

enhancing cultural awareness through cultural production

Evaluation

February 2003

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Intercultural event "INTERKUUL 2001

Dr. József Wieszt
Heimvolkshochschule Hustedt

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.

Tapaus Tellus

Multicultural evening

Irmeli Luoma
Humanities Polytechnic
The Korpilahti Unit, Finland

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.

Children's activity day

Irmeli Luoma
Humanities Polytechnic
The Korpilahti Unit, Finland

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.

Adventure in the art world Multicultural children's activity day

Irmeli Luoma
Humanities Polytechnic
The Korpilahti Unit, Finland

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.

Children and War

A photo-pedagogic project into Kosovo and its effects

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

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).

The Askov Model II

Film in Intercultural Education

Henning Dochweiler (Askov Höjskole, Denmark)

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.

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

Risto Ruottunen
Humanities Polytechnic

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.

Theatre of the Oppressed

Enhancing cultural awareness and empowerment in multicultural life

Michael Wrentschur
Peter Altmann

“ÖNORM – Forum Theatre on Everyday Racism“

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“

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?”

The Askov Model I Theatre in Intercultural Education

Henning Dochweiler (Askov Höjskole, Denmark)

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.

Intercultural Storytelling

"Folk Tales and Stories – Making them Travel"

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

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.

Intercultural work

Maria Zwicklhuber
Peter Altmann
Grazer Büro für Frieden und Entwicklung

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.