

Brief Report of French speaking ICEVI-Europe Conference on Visual Impairment and Inclusive Education

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On May 10 and 11th, 2021, the Higher Institute for Training and Research on Special Needs Education (INSHEA) located in Suresnes, near Paris, together with ICEVI-Europe and Inja (National Institute for the Blind, Paris) organized a two-day conference at INSHEA, taking place as an ICEVI-Europe French speaking conference:

“Visual impairment and inclusive education: What’s new? Learning from all senses”.

Around 70 people, which was the maximum allowed due to the pandemic, attended this face-to-face conference -mainly teachers, but also researchers, parents, transcribers, other professionals and students. They mainly came from all around France, and a few from Belgium. People from Switzerland had trouble traveling at that time. Two speakers from Toulouse had to give their lecture on Zoom. The two days combined plenary sessions, workshops and exhibitions. As this authorized event took place just when the Covid 19 situation was still severe, all the sanitary measures were strictly respected: mandatory masks, safe distance, flow directions, regular cleaning, use of hydro-alcoholic gel. Although, during the workshops, participants touched some materials, fortunately, nobody got sick after the event. It was the only conference INSHEA organized during that academic year and participants, although coffee breaks and eating inside were not permitted, were really happy to get together.

Researchers as well as practitioners presented their work and shared experiences.

Although two presentations were specifically about partial vision (use of Adobe and characteristics of the new Luciole Font for partially sighted people), most presentations dealt with profound visual impairment or blindness

Many presentations focused on braille (e.g. Adaptation in French of the braille method I-M-ABLE and presentation of a braille curriculum by Raphaëlle Bertrand and Valérie Melloul (from Lausanne, Switzerland) ; research on braille users from different generations by Nathalie Lewi-Dumont and her colleagues from INSHEA; the braille teachers from Inja presented the way they taught braille in this school and how they introduced ICT. We had also a

presentation on different ways of using the body before teaching braille to young learners by Marc Angelier and Marie Oddoux, a TVI and occupational therapist in a peripatetic service in Grenoble.

A second theme was adaptation in arts, with a presentation of a participative Design by Sophie Blain (Les Doigts qui Rêvent, Dreaming fingers Publisher), adaptation in 3D by Alexandre Ilic from Inja and Caroline Treffé, a former secondary teacher at Inja who now is a teacher trainer at INSHEA. Together with her colleague Florence Bernard, they decided to adapt pedagogical material for History and Art lessons in inclusive settings, using raised images and audio illustration, to facilitate learning for students with VI. This material will be downloadable on the INSHEA website from 2021-2022. Gabrielle Sauvillers met great success with her "tactile interpretations" of famous art works you can see here:

<https://www.facebook.com/interpretationstactiles/photos/pcb.1963768917123074/1963767243789908/?type=3&theater>

The third theme was specific access to books: two doctoral students presented their work on access to books for children with VI, raised pictures (Carolane Mascle) and audio books (Julie Mulet). The publisher Mes mains en or (My golden hands, in English) presented their research project about an accessible digital book for young children. In a workshop, Pilar Rodriguez, the mother of a young blind boy, explained how she conceived a beautiful tactile and audio book so that her son, like his schoolmates could have a souvenir of his preschool class activities.

<https://hizy.org/fr/fablif/album-souvenirs-multi-sensoriel>

Almost all the adaptations use both touch and sound, and the role of language is always very important in the interaction. All the people in the audience were convinced that it is a right for all people with disabilities to have access to art and literature. In the same state of mind, Laetitia Dumont-Lewi, assistant professor in Lyon, explained how she trains her performing act Masters students to audiodescription, and how, when the students describe for adults or children, it improves the inclusive sensitivity of the sighted audience.

On the third day, Marc Angelier and Marie Oddoux, who are now representatives of the Lego foundation for the pedagogical use of Lego braille bricks, proposed a workshop on this matter. It was the first time during that year 2020-2021 they could do it face to face.

In 2022, this French speaking day will take place at INSHEA on Friday, June 10th, about access to culture. You can write to Nathalie Lewi-Dumont (nathalielewi@gmail.com) if you need more information.