



A European qualification framework for practice and training in Animal Mediated Assistance and Therapy (AMAT)

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A Student's experience in the LDV-Project AMAT

(By Maria van Eijk. Student member of the Dutch team)

As a student I was invited to take part at the project, by the project leader (stakeholder) of the Dutch delegation, Ulrike Thiel (SHP-E(NI)).

My tasks within the project

- Take notes from the meetings of the Dutch delegation and the international meetings of the LDV-partners
- Internet survey
- Report my experience of the workshops and the meetings organised by the Dutch and the Belgium delegations.
- To provide information about my college - experience at Equithérapie SHP
- To support the project leader of the Dutch delegation
- Reading the LDV-list (mail between the partners)
- To take part in the meetings and skype conferences of the Dutch team

Taking notes is a very clear task. I took notes from the skype- meetings of the Dutch delegation. Also from the international meeting in Soerendonk in The Netherlands, and the international meeting in Belgium. (Organised by the Belgium delegation).

Internet survey was necessary to get a clear picture of what was going on in Holland concerning working with the horse. We did survey with all the students at our school. We got to know a great amount of firms who work with horses.

We screened for clients, role of the horse, hippical background and presentation of the therapist. I got to know the offer of working with the horse in our country.

Experience 4th partner-meeting and workshop in the Netherlands.

On the 7-8-9 October 2011 an international meeting was organised by the Dutch delegation in Soerendonk. (see also notes on the homepage of SHP and the Power Point productions of SHP)
At the first day a guided tour and a workshop was scheduled.

The guided tour showed the horses and how they are kept for college and therapy. They are kept in a herd. They are well-trained to be a co-therapist in the therapy and a teacher for the students at college. During the education, the students, get the opportunity to work with the horses, to learn from the horses.

After the tour we discussed the role of the horse, the way of working with the horses during our education. And we talked about how the triangle-relationship (horse-client-therapist) works out in the equithrapy

Workshop:

Ulrike works with games and self-experience exercises with the horse. The equine technique is vaulting.



The participant had to adjust at the new situation at first, but the exercises made them at ease and soon they all were having fun. Spontaneously the participants were willing to cooperate and experiment. Ulrike started with warming-up games with the horse, followed by cooperation exercises. Later on the participants who were willing could work with the horse on self-experience-exercises. Everybody acquainted oneself with the manner of working with horses by Equithrapy SHP-E(NL).



At the end of the session people were asked to draw their experience, and we talked about the drawings afterwards.

My most important remembrance was:

Everybody was a complete stranger to me, but working with the horse made me known to the others and vice versa. The atmosphere tributed by the horse was a atmosphere of energy, good mood and cooperation.

In this mood the days of conference started.



What did I learn this day:

- My knowledge of my education has increased
- I had the opportunity to tell about my own experiences in the education with foreigners.
- I've witnessed the role of the horse in achieving a constructive dynamics in a team. That especially was a wonderful experience.

My conclusion

A triangular relationship with the horse, the project leader and the participants benefits the alliance.

Meeting:

- During the meeting all working groups got the opportunity to evaluate the working process and tasks and agreements were made according the following meeting in Belgium
- A moderator took care of the process of discussion and agreements.

- Every working-group got the time they needed to come to terms with results and expectations of the future-agreements.
- (Hereby I refer to the notes)
- Everybody seemed to discuss to achieve a certain amount of cooperation. When things were not clear they became more clear, by talking about expectations, definitions etc. There seemed to be an equal interest in all achievements and wishes of all working groups. Equal interest in data, definitions for example than in PR.
- The moderator had an important role to keep track during the day. A planning board was made and everybody made appointments and wrote them down at the planning board.
- So the results of the meeting became more and more clear during the days.

My experience of these 3 days:

It was a hard job, but we are going to get results, what should become clear in the next meeting in Belgium.

Experience meeting and workshop

5th partner meeting LDV Belgium 27-28-29 January 2012

Workshop:

A little bit late, caused by a traffic jam, we arrived at the indoor arena where a workshop was offered by the Belgium delegation. In the canteen of the indoor arena, we got the possibility to get an insurance, by writing our names and birth-dates on a paper.

The actual workshop

At the indoor arena, were a lot of stables. I got invited into a indoor arena, where six horses, were walking around free, and soothing music played.

The leader of the workshop asked everybody to look for a place in the indoor arena. Then she asked us to concentrate to ourselves. I found my place away from the people and the horses.

I didn't feel at ease with the situation, the horses were walking around. At one moment a horse got aggressive, and kicked an other horse. Guests, who where standing near the fighting horses, escaped by running away.

The leader of the workshop handed me a paper, and a pencil, with questions to answer. The questions were about emotions and handicaps, which feeling I liked, which I hated, and what I wanted to do with my horse, what wishes I had etc.. Then there were questions about handicaps, which I didn't want to become etc.

After filling in the form she took them in, asking if she could look at the answers. I rejected, and that was okay.

It was difficult for me to concentrate to myself, I became aware that I was on my guard.

After filling in the form, the leader of the workshop told us, that because we are experts with horses, she wanted us to handicap ourselves. We could choose a handicap: deaf, blind, bandage on the arm, (which difficulty the balance), being mute, or hearing voices and terrible music. I choose to be deaf.

The leader of the workshop repeated several times: „There are no clients, no therapists. You are you, with a handicap and you have a helper (a partner-guest). So there's you and there is a helper. It's up to you to use your helper“. After a while roles got switched. Then I could become a helper and my partner-guest took on her handicap.

The leader of the workshop asked us to pick a horse to work with. I picked the kicked horse. He was nice, licked me a lot at my hands (I had sugar candy's eaten in the car), so we became friends.

Another guest picked the same horse and so we became companions. I decide I became 'handicapped' first and she became my helper. And so we took of.

Fortunately, my eardrops didn't work that good, so my hearing was okay, but I played deaf.

At first I walked next to the horse, after a while I liked to sit on him. Another helper (from the indoor arena?) asked me if I needed a saddle. I rejected, because I assumed this was a trained horse, who was used to be ridden bare backed. So I got on the horse and hold me on the mane of the horse. After a short while the lady (from the indoor arena?) asked me if I would like to sit the other way around. I agreed. After standing still for a short while, I gestured the horse could walk. So it happened.

Suddenly I heard a noise, a horse running, I saw a guest lying flat on the back of a kicking horse. He kicked several times, till the guest fell off. The guest lay quiet and still immediately. Participant run to the guest, and took care of her. She was unconscious for minutes. I jumped of my horse and fetched the horse, and took care of him. I walked around with the horse on a rope and had to adjust at the new situation.

The way the workshop leader handled the new/unsafe situation

It looked bad, a guest on the floor, not conscious, people trying to get into contact with her. It took minutes, then the leader of the workshop sat on her knees on the floor and took the head of the fallen guest on her lap. In that position she asked the other guests to continue with the workshop. I didn't want to continue, the whole situation wasn't safe. A fallen guest (already conscious) and the leader of the workshop on the ground, but not able to move when necessary, in the middle of horses on halter, with 'handicapped' people in the same space. It wasn't safe and I didn't feel at ease with the whole situation. My teacher felt the same way and we both stood aside and watched what happened further.

The fallen guest got a chair, but still in the middle of the whole situation, it wasn't more safe.

The leader of the workshop came to my teacher and me and invited us again to continue. We rejected again, because the situation was still not safe and we felt very uncomfortable. The leader didn't want us to stand aside, so we left the situation and went to the canteen.

After a little while everybody arrived into the canteen.

The leader of the workshop arranged an after-talk

Unfortunately in the after-talk she didn't mention risks and how to prevent them, but the talk was about what happened, (according to one person, a Belgium psychiatrist) involved with the horse when the accident occurred. There was no possibility for the other guest (Slovakian guest), who was involved also with the horse when the accident occurred, to talk about what happened and how it felt for her.

The whole situation had to do with communication (according to the workshop leader) and the lack of communication between the guests and the horse.

At the end of the workshop and the after-talk, we received another question list, but I really don't remember what that was about. The problem was ignored and not worked out together and the bad experience not shared and transformed to a learning point.

My feelings and thoughts afterwards:

This workshop is still on my mind. I feel bad, because I trusted the situation I was placed in at first. Quickly I got unease, but I took risks myself, because I presumed the workshop leader had competence.

- During my training, I learn people who are unbalanced, seek for balance with the therapist and the horse. In this workshop everybody was invited to become unbalanced in several ways.
- During my training, I learn safety and reducing risks is very important. In this workshop I experienced an increasing amount of risks.
- During my training, I learn that it's very important to talk open-minded, about what happens when something goes wrong. How to learn about it and to prevent the same faults in the future. In this workshop there was no open mind to look at what happened, and to prevent this from happening again. (the workshop leader: "accidents happen..")
- During my training, I learn that the relationship between the therapist-horse-client in a triangle is very important. In this workshop there was a lack of relationship with the horse. On beforehand we were told : there was no client, no therapist.
- During my training, I learn it's important to work with a well known and well trained horse. It's important for the horse what he can expect in his situation. In this workshop the leader of the workshop didn't know the horses at all, (I heard later at diner), so it is unknown how well-trained the horses were for this workshop.

Meeting

At the beginning of this meeting it seemed to me as if this was the first meeting ever.

The goal of the Da Vinci project was discussed again, as if it wasn't clear at first.

Here I saw for the first time the differences of interest. Everybody seemed to have their own interest in how they worked in the thematic groups.

There seemed no cohesion left anymore.

The whole project went to emotional PR and any scientific offer wasn't welcome anymore.

The agreements made with the data-group weren't important anymore. Making a decent report was objected etc.etc..

The moderator had to say that a decent report is necessary for the project.

The partners wanted to go to the politics with an emotional appeal and didn't want any comment about that.

We, as Dutch delegation had problems with the brochure made by the PR-group. We wanted to make clear, what our comments were. (safety-aspects on photo's, Dutch delegation not represented in the brochure, etc.) We got no opportunity to get so far.

The other delegations were not interested anymore in the questionnaire. The Dutch delegation gathered info and invited the other delegations to gather info about working with horses in their country's also.

They seem to refuse that, didn't assume it necessary.

And so the meeting went on. The Dutch delegation didn't recognize itself anymore in how the meeting and the project developed.

My conclusion:

- After a few days of hard work there was no cooperation.
- Delegation partners were talking in het own language (The agreement was to speak English during the project).
- To me this was symbolic in how the project was developed from mutual interest and cooperation to individual interests.

Reading the LDV-List (mail)

The communication on the list wasn't all effective. At times it was very unfriendly. I think communication by mail could work with a sort of agreement in how to use mail. It seemed to lack in this case. So it became a place for brooding of misunderstandings and angry words.

At some time we as Dutch delegation got excluded.

What I missed:

I learned a lot, what I missed was contacts with students from other country's. There were delegations (France, Poland, Belgium) without active students in the workshops and meetings in the project.

Some drawings made at the end of the workshop in the Netherlands by the participants representing the atmosphere after the workshop in the group

