

Intercultural Education



Workshops: Intercultural Education

Date: 29-30 January 2009, Warsaw

Participants: 17 Migrants

Female: 12

Male: 5

Intercultural Education



Challenges, Problems and their Origin

- the reality of our societies: Difference
- people are different in many ways and can be identified according to many criteria: gender, age, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, personality, hobbies, standard of living, beliefs, etc.

Intercultural Education



In this presentation we focus on cultural, social and ethnic differences. We will be looking at the interaction between people who are different, their lifestyles, values and cultures and the relationships between majorities and minorities in our societies.

We will be working from the basis of difference: seeing different viewpoints, ideas, values and behaviour as the starting points from which to work towards common ground.

Intercultural Education



Questions:

- When did you first hear the expression „multicultural society“?
- What did it mean to you then?
- What does it mean to you now?

Intercultural Education



Local Minorities via Migrants, Immigrants, Refugees

Attention! A minority in one place can easily be a majority in another place

In nearly every state there are „traditional” minorities: ethnic groups who have been present from centuries but who have different characteristics, manners, habits and ways of life from the majority

Intercultural Education



Migrants, Immigrants, Refugees

It is accepted practice in many European countries to talk of „migrants” as people who have origins in another country than they live at present. Some talk of „immigrants”, others of „guest workers” and some Council of Europe reports speak of „stocks of foreigner populations”.

Intercultural Education



Questions:

- When is a minority not a minority?
- When it is a powerful elite? Do you agree?
- How many people do you need to form a „minority group“?

Intercultural Education



From Multicultural to Intercultural Societies

at first sight, the terms „Multicultural Society” and „Intercultural Society” seem to be similar but they are not synonyms.

Multicultural Societies

different cultures, national, ethnic, religious groups all living within the same territory BUT not necessarily coming into contact with each other. A society where difference is often viewed negatively and forms major justification for discrimination. Minorities may be tolerated passively, but not accepted or valued.

Intercultural Education



Intercultural Societies

different cultures, national groups, etc. living together within a territory, maintain open relations of interaction, exchange and mutual recognition of their own and respective values and ways of life. We are talking about a process of active tolerance and the maintenance of equitable relations where everyone has the same importance, where there are no superiors or inferiors, better or worse people...

Intercultural Education



Culture

we are looking at the values and systems of behaviour that allow groups of people to make sense of the world.

Few points:

- the existing differences between cultures reflect the effort each society has had to make in order to survive within a particular reality.
- Even within cultures there are those who do not comply with all the usual norms and they may find themselves identified as sub-cultures. Members of sub-cultures are often the victim of intolerance within our societies

Intercultural Education



We are born within a culture, and during the first stages of life we learn our culture. This process is referred to as our **socialisation**.

Parents and family, school, friends and the mass media, particularly television- all of them contribute to the socialisation of children and, often, we are not even **aware** that we are part of this process.

Question:

What have been the biggest influences in your socialisation?

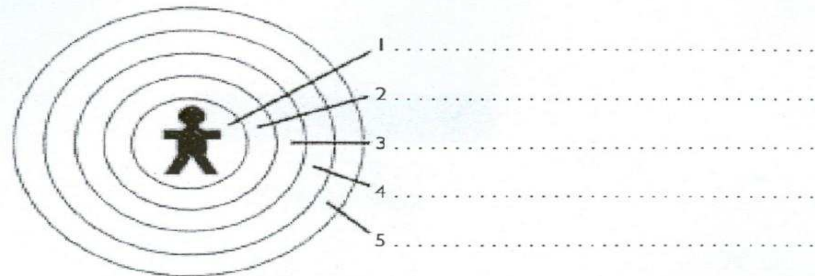
Intercultural Education



all different
all equal

Identity

Who am I? What am I? Identity is like culture, there are many aspects to it, some hidden some visible. One way of looking at this could be to imagine yourself as an onion (even if you don't like to eat them). Each layer corresponds to a different part of your identity.



alle mensen anders
allemaal gelijk

? What are the most important things which make up your identity? Write them next to the numbers 1 -5, with number 1 being the most important to you.

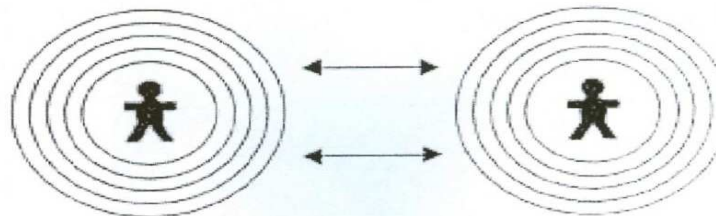
Some of these will be related to:

- the roles you play in life: a daughter, a friend, a school student, a baker, a banker;
- the parts of your identity you may be able to choose: fan of a certain type of music, member of a political party, style of clothes;
- where you were born, where you now live;
- belonging to a minority or not;
- your gender and your sexuality;
- your religion

and, perhaps strangely,

- what you are not or don't want to be: not a woman, not a socialist, not French, not an alcoholic.

Identity is not only a question of how we perceive ourselves.



The onion of identity

Intercultural Education



Stereotypes

Consist basically in shared beliefs or thoughts about a particular human group. A stereotype is an ensemble of characteristics that sums up a human group usually in terms of behaviour, habits, etc.

The objective of stereotypes is to simplify reality: „they are like that” (eg. these people are lazy, those are punctual, etc). Sometimes we use stereotypes about the group to which we feel belong in order to feel stronger or superior to others

Question: It has been suggested that we need stereotypes in order to survive. How useful do you think they are?

Intercultural Education



Prejudices

A prejudice is a judgement we make about another person or other people without really knowing them. Prejudice can be negative or positive in character. Prejudices are learned as part of our socialisation process and they are very difficult to modify or eradicate. Therefore it is important that we are aware that we have them. Prejudices and stereotypes are schemes that help us to understand reality.

Question:

Why do you think prejudices are hard to change?

Intercultural Education



Discrimination

Discrimination is prejudice in action. Groups are labelled as different and discriminated against. They may be isolated, made criminals by law that make their ways of life illegal, left to live in unhealthy conditions, deprived of any political voice, given the worst jobs or no jobs at all, denied entry to different places, subjected to random police checks, etc.

Question:

Can you think of other examples of discrimination?

Intercultural Education



Xenophobia

Xenophobia comes from a greek word meaning „fear of the foreigner”. This fear of the other is often translated into rejection, hostility or violence against people from other countries or belonging to minorities.

Intercultural Education



Intolerance

Intolerance is a lack of respect for practices or beliefs other than ones own. This is shown when someone is not willing to let other people act in a different way or hold different opinions from themselves. Intolerance can mean that people are excluded or rejected because of their religious beliefs, their sexuality, or even their clothes, etc.

Question:

When do you think that it is right to be intolerant?

Intercultural Education



Intercultural Education: A Positive Approach to Difference

Looking at:

- the discovery of relationships
- mechanism and resources
- the school/ adults' educational institutions
- out of school/ adults' educational institutions
- stages in intercultural processes
- using activities

Intercultural Education



We choose to use the term „intercultural”. Because, as Micheline Rey points out, if the prefix „inter” is given its full meaning, this necessarily implies:

- Interaction
- Exchange
- Breaking down barriers
- Reciprocity
- Objective Solidarity

Intercultural Education



„ The discovery of others is the discovery of a relationship, not of a barrier” (Claude Levi-Strauss)

The targets of intercultural education are:

- To further an understanding of the reality of an independent world and encourage action coherent with that reality
- To go beyond negative prejudices and ethnic stereotypes
- To favour a positive evaluation of difference and diversity
- To search for a highlight similarities
- To generate positive attitudes and habits of behaviour towards people from other societies and cultures

Intercultural Education



Intercultural education with young and adult people works in two major ways:

To help them gain the capacity to recognise inequality, injustice, racism, stereotypes and prejudices

To give them the knowledge and abilities which will help them to challenge and to try to change these mechanisms whenever they have to face them in society

Intercultural Education



Informal Intercultural Education

Informal education has several important features which distinguish it from formal education:

- Informal education is voluntary, it does not have the obligatory character and providers have to make greater efforts to sustain the interest of participants
- In informal education there is a closer relationship with participants, and this makes communication easier (if at times more stressful!)
- The contents are adapted with participants to their reality and needs
- The active and participative methodology applied in informal education makes for greater participation

Intercultural Education



Working with Adult People- A Continuous Process

Intercultural education has to enable adult people to discover the origins and mechanism of intolerance, xenophobia or prejudices. Personal discovery can lead to collective action and it is up to facilitate this process.

We have chosen, in a simplified way, to compare the intercultural education process to a road in which there are different stages that, simultaneously, are centres of interest to work on.

Intercultural Education



These are:

- To imagine yourself from the outside
- To understand the world we live in
- To be acquainted with other realities
- To see difference positively
- To favour positive attitudes, values and behaviour

Notice: Intercultural education is not a closed program that may be repeated without continuous modifications!

i) To imagine yourself from the outside

In intercultural education the starting point of our work is to reflect upon ourselves and our own reality.

Ideas and contents:

Our own social and cultural reality:

- To re-assess what we feel is positive and what is negative within our reality.
- Our habits, ways of thought, styles of life, etc. are only one possible response to the world: there are other realities, which are neither better nor worse, but different.
- Explaining our reality to others who do not know it can be useful in helping us to gain a different perspective.

Reactions to other social and cultural realities with which we live:

- Prejudices and stereotypes within our society toward other societies and cultures.
- Why do those prejudices and stereotypes appear?
- Why are there some positive prejudices and stereotypes and some other negative ones?
- The influence of prejudices and stereotypes on our way of behaving towards other people.

Discrimination: An arbitrary phenomenon:

- Everyone may be discriminated against on some occasion or other.
- Why does discrimination take place?
- What forms does it take?

iv) To see difference positively

What are the bases of being able to look at difference from a positive perspective?

Ideas and contents:

Our own culture is a mixture of differences:

- The social and cultural reality we belong to is the result of a conglomeration of differences.
- We do not consider those differences to be an overwhelming obstacle to living together.

The difference among different cultures is a positive fact:

- The connections and relations between different cultures are enriching not only for individuals but also for societies. They can also be the sources of great amusement and pleasure.
- Every society and culture has something to learn from and something to teach to other societies.
- How do we learn to avoid making immediate judgements about facets of other cultures or lifestyles which are "strange" to us?
- How can we learn to live with the feelings of (temporary) insecurity, which these processes awaken in us?
- How do we take advantage of the enormous opportunities such encounters give us to find out new sides to our identities?

v) To favour positive attitudes, values and behaviour

All of these stages are based on the promotion of values: human rights, recognition, acceptance, active tolerance, respect, peaceful conflict resolution and solidarity.

- If we claim the right to solidarity then, as Jean-Marie Bergeret summarises, we also have an obligation to show solidarity. It is this type of conclusion we are working towards in intercultural education. But young people will only change their attitudes and conclusions for themselves, we can only help to facilitate the process by working through a variety of challenges with them over time.
- If we work to favour these sorts of attitudes it will be easier to encourage positive behaviour toward people from other cultures. But we have to take into consideration that these attitudes and behaviours are not possible if they are not developed parallel to qualities like honesty, cooperation, communication, critical thought and organisation.

all different
all equal

köik erinevad
köik võrdväärsed

all different
all equal

ii) To understand the world we live in

Different societies, countries or states cannot develop if they are isolated from one another.

Ideas and contents:

We live in an interdependent world:

- Societies are in need of each other.
- Europe is not a planet! (the slogan taken from the Council of Europe's North-South Centre)

Shared responsibility:

- In great part, the forces that oblige many people to leave their countries in order to survive originate in the economic system our ways of life are based upon.

As a complement to realising that we live in an interdependent world, we need to be working on our responses to the phenomenon of globalisation these days. An investigation into the causes and effects is contained in the **Compass chapter** on **Globalisation**.

iii) To be acquainted with other realities

Many of the negative attitudes towards cultures, lifestyles or societies which are different to our own, have their origin in the "fear of the unknown". That is why an essential element in intercultural education is encouraging acquaintance with and knowledge of other cultures - not that of the tourist who keeps a safe distance, but one which allows us to open up to the risks of encounter and exchange. This acquaintance must be based on the effort to understand realities different to our own.

Ideas and contents:

What do we know about other cultures or lifestyles?:

- How have we obtained the information we possess about other cultures, societies, countries?
- How much of reality is there in that knowledge, and how many preconceived thoughts reach us by different ways?
- How much do we need to question the information and images we receive through the mass media?
- How can we really find out what it is like to "walk in someone else's shoes"?

There are neither superior nor inferior cultures:

- Each culture is the result of a different reality.
- In each culture there are positive aspects from which it is possible to learn, and negative aspects we may criticise - how do we decide?

Different does not mean worse, but dissimilar:

- Which are the factors by which the difference between human beings is seen as something negative?

somos diferentes
somos iguales

Intercultural Education



To help us know how and where to place the limits of each informal intercultural education activity we should try to be aware of the following factors:

- The content and the extent of the activity we are intending to organise
- The context in which we are going to work and the limits it imposes on us
- The level of acquaintance and relationship we have with the adult people with whom we are going to work
- The level of participation in the activity- the meaning of the activities should start and must be referred to the participants' daily life.

Intercultural Education



To sum up, it may be helpful to remember that:

- Starting from an active and dynamic methodology...
- We work in processes...
- Through which and by means of information, analysis and critical reflection of reality...
- The participants in our work will find ways to:
 - Interact with people from other cultures positively in their daily life
 - And will devise strategies to transfer that positive relation with people from other cultures into individual or collective actions.

Intercultural Education



Activities, Methods and Resources

The activities of the educational programme have been written for anyone working with adults in out of school or informal educational activities in issues of equality, racism, xenophobia or intolerance.

We have identified the activities according to four themes that follow a sequential educational process:

Intercultural Education



G- activities will help to create a good **group atmosphere** and reinforce communication skills and **group dynamics**

I-activities which work with the **images** we have of people from cultures, countries or social origins different from our own

M-activities which explore the social, economic, cultural or educational **mechanisms** the lie behind situations of discrimination, refusal, exclusion and marginalisation

A-activities which encourage people to **act** to bring about social change based on values of equality and the acceptance of „difference”

Intercultural Education



The educational approach

The activities in this programme have been designed to enable to work within intercultural education issues from two perspectives: participation and group work.

Taking a participatory approach implies that adult people (migrants) are not the target of our work, but that they are the resources we count on. Our main task and challenge is to encourage migrants to take control of their own actions and thereby to empower them.

Group work is an appropriate way for people to gain a deeper understanding and ownership of their experience, knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Intercultural Education



Dealing with conflict

It is possible that some conflicts may arise during the activities. We are asking people to explore very difficult and challenging issues, encouraging them to express their opinions and to think critically, this is part of the intercultural education process, but it is never easy and can be extremely stressful.

Situations which could lead to conflicts that break the educational process should be avoided if possible.

Intercultural Education



Our role as the facilitators:

- be aware of each person in the group and any sensitive emotions that might be triggered by a particular activity or by a particular part in a role play or simulation
- make sure everyone knows that they are at no time under any pressure to say more or reveal anything about themselves other than that which they feel comfortable with
- allow participants time to warm up before any activity and time both at the beginning to get into, and at the end to get out of the role
- allow enough time for debriefing and discussion.

Thank you for your kind attention 😊

