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CINAGE is a Grundtvig multilateral project with partners from Italy, Slovenia, United Kingdom and Portugal, funded through the European Union Lifelong Learning Programme. The Cinage Project grew out of the increasing necessity to encourage older people to acquire new skills and to participate in society, in the knowledge that active engagement in cognitively stimulating activities is associated with reinforced memory function, decreased depression and increased life satisfaction. Providing suitable educational resources is, therefore, vital within a central learning paradigm where personalisation, collaboration and informal learning are at the core.

The CINAGE project was composed of interlinked activities, resulting in the production of a learning package that contributes to the enhancement of lifelong learning opportunities and aimed at empowering older people towards achieving a more active ageing, using both European cinema and filmmaking as the tools.

The package development began with a review of approaches, in the four partner countries, towards the six competencies identified by the EU as significant in developing policy towards active ageing within the EU – Learning, Civic and Community, Health, Emotional, Financial/Economic and Technological. The second part of the package development was based upon an assessment of the popular stereotypes found in European cinema, identified by members of Focus Groups in each country, and who then selected 6 films that they felt exemplified a positive attitude toward the six competencies. The final part of the package development was, in a pilot action, the testing and validating of a package of film-oriented tools and learning strategies through a filmmaking course for older adults, which culminated in the production of 12 short films by the participants.

The resulting final CINAGE package, available in the four languages of the partnership, integrates various resources: a Guide for adult educators, a Manual for older learners (covering in its six modules the steps for exploring ageing, translating personal experience into drama, considering the way in which age is depicted in European cinema and film production), the short films produced during the pilot actions and the six European films, selected by the Focus Groups in each of the participant countries.

The CINAGE course offers older adults an opportunity to reflect upon their lives and situations, through watching and discussing films, and to experience collaborative activities, triggering significant and transformative learning resulting in a more active, healthy and socially engaged ageing. Written specifically for adult educators (the Guide) and older learners (the Manual) it is framed by critical reflection - using short films, feature films, music videos and advertisements as learning tools. A critical understanding of film language can act as a catalyst for healing and growth by watching and critiquing films with conscious awareness. Cinema encourages the audience, and the practitioner, to use imagery, plot, music, etc., to enable self- reflection, insight, inspiration, emotional release, relief and change. By connecting with story lines and

characters, older people can learn about themselves and explore their realities in profound and powerful ways.

One of the central elements of the CINAGE Project was to explore the way in which contemporary European Cinema reflects the six competencies and this research was conducted in parallel to the research into active ageing and learning. Focus Groups, of up to twelve members, were established in each of the four countries, composed of a cross-section of gender and age ranges from 55 – 60+, and of people who were involved in active learning, either as participants or providers, and/or were experts in European Cinema.

After a rigorous process of research and critical analysis, the focus groups chose the six European feature films that they felt best illustrate the competencies for active ageing:



Before Twilight, 2009, by Jacek Blawut



Mid-August Lunch, 2008, by Gianni Di Gregorio



Empties, 2007, by Jan Sverák



The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, 2012, by John Madden



Good to go, 2012, by Mateus Luzar



Vidange Perdue, 2006, by Geoffrey Enthoven

Some differences of approach between the different partners were seen in the responses to the films. For example, where the Focus Group was viewing films from their own country they tended to be more critical about whether the portrayal of the ageing and their circumstances were realistic. The Slovenian group questioned whether Good to Go was a realistic portrait of old people's homes, and whether the depiction of the ageing was paternalistic. In the case of the United Kingdom, many of the UK respondents felt that Best Exotic Marigold Hotel was both unrealistic (focussing upon people who clearly had some disposable income) and also patronising, particularly with the portrait of the Indians who provided the hotel and services for the white English characters. However, in the partner countries, viewers found the film uplifting because of its positive attitudes towards some of the competencies, particularly towards "Learning".

There were also differences with regard to the cinematic quality of the films. For example *Amour* and *Saraband* were both rated very highly in cinematic terms as films made by undoubted masters of European cinema. But despite the fact that *Amour* did deal with issues of emotional wellbeing and health, ultimately it was felt by the majority of the partners that its approach was not positive enough, although some respondents felt that it was more honest and realistic in its depiction of issues faced by dementia.

The films chosen by the CINAGE focus groups, and which are screened as part of the CINAGE course, are, by and large, non-commercial, character driven films, starring older actors, and rarely seen in the multiplexes. These films, address an audience of a certain age, and also engage the audience in a dialogue about pressing social issues, thus becoming an indicative and illustrative tool of a certain social status quo.

The selected films' screenings provide opportunity for the study of the representation of older individuals in the movies and how stereotypes about ageing are transformed into narrative and fictional material. The images of frail elderly, vulnerable, passive, dependent, which largely correspond to the stereotypes shared by society, are replaced by other images "rejuvenated" and with older people valued, more in tune with the idea which active ageing aims to highlight.

This can happen through different types of narratives - sometimes the arcs of the characters correspond to a proactive and combative evolution of prejudices, in order to adapt to the challenges of age and prove that they are able to change their behaviour and acquire competencies for active ageing. Or, at the outset, characters are presented as active older adults, with very marked or unconventional personalities, and it is their action on others and the environment around them that drives the narrative.

The CINAGE course is predicated on the notion that the most important single factor influencing learning is the active engagement of the learner with the material. Therefore, CINAGE combines theoretical and critical film studies with contextual based learning allowing the participants to learn through the actual, practical experience of filmmaking, rather than just its theoretical parts.

In embarking on the teaching of practical filmmaking, the partners agreed that it was vital to adhere to an andragogical learning approach. This had implications not only for the roles of the learners and educators, but also for the overall design of the CINAGE course and the learning methods and techniques that were implemented during the course. Some of these techniques are outlined below.

**Informal environments:** Motivation of the individual is an intrinsic process (the 'push' from within, which is self-generated), so that they are self-directing. It is crucial to create a learning environment that harnesses these intrinsic drives and not an environment that suppresses them. An informal environment is best. Formality can create tension and tension impedes learning.

Appropriate support: Self-directed individuals occasionally need support. The role of the educator is to recognize when this need arises and provide the appropriate support, either personally or using peer group members;

Problem-solving situations: Wherever possible the experience of each individual must be tapped. To deny a person's experience is to deny that person. The probing of experience from people with different backgrounds so that they may learn from each other is one of the fundamentals of Action Learning which has been applied with notable success in problem-solving situations;

Active learning: The participative method is widely used on the CINAGE course because:

- it utilizes members' experience for the benefit of others, including the educator;
- it is only by having an experience that people begin the cycle of learning;
- involvement in an experience ensures that the span of attention is widened so the participants learn more;
- by taking part in an experience, participants not only gain knowledge and skill, but also have certain feelings and emotions that can be a powerful way of changing attitudes and can give them greater self-insight and greater insight into others;

Learning contract: The content of the programme should be a contract between educator and learner. This meets the learner's needs for relevance to the present and moves away from the principle of deferred gratification, which is unacceptable for most adults. The involvement of the learner in deciding programme content also increases commitment because they part-own the decision;

Reinforcement of the learning: There should be ample opportunity to reinforce the learning by varying methods. Reinforcement is a vital part of the learning process and methods used should vary according to subject material and individual learning styles .

The CINAGE Course is centred on the older person, and combines lectures, seminars and practical filmmaking workshops, all totally adhering to the active learning approach. The educators on the Course are facilitators and consultants who prepare in advance a set of procedures for involving the learners in the learning process based on the proposed methods, tasks and activities laid out in the session plans of the CINAGE Guide.

Reflection on the experiences of real life and fiction whilst learning and sharing in small groups of peers, facilitates an understanding of how reality is influenced by past experiences, current perceptions and expectations about the future. Viewing and debating European films about active ageing can lead older people to reflect, and to understand the necessary competencies to age both well and proactively. Providing older learners with an in depth opportunity to connect with film education, enabled a significant and holistic learning experience.

A pilot of the CINAGE course was carried out between November 2014 & July 2015 including the production of three films, all written by participants on the Course. It was agreed from the outset that the CINAGE volunteers/participants should have total creative control over their films, with enabling guidance from a professional 'Supervising Director' and professional 'Supervising Cinematographer'. The Director worked with the volunteers on their storyboards and shot lists and liaised between them and the cinematographers. These were the only professionals on set. All other crew and most of the cast were film students or amateurs. Leading acting roles were also taken by CINAGE volunteers – so we can truly say that the films were an active learning experience in every element.

The 9 volunteers were split into groups of 3, with a director, producer and production designer in each group and thus the CINAGE volunteers were totally involved in all aspects, painting the set, organising actors, make-up, building their teams, writing call sheets, schedules and shot lists. The production part of the process has proved to be the most successful of the whole CINAGE Pilot action. Film students from local film schools crewed for the whole of the two weeks on all three shoots and both the students and the CINAGE volunteers found this an energising, interesting and valuable experience. Both groups learned from the other and mutual respect and understanding was fostered between them. All participants agreed that by being dynamically involved on shooting their own short-films about ageing, they identified possible strategies for a more active, healthy and socially engaged ageing.

The culmination of the CINAGE pilot courses in all four partner countries, was the CINAGE Film Festival and Symposium held in Leeds in July 2015. The Festival provided more opportunities for volunteers to be involved – and they took responsibility for writing the programme notes, welcoming and entertaining international visitors and organising events during the Festival.

The Symposium provided a forum for discussion and 'de-briefing' in which many positive outcomes of the course were identified such as:

- improvement in cognitive processes i.e. – memory and motivation
- engagement with contemporary culture
- an opportunity to share and express emotion
- interaction with others
- new friendship groups
- development of intergenerational friendships
- a new and deeper understanding of cinema
- a creative outlet
- learning new skills
- a lasting collective artefact
- engaging in a collaborative, creative activity

The group of volunteers have remained a strong unit, meeting regularly, and the finished films have been selected for screening at international Film Festivals to which many of the participants have travelled. The group are involved in the

development of the next CINAGE course and will be part of the delivery team and crew for the next round of CINAGE films. There is no doubt that the combination of learning, activity, creativity, hard work and collaboration has proved to be a successful contributor to a happy and active ageing.



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