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Erasmus+

KA2-Cooperation for Innovation and the exchange of
good practices

Teaching basic sciences to young people with fewer
opportunities: towards inclusive education

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**CRF and its experience in
school**

**Psychological aspects,
The use of the Nudge Theory**

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Premises

An important priority for the European Union is the accessibility to education for everyone, including young people with fewer opportunities.

Young people with fewer opportunities are at disadvantage compared to their peers because they face one or more difficult situation or obstacle

Premises

In certain contexts these situations or obstacles prevent young people from:

- having effective access to formal and non-formal education
- transnational mobility and participation
- active citizenship
- empowerment and inclusion in society

Possible obstacles or difficult situations

- Social obstacles (gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, limited social skills, anti-social behaviours, risky sexual behaviours, drug or alcohol abusers, orphans, young or single parents, broken families...)
- Economic obstacles (low standard of living, low income, long-term unemployed parents, poverty, financial problems and debts...)

Possible obstacles or difficult situations

- Disability (intellectual, cognitive, learning, physical, sensory...)
- Educational obstacles (poor school performance, learning difficulties, early-school leavers, dropouts...)
- Cultural differences (immigrants, refugees, ethnic minority, linguistic and cultural adaptation problems...)
- Health problems

Possible obstacles or difficult situations

- Geographical problems (remote or rural areas, small islands or peripheral regions, urban problem zones or less served areas...)
- And more...

The Nudge Theory and its application in the school context

A way to help the students to face their difficulties (alongside the specific support strategies for each situation) comes from the application of the **Nudge Theory** in the **school** context

The Nudge Theory

Elaborated by Sunstein and Thaler (2008) the theory has received the Nobel Prize for Economy in 2017 and got great resonance from the Governments of different Nations, particularly for interventions on:

- the reduction of tobacco use
- increasing physical activity
- the ability to program one's finances

Nudge Theory

For the purposes of this presentation it is stressed that this **psycho-behavioural** approach is based on a so-called “**gentle push**” which directs the target population (here the students) to assume certain behaviours not through imposition or coercion, but, in our experience with the students, through participation, and **empowering the students to the decision making process**

Nudge Theory

Nudge theory, or “**gentle push**” is not necessarily a new theory, and many of the researches that today would be defined as Nudge studies have been published using other terms

Nudge Theory

What is new is to gather the concepts of the “gentle push” within a **common frame** that allows the **contribution of different research areas** to converge so to:

- promote the well-being of people
- follow an integrated approach

Two kinds of Nudge

Nudges, or “gentle pushes” are intended to help people make the best choices in their own declared self-interest.

Two kind of Nudges:

- **type I**, interventions based on the **individual** (example of vending machines and healthy snacks)
- **type II**, interventions based on the **community**

Application of the Nudge Theory to an action-research

The SPAIC Project

Cause dello spreco alimentare ed interventi correttivi - A Project exploring the reasons linked with consumer-related food-waste, involving three Italian schools

A collaboration between INAIL, CRF and three Italian high schools of the Latium

The SPAIC project

In this action research the Nudge Theory has been applied to combine the issues of food waste and of correct life-styles, intended also as participation in collective well-being and in the protection of the environment

What we observed

- the students showed a **real interest** in the subject of food waste

BUT

- even in presence of correct information given by experts the students showed to be **scarcely confident** in the possibility to become concrete agents of change
- **feelings of mistrust** have emerged in their own **potential** to become an **active part** of a positive change

Nudge and decision-making

The human mind and the **decision making** do not work following “simple” mechanisms of **rational assessment** but are widely influenced from the results of the functioning of the complex network of **cognitive and emotional neural mechanisms**

Nudge and decision making

The show-coaching

Therefore, starting from the current knowledge on the functioning of the mind in the decision making process, it has been possible to think **creative strategies to set up a context** that

- favoured the **psychological involvement** of the students
- and conveyed “gentle suggestions” for the implementation of certain **behaviours/attitudes** (here **active involvement in the project**)
- without coercions and leaving the freedom of choice

Nudge and the experience of show-coaching

Our interpretation was that the **students' feelings of mistrust in their capabilities** worked as **interferences** with the cognitive knowledge they received by the teachers and experts about food-waste related behaviours

However Nudge Theory is linked to a “bottom-up” logic, in which it is fundamental:

- that the recipients **feel involved**
- to achieve **genuine participation**
- that the “gentle push” is **targeted and not imposed**

The importance of emotions for achieving the objectives of the project

We have therefore considered it important to create and **environment** that **stimulated** the students' **personal involvement** and the **sense of self-efficacy** and **confidence in their own resources and capabilities**.

This environment consisted in the show coaching experience, where the students received, while actively participating to the bubble show, messages of self trust and self esteem about their capabilities to become active agents of change

Emotions in the daily computer present

The cultural context of the **digital society** has, alongside the **countless merits** sometimes the effect of advancing at a **faster** rate than the **natural resources of human cognition**.

In one click there are endless possibilities of information, while **the more human and emotional aspects** of our lives risk to be put in the **background** or to be represented in a **spectacularized and sensationalistic way**

Emotions in the daily computer present

Some of the **risks** that follow are:

- loss of the **authentic value** of the **emotions** as a basis for the **construction of meaning** of what happens in our lives
- loss of sense of **real participation** and **involvement**
- the pursuit of spectacularized **emotions of others** to **fill a void**

Experiencing positive emotions as motivational boost: the Show-Coaching

Through the experience of the show-coaching (bubble show) it has been possible to

- **reach** the students at an **emotional level**
- let the students experiment the **importance** and the **richness of their emotional dimension**
- exploit its resonance as “**motivational engine**”
- convey messages, “**gentle pushes**”, to **become active agents** of change in the food-waste project

The results

At the end of the experience of the show -coaching the students showed themselves:

- **more motivated** to get **personally involved** to the **active participation** to the creation of tools to promote positive behaviours around the food- waste topic
- **more confident** of **their potential** to be effective agents of change

Conclusions

**Seemingly even small changes
and light stimuli (gentle
pushes) can produce great
effects**