

Title: The Potential of Group Mentoring and Photography for Mentoring Programmes with Unaccompanied Minors

Facilitator and room number: Alba Pi Barris, Marta Roda Milà; 1.403

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Number of participants: 3

Sequence of content, methods and activities:

The workshop was a combination of presentation parts with powerpoint by the facilitators and discussion as well as activity parts together with the participants. At the beginning the participants and facilitators introduced themselves, then the facilitators started with the presentation of Punt de Referència, an organisation in Barcelona with 20 years of history. It has been the first organisation in Spain that was working with Mentoring. Punt de Referència has different mentoring and/or housing projects for youngsters and young adults from foster care or former foster care.

The workshop focused on the project *GR 16-18: Group mentoring through photography for unaccompanied youngsters*. The project is currently running for the first time with six mentoring groups that each have one mentor and two mentees. In the beginning of the project they have more activities in the whole group, while later the mentoring groups meet weekly on their own and they only come together for group meeting every other month. At the end of the project (after six month) they put together a photographic exhibition.

About in the middle of the workshop the facilitators made an intervention where the participants were asked to close their eyes. Calm music was played and the participants were asked to remember how they felt when they were 16, 17 or 18 years old. They should imagine being in their home town and someone tells them about some place where life is better and then they decide to go there and suddenly they arrive in a new place. Fast music was played and Marta and Alba spoke fast in Catalan trying to say something to the audience. After a short confusion they started a group discussion about how they felt in that situation and how the unaccompanied young refugees probably feel, when they come to Spain.

Giving their example and their experiences Alba explained the strengths and drawbacks of group mentoring and which suggestions they would give for the practice. Then Martha talked about the potential of photography as a tool for social intervention and presented different exercises they use working with photography in the project. During a group discussion four fictive case studies were discussed: situations that can occur during mentoring group meetings. The participants had to take over the role of a mentor and explain how they would act. In the final discussion the participants could give a feedback and say what they took home from the workshop.

Main learnings and tools presented by the facilitator:

Giving advice why and how to do group mentoring, Alba said that the youngsters like to be with peers and the mentors are better accepted, but it is also less flexible and the mentor has to find a balance for the different rhythms of the two youngsters. She gave the advice to do monitored activities and have routines with the same place and same time. In the project the mentoring matches should be based on similar interests. They first meet all together for one and a half months and then, after getting to know each other, they do the matching.

The facilitators presented three group exercises to show how photography can be used:

- 1) Learn to look: Use a small frame and look through it. The youngsters have to stop and watch, then they take a picture through the frame.

- 2) Self-presentation through WhatsApp: The WhatsApp pictures of the youngsters are projected on a screen and the others have to guess, who is being showed. Then they write on post-its what they think and put them on the back of the person shown in the picture. The post-its can be used to see what others see and for self-reflection, and how they want to be seen by others.
- 3) Photography and memory: A person shares personal experience or a fictive story in the group . The group decides which story they want to represent in a sculpture. Another group comes in and has to guess what they want to show and they can take a picture deciding what they want to highlight.

Finally, the facilitators handed out four case studies on paper, which are used to train the mentors. The group collected ideas on how a mentor could act in these situations.

Main outcomes from the activities applied:

After the intervention with closed eyes there was a vivid discussion about the beliefs and hopes with which the refugees come to Europe/Spain, both from the facilitators' and participants' experiences. The participants were really interested in the presented photo activities and started to plan using similar activities.

The participants also really enjoyed discussing the case studies and the facilitators were interested in hearing suggestions from the audience.

Main outcomes of the discussion:

During the workshop the participants discussed, **why group mentoring and photography** are conceived as potential tools for the improvement of communication and relational skills of unaccompanied youngsters. The participants had the chance to exchange experiences and acquire knowledge and practical strategies for social intervention with youth migrants.

Marta pointed out that in the project *GR 16-18* **monitoring and supervision are really important**. Every week the mentors fill in questionnaires about how the mentees are doing.

Regarding the case studies Marta made the suggestion, that if the youngsters are not feeling comfortable they don't have to do a given exercise. When the mentors are facing problems they can't handle, they can also contact the coordinator.

In the final discussion the participants had ideas about how to support the exhibition: show the pictures online as a virtual exhibition, use the exhibition to invite new unaccompanied youngsters who could be interested in the next running project.

One thing that was laughed about:

Alba referred twice to the mentees as "the kids" and then corrected herself: "No, they are no kids, they are 18 years old."

References of literature, if mentioned:

The literature for group mentoring was from Jean Rhodes and Jerry Shark.