

enhancing cultural awareness through cultural production

All articles

February 2003

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Intercultural event "INTERKUUL 2001"

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Abstract

In autumn 2000, employees of the Residential College Hustedt (HVHS), members of various ethnic and cultural minorities, facilitators of integration work and members of the city administration founded a network with the objective of making a common contribution to integration in the city of Celle and its region by cultural means. For that purpose we founded a work group to prepare for the intercultural city event "INTERKUUL 2001". It took place on 23rd September 2001 and brought together between 4,000 and 5,000 people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. During the preparation period and analysis of the project work there were many meetings, talks, discussions, inquiries, studies, plans and organisational work which were already part of an intercultural laboratory. The preparation phase, and the event itself, provided many practical opportunities for intercultural learning and offered various occasions to enhance the awareness of the participants' own culture as well as learning to know better, and respect, other cultures. Our project created many impressions and started activities which contributed to a better understanding between the cultures with regard to tolerance and integration; they also initiated a form of public, conscious neighbourhood between members of minority cultures and the culture of the majority. Awareness of our Residential College and our educational programmes was also improved among the citizens of Celle, particularly among migrants and minorities.

Goals and objectives

By participating in the project we intended to make a contribution to improve the coexistence of the majority society and minorities in Celle and its region, as well as the coexistence of the different minorities. We intended to enhance the sensibility for other cultures and to foster an awareness with regard to our own culture. By improving mutual information we tried to intensify the interest in and the knowledge about other cultures; our further intention was to initiate and foster a willingness to establish intercultural contacts and meetings. Working with migrants and cultural minorities, we tried to select fields of co-operation for the above mentioned groups, create an appropriate network, and thereby support the formation of contacts between migrants and minorities and the city administration. This was to be achieved by our joint organisation of small intercultural events and productions, with a large intercultural festival for the city of Celle and its region as a main event.

Contents

Having initially discussed and planned the project internally, we started to go out "into the streets" to establish contacts with different minorities, associations, institutions and organisations with which we wanted to implement the project. The migrant groups were mainly Yezidic Kurds, Turks and repatriated Germans from Russia.

We visited their associations as well as some of them in their homes, and invited them to visit us; we went to their events and festivities to present our project. It was through this dialogue that we could gain their representatives' confidence, awaken their interest in co-operation with us, and integrate them into our network.

From the beginning of our work, the "Forum against Violence and Right-Wing Extremism" in Celle to which our organisation belongs, was an essential support for us. Its members come from various civilian social associations, institutions and organisations, which fight against xenophobia and violence and work for tolerance and overcoming prejudices, in short: doing integration work. These include representatives of trade unions, churches, political parties, as well as other political, social and charitable organisations and associations and last but not least, representatives of the city administration.

This was in favour of the project and facilitated its conception, so that we could acquire the city administration as a partner and co-organiser of our intercultural event, and that we could rely on the support of various administrative offices. These included: Social Welfare Office, Youth Welfare Office, Public Affairs Office, Tourist Office. In addition local politicians also actively supported our work.

Furthermore, we secured the support of a large number of people from the above-mentioned institutions, organisations, foundations and associations, who were prepared to permanently work in our "preparation group". In addition, representatives of educational associations, vocational schools, schools, youth centres, kindergartens and individuals participated in our work. Finally the preparation group consisted of 20 to 25 people meeting on a regular basis in various groupings. The above-mentioned processes and preparation lasted approximately one year, from 1st October 2000 to 23rd September 2001.

In the meetings of the preparation group we worked on the content and organisation and discussed new ideas. We discussed and reflected on our work, developed our activities, organised and improved our resources, planned and developed our intercultural event, "INTERKUUL 2001".

Representatives of minorities living in Celle as well as other immigrants participated regularly in the group work, particularly Yezidic Kurds, Turks, and repatriates from Russia and Kazakhstan. It was with their participation that we could ensure that our preparations corresponded to their ideas, needs and wishes.

During the preparation period, we worked intensively on public relations, advertising and particularly on raising sponsorship to fund the planned main event.

At the end of this period, we had a clear idea of the content and organisation in the process of the event "INTERKUUL 2001". All participating groups had developed ideas and concepts of how to present themselves and their integration work during our event. That was also true for the minorities and immigrants who wanted to give a general idea of their situation and their daily life in Celle, of their way of life and their culture.

Preparation seminar

During a preparation seminar "Integration and Cultural Bridging", organised two weeks prior to the intercultural event, we once again ascertained our goals. Measures were put into place to achieve these objectives. Even after careful and critical examination, we were convinced that bringing different cultures together in a joint intercultural event

would be a good way to foster the awareness of one's own culture and the understanding of other cultures.

We finished the final organisational coordination, agreed on the schedule for the event, determined the arrangement for the stage and the stands and also decided on the contributions of the groups and the job allocations during the event. We went about the last days before the event with the feeling of having prepared the event properly and being able to conclude any remaining work in time.

Then the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, hit the United States and caused a situation that jeopardized the implementation of our event. For quite some time, the city administration of Celle, our co-organiser, thought about cancelling the entire event.

After intense discussions we finally agreed on continuing with the event using the following argument:

It would be an additional victory for the terrorists, if an event which was to take place in the name of cultural understanding, was cancelled because of their crimes. In such a situation it is necessary to demonstrate publicly the will and commitment to understanding and solidarity with people of other cultures, and also to protect Islamic fellow citizens against general allegations and discrimination.

INTERKUUL 2001

On 23rd September 2001, our event finally took place on the largest square in the centre of Celle. It opened at 11.00 am and ended at 5.00 pm. The opening speeches pointed out the special importance of the event only a few days after the terrorist attacks in the United States and emphasized the will to coexist peacefully with our foreign fellow citizens.

INTERKUUL 2001 was also the initial event of the "Week of the Foreign Fellow Citizen" in Celle.

At the beginning the weather was dull, but fortunately cleared up later. Accordingly the ambience and atmosphere also became brighter. The programme included music, song and dance from different cultures, as well as good food and drinks. There were a number of activities for children and teenagers to participate in and the adults were invited to take part in a language game. A programme, printed in six languages, pointed out the highlights of the day and an excellent presenter cheerfully led through the event. He invited visitors and guests of the different ethnic groups to participate in talks, exchange of experience and common activities.

All over the square there were lively conversations and many friendly and festive people talked –perhaps for the first time - in an unrestrained manner to people they had never taken much notice of before, or might even have considered with suspicion. In short, the joint event INTERKUUL 2001 was an excellent platform for an unrestrained and positive encounter of people of different cultures and also for intercultural learning. About 4,000 to 5,000 people attended the event. So far, no intercultural event of this dimension has ever taken place in the city of Celle. All the people involved, as well as the local press, considered it a great success. In particular, the representatives of the participating minorities and many members of other cultures were glad that they could participate in such an event.

According to estimates we learned that about 60 per cent of the visitors and guests were members of the majority culture and about 40 per cent members of different minority cultures. Fortunately, many families came to visit the event with their children, as well as teenagers.

We also want to point out the large contribution to the project and especially to our intercultural event that our partners and the local network made with respect to financing and manpower. The City of Celle estimates its expenses (non-cash benefits and manpower) at about DM 12,000 (German marks), additional to the monetary

subsidy of the city and the rural district. We estimate the value of our local network's participation (manpower and non-cash benefits) in preparation and realization of the intercultural event at about DM 20,000. In addition, the sponsorship money we could procure, amounted to DM 9,050; sum total: DM 41,050.00 = 20,988.53 (Euro).

Without these indirect and direct project and event subsidies from our partners and our network, an intercultural event of this dimension would not have been feasible. This is not taking into consideration the services on our own account as a Residential College and the subsidies of the Grundtvig Project.

Analysis seminar

On 11th November 2001, the members of the analysis seminar confirmed our view with respect to the success of the event. Some participants would have wished for more integrating activities, e.g. not only spontaneous, but also organised dancing and singing together. Others would have preferred it if the event had lasted into the evening. Finally there was complete agreement in the desire to produce another intercultural event of a smaller scope during the remaining time of the project.

Further activities and consequences

During the period from November 2001 to April 2002 we continued co-operation with our local network. We analysed and thought of how to publish the results of our present work and continue the project together with our local partners.

The production of a video titled "INTERKUUL 2001" was one additional result. The video documents the event and contributes greatly to the public becoming aware of its results. The video forms part of the city's public library's collection as well as the district's film archives. In addition we have made it available to schools, vocational schools, associations and other interested parties.

On 9th November 2001, an ecumenical mass was celebrated in the municipal church of Celle, which was attended by Christians of all denominations, Muslims, Yezidic Kurds, Buddhists and representatives of the Jewish community. In the evening we held a music event which was attended by members of different cultures.

Weekend seminar "Islam"

During a weekend seminar from April 20th to 21st, 2002, with the subject "Islam – religious, cultural and social-political aspects", network members and vocational scholars from Celle dealt with this topic. Apart from German colleagues, representatives, especially of the Turkish minority from Celle and its region participated in the seminar. A competent speaker gave a lecture, followed by an extensive discussion about the different aspects of Islam, particularly about the coexistence of Germans and Turks. It was particularly favourable that about 15 vocational scholars who had just started with an Islam project in their school participated in the seminar. They were visibly further motivated with regard to a continuation of their work. During the second part, we discussed an intercultural weekend in our Residential College Hustedt, which we intended to organise in August 2002.

Visit to the mosque

A few weeks after our seminar, the "Turkish-Islamic association, Nienhagen", one of our partners, invited us to visit the mosque and to attend a mass. Apart from the Islamic believers, about 20 people from Celle and its neighbourhood participated, including members of our network. It was an impressive event which helped to intensify the co-operation with this partner.

Seminar "Intercultural learning"

From August 10th to 11th 2002, we hosted a seminar in the Residential College Hustedt with the subject "Intercultural learning through cultural productions – utopia or reality?". We witnessed an engaging discussion by a highly qualified Italian instructor about the experience with the coexistence of different cultures, and in particular, immigrants reported intensely and frankly on their situation. Many statements during the discussion referred to our event "INTERKUUL 2001". Besides local representatives of our network, the participants were mainly Yezidic Kurds and muslim Turks. In the evening, there was an intercultural event in our school which was hosted by our Turkish partner and ourselves. Turkish meals, music and dance, as well as an exchange of experiences and conversation, contributed to a successful intercultural event that evening. In addition to the participants of our seminars, about 40 members of the Turkish minority came with their children from outside Celle to celebrate. An analysis next morning came to the conclusion that joint cultural productions of members of the majority and minority cultures were considered to be a very appropriate means to learn from each other and to enhance the awareness of one's own culture as well as the tolerance towards other cultures. Cultural productions with intercultural claims and contents were considered to be an important contribution to integration in multicultural societies.

Intercultural cooking

Shortly after this weekend, there was an "intercultural cooking" event in the rural district of Celle, with women of different cultural minorities and representatives of the majority culture participating. Representatives of our network also participated. The women had a pleasant evening talking to each other about their traditions, meals and drinks, invitations and visits, and also about festivities and events.

Methods

According to the various demands, we applied multi-faceted methods during the project.

Within the complex contact approach/encounter we particularly applied methods such as conversations, invitations, visits, brief reports, overhead slides and discussions. The main aspect of the applied methods was to gain the participants' confidence, to convince them of the importance of our work, and to motivate the addressees to participate in the project work. First of all, we had to establish a good relationship with the minorities' representatives and convince them of the purpose of our project. That also meant clearly communicating advantages to the representatives which the project could possibly provide them with: e.g. more attention to their problems, public perception, informing the German population about their situation, their daily life and culture, reducing prejudice and xenophobic attitudes, overcoming isolation, arranging contacts with representatives of the city, articulation and support of their demands.

It was particularly important for the work in the preparation group to assure continuity and the binding character of participation. The meeting appointments had to be fixed so that all members could attend the meetings as often as possible. Transparency and frankness were the principles of this work, all information was made accessible to everybody. This step ensured confidence and enhanced motivation to participate. It was a positive aspect that some members, if willing, were assigned tasks on which they reported in the follow-up meetings. We discussed all suggestions and the majority of the decisions were made unanimously.

To provide as many resources as possible for the preparation group, we continually asked ourselves the question; 'who to pick for which contribution to the project?', utilising people within the group as well as from outside. By this means we soon had a general overview of all feasible possibilities.

There was an amazing variety of existing integrative activities and initiatives in the social field. Our project provided an opportunity to emphasize the cultural aspect of integration. Soon, interested people understood that intercultural activities can indeed bring fun and pleasure to the process of integration, therefore people begin to favour integration.

In the seminars we also dealt with the theoretical side of the encounter of cultures and intercultural learning, which, however, was only one main field among many. The project was very much practice-orientated so that we constantly came back to discuss the situation and the problems of immigrants in their daily life. We received reports about the personal biography and the family background of participants (biographic method, work on individual cases), as well as about the actual life situation, the problems and experiences in the field of mutual social relations (interview, report, inquiry). Again and again, we had to deal with "inter-cultural situations" or we re-created them by using prepared dialogues or role-play. By discussing these situations we obtained a lot of information and cognition about our own culture and others. The discussions also enhanced awareness of our own culture. Apart from that, we added analytical and receptive methods to these processes, methods for getting to know each other and illustrating other cultures and religions (impulse reports, reports, overhead slides, photos, videos, multimedia learning patterns).

We planned and organised the "INTERKUUL 2001" event in a way that gave as many possibilities for intercultural encounters as possible. This was true for families with children (people could participate in activities such as a make-up course, painting, doing handicrafts or playing, and there was a playing mobile, a magician and a circus for children), for teenagers (fitness contest of the MTV sports club Celle), as well as for adults (eating and drinking together with people of different ethnic and cultural origin, accordingly a wide variety of meals and drinks and finally having the chance of getting to know and speak to each other, spontaneous invitations to dance together and so on). We also offered a "language game" and hereby created an organised activity for all members of different cultures to gain initial direct contact with each other. The task was to ask people who one considered came from another culture for words in their respective languages. According to our observations people made abundant use of these opportunities. Kurdish and German music and dance groups as well as groups of repatriates from Russia provided superb musical entertainment.

Best Practice

The main success of our participation in the project was that the event "INTERKUUL 2001" took place in the city of Celle and the intercultural evening was arranged at the Residential College Hustedt. Both events allowed people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to meet each other and make contact in a friendly atmosphere. Boosting their consciousness regarding their own culture, people actively increased their tolerance towards other cultures practising acceptance in the most practical way of all.

The second significant result was the good work of our network and preparation group. Often, the group constituted a wide field for experimenting with regard to the handling of cultural differences, it was an offer to jointly achieve successes and solve problems. At the same time, this co-operation offered an excellent opportunity for intercultural

learning and multi-ethnic practice. The good results of the co-operation was a significant contribution to the project's overall success..

Strengthening the existing integration network in the city of Celle and the region as well as enriching it by cultural exercise and practice has to be considered an additional success. It became quite clear that the "cultural dimension" - i.e. adequate perception and respect with regard to other cultures is a very important aspect of integration. We do not consider it a biased process of adaptation of immigrants and minorities to the majority's society, but a complete society-specific development of actively taking steps to meet the other party that demands at least as much commitment and responsibility from the "residents" as from the "migrant groups".

The improvement of the contacts, above all, of Yezidic Kurds with the city administration is a direct result of the project and the intercultural event. They contributed mainly to improving mutual perception and communication. Several meetings have been held since.

Another very special result of the project was that we were able to win all political parties as sponsors – as well as businesses and financial institutes- for "INTERKUUL 2001". The co-operation of the city's administration was exceptionally helpful in this matter.

A very positive aspect of the intercultural event was that individual civil associations, federations, charitable and social institutions, educational institutes as well as migrant group's associations were given ample opportunity to present themselves with their stalls and booths. Everybody was given the chance to present visitors and guests with their work, showing their integration efforts.

I would like to express my special thanks to public relations, advertisement, and co-operation with the local printed media. The support from the Celle's local newspapers for our project was very great.

Last, but not least, the follow-up results and activities are also of some importance. They ensure the improvement of the atmosphere and contacts between residents and migrants and minorities in the city of Celle and the entire region. The City's slogan "We in Celle" has indeed received new momentum by focussing on the situation of the "foreign citizens" and showing that you can live with them and celebrate with them in perfect neighbourliness. Which, of course, is also true for the other relationship direction.

Comments

Participating staff members as well as our educational institution were glad to receive such positive feedback from private and public, especially with regard to the good success of the "INTERKUUL 2001" event. As proof, we would like to present some comments from the local press (all translated):

"'Interkuul 2001': A motley meeting on the Großen Plan (large square)

Almost like a large family: 4,000 people of the city of Celle celebrate the intercultural event

At the 'Interkuul 2001', approximately 4,000 people from Celle, being of the most diverse nationalities came together to seek talks and entertainment in an atmosphere unconstrained and almost familiar that is not often to be found in Celle" (Cellesche Zeitung, 24th September 2001)

"'Interkuul 2001' a giant success with about 4,000 visitors and guests'

'German folk music meets Kurd music band: An absolute first!'

Organisation members of the first intercultural event in Celle, the 'Interkuul 2001' did in fact make the right decision. Despite the terrorist attacks in the U.S.A., the initial schedule was maintained and the event was not cancelled

'When the atmosphere is right, it is so much easier to meet and interact with each other', say Margret and Yayla. It is especially for this event that they have put on the Kurdish traditional costume....'This is, where you meet other people that you do not have much contact with otherwise' they sum up the advantages of the day's event. (...) 'Just like a large family reunion' - Behije Altun, member of the committee of the Yezidic Cultural Centre in Celle, is almost carried away by emotions.' 'Co-operation and the atmosphere between the cultures is exemplary', as is the communication between the organizers and the City." (Celler Kurier, September 26th, 2001)

Another comment regarding the intercultural evening at the Residential College Hustedt:

"Turkish hospitality at the Aller river"

One was instantly reminded of The Arabian Nights when the folk dancers group of the Turkish-Islamic Union Nienhagen danced to oriental music. And music, fun, and talking were indeed the central and common focus during this intercultural night that the Residential College Hustedt had invited everybody to come to." (Cellesche Zeitung, August 14th, 2002)

Evaluation

Both of the above chapters already anticipated many elements that were taken into consideration when evaluating the project. Therefore, in addition to some problems, we would like to mention suggestions and ideas that came up during the evaluation seminar in November 2001.

Problems encountered

Besides the usual problems and organisation slip-ups normally associated with events of such size there were two significant problems that we would like to name:

On the one hand, all the contacts that we were able to establish in the initial stages of the project to a Russian repatriates' association and to individual Kurds seemed to vanish into thin air never to play another part in the further project development. The association dissolved at the end of the year 2000, and was no longer available as a partner organisation.

With regard to the first contact with the Yezidic Kurds, the problem was that we had talked to private persons only. It was only when we established contacts to existing associations that we succeeded in developing sound co-operation. The development was very good once young members of the board underwent efforts in support of open co-operation.

On the other hand, our initially successful initiative to integrate the association of repatriates from Russia into the project proved to be a failure, one reason was that many of the migrants from the former Soviet Union do not like to be considered a cultural minority. All the more need then for our thanks to the Russian-German group of artists who knew how to musically centre at least some attention to the cultural background of this minority group.

Some selected suggestions and ideas for a continuation of the "Interkuul Process" in Celle and surrounding region that came up during the evaluation seminar:

Opening of a Café "Interkuul" in the City of Celle;
 Establishing a help desk and consulting location for migrants and the "Ausländerbeirat",
 Founding an "exercise company": "Intercultural City Council";
 Organising an exhibition with the topic "Where we come from - how we live";
 Offering more language courses for migrants, e.g. "A comparison of cultures" (possibly at the Residential College HVHS Hustedt respectively at the Volkshochschule Celle), asking professors from foreign cultures to teach and lecture;
 Performing special intercultural events for students and young persons;
 Arranging to let institutions "adopt" migrants (associations, churches, schools and so on.);
 Presenting successful activities to the public as "intercultural bridging";
 Integrating even more ethnic groups and cultural minorities into the work;
 Identifying also the needs and requirements of the majority group with regard to relations with migrants and minorities;
 Allow for an annual "INTERKUUL" event.

Service

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The video film "INTERKUUL 2001" is available (for hire) at the Residential College.

Tips for reading:

Erwachsenenbildung mit ethnischen Minderheiten und Migrant/innen, Eine Handreichung für Erwachsenenbildner/innen in Europa, Projekthandbuch des Netzwerkes "Lernen, in einer multikulturellen Gesellschaft zu leben" IIZ/DVV und NIACE
 Erpenbeck, Gabriele, Wir leben in einer Einwanderungsgesellschaft , in: forum bildung, 1/99, Hannover
 Guth, Helmut, Politische Bildung für eine multikulturelle Gesellschaft , in: Politische Bildung 1/91, Wien
 Schulte, Axel, Zwischen Idee und Realität Demokratie als Leitbild von Politik und Pädagogik in der multikulturellen Einwanderungsgesellschaft, in: forum bildung, 1/91, Hannover

Tapaus Tellus

Multicultural evening

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Abstract

Fifteen students at the Korpilahti Unit of Humanities Polytechnic in central Finland cooperated in several ways with people of different ethnic backgrounds living in Jyväskylä. The cooperation took place through several types of activities: studies, workshops and the final cultural production, a multicultural evening, planned and organised together by all participants. The nationalities of the immigrants who participated in the project were Kurdish, Iranian and Russian. The themes of the course and cultural evening were dance and music.

The multicultural evening was preceded by theoretical studies of music, dance, cultural differences and intercultural communication. This project was one of a series of three intercultural projects realized at the Korpilahti Unit of Humanities Polytechnic in Finland within the EU Socrates / Grundtvig project "Enhancing Cultural Awareness through Cultural Production".

The lectures, workshops and the final cultural production were all successful and the students and immigrants alike were committed to the project. The project offered concrete opportunities to increase and widen contacts between people from different ethnic groups, including Finns. In addition all participants learnt about each other's cultures. Furthermore the participants' awareness of and interest in cultural diversity was increased during the project.

Aims

The project aimed at offering concrete opportunities to increase and widen contacts and cooperation between ethnic minority groups in the Jyväskylä region and Finnish Humanities Polytechnic students at the Korpilahti Unit.

Secondly, the project was aimed at increasing knowledge of cultural differences in general and that of the three minority cultures in particular. Alongside of this it aimed at arousing people's interest in other cultures. Finnish people and people from ethnic minority groups learnt about each other's cultures and thus increased tolerance and mutual understanding, reducing racism and hostility.

Furthermore, the project provided Finnish students and foreigners with a common learning environment where they developed a common cultural production, which was presented to a wider audience, consisting of people from the local community and nearby region. The aim was to attract an audience of about 200 people.

Through cooperation, cultural similarities and differences, learnt and encountered in practice during the process, both foreigners and Finns learnt about their own cultures and themselves. A part of this was the process of becoming more aware of one's own prejudices and racist attitudes. Throughout the process students developed their cooperative skills with people of different ethnic backgrounds, and so became more tolerant, flexible and culturally more sensitive.

Effective use of the media meant that people in the region were informed about the study programme and the final production. Immigrants, refugees and their cultures deserve positive attention and increased interest among the main stream culture. Immigrants deserve to be seen in a positive light in the media, because they are far too often marginalized by the media.

Contents

The course commenced in October and lasted until mid-November 2000. The activities carried out during the study period included theoretical studies, workshops, an excursion and a final cultural production in the form of a multicultural evening. The themes studied during the course and used in the multicultural evening were dance and music.

The partners, organisations and contacts included:

- Students of the cultural production and management degree programme at the Korpilahti Unit of Humanities Polytechnic.
- the Foreign Office of the city of Jyväskylä
- Paletti – projekti (a temporary regional project working on the acculturation of refugees and immigrants, financed by the city of Jyväskylä)
- Taivaankaari ry, (an organization working for the integration of refugees and immigrants, financed by Jyväskylä)
- Club Siperia (a temporary project to integrate young people from minority groups and of the mainstream Finnish background financed by the municipality)
- several associations of Kurdish, Iranian and Russian refugees and immigrants in the region
- a number of experts on dance and music
- students of Multicultural Studies at the local college Alkio-opisto
- students of a local Community College

Fifteen students participated in the project, in addition to a total of sixty Kurds, Iranians and Russians. The multicultural event “Tapaus Tellus” gathered an audience of about 150.

The beginning of the project

The preparation for the project started in the beginning of August 2000. The first task was to create a network including Humanities Polytechnic, several organizations and individuals. We contacted the Foreign Office of the city of Jyväskylä and were able to involve them in the project. The students acquainted themselves with the work of the Foreign Office in Jyväskylä and with their help we were able to contact members of Kurdish, Iranian and Russian refugee and immigrant associations. It was vital to find key persons within these communities, who were interested in participating and were able to activate members of their ethnic communities.

Cooperation was planned by representatives of Humanities Polytechnic and the Foreign Office of Jyväskylä together with Kurds, Iranians and Russians. One of the

ideas in our project was to bring together people from different age groups, not only students in their 20s.

Methods

Practice-oriented studies were combined with theoretical studies of cultural differences and intercultural communication. These offered a range of views and perspectives on the reality of everyday life for ethnic minorities in the Jyväskylä region. In addition, students became familiar with acculturation projects organized by the municipal authorities in the region.

Frequent interaction was attained by visits, discussions, interviews, lectures and workshops which provided an insight into the integration process of immigrants and refugees in central Finland. In addition students interviewed immigrants and refugees to learn about their life stories.

Final production

The multicultural evening was preceded by a number of occasions where Finnish people and foreigners met and interacted, to plan and develop the evening. People of different ages and ethnic backgrounds were thus brought together.

Kurds, Iranians and Russians together with the students organised a multicultural evening, which was open to the public. The media, the local and provincial papers, and radio were used to inform people about the event.

Curriculum

The themes of the final production were dance and music and it was realized together with Kurds, Iranians and Russians.

The curriculum consisted of the following modules, part of which were running in parallel:

- Studies of the philosophy and theory of dance, its connections and linkage to social and cultural changes in society. These included lectures and workshops on the history and styles of Finnish, Kurdish, Persian and Arabic traditional dance. Theoretical studies were combined with workshops concentrating on the final event, the multicultural evening "Tapaus Tellus".
- Theoretical studies of the history, styles and cultural contexts of traditional Kurdish music, poetry and dance. These lectures were combined with workshops concentrating on the development of the multicultural event.
- Visits to The International Kuopio Dance Festival and Dance Theatre Minimi in Kuopio to become familiar with their work, programmes and cooperation with different cultures.
- Theories of cultural differences, intercultural communication, otherness and racism.
- A range of views and perspectives on the reality of everyday life for ethnic minorities in the Jyväskylä region were presented.
- Kurds, Iranians and Russians were invited to talk about their cultures and adaptation to Finnish culture. Municipal authorities and officers working on the acculturation process of refugees and immigrants was also presented their views. In addition, some foreigners were interviewed by students. Their personal life stories helped students understand the interviewees' background and the reasons behind their immigration to Finland.

- Planning, preparing and realizing a multicultural evening, together with refugees and immigrants. The event was open to the public and people in the region were effectively informed about the event.

It was our deliberate pedagogical and didactic aim to study and work on a broad basis. To achieve this the lectures and workshops included not only theory but also a more practical acquaintance and contact with the cultures of the ethnic groups involved. This approach enabled us to involve the different minority groups throughout the project.

Best practice

With the help of the Foreign Office of Jyväskylä we were able to be in contact and cooperate with three nationalities Kurds, Iranians and Russians. The local college Alkio-opisto had had some experience in cooperating with a small group of young Kurds within the Multicultural Studies programme during the spring term 2000. We were able to benefit from these contacts and succeeded in increasing contacts with Kurds on a wider basis. There were several families, from grandparents to young children and babies, who participated in our workshops. Likewise Iranians were involved in our project and they were committed to working with us.

The only group we had some difficulties to get involved in the project were Russians. There were probably several reasons for this. Russians do not live in such a close community as Kurds and Iranians. The Russian contact person in the Paletti Project said she found it quite hard to motivate Russians. According to her it was difficult to create a network among Russians. All in all, Russians did not seem to be as keen on working in the project as the other two ethnic minority groups.

There was a specific course intergrated into the project concentrating on cultural differences, racism and otherness. This helped students to perceive and become more conscious of cultural differences and provided tools to come to terms with these differences. In addition students read newspaper articles on refugees and immigrants in Finland. This aroused a lot of discussion.

Feedback

Quotations from students' comments on the project and its effects taken from the questionnaire:

“All the work in the project has effected me positively.”

“ All our projects have widened my mind a lot; when I walk in the street my attitude towards foreigners is different compared with what it used to be.”

“My interest towards other cultures has increased.”

“I was delighted to work with foreigners of different ages, what I liked best was working with children.”

“ My attitudes towards foreigners have become more positive and I do not consider them as strange and different as before.”

“Cooperation with foreigners has dispersed my prejudices.”

“My prejudices have decreased, but I cannot say that they have totally disappeared.”

“I have realized what a huge change it is to settle down in a new culture. Problems due to that should be solved together instead of only accusing immigrants.”

“I have in a discussion with Finns defended immigrants and explained their problems and told about their culture.”

“I would like to make friends with persons of a different ethnic background.”

“Encountering foreigners, especially Kurds, has increased my interest and enthusiasm to work with them and other foreigners.”

“I have learnt to understand foreigners better, I have realized that their life is not easy in Finland.”

“Knowledge of other cultures increases tolerance, it helps to meet the other one halfway.”

“It does not matter, although at first it is hard to encounter a stranger.”

“Personal life stories were most striking, they have helped me to open up towards foreigners.”

“I feel I have got a lot of courage to be in contact with representatives of other cultures.”

“I have learnt new things about myself as a result of this multicultural project. I perceive my feelings and attitudes more sensitively than before and the understanding and tolerance of otherness has become easier for me.”

“I am a bit better prepared for delays caused by cultural differences.”

“I have gained courage and I feel more confident with foreigners.”

“I understand now that problems and misunderstandings are normal and that no one can avoid them.”

“We should talk to each other like a human to another human, not like a Finn to a foreigner; humanity is our common language.”

“Humanity is uncovered in cooperation.”

“Disagreements should not be taken personally, because they may be caused by cultural differences and not by personal hatreds.”

“My world view has widened.”

“My prejudices have decreased.”

“I have found new areas in myself, the project has aroused new feelings and thoughts.”

“I have noticed how proud Kurds are of their culture.”

“It is important to know about foreigners’ personal background to be able to develop cooperation with them.”

“I hope that we continue concrete cooperation with refugees and immigrants.”

“Practice-oriented studies are the best means to learn about other cultures.”

“The dance workshop with young Kurds united us, I had a feeling that we were all young people and alike.”

“I was impressed by the openness, joyfulness, friendliness and spontaneity of young Kurds.”

The students filled in a questionnaire on the effects the project had on their personal professional development and expertise.

Theoretical studies of dance and music, cultural differences, intercultural communication and features of the three specific cultures were followed by workshops during which the multicultural evening “Tapaus Tellus” was prepared.

The media was effectively used to inform local people about the project in its different phases. Press releases were sent to the provincial newspaper and local papers that cover the region. Posters and flyers were used to give information about the event. Unfortunately the project was unable to attract either radio or television to the event.

The multicultural evening “Tapaus Tellus” was organised on the 8th of November 2000 attracting about 150 people, most of whom were students of Humanities Polytechnic and Alkio College, but people from the local community and the city of Jyväskylä were also present.

All the four languages Iranian, Kurdish, Russian and Finnish were used in the announcements and throughout the evening.

The programme included:

- traditional Finnish folk music
- Arabic, Kurdish and Finnish folk dances
- classical Russian dances
- traditional Finnish folk dances
- comic sketches
- parodies of Little Red Riding Hood and Sleeping Beauty
- Arabic prose performed by Aziz Sheikhani, accompanied by Rashid Fayezejad (violin)
- Baran Barana, a Kurdish song, sung by Finnish students and accompanied by Rashid Fayezejad
- teacher and poet Kiamars Baghbani recited his own poems,
- interpreted into Finnish by Sari Siimes, a Humanities Polytechnic student
- performance of a visiting group of Ecuadorian musicians, who participated in the multicultural week arranged by students at Alkio College
- group dance of a Finnish polka, in which the performers and the audience participated

One of the highlights of the evening was the presentation given by a group of Finnish students, who sang a Kurdish song accompanied by Mr Rashid Fayezejad, a Kurdish musician and dancer who taught in one of the workshops. The students were responsible for all the practical arrangements of the evening.

Evaluation

Achievements, side-effects and discoveries

The aims set for the project were reached quite well. Considering the extremely tight schedule, due to the set form of module studies at Humanities Polytechnic, the project succeeded well. Reasons for this may be found in the following:

the structure of the project: Studies of cultural differences and intercultural communication, contacts with foreigners, workshops and preparation of the final event. refugees and immigrants being involved in the project from the beginning including the planning of the project (steering group)

the creation of the network was started sufficiently early, in August 2000, and it was successful

the parties involved were committed to the project

the students were motivated

Questionnaires and oral feedback showed that all the partners benefit culturally from the project. In addition the Humanities Polytechnic students gained professional experience through the planning and organisation of a multicultural event.

Providing the broad basis of theoretical studies and contacts with foreigners before workshops proved to be a very good decision. When starting with workshops, students and immigrants were better prepared and culturally much more sensitive, rather than if they had started with the workshops straight away without a longer "preparation". It was seen as important to establish a relationship between the students and immigrants before starting the workshops.

The project has also had side-effects. It led to intensified cooperation with refugees and immigrants in the Jyväskylä area. A group of students of the local college familiarized with a multicultural daycare centre in Jyväskylä and later did a one-day training themselves there. Another group helped a group of young Russians in their 20s to learn more about Finnish culture. An outdoor winter event organized at the college attracted about 20 refugees, mainly families.

One example of the long-term effects of the project is that a Humanities Polytechnic student is doing her work placement in the Writers' House in Jyväskylä, which is involved in multicultural issues. The student is among other things running a workshop on the Finnish national epic the Kalevala for an ethnic minority group.

Difficulties

We encountered three kinds of difficulties in our project related to tensions between some ethnic minority groups, financial matters and the students' team-working skills. We encountered some difficulties with ethnic minority groups during the project due to their internal groupings and tensions. Certain groups refused to work together. This meant that the participation of one group in the project caused an automatic exclusion of another. It took us some time to realize this. At times we were accused of favouring cooperation with certain groups.

Also the participation of a certain ethnic group in our multicultural evening "Tapaus Tellus" was critical. Even on the day of the event it seemed that one ethnic group would not participate at all. They only came on the condition that another group did not attend.

We also had some disagreements about financial matters with our ethnic minority partners. In projects of this kind every single detail should be confirmed in a written document, otherwise a claim of increased financial support is presented.

The Humanities Polytechnic students had many problems to get started with the project. One reason for this was their insufficient team-working skills. They had only had half a year's experience of studying and working together before the project began. In the initial phases of team-work they were, according to their own judgements, overcritical and intolerant towards suggestions made by their fellow students. In the course of the project the students merged to form a group, which displayed a great deal of inventiveness, energy and expertise.

Service

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Children's activity day

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Abstract

Students at the Korpilahti Unit of Humanities Polytechnic in central Finland planned and organised a cultural production in the form of a multicultural Children's Activity Day held on September 14th 2001 at the Korpilahti unit.

A total of 380 children, of Finnish and immigrant or refugee background participated in the event. Ten kindergartens and lower comprehensive schools at Korpilahti and three multicultural kindergartens in the nearby town of Jyväskylä were involved in the activity day. The age of the participants varied from 3 to 8 years. Children from different cultural backgrounds, both from towns and the countryside had an opportunity to meet each other and play together. The event contained four parts: the introductory, welcoming part, seven workshops, lunch and the final part, farewells. There were several themes running through the workshops: otherness, space, aliens and contact with aliens, people of different ethnic origin.

The final production "Children's Activity Day" was preceded by studies in the following fields: children and play and the work of authorities in the initial phases of integration of refugees and immigrants. In addition inter- and multicultural studies were completed during the study module. The aim of the theoretical studies was to provide students with a wide knowledge and different views in the area they would be working with. The event was produced by one of the Humanities Polytechnic students, Riku Karhunen who carried the main organisational responsibility of the event.

Aims

The project had the following aims: Firstly, it aimed at offering children with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds an opportunity to meet each other and participate in the activity day. In addition it aimed at bringing children from Jyväskylä to the countryside, in order to combine two different cultural environments. The project also aimed at providing Humanities Polytechnic students with work experience with children with a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, the project aimed at increasing the students' knowledge of cultural differences in general and arouse their interest in other cultures

Contents

The final production

Humanities Polytechnic students planned and organised "Children's Activity Day", a games day held on 14th September 2001 at Korpilahti in central Finland. A total of 380

children from three multicultural kindergartens from Jyväskylä and ten kindergartens and lower comprehensive schools from Korpilahti participated in the event. The age of the children varied from 3 to 8 years.

The Activity Day consisted of four distinctive parts: the introductory or welcoming part, seven workshops, lunch and the final part, farewells. The world the children stepped into, when arriving, was called the World of Opportunities. The workshops concentrated on several themes including: space, otherness, aliens and contact with aliens, people of different origins. The children also searched a space mouse throughout the day and found it during farewells.

The students prepared seven workshops for the children, these were the following: Story telling, Handicraft, Room of Sun, Light and shade, Touch and movement, Action in space, Fairy tales. There was a supplementary workshop for children who had participated in all the workshops or who had to wait to attend a workshop.

The event was organised according to the following programme:

Welcoming

Children were welcomed into the spacecraft.

Story telling workshop

The story telling workshop was the control room of the spacecraft. The children created their own space stories inspired by the sounds they heard and pictures they saw.

Room of Sun

Children watched a puppet theatre performance and participated in it by composing music for the play. They could also play, draw and look for lost celestial bodies.

Light and shade

Children became familiar with the following celestial bodies: Sun, Mars, Saturn and Moon. Children were moving in the world of light and shade.

Touch and movement

Children learnt how to move in space. The workshop included space walking and dark tunnels, climbing and experiencing different types of surfaces.

Action in space

Out of door games.

Fairy tale workshop

Fairy tale drama. This workshop took children from space to Africa. Children even had a chance to try a totally new language: *swahili*.

Farewell

Children solved the enigma of the space mouse and found it. Children's experiences of the day (feedback).

One of the students carried the responsibility for the coordination within the project. The students worked together with the coordinator and were responsible for planning the event and organising the workshops. All the workshops required a great contribution from the students: planning, construction and staging of the workshops. Some students worked in the workshops helping children, others guided children from one workshop to another. Students also assisted children during lunch in the dining-room.

Studies combined with the event

The production of the event, "Children's Activity Day" was combined with theory of intercultural communication and cultural differences. In addition, the students became

familiar with integration projects run by municipal authorities among refugees and immigrants in the Jyväskylä region.

The partners, organisations and contacts involved in the project included the following:

The Korpilahti Unit of Humanities Polytechnic: students of cultural production and management, three multicultural kindergartens from Jyväskylä and ten kindergartens and lower comprehensive schools from Korpilahti, the Foreign Office of the town of Jyväskylä, Kotopolku –projekti (a three-year regional project working on the integration of refugees and immigrants, run by Jyväskylä and financed both by provincial and European Union funds), students of Multicultural Studies at a local college, Alkio-opisto.

Methods

The methods used during the project can be viewed from two perspectives: methods used in the whole study module, of which Children's Action Day formed an integral part, and the methods used during the event.

The pedagogical and didactic principles of the study module emphasised the following four key areas: studies of children's play culture, studies of cultural differences and intercultural communication, becoming familiar with the integration of immigrants and refugees in the area and finally, planning and organising the cultural event.

Studies concentrating on children's play culture gave the students the tools and the confidence for organising the event. Intercultural studies with workshops combined with different views on immigration policy increased cultural sensitivity and awareness on the one hand and interest in multicultural issues on the other. Intercultural studies contained studies emphasizing cultural differences, intercultural communication and case studies.

The methods used during the activity day to reach the aims can be viewed from two perspectives: contact between children from different ethnic backgrounds and town and countryside environments, and the contents of the day. See the information under Contents for more detail.

Best practice

This aim of bringing children from different cultural backgrounds and different living environments together was successfully attained during the project. It was the first time the multicultural kindergartens in Jyväskylä were invited to participate in the same event in the countryside. "Children's Activity Day" was a success. Positive feedback was given by kindergarten teachers, children, students and teachers.

The production of a multicultural activity day for children aimed at providing the students with professional experience. Organising a cultural event for children of different ethnic backgrounds provided the students with a completely new, inspiring and challenging learning environment. The students dealt with ideas of otherness and developed and realised them in workshops. In addition, organising a cultural event of this type provided the students with a broad-based learning environment of practical work experience.

The project also aimed at increasing the students cultural awareness in a broader context. One of the main ideas of the project was to place the event into a wider context of cultural similarities and differences. This way the multicultural event did not

become a separate event without theoretical and practical links to encounters with different cultures.

The students had an opportunity to develop their intercultural knowledge throughout the process and through increased experiences they became more tolerant, flexible and culturally more sensitive. This increased sensitiveness became very apparent during the evaluation meeting held at the end of the project.

The students, who were involved in the project, began discussions on how multiculturalism could be more effectively included in both the studies and the projects of Humanities Polytechnic in the future.

Feedback

The positive feedback given by students, kindergarten teachers and Humanities Polytechnic teachers contained the following points:

Before the event: several meetings with representatives from kindergartens to hear their views, hopes and wishes concerning the activity day

The kindergartens were well informed about the day's programme beforehand

Design and staging workshops

The workshops were well planned

Clear opening and closing of the multicultural activity day

The adventure was credible

Fantastic atmosphere, the children were excited

Flexibility of all partners

The students took their responsibilities conscientiously

The negative feedback contained the following:

Problems with the workshop timetables

Too many children

The information did not always reach everyone involved

The information available on the budget was limited

No programme was available on the day

In addition the students' feedback contained the following:

"I have learnt to understand my own culture, other cultures and even myself better.

Now I am able to observe my behaviour when I meet a foreigner."

"It opened my eyes to see things from several perspectives."

"I received tools to handle cultural differences. In addition I learned terms and concepts."

"The project definitely increased my interest in other cultures."

Evaluation

The aims set for the project were attained very well. The number of participants, about 380 children and their teachers, proved that all the partners involved were highly committed to the project. Efforts were made to inform the public in the region about "Children's Activity Day".

The children were happy and excited and seemed to enjoy the event enormously. The children participated in all the workshops with enthusiasm. There were no sad faces to be seen in the event.

The students involved in the event made an effort in planning and realizing the event, from the overall plan to the smallest detail. The workshops were praised both by children and kindergarten teachers. Students benefited from the project both culturally and professionally. The students were able to cooperate and displayed a lot of inventiveness, energy and expertise.

The project has led to intensified cooperation between Finnish and multicultural kindergartens and lower comprehensive schools. On Father's Day 2001 there was a feast arranged for families at the Korpilahti unit. The multicultural kindergartens in Jyväskylä that participated in "Children's Activity Day" were also invited to that event. Cooperation between Humanities Polytechnic and multicultural kindergartens in Jyväskylä continued in our third cultural production within the project "Enhancing cultural awareness through cultural production" in the autumn 2002.

The biggest provincial paper and a number of smaller local papers published news reports on the multicultural event. Coverage of these types of events in different media is important, because it increases tolerance and mutual understanding among the mainstream and minority cultures.

We encountered a few difficulties which were mostly related to the practical organisation of the event. The students were conscious of the challenges and therefore prepared a detailed schedule for all kindergartens concerning arrival time, participation in workshops and lunch. Some kindergartens did not follow their scheduled arrival time which led to queues to some workshops. Luckily the students had organised a supplementary workshop for children to attend in case of queues and unexpected waiting. More attention should have been paid to the information being delivered among the students. The number of children participating in the event 380, could have been a bit smaller.

Service

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There is a video film made about Children's Activity Day.

Adventure in the art world Multicultural children's activity day

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Abstract

Students at the Korpilahti Unit of Humanities Polytechnic in central Finland planned and organised a multicultural activity day, "Adventure in the Art World", for children of different ethnic backgrounds in the town of Jyväskylä on 18th October 2002. The activity day "Adventure in the Art World" was carried out in the Jyväskylä Art Museum. The target group of the event was kindergarten children, aged between 3 and 5 years, of Finnish and immigrant or refugee background.

The partners involved in the project included 12 Humanities Polytechnic students, the Jyväskylä Art Museum and children from kindergartens in Jyväskylä, including children from two multicultural kindergartens.

Humanities Polytechnic students were responsible for the planning and organisation of the entire event. The modules completed by work placement during the project were the following: Cultural Life cycle, Tools for Cultural Production and Public Relations.

The aim of the activities was to provide children from different cultural backgrounds with a chance to meet each other and work together in workshops. Children were encouraged to react to works of art, talk about them and discuss the associations that art created in them. The project promoted equal opportunities for children of both Finnish and other ethnic backgrounds to participate in the activities of "Adventure in the Art World".

The event "Adventure in the Art World" was very successful, attracting 240 children and adults and receiving positive feedback from all participants involved: children, adults and kindergarten teachers. The staff of the art museum was satisfied with the cooperation and contribution provided by the polytechnic students during the project. Representatives of the art museum have expressed their hope to continue cooperation with Humanities Polytechnic in the future.

Aims

The project had several aims, including the following: Firstly it aimed to organise a multicultural activity day for children from different ethnic backgrounds in an art museum in Jyväskylä. In addition works of art and a variety of workshops were used to inspire children to create their own works of art and different cultural objects. The children were also encouraged to react to works of art, talk about them and present the associations art created in them. Furthermore the event aimed at providing

children from different cultural backgrounds with a chance to meet each other and work together in workshops. Finally the event aimed to acquaint children with an art museum.

Contents

The children were offered several opportunities to experience and react to works of art. They were given the opportunity to look, touch and listen, play games and create their own works of art.

The workshops organised included the following:

1. Every child was personally welcomed to the exhibition by a guide dressed as a magpie.
2. Paintings and drawings
 - Items to be touched with blindfolded eyes
 - Items to be smelt
 - Old items and toys
3. Playing traditional Finnish games
4. Story telling
5. Round-the-world-trip
6. Making handicraft

Children were encouraged to interact, to talk about the associations the works of art brought to them and present their own comments on the objects.

Finnish and immigrant children had a chance to meet each other and work in the same workshops. The visit to the art museum and the workshops were pleasant and inspiring and full of new encounters for children at several levels.

Best practice

The Humanities Polytechnic students made an effort to plan and realise the event.

All the partners involved in the project agreed on the fact that it was a good idea to choose an art museum as a meeting place for children of different backgrounds. Both the works of art that were on display and workshops inviting children to activity created a special atmosphere and environment. It was easy for children to approach works of art with the help of Humanities Polytechnic students and participate in different activities that interested them.

As many as 240 children and adults participated in “Adventure in the Art World”, while only 150 were originally expected. An effort was made to inform the public about the event. Invitations were sent to all the kindergartens in Jyväskylä, including three multicultural kindergartens of the latter two participated. Information about the event was also delivered to supermarkets, museums and health centres. Likewise advertisements were published in local and provincial papers. Press releases were sent to radio and television stations.

The multicultural children’s activity day “Adventure in the Art World” received wide publicity: a radio programme about the event was made and national television, TV2, covered the event in its news report.

Feedback

The success and failure of reaching the objectives were monitored in several ways. Both children and organisers were asked to give feedback and evaluation on the event. For the evaluation both questionnaires and observations were used. In addition the Humanities Polytechnic students wrote a learning diary about the event.

Children gave their feedback by attaching a feather on a big magpie, if they were happy with the adventure. More than one hundred feathers were counted at the end of the event. Adults filled in a questionnaire and were asked to evaluate the event. The feedback received from adults was very positive.

The personnel of the art museum was satisfied with the cooperation and contribution provided by the Humanities Polytechnic students during the project. According to them the students showed expertise in working with children and they were able to approach the children both as groups and individually. Representatives of the art museum have expressed their hope to continue cooperation with Humanities Polytechnic in the future.

Evaluation

The project promoted equal opportunities for children of Finnish and other ethnic backgrounds by enabling them to participate in “Adventure in the Art World”.

The event, “Adventure in the Art World” was very successful. It attracted a total of 240 children and adults. The event received positive feedback from all participants: children, adults and kindergarten teachers.

Service

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Children and War

A photo-pedagogic project into Kosovo and its effects

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Aims

Our project was entitled "Children and War" and had been triggered by the war and the political events that shook Kosovo in 1999 and 2000. The city of Cologne was affected by these developments inasmuch as a significant number of Kosovarian refugees had found shelter here. At the same time, media coverage had raised the awareness of students and teachers in the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences to the living conditions of children in the refugee camps. Our project (which was part of the "Intercultural Education" academic focus program) was designed to show how children who have been through dramatic events (escape, displacement, violence and death of relatives) cope with their experience, and which pedagogic tools are suitable for supporting them in this process. We found photography to be both an easy-to-use and pedagogically helpful medium, both on site in the Kosovo and during subsequent work in Cologne. For a more in-depth approach to the subject of "Children and War" we had advised our students to conduct research (library and Internet based) on both the subject in general and the Kosovo conflict in particular. We were not interested in abstract theoretical study; our objective from the start was to find ways to make our findings public. Were there historical pegs or local connections? Which specific aspects had to be taken into account? Since the subject was both politically and emotionally engaging, it was easy to keep student interest awake and to face and overcome the attendant difficulties, some of which proved quite formidable.

Contents

Medium

In approaching the subject "Children and War", the project initiators from the Cologne University of Applied Sciences' Faculty of Applied Social Sciences adopted photography as their medium, in the specific form of inexpensive Fuji snapshot cameras. The cameras had been distributed to Kosovarian children by German students in the summer of 1999, shortly after the peak of the Kosovo conflict. The children were requested to use these cameras to document their lives and environment in pictures, following their return from refugee camps. The result was a collection of about 1,700 photos returned by 56 children.

This camera was the instrument of choice because it is easy to operate and a photography project of this type is straightforward to launch. The relevant part for the students was the image processing, the digitalization and subsequent presentation of the pictures. For them to cope with these tasks, our students needed to be familiarized with photographic techniques as well as with the fundamentals of image processing and exhibition organizing (the exhibition opened on November 14, 2000).

Target group

The photography project – and, subsequently, its photographic output – was chiefly aimed at students from the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences (as part of their training in media pedagogy), the German general public (to inform them about an explosive political event), and academic instructors at the Cologne University of Applied Sciences. With regard to this latter group, the aim was to introduce them to the special potential of photographic work in a pedagogic context and to provide a glimpse of the technical and didactic implications and possibilities of computer-assisted image processing. Such skills are increasingly gaining importance in the social pedagogue's professional context, for without some degree of IT expertise, social work too has become all but impossible in our day and age.

Up until the end we had a group of 5-6 students who contributed to the project through all its phases, from the work in Kosovo to the subsequent image processing through to the preparation and implementation of the planned symposium (which took place in Cologne on November 14th and 15th 2000), thus benefiting from the learning by doing approach.

Photographic activities and their impact

The history of photography, since the invention of the technique in the 1830s, has essentially consisted in compiling enormous collections of pictures – a collective effort that is continuing to this day.

Thus, we have the collection of human faces known as portrait photography, the collection of urban views and buildings reflected, for example in travel and architectural photography, as well as a collection of images documenting the terrors of war.

Each single photographer, whatever his individual history, adds to this huge archive through his work, usually without intention or awareness.

All of the aforementioned photographic genres can be found, albeit in rudimentary form and quite individually realized, in the photographs received from the Kosovarian children. What distinguishes them is the specific historic situation.

These photographs were taken within a period of about one week, in late July 1999, following the end of NATO attacks on buildings and Serbian troops and the return of Kosovarian refugees to their home towns from the camps in Macedonia.

In reviewing the photographs taken by the children, one striking feature is the absence of any identifiable plan underlying the exposure of the 56 or so films. No order-imposing "brain" has defined the content to be documented. A chaos of motifs that is difficult to unravel reigns both within the individual series of photographs and throughout the collection as a whole.

It appears that the children, boys and girls aged between 8 and 14 from various places in Kosovo, used the camera spontaneously, like a reflex, as they responded photographically to people, objects and events immediately following their return.

This spur-of-the-moment, reflex-type response (some rolls were exposed within an hour or less) imparts a fragmentary quality to these images. Only rarely can the viewer identify a thread linking the pictures in a given roll (such as war ravages only, or exclusively family scenes). Often the motives "jump" from one picture to the next, implying an absence of coherent visual conceptualization. The beholder is unable to identify a context, each individual picture remains closed in itself.

One might compare this – unintentional – method to a stage performance made up of short individual scenes which are not, or barely, interrelated.

The photographs taken by these children do not moralize, they point to objects, like an extended index finger. It is true that in some cases a message or intention is discernible behind a sequence of frames, e.g., when a child has recorded scenes of destruction only. But as a rule, each series of photographs (they are included on the CD-ROM "Children and War") shows an unbiased juxtaposition of widely different contents: destroyed buildings, a child with its mother at the stove, children playing in

the ruins of a mosque, people in a streetside café and so on. This means that the pictures reflect immediate acts of perception, yet without any interpretation of the perceptions made.

Now what is the context in which these photographs were taken, the context that might explain the undramatic gesture of pointing? In all cases the photographers were children; they had suffered expulsion from their home towns, with all the terror and fright evoked by threats and destruction and, frequently, the death of friends, parents and close relatives, they had felt fear on their way to the camps, uncertainty regarding the whereabouts of their parents, they had witnessed the return to their home towns, been concerned about the state of their cities, houses and apartments, but also experienced the protection offered by KFOR.

Methods

On the whole, the exemplary method employed – i.e., to address a subject in depth to increase understanding (intercultural knowledge) while also acquiring skills (know-how in media pedagogy) – was found to be very helpful. The explosive theme "Children and War" required diversity of method, apart from permitting experimental work in some instances.

To enable the students and teaching staff (the managing team consisted of three academic instructors) to cope with the sheer number of the pictures submitted, it was necessary to

- provide an introduction to digital image processing in groups;
- familiarize the students with exhibition techniques (from technical through to planning aspects);
- combine students and instructors into a working team capable of developing and implementing a symposium concept;
- overcome the new challenges posed by CD-ROM production techniques.

In all activities it proved helpful to adopt a group-based approach and to make clear-cut agreements that would result in an effective division of labour. A major factor specifically for the students was the close contact with professors and the public orientation of the assignment – they were, quite simply, taken seriously. This facilitated the achievement of genuine project results.

Best Practices

Perhaps it is this background of experience which makes the photographs appear like an unexcited stock-taking effort, an act of staking a terrain that is both familiar and alien, of documenting what is incredibly distant yet remarkably close: the mother, friends, the garden, the newly born kitten, and then again a burning house, the destroyed national library, the shelled and ravaged residential buildings.

This individual and, to an extent, collective search by 56 children has thus evolved into a rudimentary archive of a people, covering the dramatic events in their history of July 1999.

Fourteen-year-old Fjolla Latifi from Pristina (Kosovo) has obviously grasped the meaning of archives for our collective memory: "I took a photo of the library because it's a place where all kinds of books are kept. It is a source and a treasure that any people should possess."

In this, the pictures differ from the professional photographer's work. The children are not in search of the sensational. They illustrate their everyday post-war world: the

KFOR soldier going for a pizza, cigarette vendors in the street, children playing in the ruins of houses.

Above all, these different eyes belong to children. The post-war world approaches them in a different style. One that is emphatically friendly, as documented in the picture of a "child-hugging" KFOR soldier. Or else emphatically terrible: How enormous must the destruction of the old Post Office in Pristina appear from a young child's perspective? And what is it like for a nine-year-old to stand before the ruins of his home? Arta, a boy from Pea (Kosovo), has attempted to document this. He took pictures of his house, from the basement to the top floor: of the destroyed balcony, his ravaged room, the charred roof timbering.

Life after war - children settle into it in a quite amazing manner. This, too, is evident from the photographs. Farije from Vitie e Kosovos opted for a self-portrait in a flowery meadow. Schoolchildren from Prizren took snapshots of each other making soap bubbles, or releasing red balloons into the sky. The pictures thus also testify to the children's secret wishes, their yearning for a normal life, for security and peace. However, there is no reason to sound the all-clear signal. As childhood in Kosovo remains tenuous. Creating an awareness of this fact was and is the function of our cultural pedagogy project "Children and War".

Feedback

Summing up our work on the "Children and War" project we may state that the photograph exhibition and the CD-ROM have served the intended purpose. The CD-ROM is still in demand.

Moreover, we have succeeded in raising the awareness of the German general public, and in giving our students a unique opportunity for learning and gathering experience. No small achievement, indeed. On the other hand, it must be said that some objectives could not be attained. The planned "photo picturebook", a printed version of the exhibition, could not be realized for shortage of time and funds. We have also failed to take our exhibition to other venues. In many cases much more time would have been required. More significantly, the input of a larger number of students would have been welcome. On the whole, the amount of time and effort that went into the "Children and War" project was enormous, specifically when viewed against the amount of public attention generated, which was ultimately not as great as it could have been.

Nevertheless, all involved – students, teachers and countless supporters – benefited from what they experienced as an exceedingly fruitful cooperation. In addition, the project spawned a number of diploma theses and publications, so that our joint labours did, after all, produce results beyond their ephemeral topicality. To all who contributed, the project was exceedingly stimulating both emotionally and intellectually, despite the strength it required. We managed to raise the level of cultural awareness both among participants and in a wider public, and to sensitize people to intercultural issues.

Evaluation

Another target group was a broader public, both in the region of Cologne and throughout Germany. For this audience we compiled a thematic selection from the bulk of the images taken and exhibited these pictures on the premises of the Cologne University of Applied Sciences. Faculty colleagues from various departments, and again students and other interested parties, participated actively in this stage. The exhibition met with significant public interest, drawing 200 visitors on the opening day

alone. It was supported by the rectorate of the Cologne University of Applied Sciences and the German Unesco Commission, under whose auspices it was held.

The "Children and War" exhibition had extensive reverberations. It was covered in numerous newspaper articles and radio features, as well as two extensive TV broadcasts (these are documented on the CD-ROM "Children and War", which was developed in the wake of the exhibition and symposium and has been available in its finished form since May 2001).

Services:

"Children and War" CD-ROM (editors: Albert Dost, Jürgen Fritz, Winfred Kaminski), Faculty of Applied Social Studies, Cologne University of Applied Sciences, Mainzer Str. 5, D- 50678 Cologne

<http://www.sw.fh-koeln.de/kiki/index.html> (website with material on "Children and War")

"Fotopädagogik" (special issue) in "Praxis Spiel und Gruppe" December 2002, Mainz, Grünewald Publishing Co.

Schafiyha, Liliane: "Fotopädagogik und Fototherapie" [Photo pedagogy and photo therapy], Beltz, Weinheim/Basel 1997

The Askov Model II

Film in Intercultural Education

Henning Dochweiler (Askov Höjskole, Denmark)

Aims

The second project brought up in Askov was defined in a completely different manner. Again it was the idea to use the opportunity that the school had a number of foreign students with different cultural backgrounds and a line of cultural mediation. But instead of defining the object, i.e. the cultural production on beforehand, we decided to have the students actively define and create the project from the very beginning – the provocative question they were asked was: “Denmark as a tribal society – how to break the vicious circle?”.

Contents and Methods

Obviously there were many ideas as to the project form: theatre, dance, photo exhibition, movie film, or a newspaper...the target groups in question were our own students, invited people from the region, home towns of the students, galleries and/or our partners in the Grundtvig project.

Besides the foreign students at the school we had the intention of attracting “new Danes”, especially Muslim citizens with a different ethnic background. We contacted a number of Danish municipalities where we knew there would be groups of refugees or second generation immigrants and had encouraging answers from a number of them. Eventually, however, it proved that these students did not show up: the explanation offered us by the municipalities that had practically granted their stay was purely bureaucratic and not very satisfactory.

So the cornerstone of the project, where the aim agreed upon was to arrange exhibitions in Danish art galleries, had vanished, and the students had to reconsider. A simple observation started the students thinking. It was noticed that in the dining hall a new kind of segregation had taken place: the Danish students were sitting at specific tables, while the foreigners, who had come to the school to learn the Danish language before returning to their respective home countries (mainly in Central and Eastern Europe), were sitting at other tables. The reason of this peculiar segregation was not “racism” in the strict sense of the word, but the phenomenon was clear enough and caused teachers and students of the cultural mediation line to consider the situation: was this the forerunner of a more serious segregation and lack of mutual understanding, or even worse, lack of will of communication between two differing kinds of culture?

Now, the first thought was of course, if this was just a misunderstanding and due to the simple fact that the foreign students spent a considerable amount of time together in a class room without Danes. On second thought the staff meeting, having discussed the

matter, decided to ask the students to confront the problem and to suggest how to do that.

The film teacher and his students then had the idea to create a film in common, a movie, which would involve not only the majority of foreign students, but also some of the Danish students as well as local people from Askov Village and its vicinity. The students contacted the local amateur theatre group called "Sløjds scenen" and put up messages in the local coop store. In this way a rather unusual example of cooperation between school and neighbourhood was established, which included not only the local stage and coop, but also local companies that allowed film crews to shoot takings on location. The obvious advantage of this

being of course a better understanding in the local population of the fact that so many foreigners were allowed to the boarding school.

The next step was that one of the students, Jens Peter Nielsen, wrote a script, which intentionally involved practically all the foreign students, either in front of the camera as actors or behind it as costume makers, make-up girls etcetera. Jens Peter Nielsen also directed the movie, a cliché, a pastiche or mixture of James Bond films, Dr Strangelove, Aliens and other globally recognized classics. The great advantage being that all students quickly realized what it was all about and how they would have to act. Consequently everybody was ready and even eager to cooperate: Bosnia-Herzegovians, Chinese, Danes, Faroe Islanders, Icelanders, Japanese, Romanians and Russians alike. The students did not only play the different roles, but also participated in cutting and mixing in our own film studio.

Best Practices and Evaluation

The final result was shown to the students and the public audience in the school cinema (120-130 spectators) and later in a the cineast cinema in a nearby town, Brørup, which hosts rather large groups of foreigners, foremost Bosnians. Finally, on June, 8, 2002 it was shown at a large film festival, which Askov organized on behalf of 8 Danish folk high schools as the first of its kind, and which assembled about 120 spectators, including well-known Danish professionals of the film trade, acting as a jury.

Services

There are videotapes available of the theatre performance and the film: please contact Askov Højskole, Maltvej 1, DK-6600 Vejen, or e-mail askov@grundtvig.dk

Life as a Somali in Finland Forum Theatre courses 2001 and 2002

Risto Ruottunen
Humanities Polytechnic

Aims

There were two separate courses of forum theatre held at Humanities Polytechnic (Humak) in Kauniainen, Finland. The first course took place in May 2001 and the second in April 2002. During the courses the students studied the position of Somali immigrants with respect to the Finnish population. The courses also aimed at decreasing racism and intolerance. Topics studied during the courses included the following: cultural differences, the possibilities minorities have to keep their own culture alive, the integration of immigrants, the difficulties and possibilities encountered in every day life. The students also discussed the hopes and dreams of immigrants.

In addition the courses aimed at acquainting the students with forum theatre. This specific form of Theatre of the Oppressed was studied in theory and practice during the courses. In addition emphasis was laid on the possibilities offered by this art form to treat and discuss cultural and social problems and awake discussion on topics which affect the community.

Content:

The Beginning

The structure of each course was alike. The course started with a three-day seminar concentrating on Finnish society's attitude towards immigrants from a theoretical point of view. During the first day the topics studied included the ethnic minorities which have moved to Finland and their relation to Finns. In addition the students learnt key terminology and studied Finnish immigration policy. On the second day the subject was approached from the grassroot level. Representatives of different minorities present in Finland explained their experiences, hopes and the difficulties they had encountered in Finland. In addition the lecturers talked about their own culture.

On the third day a panel discussion was held on the position of minority cultures in Finland. Over thirty people attended the discussion. Different minority groups and people who work with minorities were heard. The latter included social and cultural workers, police officers and administrative staff. On the third day the students also approached Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and forum theatre. A short demonstration of forum theatre was developed, based on the students' experiences.

After this theoretical study the course continued with two simultaneous topics. The students became acquainted with Somalis and Finns who work with Somalis. At the same time the students began rehearsing their own forum theatre performance.

The students had invited a group of Somalis who live in the centre of Espoo to dine at the polytechnic and at the same time discuss their lives as a minority in Finland. Somali women had prepared a Somalian meal, which they brought with them. The Finnish students demonstrated Finnish food culture by frying pancakes. In this informal “garden party” the students had their first contact with the possibilities and practice of forum theatre by acting out a previously rehearsed scene using forum theatre methods. In addition they developed a second scene based on the comments and suggestions of the public. The audience participated actively, by making comments and by questioning the approach. This proved that forum theatre was applicable to our needs.

During the same week Humak students, in smaller groups, met different people who work with Somalis. These included school staff, social work representatives, project and field workers and the staff of the Multicultural Centre Caisa. During the following week students visited a job search centre aimed at immigrants in Espoo and a residents’ premise for immigrants. In the latter the students had a discussion with Somalis and people who work with them. Later on the students also visited the Multicultural Centre Caisa and the multicultural house Fenix.

The students also continued informal meetings with Somalis. Some of them were even invited to the homes of some Somali families. The students also visited Finnish for foreigners language lessons and an immigrant girls’ group in a youth work centre.

Rehearsal period

In the first stage the aim was to get to know one’s body. There is a great number of exercises designed with the objective of making each person aware of their own body, their bodily possibilities, and of the deformations suffered because of the type of work performed. That is, it is necessary for each one to feel the “muscular alienation” imposed on the body by work. (Boal 2000, 126-127)

The students learnt new ways to move. In one exercise they had to carry a small object using different parts of the body. In another each person had to follow their partner’s hand. When someone else controls your rhythm and lines of movement you can find profoundly new ways of moving.

The exercises of this first stage are designed to “undo” the muscular structure of the participants. That is, to take them apart, to study and analyze them. Not to weaken or destroy, but to raise them to the level of consciousness... If one is able, in this way, to disjoint one’s own muscular structures, one will surely be able to assemble structures characteristic of other professions and social classes; that is, one will be able to physically “interpret” characters different from oneself. (Boal 2000, 128)

The participant is asked to express his opinion, but without speaking, using only the bodies of the other participants and sculpting with them a group of statues, in such a way that his opinions and feelings become evident. The participant is to use the bodies of the others as if he were a sculptor and the others were made of clay: he must determine the position of each body down to the most minute details of their facial expressions. He is not allowed to speak under any circumstances. The most that is permitted to him is to show with his own facial expressions what he wants the statue-spectator to do. After organizing this group of statues he is allowed to enter into a discussion with the other participants in order to determine if all agree with his “sculpted” opinion. (Boal 2000,135)

From image theatre we moved to forum theatre. The students took the stories they had learnt during the meetings with the Somalis containing a political or social problem

which was difficult to resolve. During the following few weeks short scenes (five to ten minutes) were rehearsed. The scenes portrayed the problems and intended solutions. These were rehearsed and later they were represented during the forum theatre event.

The Event

There were three scenes, with very different themes, that were chosen for the forum theatre event itself. The chosen topics included a child's curiosity towards a coloured person in the metro, a Somali woman being insulted by Finnish teenagers. One of the chosen scenes portrayed a Finnish girl telling her family that she was dating a Somali.

In forum theatre the joker plays an important role. The joker is seen as a host who introduces the scenes, gives background information and is in constant dialogue with the audience. After a scene was performed, the spect-actors (audience) was told that the same scene would be reperformed, exactly as it was the first time. The second time any person in the audience was allowed to stop the scene and ask for the actors' motives. This engendered a lot of discussion between the public and the actors. The scene which dealt with the Finnish girl telling her family that she was seeing a Somali was one which raised the most questions and discussion. After discussions any member of the audience had the right to replace any actor and lead the action in the most appropriate direction. The other actors thus had to adapt to the new situation and respond instantly to the possibilities that it may present. During rehearsals different possibilities and solutions were also acted out. But several new approaches and solutions were engendered by the public performance.

After the theatre performance a discussion was held concentrating on the problems and solutions raised by forum theatre. This type of discussion is important because it expands the scenes and topics of the play further outside theatre. In these discussions the audience is able to reflect upon the possible solutions and action models that could be used in reality. The aim is to improve reality. One of the main aims of forum theatre is to influence reality, that is why the topics chosen concentrate on social problems. The aim being to create a community spirit to fight against these problems.

Methods

The aim of the courses was not to make artistically high quality theatre performances, but to use theatre as a tool. We wanted to enhance cultural awareness through theatre production as well as through theatre performance. The rehearsal period was regarded as important as the performance itself. For the participants of the courses, learning acting skills was regarded as secondary to understanding similarities and differences between cultures.

The methods used during the course were adapted from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and especially from forum theatre. According to Boal "all theatre is necessarily political, because all activities of man are political and theatre is one of them" (Boal 2000, Foreword). Later he declares: "I, Augusto Boal, want the Spectator to take the role of Actor and invade the Character and the stage. I want him to occupy his own Space and offer solutions.

By taking possessions of the stage, the Spect-Actor is consciously performing a responsible act. The stage is a representation of the reality, a fiction. But the Spect-Actor is not fictional. He exists in the scene and outside of it, in a dual reality. By taking possessions of the stage in the fiction of the theater he acts: not just in the fiction, but also in his social reality. By transforming fiction, he is transformed into himself." (Boal 2000, Preface.)

“This is the theatre I believe in: the place where we can stand and see ourselves. Not see what others tell us we are, or should be – but see our deepest selves!” (Boal 2001, Preface.) Through theatre production an attempt was made to enhance not only the audience’s cultural awareness, but also that of the actors, of the participants themselves.

The aim of Theatre of the Oppressed is to create a change, a political change in a person’s real life situation, a psychological change in a person’s way of seeing his possibilities towards his own life. Through Forum theatre one is stimulated to transform his society and to engage in revolutionary action. Because of this, Forum theatre must differ from the traditional form of Aristotelian theatre, which, according to Boal (2000, 47) “is designed to bridle the individual, to adjust him to what pre-exists.”

The ultimate aim of tragedy, of Aristotelian theatre in general, is catharsis, quite a controversial concept of correction and purification. “Through purification, catharsis, through purgation of the extraneous, undesirable element which prevents the character from achieving his ends. This extraneous element is contrary to the law; it is a social fault, a political deficiency.” (Boal 2000, 32.)

“Empathy is the emotional relationship which is established between the character and spectator and which provokes, fundamentally, a delegation of power on the part of the spectator, who becomes an object in relation to the character: whatever happens to the latter, happens vicariously to the spectator.” (Boal 2000, 102.) In Aristotelian theatre the spectator sits still and watches imaginary events taking place in front of him. The spectator sees how dangerous it is to break the rules, not to obey the laws and orders of society. Aristotelian theatre is a warning of a catastrophe that rebellion will meet. Theatre like that aims to maintain status quo.

In Image theatre the participants make images or statues by using bodies, their own bodies or those of others in the group. This form was born to avoid problems of language i.e. different words mean different things to different persons. (see Boal 2002, 174-175, Boal 2001, 310-311.) “Dealing with images we should not try to ‘understand’ the meaning of each image, to apprehend its precise meaning, but to feel those images, to let our memories and imaginations wander: the meaning of an image is the image itself. Image is a language.” (Boal 2002, 175.) In one version of Image theatre the participants are asked to make one image of the real situation where they feel oppressed and one of their desire. After that they are asked to make another image of how they can move from the real to the ideal. (Boal 2001, 310.)

In one game of Image theatre the group was divided into pairs. Silently, one of each pair made a statue out of his/her own body. Then the other one went into the statue and made it a statue of two bodies. After feeling the new image the first one moved to a different position and that way changed the image. Again after feeling the new image the second one moved and so on. After the game each pair discussed their feelings and images. There were both similar and different reactions, which helped the participants to realize different aspects of the images they had produced. Image theatre was used during the rehearsal period, but not in the event itself. The event was built around three scenes that were made using the method of Forum theatre.

Forum theatre as well as the other forms of Theater of the Oppressed makes the spectators the active protagonist of theatre. They start acting, it can be invisible theatre, image theatre or forum theatre. The gap between the audience and the stage no longer exists. Theatre is not a spectacle that a person sees on the stage but rather events that they take part in. The performance is something new, something that

nobody was able to foresee. The spectators are invited to carry the events to the direction they see is necessary /inevitable. The story will be the one the spect-actors invent.

“In Theatre of the Oppressed, reality is shown not only as it is, but also, more importantly, as it could be. This vital element is entrusted to the creativity of the audience: the spectators come on stage, substituting themselves for the protagonist, and trying to find viable solutions for real problems.” (Boal 2002, 6.) Different solutions for the problems were acted out during the rehearsal period, but still in the main event there were some new solutions carried out.

With the help of the Joker system a spectator is invited to play different characters. “The participants who choose to intervene must continue the physical actions of the replaced actors; they are not allowed to come on the stage and talk, talk, talk: they must carry out the same type of work or activities performed by the actors who were in their place. The theatrical activity must go on in the same way, on the stage. Anyone may propose any solution, but it must be done on the stage, working, acting, doing things, and not from the comfort of his seat. Often a person is very revolutionary when in a public forum he envisages and advocates revolutionary and heroic acts; on the other hand, he often realizes that things are not so easy when he himself has to practice what he suggests.” (Boal 2000, 139.)

The Joker is a person between the action on the stage and the spect-actors in the audience. The Joker does not personally decide anything, but “is constantly relaying doubts back to the audience so that it is they who make the decisions” (Boal 2002, 261). “Jokers must avoid all actions which could manipulate or influence the audience. They must not draw conclusions which are not self-evident. They must always open the possible conclusions to debate, stating them in an interrogative rather than an affirmative form, in such a way that the audience can answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, ‘We said this and not that’, instead of being confronted with the Joker’s own personal interpretation of events.” (Boal 2002, 261.)

The Joker can ask questions or show doubts in order to help the spect-actors gather their thoughts or prepare their actions. Although the Joker is constantly aware of possible unrealistic solutions given by spect-actors, the Joker is not the one who decides which solution is magic. Once again the Joker’s task is only to doubt and let the spect-actors make the final judgement. The Joker’s situation between the stage and the audience should also be seen concretely; the Joker does not sit with other spect-actors in the audience but rather stays (or sits) on the stage, or at least nearby it. And being on stage the Joker must be aware of his/her physical stance, since every image produced on stage is automatically significant. (Boal 2002, 261-262.)

As mentioned before, the aim of Forum theatre is a change. In Boal’s own words (2000, 141) Forum theatre is “a rehearsal of revolution”. There is no catharsis in Forum theatre, on the contrary, it evokes a desire to practice in reality the act-spectator has rehearsed in theatre (Boal 2000, 142). And according to the feedback we received, enhancing cultural awareness through a Forum theatre event was a rehearsal for a peaceful co-operation between people from different cultural backgrounds.

Best practices:

One of the best practices we had was the garden party where Somalian and Finnish food was cooked and served. In an informal meeting over a meal it is easy to become familiar with each other. The possibility to “taste” another culture creates an immediate reaction towards it.

At the beginning of the theatre performance the audience was asked to join the actors on stage. Everyone was asked to, random, take hold of two other persons' hands. Then the knot had to be undone, without letting go of hands and a circle was formed. This exercise sounds very simple, yet it effectively breaks the boundary between the stage and the audience. In addition it breaks the audience's physical impunity. This way the audience and actors are also made to work together in order to attain a common goal. Once the audience is made to hold a stranger's hand, receive and give advice, they will feel more at ease to actively participate in the performance itself.

Feedback:

According to student feedback the method was regarded as suitable for Finland. It gave the participants the opportunity to ask for motives and ask questions, which are normally impossible:

"Theatre of the oppressed was a completely new experience for me. I see it as an extremely suitable and efficient method to awaken discussion, increase understanding and it is adaptable to real life situations. This method should be used more to solve social problems and bring different social groups together. Theatre of the oppressed is cooperation and solution-making. It is impressive to see real situations re-performed. As right answers are not given, people are activated to think for themselves."

"I think that Forum theatre is a good way to solve problems. It offers people the possibility to look at problems from different angles. In normal situations people are so vexed that it is impossible to find a common solution."

"I really can't offer any solid model of solution. The co-operation between Finns, Somalis and the media is the key. Forum theatre seems to be quite an effective tool."

The fact that Somalis did not participate in the course was a grave disappointment to many:

"I wish the Somalis were more involved in our project. In the beginning I was afraid that we were going to tell them about their problems."

"It would have been important to have Somalis among us, that would have given more depth to our performance."

The participants also pointed out that they confronted their own opinions about themselves and their culture:

"I learned a lot about myself and my own culture, which can be very dominant. I found out that I am quite shy and cautious and surprisingly prejudiced in confronting different cultures."

"During the five weeks period one had time to study one's own feelings and prejudices."

"The course awoke more questions than it gave answers. My own attitude towards Somalis was completely altered."

Evaluation:

Forum theatre is a method that can be well used in Finland. The participants found it an extremely suitable and efficient method to awaken discussion, increase understanding and it is adaptable to real life situations. In the forum theatre event it was possible to ask questions which in normal life are impossible. Forum theatre was also praised for giving the possibility to understand different motives behind opposite actions.

If the barrier between the actors and the audience is actively broken at the beginning of the event, it is much easier for the audience to participate, to become a real spect-actor.

The most important problem we faced, was that the minorities did not participate in the rehearsal process. One possible reason for this was our own failure to market the course. On the other hand forum theatre is not at all well known in Finland, so the possibility it offers to solve social problems is not widely understood either.

In the future it would be important to use this method with an audience familiar with the method and willing to use the method to improve their living conditions. This would improve the experiences gained by community members, the audience and the course participants.

Services:

Literature:

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Routledge

www-pages:

<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-boal.htm>
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http://www.de.sch.gr/theatro/forum_theatre_for_teachers.pdf
<http://www.allkidsgrieve.org/Classroom/class5.html>
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Theatre of the Oppressed

Enhancing cultural awareness and empowerment in multicultural life

Michael Wrentschur
Peter Altmann

Overview

Idea

Two separate projects, "ÖNORM" and "Free Mind", were designed to examine our awareness of our own and other cultures and to address the issues of racism and xenophobia in everyday life. The projects aimed at allowing people develop new forms of coexistence while becoming more sensitive to problems which arise when different cultures meet.

Objectives

Both "ÖNORM" and "Free Mind" aimed at discovering and trying out new perspectives and options for ways of tackling "everyday racism" in a confident and constructive manner. The projects were designed to sensitize people to encounters between different cultures, to help them identify suitable modes of approaching people from other backgrounds and to develop possible ways of intervening and showing civil courage in everyday situations of racism.

Target groups

"ÖNORM" was aimed mainly at Austrians – both the actors and spectators were mainly "indigenous". The participants in "Free Mind" were predominantly unaccompanied children who were asylum seekers from African and Asian countries. Their everyday lives in Austria are rife with discriminatory experiences. The performances were attended by Austrians and immigrants.

Process and method

Methodologically, the two projects relied chiefly on "Theatre of the Oppressed" as developed by Augusto Boal, specifically in his "Forum Theater" concept. Forum Theatre is a form of politically educative participative improvisation theatre in which the spectators can try out plot alternatives to a given scene of conflict or oppression. The methods of "Theatre of the Oppressed" start out from personal experiences, which are then processed and transformed in a creative and action-oriented manner. Due to this close-to-life approach, the experiences and insights gained in the exploration process become available for use in everyday (intercultural) life. Work on the "ÖNORM" project extended over the period from October 2000 until November 2001. The "Free Mind" project was implemented from October 2001 until May 2002.

Contents

Both projects addressed discrimination and racism, starting from the participants' personal experience. Criteria deemed important for our understanding of these phenomena included both the emotional circumstances of individuals and existing

social structures. Another key aspect was the development of new, satisfactory alternatives for action in an intercultural context.

“ÖNORM“ additionally dealt with the question of how a witness to discrimination and racism can become involved and show civil courage. In the “Free Mind” project the process of coming to terms with personal experiences of discrimination and racism was a priority subject. In addition it emphasised the building of the community and positive, trusting relationships.

Success

“ÖNORM“ proved successful in identifying diverse forms of racism. The audience discussed personal experiences as well as their own discriminatory behaviour, fears and uncertainties. The methods of Forum Theatre provide ample identification opportunities, but also sufficient distance to permit deep emotional involvement and a high degree of openness on the spectators’ part. Based on these experiences, it was possible to develop civil courage in a variety of discriminatory and racist situations. In addition various action models were developed, tried out, and integrated into the personal behaviour pattern. The form of work used during the “Free Mind” project yielded a high degree of direct support for people exposed to massive discrimination and racism.

Project implementation

The “ÖNORM“ and “Free Mind“ projects were carried out by InterACT – Werkstatt für Theater und Soziokultur.

“ÖNORM – Forum Theatre on Everyday Racism“

Objectives

“ÖNORM“ was designed to render diverse, even subtle forms of everyday racism and xenophobia visible and comprehensible. The project aimed at stimulating a process of “coming to terms” with the participants’ fear of what is different or strange and with their inherent xenophobic traits and prejudices. The underlying idea was to expose the potentials for conflict in intercultural coexistence. In addition a space was to be provided in which various forms of civil courage could be creatively developed: participants were able to “try out” responses to everyday xenophobic or racist acts and attitudes. Furthermore they were able to explore ways of actively defusing escalating processes that would result in exclusion and violence towards “foreigners”. Moreover, “ÖNORM” was intended to help develop new constructive models of how people from different cultures can live together.

Contents

The scene was set in a supermarket in late afternoon. People were doing their shopping. The normal course of events was disrupted when a woman of very different appearance, wearing a yashmak, entered the scene. The ensuing encounters revealed the uncertainties, fears, ideologies, hidden desires and longings.

Target groups

ÖNORM was aimed chiefly at Austrians of both sexes. The underlying idea was that “normal people” shape our normal everyday lives and therefore bear considerable responsibility for the changes taking place in society.

Process

The ÖNORM production was developed from October 2000 to May 2001 by Austrian actors in co-operation with immigrants, immigrant counsellors and antiracism workers. "ÖNORM" was performed eight times between May 2001 and November 2002. A half-day workshop following one of the performances provided an opportunity for further exploration of the subject. "ÖNORM" comprised several sections, built one upon the other:

Scenic transformation of experiences

Individual experiences of alienness, prejudices and xenophobia - both as victims and "perpetrators" - were expressed, scenically transformed, explored and reflected.

Exploration of the phenomena of everyday racism

Building on previous work, diverse forms and attitudes of racism and xenophobia were examined in detail, distilled into stock characters and presented on stage in focused form.

Scenic development

From the interplay of roles, a Forum Theatre scene was developed which summarised the aspects and elements of everyday racism explored so far. Rehearsals provided an opportunity for an in-depth analysis and discussion of the roles, which are then refined into "authentic characters".

Performances and dialogue

During performances, diverse options for handling racism and xenophobia were tried out; the consequences of each course of action were perceived and witnessed directly. Experiences were reflected upon and processed through discussion. New perspectives were developed, and the content viewed was transferred to the level of everyday life.

Further development

The experience gained in the context of the performances, plus current political events, provided an impetus to refine the play for further productions.

Methods

Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is a form of political and educational participative theatre. It provides a framework for exploring different behaviours, alternative courses of action and strategies in a stage-performed sequence of scenes. Oppression, power and violence are key themes in Forum Theatre work.

A scene is presented to illustrate how social reality is perceived. It has an unsatisfactory, unresolved ending. The audience is invited to substitute roles which appear particularly powerless, perplexed or oppressed. During successive performances of the scene, members of the audience come on stage and try out the proposed solutions to the problem or conflict on stage. The effects of their actions are rendered transparent in the process as action and cognition are jointly developed and reflected upon in this "dramatic laboratory". Forum Theatre eliminates the boundary lines between the actors and audience; spectators become participants who bear responsibility for the dramatic events on stage. All participants are free to comment on the presented scenes, and may avail themselves of the power of the word and/or plot to demonstrate what they would want to see changed.

Developed by Brazilian Augusto Boal Forum Theatre is one of the methods and forms referred to as "Theatre of the Oppressed".

Methodological elements

Living statues and improvisation theatre

Personal experiences of foreignness and prejudice are expressed in the form of physical postures and statues, which are then processed and placed into context. Brief extemporized passages make these postures and images come alive. The actors thus develop an emotional and physical relation to the subject, simultaneously tapping a source for the further development of the play. This approach provides an excellent peg for the exploration of the subject, expanding angles while helping identify a diversity of connecting links. Living statue theatre and improvisation theatre are highly suited for addressing the present themes, even within constrained time frames.

Systemic (stage) arrangements

Individual characters representing attitudes and aspects relevant to the subject are arranged according to people's own internal image. From the different spatial positions and experiences of the characters it is possible to develop and illustrate relationships, effects of actions, event flows and dynamics in a sensually perceivable and visible form.

Such systemic arrangements add to our understanding of overall causal relationships; the interrelatedness of individual positions or elements begins to make sense in a manner not previously perceived. Working with this method thus enables the participants to process the previously developed aspects and attitudes of racism (and their interconnections) into a coherent sequence of scenes.

Development of attitudes and roles

Theatre production offers numerous methods and techniques for deepening and transforming prior experience with given attitudes into characters for the play. Work on the characters proceeds in the "field of tension" between one's experience of identity and foreignness. The actors thus gain a wealth of experience and insight into their self in the "foreign" role and, at times, into the "foreign" aspects of what used to be familiar. Moreover, the role development process leads to more detailed research, exploration and discourse.

Research, external consulting and scenic coaching

Immigrants, immigrant counsellors and antiracism activists were involved in the development and rehearsals. They participated by taking the stage, provided feedback on the effects of material developed so far, contributed information and suggestions for content and clarified and deepened the links to social reality. The role work induces the actors to engage in more detailed research and heightens their everyday sensibility and readiness for exploration and discourse.

Effects and benefits

Illustrating the dynamics of exclusion and escalation

Forum Theatre is very successful in illustrating and recreating, in an emotionally accessible manner, the interaction between individuals and the group and the inherent dynamics of events. The power embedded in the system never ceases to amaze, but neither does the ability of the individual to change the system's workings so that events will take an altogether unexpected, unplanned course.

Explaining the complexity and contradictory nature of attitudes, views and behaviour

The many-faceted nature of the subject, the intention and effects of human behaviour and the gap between expectation and reality are rendered highly evident to both the actors and the audience. Views and attitudes are often ambiguous or inherently contradictory for example the "curious onlooker" is torn between her fear of foreigners and an exotically inspired, instrumentalizing curiosity. A similar effect emerges in the role of the "saviour", who basically views foreigners as victims who deserve our help

because they are oppressed. For all that, he defines himself via his helping role, needs his counterpart to bolster his self-esteem, thus becoming an agent of escalation himself. And indeed, it has been found time and again that basically "anti-racist" or "xenophile" behaviour can aggravate conflict situations.

Expanding perspectives and enlarging scope for action

The development of strategies for changing the scene and solving the conflict opens up previously unknown views and perspectives of intercultural coexistence. This gives rise to a rich array of alternatives for action in those roles which appear powerless, perplex or oppressed during the scene. Interestingly, young people in particular find it easy to take up a part and defend themselves against discriminatory and racial words and deeds, exhibiting a lot of power and commitment as they do so.

Developing civil courage and promoting involvement

Successful action rehearsals in near-real-life situations stimulate courage, create self-confidence that can be applied in reality, and thereby increase the individual's willingness to take a stand. Thus, Forum Theatre work promotes a "sustainable" form of civil courage.

Enabling high emotional involvement

Coming to terms with the subject through action rather than words is a process that remains close to life and authentic experience. Problems are handled against their actual emotional background. At the same time, the spectators involvement is intense, if only because the audience thinks and feels with the protagonists. In addition, Forum Theatre offers very different possibilities for participation - from discussing what one has seen and witnessed to actually taking the stage in a production. Each of these modes of participation provides an opportunity for thorough exploration of the subject. Regardless of the chosen role, new perspectives will be developed and new options for behaving in accordance with one's own values will emerge. The result is an improved understanding of others.

Evaluation

The stated objectives - enhanced sensitivity for different cultures, development of new perspectives and options for taking action, promotion of civil courage, identification of suitable modes to encounter people from other cultures - were attained to a high degree. It deserves to be noted that the amount of time and resources which went into the project was fairly high. On the other hand, the integration of public authorities and other, similar institutions was not given adequate attention at the designing stages. To implement a project such as ÖNORM, the following boundary conditions are important:

The time requirement for play development and rehearsals amounts to about 120 - 150 hours. Time and funding on this scale must be available.

From the actors, a project of this type requires open-mindedness, curiosity, and the personal willingness to tackle a broad range of aspects and contradictions.

The play and project management should have ample experience with Forum Theatre methodology. We recommend that the leading individuals should initially attend a number of workshops as participants and work on other projects before embarking on the managing their own project.

Immigrant support workers and immigrant associations should be integrated at the earliest possible stage. Performance contexts and areas to be addressed ought to be considered and defined in advance, as early as during project development.

Comments on “ÖNORM“

Comments from actors:

"Acting in this play has also changed my personal attitude towards Islam and veiled women. For one thing, you simply learn so much more about this religion and the tradition of the chador. This new knowledge makes you take a more differentiated view on the subject ... The incredible Western arrogance of assuming to know best what is good for "women" (both Muslim and in general) was brought home to me by this play and by my acting in it. Western behaviour is deemed "normal" and desirable, the ultimate yardstick by which anything different is measured. I have remained critical of the chador, but I've also learnt that I see the subject through Western eyes and don't really have an insight ..."

"My image of (a) different culture(s) has shifted, it has become broader and multi-faceted, especially with regard to Islam".

"There was an enormous amount of audience input when it came to searching for solutions, and a deep sense of gratitude for being provided with this 'experimental space'."

"It's fairly easy to be tolerant when I'm not concerned myself, or when tolerance becomes mere indifference."

"There has been a change in my perception, brought about specifically by talking to self-confident Muslim women who did a great job defending their views. Other cultures have really different standards, one shouldn't approach them with a simplistic 1:1 attitude."

"My awareness of the problem has risen as we developed and rehearsed the play, even with regard to our own cultural rules and standards."

Comments from spectators:

"I was anxious to see whether anybody would show the courage to take a part that would turn the scene around. People were timid at first, but their fear eventually subsided and many new aspects emerged".

"Amazing to see how the spectators courageously took part in the scene and co-determined its course. Some stuff was really funny, some of it was harsh criticism, mostly it made you pause and ponder."

"Of course there are films and other plays dealing with this issue. The difference is that here you walk away wondering how you can help. You don't have a guilty conscience, don't go home depressed. I was just full of this urge to get involved."

"I had a good time, I examined much of this in my mind, and quite a few things became suddenly clear to me. How many misunderstandings actually shape our daily lives, and how difficult it is to change an ongoing process even if you know exactly what your views are."

"Proving myself and finding out that there's nothing really to fear, and sensing the resignation that often attaches to the subject and the theme of this play - these were the key points for me."

"What fascinated me was the openness of the audience, their willingness to get up and join the action. Also, the pleasure of working this out, acting in a play. Being able to try out contradictory courses of action, without having to think of the consequences or feel anxiety, seems to be a highly suitable means of triggering reflection processes."

"The way they joined in a circle at the end of the event, now that was pure genius. You were made to raise questions, understand and reflect upon the issues - as opposed to being sent home in a stupor, full of questions and hypotheses. You learnt about the feelings these actors had in the various scenes. Or else, you could just lean back and let it take effect on you."

"No right or wrong. No guilty conscience. Such performances always have a long-term effect on me, they keep entering my memory in bits and pieces subconsciously, and I think I'm not the only one to feel this."

“Free Mind - Forum Theatre with Underaged Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers“

Objectives

“Free Mind“ was designed to contribute to a group and community building process as a basis for cultural expression and identity development, using theatre as a tool for empowerment and medium for the public voicing of personal concerns and interests. The joy of acting, combined with creativity, were intended to translate into a change in perspective; theatre performance and role development were to facilitate the expansion of psycho-social abilities. By trying out courses of action on stage, the participants were enabled to develop new options for resolving everyday problems and conflicts. Moreover, they were induced to develop responses to xenophobic and racist acts encountered in everyday life, whether as victims or witnesses.

Content

Racial discrimination and exclusion from (or within) the labour market, including job search problems, emerged as the key themes for juvenile immigrants. Another area addressed concerned xenophobic excesses in everyday life and in public (football, shopping, disco, tram). Language problems and communication difficulties were other important issues to these youths.

Target group

The “Free Mind“ forum theatre project was aimed at asylum seekers below legal age (male and female) from African and Asian countries who were supported by the "Caritas" organization.

Process

From October 2000 until May 2001, the group members met once a week to develop the creative shape of their everyday experiences as immigrants in Austria. In addition, three public Forum Theatre performances were produced.

“Free Mind“ covered the following phases:

Group building and play

Here the focus was placed on trust and confidence building, body perception and expression exercises and rhythm/improvisation training.

Scenic exploration of everyday experience

The participants' own everyday experiences as young immigrants in Austria were transformed using the scenic methods of theatre pedagogy. Problems, conflicts and discrimination situations were staged in the form of images and scenes.

Development of Forum Theatre scenes

Key themes and problems encountered by immigrants on a day-to-day basis were processed into Forum Theatre scenes. The rehearsal work gave rise to an in-depth exploration and development of the characters involved and their behaviour.

Performances and dialogue

Interactive Forum Theatre performances were used to try out and reflect upon alternatives to the characters' on-stage behaviour. This approach stimulated public dialogue and discourse.

Reflection and implementation of findings

Both individual and collective reflection processes were initiated to determine how the findings from the play-acting experience and baseline dramatic situations might be useful in the everyday world and could be translated into real-life behaviour.

Methods

Forum Theatre

See above.

Methodical elements

Physical and expression exercises based on theatre pedagogy

Trust-building games, physical and emotional expression training and exercises aimed at improving motion and spontaneity which enabled the young participants to have fun, come out of their shell, forget everyday concerns and develop an enhanced sense of their body and gestures.

Live statue and improvisation theatre

Experiences gathered in the host country are depicted as postures and live statues which are then refined and correlated. Brief extemporized scenes make these postures and images come alive. These methods give room for a scenic exploration of, and a process of "coming to terms" with, various everyday issues and problems that are difficult to put into words. Key experiences expressed in stage images were those of helplessness, oppression and discrimination. The subject was thus presented in a form permitting it to be sensually experienced, graphically witnessed and re-lived.

Role work

Theatre work comprises a variety of methods and techniques for deepening prior experience and translating it into characters for the plot. This enabled the young participants to adopt roles hitherto alien to them, and to try out what it feels like to be on the other, powerful side for once. The role-study process also prompted participants to project themselves into, and critically examine, specific situations emotionally and cognitively.

Effects and benefits / Best Practice

Offering a positive counter-reality

Play-based and dramatic physical and expression exercises enabled the young participants to come out of their shell, have fun, forget their day-to-day worries, and improve their sense of body and gestures. In the difficult life situation in which these juveniles find themselves, this positive counter-reality is of great importance. The work provided them with meaning and a goal, as one participant phrased it: "Before theatre we were lazy, didn't have so much to do ... It was an opportunity for me to shed all that weight, to clear my mind."

Experiencing a sense of unity

The Forum Theatre project became a fixture for these juveniles, allowing them to build a group awareness, make new contacts while strengthening existing ones. "We came from many countries, but we were only a single country."

Experiencing power and self-determination

The juveniles were enabled to adopt roles hitherto alien to them, and to try out what it feels like to be on the other, powerful side for once. The role-study process also prompted participants to project themselves into, and critically examine, specific situations at both the emotional and cognitive level. One participant put it thus: "I liked the role-playing, even acting the part of the racist. I really felt touched by this, because there are many problems here." The performances also helped strengthen the young people's self-esteem, encouraging them to speak up and make their point even in the face of a crowd. "Before, like when there was a problem, I got really withdrawn. Now I am able to really say what I think, and to say what matters at that moment".

Speaking out in public

Ultimately, the chance for the juveniles to make their issues public via the medium of the performances was highly important. Metaphorically speaking, they were provided with a mouthpiece they otherwise lacked. As a result, most of them felt they were helping to make their situation better understood - a conclusion borne out by the audience's active participation. An exchange of views took place in which the spectators gained insights into the situation of these youths while the latter were able to discover uncertainty and ignorance on the part of the 'locals'. "If we stage this play with all the parts in it, people can understand it well, better than if we just say it ... I hope that people will think differently about us after seeing the play, that the negative image will go away."

Expanding the potential for action in discriminatory situations

From interviews conducted with the young migrants one year later it emerged that some of them have indeed expanded their range of responses to xenophobic or conflict-based situations. Their ability to understand or assess social situations on the whole had improved. "Yes, I've had one such experience where I wanted to get into a disco with a friend and they refused to let us in. I explained to the man that this was racism and he wasn't doing the right thing, and I started to discuss this with him".

Evaluation

The objectives of the project - group and community building, positive cultural identity development, empowerment, expanded situation handling competence, ability to speak out in public - were achieved to a very great extent. This was confirmed by research conducted as part of a thesis (cf. Nussold 2002). In retrospect it would have been desirable to carry on with this type of work, making it a permanent feature in the psycho-social care of unaccompanied underaged refugees. Apart from the above effects and benefits for participants, the following boundary conditions were identified as essential for a project of this nature:

The theatre work must be carried out continuously over a period of at least half a year. The project process should be communicated to the caregiving teams, who should be able to provide feedback,

Participation in the project must be absolutely voluntary.

During rehearsals and performances, the group must be supported by people they know.

For their rehearsal and performance work, participants should receive a nominal fee "to cover expenses". The amount of that fee should be contractually defined and made contingent on actual participation. The binding nature of the commitment will thus be underscored, and a visible token of appreciation is created.

Participant and spectator comments

Young refugees and support team members:

"Well, the strongest scene of them all, the one that hurt real deep, was the one with the tramway passengers where they called me a drug dealer. And then there was the situation where a passenger said he wasn't going to sit down beside that negro, it's the lack of respect you get."

"In the job search scene, or in the tram where they called this person a drug dealer, you got interventions which were very good and which made me feel I'd learnt a lesson."

"We have learnt very many things. I think much of it will stay in our lives."

"Sure I found wishes expressed here, namely that everybody is respected, that regardless of colour, everybody is equal before the law, especially in Austria. If the Austrians show some respect too, then I won't have any problems here either."

"The most important thing in my view, really, is that they were able to convey something here, that they are not victims but people with abilities." (Support team member).

Performance spectators:

"And I was rather amazed how good these youths were, how accurately they depicted some details. Despite the serious subject, I enjoyed this evening enormously ... Incredible how positions can change unintentionally. Each intervention develops its own dynamics that you cannot escape."

"I find this form of theatre really fascinating, and the scenes keep coming back to me. Today I often wonder how I would respond in specific situations. What would I do? Would I keep my mouth shut, or would I get involved?"

Service

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The Askov Model I Theatre in Intercultural Education

Henning Dochweiler (Askov Højskole, Denmark)

Aims

From November, 1, 2000 through May, 15, 2001 (26 weeks + Christmas break), the theatre line of Askov Højskole (Denmark) consisted of 12 students from Denmark (4), Spain (2), France (2), Germany (3) and Italy (1). It was instructed at least 14 lessons a week, including a two week introduction to the Danish language and society. The main teacher of the group was Anna Himmelstrup, herself a graduate from Glasgow Royal Academy of Drama and Music. She was assisted part time by drama teacher and actor Jesper H. Larsen and by mr Allan Agerbo from our partner organisation AOF.

The aim of the course was to form a group of young Europeans to learn about drama and theatre and to produce a play completely on their own on adolescence and the problems of getting a grip of identity, group belonging and cultural background in modern society.

The process of learning dramatical means of expression and simultaneously refining the only common language – English – provoked many confrontations in the group building and discussions on the process. Instruction included improvisation, stunt, Mike Leigh's play method, work on monologues, building up a character and text analysis.

Contents and Methods

From January 2001, the work concentrated on the main purpose, writing and rehearsing a performance under the guidelines of the Grundtvig programme, refining the pronunciation and planning the tour at the same time.

To help build up the dialogues, the students went through a number of exercises, reading of youth literature and producing sketches relating to their own experiences with adolescence and building up relationships. A special note was of course the emphasis on the confrontation of own identity with that of other cultures. In this respect the teacher Anna Himmelstrup succeeded in creating a number of challenging scenarios that really set off discussions – and sometimes confrontations and even crises.

A special opportunity of making observations was the group of young foreigners simultaneously studying Danish language and culture at the school. The group consisted of students from the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Albania, Bosnia/Hercegovina, Russia, Japan and Venezuela. These students contributed to the making of the play both by offering their own observations on the behaviour and attitudes of the young Danes (certainly not only flattering to these) and by their own group building – of which they were only conscious, it seemed, through the dialogue with the theatre students. The importance of this dialogue to the school as an entity – reaching from the seating order at table via eating and not least drinking habits to religious discussions (Catholics vs Muslims especially) should not be underestimated.

Gradually, a number of dialogues were created and tried on stage. The task of refining the English wording and combining them into a meaningful play was undertaken by Anna Himmelstrup. After a number of discussions and changes after criticism, the play had a name "WHO IS AFRAID OF THE WOLF?" and the final intensive rehearsing including the making of sets and costumes could start.

Simultaneously one of the German students in conjunction with the principal and his class, "the cultural mediation line" started planning the tour in details. The idea was to present the English spoken play to young Danes and foreigners at other Folk High Schools and then embark on a bus tour through Central Europe, again with young English speaking people as the target group. The reason for this geographical decision was that the principal, Henning Dochweiler, for 13 years had been director of the Danish Cultural Institute in Vienna, covering all Central Europe, and consequently had many good contacts.

Best Practices

The play premiered in Askov on April, 25, 2001, before our own students and was a massive success. There is a recording of the play (duration 55 minutes) and a brief description in English in the programme (enclosed). Of course, the play itself was followed up by a discussion of the contents among all students at the school. The problem of group belonging or not and mobbing again proved crucial to young people. After Askov, the play was performed in Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, and Hungary until it was shown a last time in Askov before a new group of students on May, 14. All in all 11 performances in 6 countries, including all 6 capitals, more than 1,200 persons, in less than 3 weeks. Each performance was followed by a discussion in English with the group of students watching. All the audiences were English speaking students assembled in cultural centres or gymnasias, altogether an estimated 1,200 persons. In fact, the success criterion was the willingness of the audience to embark on discussions – the greatest ones occurring in Budapest and in Bratislava, where there was also a remarkable interest from the media, including TV.

Evaluation

The difficulties of this project were observed especially in the beginning, due to the different backgrounds and attitudes to the learning situation in a liberal, non-formal residential school, where you stay rather closely together for half a year. But exactly these initial difficulties proved to be of great importance to the final outcome, being part of the process and thus of the result. In our experience, however, there can be no doubt that a project of this kind requires a strong teacher, who does not only have a professional background as a drama teacher and who also commands English very well – but most important: who can mediate, obtain the confidence of the young people and create a positive allround environment.

Services

There are videotapes available of the theatre performance and the film: please contact Askov Højskole, Maltvej 1, DK-6600 Vejen, or e-mail askov@grundtvig.dk.

Intercultural Storytelling

"Folk Tales and Stories – Making them Travel"

Prof. Dr. Winfred Kaminski
Faculty of Applied Social Sciences
University of Applied Sciences, Cologne

Aims

The project was primarily targeted at educators, teachers, and students of social pedagogy, whom we intended to acquaint and familiarize with the narrative tradition of another country. Thus, we considered it important to share the oriental tradition of the "hakawati" (coffeehouse storyteller) and the type of stories he narrates, for example tales from "Arabian Nights" or other oriental countries with their specific stock of characters.

Participants in the programme were to re-develop free narrative skills themselves (as distinct from reading to an audience) so that they would be able to follow and revive the oral tradition. It was our intention to train this important capability and to transmit it to the extent where our course participants would in turn be able to instruct others, thus spreading a receptiveness for intercultural tradition.

With this aim in view we designed and conducted courses with between 6 and 10 participants, using experienced male and female narrators. Participants subsequently went out to establish their own narration groups (in kindergartens, day-care centers, schools and youth centers) which allowed them to pass on their freshly acquired skills while carrying the narrative content further afield.

The results achieved were twofold. On the one hand, story-telling skills were improved; on the other, new and hitherto unknown stories from different traditions were made more widely known. It was found highly fruitful to absorb the respective cultural context of the course participants directly and to benefit from each particular folk tale tradition present.

Contents

Medium:

The medium addressed in this cultural studies project was chiefly language, as represented by oral narration and tradition. This direct form of communication affords an opportunity to familiarize social groups of different cultural and/or ethnic background with each other's specific heritage without having to rely on extensive material resources. We had placed the focus on German/Turkish contacts, and specifically on folk tales and stories from these two cultural environments, having had occasion to note an exceedingly low degree of mutual acquaintance with typical characters from the tradition of the two cultures in the respective other language.

Subject:

Apart from educational events with a primarily technical background these were mainly designed to develop new stories and make cultural traditions more widely known. The traditional narratives examined ranged from Slavonic (mention should merely be made here of the important Russian folk tale character "Baba-Yaga", a witch differing greatly from its counterparts in Grimm's fairy tales) to South European, mainly Turkish. Two heroes enjoyed particularly by the adult listeners and, subsequently, their young audiences, were Nasreddin Hoca and Karagöz. Both are integral parts of the Turkish cultural heritage but virtually unknown in Germany; we have parallel figures in Till Eulenspiegel and Kasper, or Punch.

Up to this moment, about 20 adults have taken part in the narration courses. All were from the greater Cologne area: teachers, educators, students, social workers. About four afternoon exercise classes (of 3 hours' duration each) were usually necessary and sufficient. The related public storytelling afternoons and evenings were attended by an average 25 visitors (adults and children, depending on the theme). The venues selected for these narration events were schools, libraries, day-care centers and other educational institutions.

Story-telling activities:

Each of us has engaged in narration at some point. We all tell stories (long and short, low or tall), often anecdotes, or – more frequently still – jokes, as well as the occasional excuse or untruth. There are "born" storytellers, but like many other things, oral narration can be taught and rehearsed.

There are many occasions for narration, and almost as many genres: adventure stories, travel stories, love and disaster stories, stories from school and so on. Imagination is the only limit. Usually we associate oral narration – which is what interests us here – with the telling of folk (or "fairy") tales, but we are all thrilled instantly by fantastic or fictitious ("cock-and-bull") stories, the yarn of the hunter or sailor, or indeed any other form of exaggerating account – whether as part of the audience or as narrator. What matters is the aspect of oral performance.

Where, when and to whom do we tell stories? Storytelling is widespread for instance, in the pub, at children's bedtime, in a circle of travel companions, in school or kindergarten, in retirement homes and by a invalid's bedside. In actual fact, stories of illness (or about the ill) are probably among those most frequently told. What we care about is immediacy; the product itself is not the important thing, but the process of narrating, the finished story does not matter as much as the development of the narrative face-to-face with an audience.

Stories are told across all social groups, by old and young, women and men, privately or publicly, formerly in the spinning room, now in the coffee shop. Our first stories are usually rooted in biography but soon overstep these bounds, evolving into independent narratives, hopefully, worth listening to in their own right.

Narration has undergone a reevaluation in recent years because of the personal encounter it involves, the teller's unique voice, the direct form of address, all of which is pitted against the power of modern communication technology. In the eyes of Volker Klotz, the Stuttgart-based German literature scholar, even literary narration often sticks to oral storytelling devices and turns out to be an exercise in "talking to keep death at bay", i.e., storytelling keeps us alive. He was referring to the narrative circles in Boccaccio's "Decameron", to "Arabian Nights" and Sheherezade's storytelling skills, as well as to the fairy tales of the Grimm brothers.

The process of narrating offers a utopian model of life that succeeds despite the threatening loss of human interaction. The depths penetrated by storytelling become clear if we remember its role in the confessional box and, later on, psychoanalysis. But if oral storytelling obviously meets a need of the soul, this is only one aspect. Another function, important *inter alia* in kindergarten and school, reveals itself if we consider that narration is also a fundamental form of teaching. In his classic book on didactics of that title, the Swiss Hans Aebli (1976) emphasises that in the cultures of the past that knew neither book nor script, education and training as we know it was imparted by narration.

In order to convey something to an interlocutor, I must adapt my narration to his level. For instance, when addressing children (specifically in a multicultural context), I should allow for the fact that they still have undifferentiated, general ideas and that, as a result, their concepts are simpler, to the point of being one-dimensional. This implies that their thought processes are less flexible, the more so the younger they are. The narrator must therefore choose his words carefully – he should not operate with concepts, but describe actions, and should present specific behaviour instead of referring to decisions or virtues. The experiential dimension takes priority over the matter-of-fact, scientific one. Action remains in the foreground of the narrative; by applying the “genetic principle” I present and explain matters in their evolution.

Oral storytelling does not abide by a fixed wording, it is all about extemporizing, whether at the family table or in the bazaar of Istanbul where the *hakawati* charms his audience with stories from Arabian Nights. What matters in oral narration is not the reliable version, but the “ever-changing variation”, the infinite changes made depending on the audience, time and place. "The narrator invents his wording the moment he tells the story." (J. Merkel)

There is one additional peculiarity of oral narration: we cannot luxuriantly embroider the story, lest we may lose our grasp on the audience. So the story must move forward. The weight must remain on the action, on graphic images. Our facial expressions and gestures must enrich the story and help captivate the listener. Oral storytelling is successful when the narrator is not just a speaker, but plays and acts at the same time. Our narration needs a clear-cut dramaturgic structure, it requires obvious patterns and schemes. In the interests of both narrator and audience, the plot must not get too entangled.

In general it appears necessary to memorize not words but plot sequences, possibly by closing the eyes and reviewing the story like an internal motion picture. We can then extemporize along the images thus committed to memory, can fill them with new life linguistically, and as we do so we are already telling the story. Key words linked to individual turns of the plot are helpful, and are supported by physical expressions and gestures. We must ask ourselves: How specifically are we representing something? What should we merely suggest? When and how do we involve the spectators? We need not fear repetition, quite the contrary is true: repetition does not hurt an orally transmitted story because it creates moments of rest and sets rhythmic cadences. Moreover, it facilitates reception by the audience. As is evident from the example of the fairy tale, formulaic devices help generate a graphic and lively image.

Now if we look around, it appears that narrative skills are on the wane, what with all the stories around us. There is more than the narrative side to this, for the ability to tell stories is contingent on the ability to listen. Narrating is not a form of one-way communication, the listeners play a role in creating the story. Through our narration we pass on experience, attitude and emotions. The act of listening and that of storytelling

are two mutually contingent processes, and the more I am able to slip into both roles, the more oral narration will become an active part of everyday life.

Methods:

The courses were held mainly in seminar format, in the form of day or evening classes. Completing the programme enabled our professionally active participants to continue the work within their respective institutions while deepening their understanding of other cultural traditions on their own. As the stories thus began to "travel", the indigenous culture was enriched with new elements from the folk tradition of the migrants. In addition, a measure of linguistic exchange took place, since audiences (particularly those consisting of children) often wanted to hear and learn to understand words from the respective other culture, which boosted the confidence, e.g., of Turkish participants whose language is not regarded particularly highly in Germany.

Best practices

In our everyday life we narrate, for instance, when describing events, sometimes we even communicate delicately designed stories. In each case, the purpose is to "transfer experience" (K. Ehlich) – this has been true in the past and is still true today, both intra- and interculturally. Narrating helps overcome isolation and allows us to share, specifically in foreign cultures. Integrated into the more general reference frame of human activity, it impacts our ability to make ourselves understood and to understand others. Invariable, something happens to the listener and the narrator at the same time. It thus becomes clear that the act of jointly making up, "inventing", and telling a story is a particular type of "social practice" (Merkelbach/Clausen) that must be present in school and in many other places at various distinct times.

It is the task of pedagogy to promote the process of narration through specific activities. To achieve this, occasions for narration must be provided to give both German and non-German participants an opportunity to relate positively to linguistic expression and generate encouragement. Needless to say, care must be taken to ensure that these storytelling occasions address aspects of the respective multicultural background.

Evaluation

Overall, the idea of multicultural storytelling can be viewed as a highly fruitful one, although at times the sheer logistic aspects proved burdensome. While it is easy to find partner institutions who are prepared to play the listening (i.e., consuming) part, motivating them to carry the narrative process further (i.e., to participate actively) tended to be more difficult. Consequently, the idea of our "travelling folk tale project" was not always easy to implement.

However, once the event program was launched, it turned out that interest remained high and courage grew; the readiness to try one's own hand at narrating increased markedly. We know of several follow-up projects currently taking place in the Cologne region.

Intercultural narrating is an inexpensive yet promising technique for acquiring and promoting intercultural competence. It arouses curiosity about other peoples' cultures and strengthens the willingness to accept and appreciate matters new and foreign.

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Intercultural work

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Aims

The objective of the workshop was to allow participants to acquire greater sensitivity and empathy in dealing with people from other cultures. In addition it aimed to strengthen their competence in dealing with conflicts in intercultural contexts and especially to broaden their repertoire of actions and behaviour in situations subject to conflicts. Furthermore the course aimed to develop awareness of the participants' own cultural imprint and allow them to acquire confidence and clarity in their professional role and self-image in intercultural work. The workshops enabled the participants to acquire and broaden economical, sociological, cultural and psychological background knowledge regarding immigration and integration (dates, facts, contexts, ground-breaking concepts, theories, etc.). Also the participants were to gain more insight into their own positions and patterns of behaviour and to actively criticise them. In addition to encounter and engage in dialogue with people from other cultures with the objective of getting to know immigrants' situations and of learning to balance the foreign and the familiar, to trace processes of (de-)integration and to get to know oneself better in the process. The workshop was also designed to further the exchange of experience and the creation of lasting information and co-operation networks between the participants. Finally, it was aimed to develop and carry out a project during the workshop and to present it in the framework of the workshop and to thus ensure the applicability of the learning to everyday work.

Target group

The composition of the target group was interdisciplinary and intercultural participants. Persons from many different fields of work - social, youth, health, education, integration, and community - participated. The participants encountered immigrants and multicultural groups within the context of their field of work. The primary goal of the participants was to broaden their intercultural competencies.

Contents

Immigration - multicultural co-existence (Module I)

This seminar deals with immigration and the value and culture shifts connected to it. The participants studied their personal socio-cultural origins by means of their familial histories and put their history in the context of history in general. Through this, the intertwining of family curricula (micro level) and the societal developments and events on the macro level became evident, the issue of "immigration" was related to one's own life circumstances and given an emotional context. In a simulation about immigration it was possible to acquire an understanding of the kinds of difficulties with which people who emigrate to another country and wish to be accepted there are confronted.

In addition, Austria's immigration and integration policy during the last 35 years was examined more closely. Aspects of the topic were researched in small groups and presented to the whole group, and human resources personnel (scientists, politicians, representatives of NGO's, representatives of immigration organisations) were available to answer questions.

Diversity, foreignness - intercultural communication (Module II)

One significant focus of the seminar was the discussion of the origins of prejudices, and the conceptualisation of foreignness and alienation. Through perception and reflection exercises, supported by short film sequences and contextual impulses, the participants became aware of the phenomena of selective perception, self-fulfilling prophecy, the development of prejudices and the possibility of the formation of a concept of alienation. The participants studied, by means of a scheme of analysis for the description of marginalisation mechanisms, examples of discrimination and racism both on the interaction-level in daily life as well as on the structural level. Examples of behaviour exhibiting civil resolve and acting approaches were rehearsed by role-play scenarios.

The second part of the seminar was about the examination of family structures from different cultures and the way in which they clash in a pluralist society.

The topic of Islam was of great importance as perceptions of Islam in our society are heavily imprinted by the idea of Islamic fundamentalism. It was the aim of the discussion in the seminar, to present differentiated information about this religion and to examine the heterogeneous group of Muslims in Austria in more detail.

Intercultural conflict management (Module III)

In this seminar, the topics of intercultural conflict management and intercultural management of conflicts were dealt with in an integrated manner. On the level of methodology/didactics the forum theatre (see description of methods) was used as a model for the dealing with conflicts, with the aim of reflecting one's own and external behaviour in conflicts, simulating possible reactions, broadening one's repertoire of responses and to experience oneself being actively creative in conflicts. The scene work was complemented by theoretical contributions about topics such as "What is an intercultural conflict?", "*The Human-Needs Theory* in connection with conflict resolution" and "Non-Violent Communication". The participants extended the contents of these contributions through exercises and sequences of reflection, so as to implement the insights in the scene work which followed.

The participants were in addition, presented with the practical realisation of these approaches through examples of intercultural conflict mediation in the community (conflict mediation in apartment buildings and housing estates).

Intercultural learning - integration (Module IV)

Intercultural learning presupposes encountering people of different cultural origins. It describes a learning process leading from an ethnocentric world view towards the acceptance and valuing of cultural diversity and presupposes the ability to contemplate one's own cultural and moral precepts from a critical distance and to differentiate cultural perceptions. From this starting-point, the participants reflected upon their own intercultural learning history. Experiences from living or travelling abroad, immigration, encounters and experiences with the co-existence of people of diverse origins were thoroughly examined against this background. Different cultural behaviour could be experienced through everyday examples of "critical incidents", and the meanings behind them scrutinised. This also strengthened intercultural competence.

A multicultural society requires supporting social framework conditions such as legal and social equality of treatment, as well as possibilities of participation for immigrants. These topics were looked at in the second part of the seminar. Contributions by experts

about potential-oriented integration policy as well as examples of integration models implemented in practice in the different fields of the community were presented. Additionally, the participants also presented their completed projects during the workshop.

Procedure

The seminar/workshop lasted from October 2001 to March 2002 and comprised 4 three-day seminar-modules (October, November, January, March). Additionally, the participants developed and realised a project and presented it in the seminar.

Target group

The composition of the target group was interdisciplinary and intercultural participants. Persons from many different fields of work - social, youth, health, education, integration, and community - participated. The participants encountered immigrants and multicultural groups within the context of their field of work. The primary goal of the participants was to broaden their intercultural competencies.

Methods

In the pedagogical design special attention was paid to the linking of different levels and forms of learning, namely to the combination of emotional learning, cognitive learning and reflection upon practical experience. On the other hand, the learning levels; individual, group and community, were linked together and entwined with individual learning, learning in groups (group dynamics) and socio-political learning. This concept is reflected in the methods used.

Methods of self-awareness and reflection

These methods allow the participants to acquire personal experience, to get to know themselves better, to practice empathetic capacity for understanding and to broaden their own choices of action. The repertoire of methods included perception, communication and simulation exercises, imaginary voyages, self-assessment exercises, biographical self-reflection and miscellaneous interaction exercises.

Forum theatre

The forum theatre portrayed intercultural conflict situations scenically. Different methods of resolution were sought and played through. In the scenic play the participants could immediately see the effect of their behaviour and their intervention. The stage became the test for reality. New, unusual and also seemingly absurd patterns of behaviour and action could be tried out. Courage to act was promoted.

Intercultural dialogue

Intercultural dialogue and encounters with people from other cultures allowed the participants to get to know biographies, values and the life situations of people from other cultures; to balance the foreign and the familiar, to trace (de-)integration processes and to experience this for themselves in the encounter.

Impulse presentations

Impulse presentations by experts helped the participants to acquire sociological, cultural, political and economic background knowledge and to grasp the larger social context in the field of immigration and integration and also to become acquainted with ground-breaking concepts. The experts' presentations allowed the participants to argue intellectually in discussions, to present their own opinions, to obtain confirmation or to

be questioned and to take home suggestions for new approaches and concepts to be used in practice.

"Good-practice" examples

Practice field experts presented positive and successful experiences in immigration and integration work. When choosing the examples, the course management was guided by the participants' needs and wishes. This stimulated the communication of interesting and exciting practical approaches and networking.

Planning and realisation of a project

This was an integral part of the course. The participants presented the results of their projects during the fourth module. Cognitive knowledge, behaviour and learned acting strategies could be implemented in a practical area of responsibility. At the same time, the projects also created an impetus for the copying of creative ideas within the seminar group.

Best practice

Family histories in the course of the generations (Description)

The participants were instructed to research their own social and cultural origins. They were asked in the invitation to the seminar to explore the living circumstances and history of their family back to their grandparents. The most diverse aspects of their family background including such areas as upbringing, education, profession/occupation, male and female roles, religion, language, number of children, marriage, etc. were to be looked at. Additionally they were to put their family history in a historical context. Questions such as: What influence had outside political, economical events? What changes, e.g. referring to the significance of the religion, the roles of man and woman became visible in the course of the three generations? What were their experiences of immigration? Which reasons were decisive?

This gave the participants the possibility to discover the interlacing of family curricula and social events. The participants presented their "histories" to the group in the seminar. Drawings, photos, important objects ("cultural objects") were used to illustrate the events and support the presentation. A concluding collective reflection on the presented stories allowed the creation of mutual relations and insights and the expression of emotional involvement.

Family histories in the course of the generations (Effects and benefits)

The realisation of one's own family history with its developments, ruptures, contradictions, highs and lows made the participants emotionally involved. For many people it was the first time they had brought to mind and recounted their history in a general survey over three generations. The intensive discussion of family history allowed the participants to immerse themselves in the family's cultural history and identity and gave many people the motivation to delve further into their origins. Exchanging their histories made many participants realise that there are, in their families, examples of immigration within the last 100 years. Causes for immigration then and now include wars, economic distress, aspirations for better opportunities in life, voluntary departure and the desire for adventure. The methodology of the "history-telling" was greatly approved and appreciated. One participant put it this way: "If we, in our own families, told our common history more often, we would act in a less deprecatory way towards immigrants, because we would realise that we too are a part of this history of immigration". An awareness developed as to how much social circumstances influence and mould family life and the personal history of individuals.

"Barnga" - a simulation game about the topic "intercultural communication/integration" (Description)

The card tournament "Barnga" (description see "service") is an easy to play and time-limited simulation game, which picks out aspects of intercultural communication and integration as a central theme. The players were, in groups of 4-6 persons, placed at several tables. The tables were labelled (Table 1, Table 2 and so on.). On the last table there stood a bowl with fruit, candy etc. With 5 groups the game lasts 4 rounds, with 4 groups 3 rounds and so on. The last table is the winner. Each group receives a set of cards, the rules and the instructions. The rules provide the participants with the information that the one who has the most tricks after 5 minutes is the winner of a "round". The winner of the round moves to the next higher group, the loser falls to the next lower group (except in the first and last group). The instructions contain slightly different "rules" from table to table. But the players are not provided with this information. After a five-minute try-out phase the card tournament begins. The groups are told that they are no longer allowed to communicate verbally or in writing. Afterwards the game is evaluated at three different levels, firstly, on the emotional level: Which emotions did you go through? What were the strongest experiences of frustration or success? Which behaviour brought you success or failure? On the cognitive level: What consequences became evident? What does it mean not to understand "rules"? How does one feel belonging to the core group? How does one feel as a newcomer? Finally on the political level: How is this game connected to "immigration", "intercultural communication", "intercultural coexistence"? What does the game illustrate about distribution of power, marginalisation, security, solidarity and participation? How can integration and multiculturalism work against this backdrop?

"Barnga" - a simulation game about the topic "intercultural communication/integration" (Effects and benefits)

The slightly different rules between the groups led to irritation during player changes. In particular, newcomers (immigrants) get to feel the handicap of not having known the rules. How does one behave in relation to these irritations? How does the core group behave - with solidarity or by marginalising? Are the rules of the core group maintained? Are new rules developed? Reactions of the players are very diverse. Withdrawal, fight, silent adaptation, protest/dispute, escape - a variety of behaviours are visible. The fact that speech is forbidden, leads to the newcomers not being introduced sufficiently to the new rules. From this arise not only misunderstandings regarding the rules but also subtle tendencies for plotting within the core group. The question arises whether to surmount the communication barriers or to use knowledge of the rules as a means of power. The game reflects the social reality about "intercultural communication" and "integration of immigrants" very well. The participants are confronted with similar difficulties as people who want to be accepted into a new society or group. The members of the last group know in advance that the game does not allow them to end up as the overall winner. Because of this, the motivation of those involved to play decreases round by round. As playing behaviour is successively questioned, the willingness to integrate diminishes.

Integrative approach in the intercultural handling of conflicts (Description)

On the level of methodology/didactics, forum theatre (see description of methods) was used as a model for the action-related handling of intercultural conflicts. The basic principle of forum theatre is to draw attention to, by means of theatre, situations in which repressive action occurs, and to directly alter these situations. Conflicts and situations of injustice are portrayed and resolution approaches are developed in scenes. The participants are asked, in the role of "the victim", to show diverse possible solutions. The stage became the test for reality.

The scenes were stories based on every-day experiences about discrimination and marginalisation (e.g. racist molestation of Muslims in the tramway). The objective of the scene work is to reflect the behaviour of oneself and others in conflicts, act out variants

of actions, broaden ones repertoire of actions and experience oneself being actively creative in a conflict.

The scene work - three to four scenes were worked on in the seminar - was constantly deepened and extended through theoretical input.

Topics such as conflict theories, cultural theories and cultural concepts, identity-needs in deeply rooted conflicts, 'what is an intercultural conflict?' and inoffensive anger-communication were consolidated through impulse presentations.

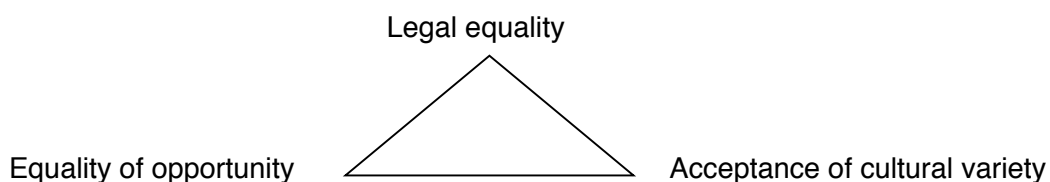
Exercises and sequences of reflection allowed the participants to adopt aspects of these impulses in practice, so as to apply them the following scene work.

Integrative approach in the intercultural handling of conflicts (Effects and benefits)

This integrative method of conflict handling was highly appreciated by the participants. The transfer of theoretical parts into strategies for behaviour and actions can be implemented immediately. The participants experienced a palette of variants of actions in one and the same conflict situation. The one-dimensional assessment of conflict-solving strategies gave way to a multi-dimensional perspective. The learning through dialogue between theory and exercise impulses on the one hand and the forum theatre work on the other allowed a study of various facets of conflict and conflict resolution work. Both a broadening of the behaviour repertoire, as well as a deepening of understanding of, and recognition of conflicts occurred. Forum theatre allows for a highly emotional participation in conflict resolution. Actors as well as audience are "grabbed" emotionally by the scene work. Additionally, theory inputs strongly emphasises the cognitive understanding and acquisition. Well orchestrated, the two elements resulted in integrated learning.

The integration triangle (Description)

In discussions of the topic "integration", it was noticed on many occasions that this term was discussed in contradictory ways, and that it contained or suggested different meanings and connotations to the participants. For many, it refers to the menace of forced assimilation and conformity of immigrants, for others "integration" meant the participation in political rights. Because of the explosiveness and ambivalence of this term in the socio-political debate, ample space was given for the discussion of this topic. The course management thought it important to take a closer look at this term and to present their own analysis framework. The Austrian political scientist Dr. Bernhard Perchinig presented and explained the following analysis framework.



Assessment criteria for legal equality (political level):

- Do foreign nationals experience equality in the face of the law?
- How about the degree of residence security?
- How is family reunification regulated?
- What degree of access to the work and housing market, educational system and welfare-state benefits is available according to legal status?
- What opportunities for political participation do foreign nationals legally have? Do foreign nationals have the right to vote?
- What are the provisions for naturalisation?

Assessment criteria for equal opportunities on socio-economical and political levels

- What is the real residence security for immigrants like?
- How about the opportunities for immigrants in the job market, in the educational system, as well as in the housing market and goods market?
- What real possibilities for political participation (right to vote and participation in voting, status of immigrants in political parties and unions, ratio of deputies and members of government to the immigrant population) do immigrants have?
- What action does the state take to fight discrimination?

Assessment criteria for cultural variety or diversity (socio-cultural level)

- Is multilingualism and intra-cultural instruction in kindergarten and educational institutions part of the rule-system?
- Is there any official recognition of the holidays of the immigrants' religions?
- Are religious food commandments recognised and acted upon in kindergarten, schools, hospitals and staff canteens?
- Do administrative bodies offer their services multilingually?
- Do social institutions offer culture-sensitive support?

Integration policy must not confine itself to one or two areas but should pay adequate attention to all three aspects.

The integration triangle (Effects and benefits)

The participants received an easy to handle but very significant instrument to systematise daily experiences in immigration work. This scheme affords them an orientation for political discussions. The analysing scheme affords a new view on phased-out aspects. Ideas and approaches for "integration" become visible - e.g. the idea of an intra-enterprise interpretation service was viewed as a very motivating and sensible idea by a participant from the health sector. The presented instrument permits a very comprehensive view of integration. It eliminates many insecurities and ambivalent and contradictory notions. The participants appreciated it as an important support in their daily work, in which they are repeatedly challenged to define integration and to take measures. Many of the presented aspects appeared to the participants as utopian. However, some aspects seemed difficult but possible to obtain (e.g. multilingual administrative services). The question of how to fund these claims and demands came to the foreground.

Participants' feedback

"For me the variety of the participants, the different professional experiences, the interculturally-composed group was one of the most important elements of this course and a big enrichment. I really learned a lot through this course, especially concerning my attitude towards Austrians."

"You should emphasise even more that the course also runs on an emotional level. I had the expectation that it would be a course with presentations. This caused me some difficulties in the beginning, but during the course I started to appreciate these methods."

"Sensibility, curiosity, openness, small indications of success, contacts with the other participants, new and expanded knowledge - all this I gained through this workshop and it all flows into my daily work. The workshop was enriching in every respect."

"For me the four most important elements of this workshop were:

- *the introduction with one's own history of origin,*
- *the insights concerning the unjust "ratio of distribution" between foreign nationals and Austrians regarding possibilities in education, career and job,*
- *the significance of the non-intellectual accesses and methods in the course methodology,*
- *the method of the forum theatre and interesting debate about Islam."*

"In some stages less would have been 'more', i.e. in a further course several aspects should be allocated more time and space - be it for more in-depth theory-impulses or for more examination and discussion within the group."

"Forum theatre is an impressive way of communicating and method of conflict handling. I also discovered that I like to slip into roles and act, something I did not know beforehand. Now at the end of the course I feel more competent and definitely assured."

"Foreign is a way of looking at things. For a native I am foreign. For an alien we are all foreign."

"The best way for me to describe the seminars is the following:

- *the first course was the "seminar of the community"*
- *the second course the "seminar of the broadening (of one's horizon and self-awareness)*
- *the third course the "seminar of politics"*
- *the fourth course the "seminar of knowledge".*

Evaluation

The goals of this workshop were achieved to a high degree. It should be noted that the courses pedagogic/didactic conception, with the combination of emotional, cognitive learning and reflection upon practice, may appear novel and unfamiliar to the participants. Participants have different learning experiences and learning habits and self-awareness includes the questioning of long standing thought and behaviour patterns, so the education approach realised in the seminar can thus cause insecurity. The integrative concept of learning poses high demands on the seminar's trainers and assistants. It means constant balancing of the elements of self-awareness, knowledge-broadening and information and strategy transfers in relation to the groups. Disagreements during the course are unavoidable, because the groups represent the variety in plural societies; a microcosm of society, so to speak. Participants have different demands and priorities, such as more political learning, more self-awareness, more practice. Those have to be brought in line with each other. This means re-discussing and re-planning aspects of the content, lecturers and other areas in the framework setting the priorities for the seminars to be repeated. The course management considers the learning structure with the meshing of emotional and cognitive learning, the combination of individual and group learning as especially valuable. It allows the participants to put what they have learned into practice particularly well and to contribute new questions from practice to the course.

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