious because I wanted to make sure that their ideas were properly portrayed. This experience helped me realise that it IS possible to get the views of people with autism in Greece, and that the actual process was easier than I had anticipated. In fact, I discovered that they wanted to say more things and the interviews ended only due to time restraints. The experience made me feel more confident in myself, in the project and in a better future where people with autism are not excluded in the decisions that concern them. Feeling immensely proud about the video project, I talked about it to many people in my field. I talked about it before it actually happened, as well as after, describing what these people said and why I felt it was important. The experience influenced me very much in my job as lecturer in seminars for professionals who work with people with autism, and since that experience I encourage people to find ways to get their clients to give their opinions, and to use these to inform their practice. This experience also developed in myself an interest in video-making. So, I filmed and edited several other videos for the project where parents and teachers also spoke about their views and experiences. I also started using more video with the children I work with, to help them pinpoint and process important issues for them. After some time, I was very happy when someone I had spoken to about getting the views of people with autism told me that this changed the way they evaluate their work at the outpatient center that she runs. She said that they now ask children and their families to evaluate their experience at the end of each school year. I was immensely happy for that! I

hope that when the videos I made are uploaded on the website, more people will be inspired and find ways for the voice of children with autism to be heard. Another positive result from this experience is that since the first 2 interviews, more people with autism and/or learning difficulties have come up to me and said that they would like to be interviewed too someday. Finally, since I started using videos in my work with children, I discovered that they love watching themselves on video and this became a new fun tool for us to use in our work together.

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