



"VET STUDENTS APPEARANCE CONCERNS
AND THE INFLUENCE ON COMPLETION
RATES IN VET AND ON ACCESSING THE
JOBMARKET"



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"Mirror" Project

Training Package delivered in Pico's Vocational School

The Training Package related to appearance issues, self-esteem, negative body image and mental health (a product associated to the Leonardo Da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Project in which our school participates in partnership with PEJ Açores and other educational institutions from Norway, UK, Austria and Denmark) was ministered at Pico's Vocational School on the 10th and 11th of March 2015.

This Training Package, delivered by UK Specialists, Martin Persson and Nichola Rumsey, who are responsible for a study carried out by the "Centre for Appearance Research of the University West of England", was attended by teachers, trainers, psychologists and health professionals from the Town of Madalena, in Pico Island, and also from the Vocational School of the neighbor island of Fayal.

Studies show that there is a very critical body of evidence which comes to show that people who are worried with their appearance may experience a variety of negative effects, including a low self-esteem, emotional distress, health risk related behaviors, negative effects on physical and mental health, school failure and even social exclusion.

The main objective of this Training, in which 15 people participated, was to create awareness among professionals who deal directly with young people on a daily basis, about issues that, even though, may seem superficial, are becoming ever more serious and alarming.

To reinforce the pertinence of this debate, we had the participation of two local Nurses (Márcia Neves and Sara Gaião) who presented us with the results of a research study carried out in the framework of a Masters Course in Mental Health Nursing and Psychiatry, entitled "Suicidal sphere behaviors of adolescents from Pico Island". The main objective of this study was to identify some components of mental health of the adolescents in Pico Island; evaluate the correlation between the mental health components of adolescents with the suicidal sphere behaviors; characterize the adolescents from Pico Island in what pertains to their well-being, self-concept, depression, coping and suicidal sphere behaviors. The results that were presented to us deserve some reflection, considering that there is a significant percentage of adolescents who present suicidal ideation and/or who have felt the desire to die. There is, also, a considerable percentage of young people who have already suffered from depression (mild, moderate or severe). The intention of this health professional is to give some contribution for the quick and effective development of more efficient strategies for the promotion of mental health, where adolescents are the privileged target group, considering they are at a stage in life



in which they are building their personality. Prevention becomes essential for a healthier growth of our adolescent population.

All this information complemented, at a local level, the Training Package which included a series of modules contemplating issues, such as “Body image in relation to society and culture”; “Impact and consequences”; “Self-esteem”; “Mental health”; “Psychological impacts of appearance dissatisfaction”; and, also, a module on “Communication”.

Pico’s Vocational School (Escola Profissional do Pico) is a “pilot” school at national level for the implementation of this Training Package, expecting to be able to extend it to other schools at regional and, even, national levels, after it is tested in all schools/institutions of the partner countries (Norway, UK, Denmark, Austria and Portugal).

The Training revealed itself as very interesting, interactive and enlightening, in accordance to the feedback that was given by the participants, allowing for people to be more aware and alert to these kinds of issues and more comfortable/confident to intervene and/or to guide young people and, eventually, recommend them to the adequate specialists.

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