

enhancing cultural awareness through cultural production

Methods

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Intercultural event "INTERKUUL 2001

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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)

Tapaus Tellus

Multicultural evening

Irmeli Luoma
Humanities Polytechnic
The Korpilahti Unit, Finland

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.

Children's activity day

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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."

Adventure in the art world Multicultural children's activity day

Irmeli Luoma
Humanities Polytechnic
The Korpilahti Unit, Finland

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.

Children and War

A photo-pedagogic project into Kosovo and its effects

Prof. Dr. Winfred Kaminski
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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.

The Askov Model II

Film in Intercultural Education

Henning Dochweiler (Askov Højskole, Denmark)

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.

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

Risto Ruottunen
Humanities Polytechnic

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."

Theatre of the Oppressed

Enhancing cultural awareness and empowerment in multicultural life

Michael Wrentschur
Peter Altmann

“ÖNORM – Forum Theatre on Everyday Racism“

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.

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

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".

The Askov Model I Theatre in Intercultural Education

Henning Dochweiler (Askov Højskole, Denmark)

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 gymnasia, 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.

Intercultural Storytelling

"Folk Tales and Stories – Making them Travel"

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

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.

Intercultural work

Maria Zwicklhuber
Peter Altmann
Grazer Büro für Frieden und Entwicklung

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.

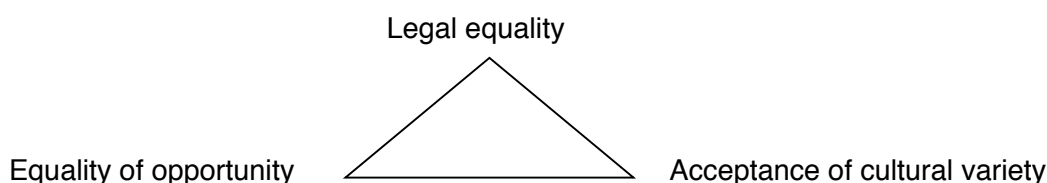
Exercises and sequences of reflection allowed the participants to adopt aspects of these impulses in practice, so as to apply them the following scene work.

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".*