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TIPS & TRICKS

Reflections and practical tools for the effectiveness of safety training with migrant workers Communication traps and engagement strategies

Material developed by: IIPLE Team (Gazmend Llanaj)

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this short manual is to suggest some tools for trainers who wish to manage training sessions in a more effective and engaging way to ensure migrant workers actively participate in the sessions.

Both the organizations that coordinate and manage the training and the safety trainers who deliver training should get to know migrant workers in order to plan a "tailor-made" training and, in all cases, be effective in terms of communication, performance and involvement.

Some reflections and techniques presented below have already been included and integrated in the various tools of the training package and in the outputs of ESTEEM; the others are transversal and technical reflections that can also be used in other training and social contexts involving migrant workers.

An effective and good level training aimed at adults, must necessarily start from their skills and from the experiences / knowledge acquired in various formal and non-formal contexts. In addition to basic information about the users of a training course, it is necessary to motivate migrant workers to train and to trigger processes of emotional and cognitive involvement, also in order to overcome mutual distrust and cultural obstacles.

In general, training for those who emigrate is a synthesis of welcome and stabilization in the country of arrival. The migrant worker agrees to undertake a training course both to learn to live in the ambiguity of their condition and to get out of it. They begin a process of linguistic, socio-cultural and professional re-identification because they know that they can no longer bear to live only with the "safe-haven" represented by their own language, mentality and





operations. In this long and complex process, safety training can become an important turning point and an opportunity to change the social relationship with colleagues, employers and institutional safety figures in the workplace. The training dynamics on safety and health in the workplace can trigger reflections in the migrant worker that also modify their social and "emotional" relationship with the country of arrival. All these factors make the role that the safety trainers can play, important, also due to the considerable social contribution they can bring, especially when they are aware of these dynamics and tries to go beyond the passage of simple technical skills.

CHARACTERISTICS AND PECULIARITIES OF THE TARGET

Training involving migrant workers should be organized and designed only after the acquisition of certain information and data necessary to identify not only the individual characteristics but also aspects and specificities related to the social group they belong to. In training on the safety of foreign workers, greater exposure to accidents must always be considered, which also derives from recognized and quantifiable social causes:

- greater riskiness of the works performed: **DDD = Dirty - Dangerous - Demanding jobs**;
- higher incidence of risk factors related to company organization (extended working hours, shifts without rest, continuous work with high concentration);
- [linguistic comprehension](#) problems;
- differences in [risk perception](#) with significant differences between ethnic groups;
- conditions of [greater fragility](#) and willingness to accept more humble and dangerous tasks;
- vulnerability and blackmail: (tolerance towards levels of moral harassment unthinkable for native workers);
- situations of extra-working life of [greater precariousness](#);
- difficulty in accessing [training / information](#);
- lack of knowledge of civil and insurance rights.

To try to activate effective training interventions on the issues of safety and health in the workplace, especially those aimed at migrant workers, additional data and information are required in addition to the simple knowledge of the country of origin:

- The age of the participants
- The level of education in the country of origin (any previous professional training on safety)
- Current work in Italy: (type, duration, job ...)
- The family situation: (married, with children, awaiting family reunification, young, single ...)
- Life plans: (possible return to the country of origin, marriage or children, obtaining a degree, buying a house ...)
- Future work projects: (possible new jobs, intention to start a new company ...)
- Aspirations / interests: (interest in art, cooking, football, secret dreams ...)

The contents and structure of the training sessions can be prepared and adjusted from time to time also on the basis of these elements and others, if they are useful for a greater involvement of migrant workers.

TOOLS FOR AN EFFECTIVE TRAINING

One of the main problems faced when organizing safety training with migrant workers is their low participation and minimal level of involvement. Very often the role of migrant workers during training is reduced to a simple passive presence in the classroom, thus triggering a double negative effect: the trainer renounces their real involvement justifying himself with prejudices linked to linguistic and cultural understanding, migrants "close up" and feel excluded





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and misunderstood in their difficulties, holding the trainer and the organization responsible for this exclusion / prejudice.

Here are some tools that can help overcome this cognitive and emotional impasse. The trainer can use these tools to make migrant workers participate and in the case of mixed groups, also promote socialization with native participants in training.

Safety training, in order to involve migrant workers in a conscious way, must be able to motivate participants at different levels and to transmit the value of safety also as:

- **Universal value in life plans**

Safety training can be experienced as personal enrichment and long-term investment within your life plan, regardless of the places where you live and work. For a migrant worker, training in general constitutes a "light baggage" but important that can be easily transported and used in different contexts and cultures.

- **Right to life and health**

A capable trainer must also be able to promote workers' feelings of justice and affirmation of their dignity as individuals and holders of important and inalienable rights: "Everyone has the right to life, freedom and security of his person" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art.3, 1948).

- **Moral and criminal liability**

Migrant workers often find themselves in fragile family situations complicated by forced temporary separations, due to the difficulties of the migration process. These difficulties, together with strong family ties marked by a sense of sacrifice towards loved ones, can turn into formidable tools of moral motivation: "if you really care about your family and your children, work safely and take care of your health".
Legal responsibility deriving from unsafe behaviour and non-compliance with the rules can be used as a motivational lever towards migrant workers arriving from countries and socio-political contexts where "the government authority" inspires the fear of sanctions and "the uniform" it has a considerable cultural weight. Compliance with the rules for a migrant worker is also a primary necessity linked to one's legal situation as a resident which can be compromised in the event of violations or criminal convictions with the real risk of being deported and sent back to the country of origin.

- **Professional competence**

Migrant workers often find themselves in conditions of occupational segregation in many productive sectors and are inclined to accept jobs below their skills. The perception of safety as a professional competence acquired and formally recognized in the country of arrival represents an additional motivation for foreign citizens to obtain a job consistent with their expectations and abilities. The acquisition of a new "document" which certifies their knowledge and skills and which can be used in their curriculum, encourages them to actively participate and achieve the training objectives.

- **Art- techné**

Effective safety training must also stimulate the creativity of migrant and indigenous participants, triggering fun and productive group dynamics through the simulation of safety problems that require innovative and not obvious solutions. The desire to invent valid solutions and emerge, makes it easy for migrant workers to get involved and stimulates their interest in collaborating and contributing by taking the opportunity to emerge and also demonstrate their previous skills. In this case, however, the trainer must be careful not to confuse the creativity that improves safety and health conditions with the "hasty" solutions that are often improvised on site and that contribute to lowering the level of protection and risk prevention.



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INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

In order to be able to involve migrant workers and stimulate their active participation during the course, the trainer should modify and integrate the teaching materials (slides, handouts, simulations, group activities, role-playing, etc.) by inserting elements that allow them to apply and use some strategies:

- **Use paradoxes, overturning cultural clichés and stereotypes**

To stimulate the participation and involvement of migrant workers, it is effective to use paradoxical situations. These are images or videos, relevant to the training content, carefully chosen from various countries of origin of migrant workers, which show situations of orderly and safe construction sites, while negative examples are chosen from construction sites in "developed" countries. This reversal is very effective as a tool for involving and enhancing individual experiences for foreign workers and naturally stimulates the reflection also of native workers towards a possible overcoming of cultural stereotypes and ethnocentric clichés. The use of paradoxes attracts the attention of learners, also through the overturning of beliefs, often superficial knowledge and stereotyped cultural cognitive maps.

- **Involve by enhancing the various places of origin**

Similar to the previous technique, this method involves the conscious and deliberate use of video material, images and concrete examples of architectonic and building excellence in the countries of origin of migrants, in order to enhance their cultural background. These elements easily capture the interest of migrant workers and stimulate the desire to participate and explore situations and contexts they know very well. Also, in this case, a secondary effect is obtained which is to raise awareness among indigenous workers and convey the idea of transversal safety issues in each country, despite the obvious structural differences. The images of excellent buildings and construction sites in the cities of origin of foreign workers can also be used to improvise games of recognition of places related to their work or life experiences, in order to stimulate mutual curiosity and enhance the different places of origin.

- **Trigger processes of mutual empathy and active listening**

To foster the initiation of a teacher - learner relationship based on trust and consequently create new communication possibilities, it is advisable to offer empathic and genuine listening, demonstrate that you are available for an authentic relationship and recognize the dignity of the other, even when this doesn't automatically implies the adhesion and the opening of the other. Briefly summarizing, the principles of active listening to be kept in mind during training are:

- Suspend value judgments,
- Try to put yourself in the other's point of view,
- Listen without interrupting,
- Trigger empathy also through an equal, self-deprecating and "light" approach,
- Verify understanding of the content, relationship and context.

- **Acknowledging individual experiences**

Often the legislation in force in the European countries does not provide for any legal recognition of previous training credits from other non-EU countries; this does not mean that security training is non-existent or insufficient in the countries of origin of migrants. Taking an interest in, acquiring information on previous training and also on the qualifications of migrant workers can be important to modify and "tailor-made" the courses on safety. In particular, a good level of previous schooling of migrant workers helps to greatly accelerate both the language and technical learning process.



- **Avoid cultural contrasts by promoting cooperative learning**

The safety trainer should avoid the stigmatization of migrant workers as representatives of a culture insensitive to safety and health and vice versa of native workers as bearers of an always positive and superior vision on the issue. To overcome this difficulty, cooperative learning is also very useful as a teaching methodology that stimulates peer to peer learning and provides for the division of students into small groups. The presence of migrant workers in groups can lead to higher performances both in application tasks (which seek solutions to a specific problem) and in evaluation or creative tasks (which require a solution outside the usual or already tested schemes).

The three main characteristics of cooperative learning to keep in mind are:

- Positive interdependence; perception of being connected with others in such a way that the individual cannot be successful without forming a group (and vice versa the group cannot be successful without the individual).
- Face-to-face relationship, possibility of getting to know each other and establishing direct relationships between the participants
- Individual responsibility; each of the participants is aware of their role and the contribution they make to group work

COMMUNICATION TRAPS TO AVOID

Knowledge of some typical situations and relational dynamics that can easily be transformed into communication traps, would be a further help for the trainer who wants to increase the communicative performance with migrant workers. To avoid these communication traps, some practical measures can be used:

- **Respect the name to respect the person “nomen omen”**

It is important to know and pronounce the name of the migrant workers who follow the training course correctly, as the name is an important part of our identity, of who we are. The name represents and gives dignity in the encounter with the other. The trainer who wants to establish an authentic relationship with the migrant worker cannot miss the opportunity to distinguish name from surname, the meaning of the name, the way the person wants to be called. It is important to ask for additional information and confirmation from the person concerned, also in order not to make formal errors in the documentation that will be released.

- **Don't overestimate the verbal language**

The main difficulty that can be encountered during training with migrant workers is the insufficient level of understanding and use of the language. In addition to the natural limit that constitutes this lack, there should be no confusion between linguistic and conceptual understanding: if someone is silent because they do not have the courage to speak badly and feel mocked, this does not automatically mean that they do not understand anything of what is being said. For an effective training it is advisable to always use universal languages that are shared by different populations and cultures such as mathematics, physics, logic, graphics, computer science etc. These languages, in addition to their concrete and practical value for the human race, demonstrate the ability to build transversal communication systems in educational contexts.

- **Learn as much as you can and use your students' language as much as possible**

A good trainer must always try to cultivate cultural curiosity towards the languages spoken by migrant workers and acquire, as far as possible, simple skills consisting of a "minimum vocabulary" of greetings and keywords, to involve and intrigue learners in training. The use of these terms makes communication more fluid and stimulates the involvement of workers who face significant language difficulties.



- **Misunderstanding arising from non-verbal communication**

The use of non-verbal communication is another tool for the expert trainer. Understanding the non-verbal modalities of our interlocutors and perceiving ours at the same time is essential to obtain and establish effective and clear communications, which will also allow greater effectiveness in the process of active listening and learning. In this context, it is important to correctly interpret non-verbal signals, avoiding the misunderstandings deriving from the different communication codes (for example some gestures can take on a totally different meaning in different cultures and countries: the nod in Bulgaria has the opposite meaning in Italy, the clenched fist and the thumb upright in many countries means "OK" while in the Far East it corresponds to an offensive gesture, etc.).

- **Do not judge from statistics with “three numbers” on ethnicities and cultures**

The safety trainer should avoid making peremptory and definitive judgments about countries, cultures and ethnicities that he knows only superficially. In the same way, it must be able to manage and render harmless the superficial judgments of indigenous and migrant learners that arise from the knowledge of a very limited number of elements and people who represent a specific culture or country.

- **Avoid the simplified vision of the migrant as a delinquent – poor unfortunate**

In the perception of foreigners from poor countries, the mass media play an important role, often operating a simplification of migrants as carriers of delinquency / terrorism or at the other extreme as poor wretches to be pitied. The safety trainer must try to avoid this simplistic view of their learners and consider migrant workers in their "normality". The extremization of the perception of migrants pushes towards an excessive characterization of social groups to the detriment of individual peculiarities.

- **Learn to properly manage the relationship between equality and fairness in the classroom**

The trainer must consciously balance particular attention towards some learners with special needs, basing their behavior on the basis of the differences between equality and equity. Applying the principle of equality to the training context means having to treat each individual in the same way, regardless of differences, while fairness allows each individual to be treated according to their needs, in this case training. A balanced attitude in this context is extremely important to maintain the cohesion of the groups being formed and to best satisfy the needs of all workers.

- **Limit your prejudice on the rigid and predetermined vision of personal identity**

The trainer must avoid the trap that constitutes the rigid and predetermined vision of individual identity, especially when the latter is defined by contrast between different cultures. When identifying someone as a member of a social category, while reifying the distinctive characteristics of that category, stereotypes are generated that are difficult to remove. Personal identity, on the other hand, must be considered as something unique, fluid and in constant evolution both at the individual level and at the social group level.

- **Try to move from multiculturalism to an intercultural vision**

In the common vision, cultures are thought of as “containers” which are concretized in individuals who thus become their representatives or bearers. Multiculturalism, in a positive attempt to respect cultural diversity, makes visible and rigidly stigmatizes the differences between various cultures and countries. The transition from multiculturalism to interculturality requires the rejection of the premise of the multicultural conception according to which culture is an immutable reality. To deal effectively with training with migrants, one must try to overcome the "cultural containers" and learn to move in a dynamic balance between cultures, understood as fluid systems in time and space. It is necessary to see the migrant in addition to the simple reduction to different and alien to the fixed system of belonging, trying to go beyond the exterior, the habits of thought and common conventions that tend to simplify, reduce, essentialize.



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USE OF “STRONG” IMAGES IN TRAINING

The use of images and videos is always an effective means of safety training. In this context, the use of strong images that document fatal accidents and even the corpse of the worker who lost his life in an accident is also effective. Generally, these types of images provide an emotional shock and involve even the most distracted of participants in the training session. Also visually connecting sequential images with cause-and-effect logic is effective for most workers and particularly for migrants. However, the trainer will have to carefully evaluate the opportunity to use these images with groups of migrant workers from countries at war, with traumatic emotional experiences also linked to persecutions and dramatic experiences. On the one hand, “seeing the blood” is useful during training because it shows what really happens in the event of an injury; on the other hand, it is also necessary to take into account the different sensitivities of the adults participating in the training also from a cultural and value point of view. In these situations the trainer will be able to opt for a middle way that takes into account these characteristics of the learners, trying to present images that are not too explicit but that nevertheless show well the consequences of accidents and injuries in the workplace.



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