

Intercultural dialogue in Refugee crisis in Europe

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1. Intercultural Dialogue

According to the study by Council of Europe, Intercultural dialogue is defined as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different background, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. The ultimate purpose of this exchange is to create a cooperative and willing environment for overcoming political and social tensions.

In an intercultural setting, the cultural, religious, socio-economic and political backgrounds are the so called 'differences', while the common ground is the inner-readiness and openness to deal with these differences through dialogue. The focus here is neither on agreement nor on 'finding the truth', but on understanding different perspectives, on active and respectful listening and commitment to human rights and social action.

It is further clarified in the study that Intercultural dialogue is a process that takes place between people with different backgrounds. It is guided by readiness, respect and openness; it is a dialogue between equals. The role of non-formal learning/education with respect to intercultural dialogue is to create spaces and conditions for it to happen, to support participants in understanding and overcoming their stereotypes and prejudices, in being open and motivated to cooperate for a better, fairer and more inclusive society. Intercultural dialogue enables people with different perspectives and worldviews to work and live together. Intercultural dialogue and related concepts are explained below from the perspective non-formal learning/ education activities.

Often people are inclined to take the easy way. In the case of intercultural dialogue this means maintaining a superficial level of interaction through creating an environment of respect and exchange of views, by avoiding 'hot' topics, fields of tensions, core problems in the society, major contradictions, etc. However, in order to be meaningful, intercultural dialogue needs to go beyond solely celebrating diversity and cultural heritage to creating spaces and conditions for sincere sharing and even for challenging the values and assumptions that shape our understanding of the world, our perceptions, our attitudes, our behaviours as well as the established social order.

Intercultural dialogue is not only a platform for communication; it is a means for learning about each other and learning from one another. It is an ongoing process that can contribute to social transformation, to creating a better world, a world of equal opportunities and social justice. In this perspective the main dimensions of intercultural dialogue are: respectful sharing of opinions, appreciation of diversity, meaningful interaction, dialogue between equals, learning about each other, learning from one another, and social transformation.

1.1. Intercultural Dialogue in Europe

Over the past 30 years, with the advent of increased migration from different parts of Eastern Europe, African and Asian countries, European countries have changed their approach towards immigration policies by adopting various acts and agreement in order to include immigrants within the societies. In the last year, a new mass migration of people started that were interested in seeking refugee entered Europe. The flow of immigration hasn't stopped yet so It is hard to measure dramatic results of this mass migration yet. New critical contexts and issues take place, concerning the needs of newcomers, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants; problems and new conditions arise for the receiving local societies, such as accommodation, language, cultural and religious understanding in various sectors of social life. According to the European Union policies on migration and integration as well as the fundamental human rights, we need to promote Inter-cultural dialogue, in order to avoid conflicts, acts of discrimination, stereotypes, prejudices and xenophobia, between the receiving society and the newcomers.

To promote peaceful interaction between cultures and religions by involving them to coexist in an inter-ethnic understanding instead off the isolation, segregation in ghettos and violence. Education on Inter-cultural communication and understanding is based on the recognition and vaporisation of both differences and similarities between cultures, in order to avoid conflicts and to transform them into strong relationships.

Main objective of this project is to enhance the youth inter-cultural, inter-religious and mediation, knowledge, skills and understanding in order to transmit to young people common values of freedom, tolerance and respect of human rights for creating a more just and peaceful world.

51 young participants from 7 EU countries in a 7 days youth exchange gathered in December 2017 in Athens, Greece. They gained experience in inter-cultural mediation, communication and entrepreneurship by learning through non formal education in an informal environment with a blended methodology, learner centred, as well as the help of the facilitators. In this space, creativity, peers experience and facilitators' contribution will took place. An Exchange of experience among youth took place that made European Youth united and stronger with ideas.

2. Objectives of Project

The Inter-cultural education that was provided to the participants consisted of activities that tend to produce understanding, to break down the language and inter-cultural barriers, to create relations, to establish links between the participating groups who belonged to different cultures as well as relations between them and the institutions of the society that welcomes them.

There were defined objects of the project,

1. to improve youths' inter-cultural, inter-religious and mediation skills, knowledge and understanding;
2. to create new criteria for assessing and recognising inter-cultural competences;
3. to facilitate youths' entrepreneurship by eliminated inter-cultural and inter-religious stereotypes and introducing them to international opportunities ;
4. to encourage the exchange of information in the area of personal and professional development opportunities for youth;
5. to create new inter-cultural curricula with new teaching methods of informal and non formal education;
6. to foster the development of youth projects between EU countries;

2.1. Intercultural Competences

Bertelsmann Stiftung Germany provided very effective platform to understand Intercultural Competences by segmentation of key themes while understand the topic, the breakup of the key competences while understand Intercultural dialogue are as under,

Internal Outcome:

- Shift and relativize the frame of reference
- Empathise

External Outcome: Constructive Interaction

- Avoid violating cultural rules
- Achieve valued objectives

Intercultural Knowledge & Skills:

- Comprehensive cultural knowledge
- Communication skills
- Ability to manage conflicts

Attitudes:

- Valuing of cultural diversity
- Tolerating ambiguity

3. Outcomes of Project

During the project, with the cooperation of all partners, a light electronic manual is created. The toolkit will be placed on partners websites and relevant platforms and will be available for free for youth, teachers, practitioners and stakeholders, as a guide for defining and assessing inter-cultural competences. The project contributed to the development of non-formal education methods and instruments and thus encouraged an active way of learning and assessing inter-cultural skills as well as to promote inter-cultural dialogue. In this critical moment for Europe, the inter-cultural dialogue becomes of a big importance in order to warranty peace inside communities from different background, living in Europe. The participants gained the abilities of mutual thinking, and they developed the skills of tolerance to different cultures and cooperation for a common purpose. These skills contributed to the creation of a united in the difference European society.

The expected impact of the project on the participants is that participants attained basic skills in certain subjects such as intercultural skills and their spirit of entrepreneurship was triggered. The participants took responsibility to help people in need of Intercultural dialogue. This role will develop the participants for the participating institutions in their institutional capacity and preferability would increase.

All our partners prepared their own strategy in order to reach their target group and through that spread the results of the project. The project was framed within a longer-term perspective, and planned with a view to achieve a multiplier effect and sustainable impact. The plan for this project was to be pilot and example for other projects on skills assessment in intercultural education of young people. We all understood the need of this kind of education and we planned to expand our achievements through our participants, participating organisations and our and their target groups during the time. We had all together identify our target groups (young people, representatives of local or regional public bodies, opinion leaders, decision makers, etc.) that they would be the beneficiaries and the multipliers of the project.

3.1. Reflection Questions

Here are some questions that can help participants, youth works, NGO works and any team reflect on the use of the criteria and indicators for intercultural dialogue in your work:

1. Which indicators do I already use in my practice and which ones do I want to start using in my current and future activities?
2. What other resources do I need in order check some of the indicators that are currently missing from my practice or they are present only to a certain extent?
3. What further competences do I or the trainers/facilitators I work with need to develop and why?
4. How do I plan to start developing those competences?
5. What insights did I gain from using this tool in general?
6. What are my reflections about intercultural dialogue in the preparation phase of my activity(ies)?
7. What are my reflections about intercultural dialogue in the implementation phase of my activity(ies)?
8. What are my reflections about intercultural dialogue in the follow-up phase of my activity(ies)?

4. Methodology & Conclusion

The project contributed to the development of non-formal education methods and instruments and thus encouraged an active way of learning and assessing intercultural skills as well as to promote intercultural dialogue. In this critic moment for Europe, the intercultural dialogue becomes of a big importance in order to warranty peace inside communities from different background, living in Europe. The participants gained the abilities of mutual thinking. They developed the skills of tolerance to different cultures and cooperation for a common purpose. These skills contributed to the creation of a united in the difference European society.

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