

ERASMUS+ SEKEHE: monitoring of WP2 using photovoice – reflection from the Italian Unimib team



1



Starting point...

Within the scope of the SEKEHE project, the University of Milan Bicocca partners:

1. Involved two Experts by Experience (EBEs) in mental health from the CoopLotta Cooperative.
2. These experts actively participated in the co-design and co-teaching of specific lessons within the "Pedagogy of Social Inclusion" course.
3. The collaboration occurred during the third year of the Bachelor's Degree program in Educational Sciences, during the academic year 2022/2023.

2

Main objective...

To **co-create experiential knowledge** that can build understanding through a formative and self-formative process **based on lived experiences**



3

The guiding questions of monitoring (WP2)...

What is the **stakeholders' overall description of their experience in the SEKEHE project**/university lessons derived from the SEKEHE project, including any limitations and strengths?

What were the **stakeholders' personal experiences** regarding their participation in the **SEKEHE project**/university lessons derived from the SEKEHE project?

What is the **significance and what are the gains resulting from stakeholders' participation in the SEKEHE project**/university lessons derived from the SEKEHE project?

4

How we tried to answer...



5

Some examples of the use of Photovoice...

- **From the focus group with the students**

During the focus group:

"Now we ask you to take a photo that represents the classroom journey with the EBEs"; "What does this photo convey in relation to what you have learned from the experience in the classroom with the EBEs?"

- **From the interviews with teaching and research staff**

Before the interviews:

"We ask you to take a photo that, for you, represents the co-construction process with the EBEs in designing classroom lessons";

During the interviews:

"What does this photo say compared to how they experienced this process...?"

6

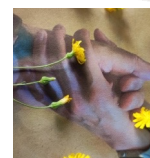
Some key-points from the interviews and the focus group, using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)...

7

1. Weave the stories of the past to co-write the stories of the future...

The SEKEHE Project as an **Opportunity** for:

- Recognizing **discomfort experiences as valuable educational opportunities for everyone** (ALL).
- Raising awareness that **sharing experiences of distress can be a means to reinterpret, meaning making and enhance the narratives** of both those who have experienced such distress and those who hear their stories (ALL).
- Emphasizing the importance of **constant self-questioning and critical thinking, particularly among education professionals** (TRAINERS AND STUDENTS).



8

2. Recognize the limits...

The SEKEHE Project as an **Occasion**:

To address Challenges and Limitations in involving EBEs as co-teachers in university education, specifically:

- The **lack of formal recognition of the EBE role and competencies**, and the presence of pending workload issues related to one of the candidates (WIDER CONTEXT).
- The **difficulty in economically recognizing a public assignment for individuals receiving disability benefits (TRAINERS)**.
- The **fatigue experienced by EBEs resulting from co-teaching in the classroom (EBEs, TRAINERS)**.



9

2. ...to discover new paths and perspectives

The SEKEHE Project as an **Occasion**:

To recognizing Strengths and Perspectives:

- The **empathetic attitude of Administrators** coupled with professionalism and the **motivation to go beyond predefined standards** (WIDER CONTEXT, TRAINERS).
- **Understanding and sharing project objectives (ALL)** and the **perception of actively being part of a working group** (WIDER CONTEXT, EBEs, TRAINERS).
- The **emergence and reconsideration of implicit biases underpinning representations of mental distress** and individuals with psychological challenges (WIDER CONTEXT, TRAINERS, STUDENTS).
- The **potential of EBEs** revealed through co-teaching in the classroom (EBEs, TRAINERS).



10

3. Exposing oneself to be the protagonists of change

The SEKEHE Project as **Recognition**:

- Of the **uniqueness and professionalism of EBEs in promoting student learning** based on their experience (WIDER CONTEXT, TRAINERS, STUDENTS).
- Of **EBEs' contribution to improving mental health services through their involvement in training future education professionals** (EBEs).
- Of the **value of the work of Administrators and Trainers** in involving EBEs and the success of the project (WIDER CONTEXT, TRAINERS).
- Of the **educator's role and responsibilities in the field of mental health**, as a prospective learning experience, **thanks to the reduction of the gap between theory and practice** (EBEs, TRAINERS, STUDENTS).

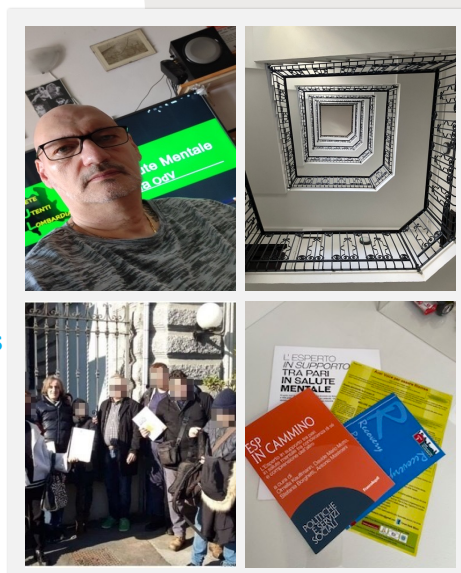


11

4. Making the steps leading to the achievement of goals visible

The SEKEHE Project as an **Outcome and Part of a Journey**:

- Of **recovery, empowerment, and inclusion** that we have been a part of (EBEs, TRAINERS, STUDENTS).
- Of **awareness of the interconnection between inclusion/exclusion, empowerment, recovery, and the opportunity to access experiences and contexts** (STUDENTS).
- Of **promoting ESPs' citizenship** through recognizing their role, responsibility, and value for the project (EBEs, TRAINERS).
- Of **promoting a renewed perspective on mental health**, aided by the visibility and prestige of the project provided by public institutions such as universities (ALL).



12

Some conclusions...

- **Participation in the SEKEHE Project as a Learning Experience**

- Active participation of all members in the SEKEHE project

The exploratory investigation itself served as a learning opportunity:

- Co-construction of meanings and knowledge about mental health
- Personal and organizational implications for the promotion of concrete practices in daily life
- Emergence of new points of reflection, questions, and educational needs...

13

Open questions...

- Asking for photos generated a great initial disorientation in our participants...
- We noticed a sense of fear about presenting a «wrong» photo.
- We noticed that when the participant feel comfortable about the photo, then a great discussion can start.
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14