

TEACHING AND LEARNING  
IN DIFFERENT CULTURES



# TEACHING AND LEARNING IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

## An adult education perspective

Edited by Eliza Czerka  
and Monika Mechlińska-Pauli



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Jacek Tomaszewski

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Marek Rudowski

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## Introduction

Imagine that you have set off on a long journey. You have heard from other people where you need to go and how to go. But you don't understand their tips. The journey is pleasant at the beginning: everything is new and fascinating. But the longer you go this way the more frequently the road forks and you have to make decision what path you need to choose. During the trip you meet other people – some try to overtake you, others keep pace with you, some have finished they trip and are sitting demotivated in the roadside ditches. Sometimes you are also not willing to go ahead, you can stop, back off to choose a different way; a couple times you get seated in a ditch as well. However you are going straight because you are curious of what is at the end.

People differ from each other just in a level of curiosity. Some of them look ahead in the future expecting exciting challenges, others are submerged in everyday life, coping with surrounding reality. Some of them are standing at a fork in the road trying to make decision or waiting for someone's help. Everyday process of 'self being' is tough and demands a lot of self-consciousness and discipline. Education was just invented to regulate this process make it easier. However the older we get, the more insufficient our supervisor's directives are. Therefore developing proactivity and self-direction becomes crucial in adult learning.

The articles presented in our book concern this problem – recognizing the right way. How to search – in order to find, how teach – in order to learn.

In the first part of the book we put emphasis on describing cooperation between teachers and learners in adult education. Hanna Solarczyk-Szwec focuses on significance of critical model of educational work with adults in building intercultural competence. Alina Matlakiewicz explores the characteristics of learning in adulthood, describing problems that learners encounter and their compensation and presents recipes for effective learning for adult learners including practical guidelines on how to learn and remember better. In turn, Eliza Czerka analyses mentoring as a tool of generating social capital, explores the role of mentor, the relationship mentor-mentee and assesses various models of mentoring.

Theoretical foundations are supported by empirical research. In this context Beatriz Malik and Patricia Mata characterize a way of thinking about diversity and postulate to treat social diversity as resources not a problem. Enforcing unfavoured groups is also the aim of the next two articles. Sabine and Thomas Bertram present a project LernZeitAlter. The courses they design within the project are aimed at testing and implementing age-sensitive learning concepts in further education and in enterprises. In turn, Izabela Czerniejewska, presents the results of her research into educational projects for repatriates. The article provides in-depth analysis of the repatriates' educational needs as well as strong and weak points of the courses.

The second part relates to biographical learning as a way of creating our identity and a method of self-learning. Dirk F. Becker writes about his work as a professional biographer, writing and assisting in the writing of people's own history. Bearing in mind people's reservations for writing, the author gives inspiration to those who are reluctant writers and explores the concept of responsibility we have towards ourselves, our fortes and weaknesses. In Kiriakos Vasilomanolakis text called 'Teaching and Learning through storytelling in Greece', the author shares the experience of a project aimed at senior citizens in Crete who participated in storytelling training to become active educators-storytellers in primary schools. Practical advice for writing and telling stories is provided and examples of the author's stories included in the text, which became part of the workshop presented as part of the Talic project.



Autobiography as a research method which is helpful for diagnosing personal problems and restructuring someone's personality is described by Magdalena Suarez Ortega who expends on methodological perspectives of researching and reinforcing self-consciousness and motivation to change of middle age women in Andalusia, Spain. With the same aim Małgorzata Olejarz presents the results of her research conducted among non-traditional college students from Polish-German borderland whose biographies reveal the realia of their area and their identity.

The last part focuses on examples of using effectively different methods and techniques of learning, especially in intercultural background. Inés Gil-Jaurena and Belén Ballesteros present an article on resources for teacher training in intercultural education and report on INTER Research Group activities and products. The authors present the INTER guide which features the glossary of useful terms and examples of actions aimed at promoting intercultural education. Analogous issues are a subject of the text of Alina Szczurek-Boruta who describes methods of providing multicultural education and concentrates on difficulties connected with teacher training. She gives examples of actions undertaken by herself and her students, teachers-to-be, including courses, projects and various activities organized locally and at universities in Poland and abroad. Aims and tasks of educational institution are also presented by Maria Drakaki who describes 'mouseioskevi', a concept of the educational package developed by the School Life Museum and its educational values to promote the museum's work. The vocational experiences are also recounted by Hélène Kelly and Bettan Bagger who share the experience of using poster presentation as a pedagogical tool used in teaching nursing students in Denmark. The authors describes the merits of poster presentation with respect to prevention and health promotion as well developing students' abilities to think critically and communicate health knowledge. In turn, Katarzyna Stankiewicz and Anna Żurek present methods of teaching the Polish language for foreigners, which are also useful for developing intercultural competences. The part concludes with Peter Aurin's article which focuses on motion learning as a learning strategy which is unfairly excluded in traditional education institutions. The text con-

centrates on personality development through motion and describes the methods of lifelong learning used by Arco organization, Germany. The author suggests a number of exercises, both classic and originally devised and employed within the organization aimed at all age groups, including some presented during the Talic workshop.

As we are reading this book we should notice that our cooperation is a good example of intercultural learning as well. The idea of preserving results of our work emerged during our Talic meetings, later we decided to invite other teachers to diversify, enrich and improve our outlook. In many cases we don't know each other but we have invested our time and energy to share information.

We are convinced that this is a real intercultural communication when we learn about our worlds out of curiosity.

Thank you Partners!

Eliza Czerka & Monika Mechlińska-Pauli

**I. Teachers and Learners in the Background  
of Adult Education.  
Theoretical Foundations and Research Reports**



## Significance of Critical Model of Educational Work with Adults in Building Intercultural Competence

There is a general agreement that shaping competence is the aim of education. It is most often defined as a system composed of knowledge and skills, permeated with values. In Polish pedagogical literature, we can find numerous contributions on that but it is a scattered set and few pedagogues make the effort of systematizing them in the form original conceptualizations. The concept of models of educational work with adults by Mieczysław Malewski can be inspiring in this respect. I extend it at the level of didactic implications and programmes of education by findings of Bogusława Dorota Gołębniak, to focus on the significance of critical model of educational work with adults in shaping intercultural competence, *inter alia*, based on the theories of German andragogues in the further part of the paper.

M. Malewski (2001:284) distinguished three models of didactic work with adults: technological, humanistic and critical, which match different concepts of understanding knowledge. The table below shows the criteria differentiating the models mentioned.

As we can see (Table 1), the models of educational work in M. Malewski's approach take into consideration assumptions on the nature of the world (ontology), nature of cognition (epistemology) and preferred values (axiology), which translates, in a conscious or unconscious way, into teacher's work style, teaching strategies and learning

patterns. The table below presents these issues in the way I developed them based on the proposals of B. D. Gołębniak.

**Table 1: Models of educational work with adults – basic differences**

<b>Differentiating criteria</b>	<b>Technological model</b>	<b>Humanistic model</b>	<b>Critical model</b>
<i>The most important social problem</i>	social development	individual awareness	oppressive conditions of living
<i>Ontology of man</i>	learning human being	acting human being	free human being
<i>Key value</i>	democracy, prosperity	self-realization	freedom
<i>Context of education</i>	social structure	individual personality	‘me’ in society
<i>Ideal of education</i>	social involvement	integrated personality	emancipational orientation
<i>Role of teacher</i>	guiding	maintaining learning	awareness awakening
<i>Teacher’s task</i>	knowledge transmission	competence construction	questioning identity of students
<i>Character of education</i>	teaching	learning	critical reflection
<i>Teaching methods</i>	offering	making more accessible	Socreatesean (dialogic)
<i>Role of experience</i>	worthless	potential source of learning	basic sources of self-knowledge
<i>Teacher’s position</i>	domination	partnership	service
<i>Responsibility</i>	teacher	teacher and students	learner
<i>Criteria of efficiency of education</i>	knowledge reproduction	ability to solve problems	ability to change life (emancipation)

Source: M. Malewski, (2001:284).

The models of educational work with adults distinguished by M. Malewski can be related to various areas of adult education that concentrate on development of different aspects of competence:

Technological model – formal (school) education – knowledge

Humanistic model – non-formal (non-school) education – skills

Critical model – informal (everyday) education – values, attitudes.

Models of educational work are included in educational programmes. The analysis of the programmes of adult education indicates that their authors do not seek support in scientific theories (Solarczyk, 2000:162), but indirectly express their or their institutions' views on ontological, epistemological, axiological issues and based on that formulate the assumptions of the model of education implemented in practice. Analyzing the programmes we can find out what popular knowledge on the above mentioned issues the authors of the programmes use: adult education educators, educational institutions, adult education organizers, and how it relates to scientific theories. We also know that contemporary programmes mainly respond to the logic of the market and the needs of its 'customers' (Solarczyk, 2000:163) and that is why they at the same time mirror expectations of the environment on aims of education, place of an individual in educational process, methods of acquiring knowledge, that is the models of education implemented in practice. Analysis of the programmes (Gieseke, 2000:17) enables naming what planners are unaware of, what supports their work, since published knowledge becomes supporting knowledge, for which scientific research provides adequate notions (Ornstein, Hunkins, 1998).

Based on the theories on school programmes, following Hunkins and Ornstein (*ibidem*), one can divide the programmes into two fundamental types: technical-scientific and nontechnical-nonscientific. The first one includes behaviouristic, academic, systemic and managerial approach. The other type of programmes is represented by humanistic and reconstructive (critical) approaches. I think that this typology can also be applied to programmes of adult education, which specify in more detail the models of educational work with adults. The differences between these approaches are presented in the table below.

**Table 2: Educational models vs. teaching styles and strategies and learning patterns**

	<b>Technological model</b>	<b>Humanistic model</b>	<b>Critical model</b>
Teaching styles	<i>Closed (formal, frontal):</i> paying great attention to education content, dividing it into small portions, avoiding any side topics, contact between teacher and student is characterized by distance, teacher does not differentiate tasks.	<i>Framework (individualized):</i> teacher puts student's needs, interests, his motivation and his style of cognition in the centre; helps him to discover meanings; creates conditions in which an individual reaches self-updating and authenticity.	<i>Negotiative:</i> teacher explains the complex reality, is a guide promoting dialogue, takes care of democratization of social life among classmates, rather observing and giving feedback than assessing products of learning, "energizes", encourages to reflect, to try to reach personal understanding, to take up risk; teacher is required to create casual atmosphere, create opportunities for showing originality, for critical thinking, for sympathy, for honesty in contacts with others.
Teaching strategies	<i>Task-oriented situations and feedback:</i> e.g. direct teaching (presentation and practicing), programmed teaching, simulation, educational and computer games.	<i>Information acquiring, processing and producing:</i> e.g. providing and explaining knowledge (examples, illustrations, comparisons, lecture, talk, description, story telling), mnemotechniques, inductive teaching model (from example to rule), cognitive maps, discussion, asking questions, metaphoric teaching, synectic teaching.	<i>Group work:</i> work in pairs, learning in small groups, acting out.  <i>Supporting personal development:</i> e.g. Gestalt pedagogy (emotional integration of emotional and intellectual sides of personality), learning with adviser (learning as a form of therapy).



Learning patterns	<i>Behavioural:</i> learning specific behaviours under influence of external reinforcements (receiving feedback) and inclination to modelling.	<i>Processual-cognitive:</i> learning consisting in active processing of information (coping with information).	<i>Synergy:</i> social learning (in cooperation).  <i>Comprehensive:</i> (personality-centred).
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The author's compilation based on: B. D. Gołębnik (2003:161–187) and M. Malewski (2001:284).

**Table 3: Approaches to programmes of education**

Criterion	Approach		
	behaviouristic	humanistic	reconstruivistic (critical)
Baselines	Traditional and conservative philosophy (idealism and realism).  Behaviourism  From idea and cult of output to connections with progressivism.	Progressivism.  Humanistic psychology.  Development theories of Erikson, Havighurst, Maslow.  Methods of Fröbel, Pestalozzi, Neill.	Neoprogressivism.  Radical romanticism (e.g. Illich).  Reconceptualism (e.g. Freire).
View on role of education in society	Socialising adequate to standards to be observed in society.	Self-realization of individuals for full democratization of social life.	Criticism of traditional education. Postulates of emancipational education, critical of cultural heritage.

Essence of proposed education	Emphasis on efficiency based on scientific grounds: technical and scientific principles paradigms, models, stages, plan, objectives and tasks, content and activities.	Emphasis on individualization, self-reflection and self-realization: great role of experience, didactic games, learning in small groups, creative solving of problems, comprehensive learning, awareness of hidden programme, no competition, scope for negotiating programme and ways of implementing it, idea of collegiality.	Dynamic, comprehensive and transcendental character of didactic process, emphasis on: language and communication, self-knowledge, personal reflections, critical dialogue, moral awareness, non-avoidance of sensitive subjects, scope for art, artistry.
Programme definition	Narrow definition in terms of detailed action plan.	Broad definition in terms of experience.	Broad and dynamic definition in terms of philosophical/ psychological experience.
Programme development	Linear model.	Spiral model.	Spiral / open model.
Programme standard	Conservative-technological: focus on education content, the same programme for all (uniformity, detail).	Focus on student: considering the place of teaching material, comprehensiveness principle, flexibility, emerging during interaction.	No standard; focus on improvement of society: expanding borders by intuition, linguistics, political sciences, aesthetic rationality, pluralistic character and looking at future perspectives, reformatory strategies, developmental character of programmes.

Programme development model	Tyler's model (deductive). Taby's model (inductive).	Deliberative approach.	Freire's emancipational perspective.
Evaluation	Scientific approach.	"Soft" methodology.	"Soft" methodologies.

Source: B. D. Gołębnik (2003:156–157).

It must be stressed, however, that educational practice, that of adult education in particular, is richer and less clear than theoretical models show, but this seeming simplification has practical implications – it enables identification of structures responsible for, e.g. shaping competence, intercultural competence included, which is the subject of these considerations. In the case of adults, the problem of 'being competent' is of special significance as it is reflected at work.

The analyses made so far indicate that each model of educational work with adults has a role to play in the process of shaping competence, intercultural competence included: technological model is responsible for passing on knowledge (e.g. on other cultures), humanistic model – for developing skills (e.g. dialogue with representatives of other cultures), critical model – for work on attitude (to other cultures). So it is groundless to try to prove superiority of any of the models or redundancy of any other. **In competence shaping oriented education we need all the models of educational work.**

While passing on knowledge is basically a matter of memory and time, shaping skills – a matter of becoming skilful, shaping attitudes is a very complex problem, ambiguous, scattered, too rarely explored in research, seldom taken up in practice because it poses a risk of destroying patterns and the surety guaranteed by knowledge and skills. It also refers to intercultural competence, which can be a positive response to sensitive and complex challenges formulated by Aviva Doron, UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue Studies at the University in Haifa:

- How to create a framework for cooperation between various cultural communities, people of different religions, when some of them

are in a state of sharp theological dispute or have common memories of conflicts and wars that happened so often in the past?

- How to develop a dialogue between people that are different and strangers to one another?
- How to overcome natural aversion that so many have for any person that is a stranger, that is different or does not belong to a homogeneous society in which he/she was brought up?
- How to promote openness towards others and how to learn to listen to them and to respect them? (Doron, 2005:43)

These questions touch on axiology of education – work on values and attitudes of individuals and social groups, on what makes people interested in the notions of identity, biographiness, reflexiveness. It is these issues that are a categorial scaffold of critical model of educational work with adults.

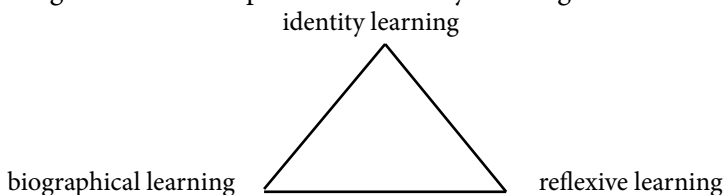
Broad understanding of knowledge **is a feature of critical model**. Knowledge is not treated as an esoteric product of a small group of highly qualified specialists in various fields, and its existence is not placed in a separate world isolated from everyday life (Malewski, 2001:278). In critical approach, knowledge symbolizes experience of everyday life, splits into numerous, qualitatively different versions of social world. Such an approach to knowledge results from the assumptions of the critical theory, which for the model of educational work discussed here constitutes a baseline. Critical theory proposes education oriented towards enhancement of quality of life, inspiring to reflect on the conditions and mechanisms that enslave man. **Andragogues with critical approach** are to free man from prejudices and stereotypes by transforming his awareness, which a negotiational work style of an andragogue is used for (Table 2).

**Educational process** consists of analysis of the course of life in the context of political and economic factors, socialization communications and cultural impacts, to, first, discover the relation between definition of one's own identity and functioning of social structures (family, environment, nation, authority, mass media, work), and then to construct better worlds, individual programmes of mobility that enable achieving them. More aware and subjective being in the world is the aim of these activities. In the context of intercultural challenges we

are concerned about identity, that is such states of ‘me’ that according to Erikson are characterized by: being a perpetrator and not a victim, being active and creative and not passive, being focused and included and not peripheral, being aware and not confused, which provides for our readiness to change the system of values and attitudes.

Peter Alheit calls the process of constructing and reconstructing life and identity biographiness (Dubas, 1998:33). **Learning identity is also reflexive learning.** The relations between the notions mentioned are shown in the diagram below.

Diagram No 1: Components of identity learning



Source: H. Siebert (2004:40).

**Identity learning** is mainly reflexive learning: reflection on one’s own biography, key events, gains and losses, joys and fears, opportunities and barriers in education. Such learning combines cognitivity with emotions. Feelings and rational arguments mix up, it is hard to tell them apart, which makes didactic planning difficult or even impossible.

Critical moments that appear in man’s life (e.g. Erikson’s and H. Bee’s theory) are another important factor of identity. They are phases in one’s life in which biographical, reflexive learning, that is working on one’s own identity are especially desirable. Hartmut GRIESE noted that change of identity is most frequently connected with change of directions of interaction, people of reference or transformation of the role played, which results in new normative and qualificational requirements (GRIESE, 1979:172). If an individual manages to cope with educational challenges, then a new equilibrium between him and the world will appear, otherwise, an identity crisis becomes a fact. Adult education can/should make such crisis moments in the life of an adult person a subject of reflection, although it is not very likely that it will

contribute to constructive turning point. H. Siebert says: 'Identity cannot be learnt, not can it be intentionally taught, but there exist methods that inspire autobiographical reflection or facilitate combining educational content with biographical experience' (Siebert, 2004:51). They include biographical methods, e.g. guided autobiography, consisting in discussion on universal issues, such as time, nature, foreigners. Other methods include drawing life lines and discussing their shape (ups, downs, disorders), or dialogue (Socratean methods), which exclude using rigid teaching principles. So a teacher is not – as in the technological model – an expert on knowledge, or – as in humanistic model – a specialist on methods, but a critical analyst of individual ways of living and a competent expert on personalities. Critically oriented teachers work at the outskirts of institutional education, at the borderline of group psychotherapy and social work.

Identity learning does not mean only taking care of oneself but also dealing with social and political issues as, according to Wolfgang Klafka, true education is an alternating and dialectic process of relationships between an individual and the world (Klafki, 1967:43). It requires cognitive and affective identification with the subjects taken up so that the content of education might become a part of identity.

**Education principles** proposed by H. Siebert in his book *Didactics of Adults from the Point of View of Constructivism* (2001) can be helpful in implementation of critical model of adult education. The assumption characteristic for constructivism, namely the assumption about subjectivity and independence in getting to know the reality means that knowledge of the learner is his individual construction and not a copy of existing reality. It bears special consequences for the process of teaching and learning, in which autonomy, independence and responsibility of the participant are emphasized (Solarczyk-Szwec, 2005:2–3). Education is to solve the problems of an individual, where the teacher is not a "didactic leader" but an adviser and co-organizer of learning processes. The teacher is to provide tools for studying problems and to react to the learners' needs. Such an understanding of a participant, teacher, process of education is included in the critical model of educational work with adults, which the following education principles describe: orientation for target groups, orientation for

participants, work on interpretation patterns, adapting classroom language to participants, crossing of perspectives of teacher and student, orientation for objectives of learning, confrontation with content of education, self-education, integration of general professional and civic education, influence of emotions on teaching – learning process, orientation for doing, aesthetisation, optimum use of time, probability of mistake, use of humour (These principles are developed in A. Matlakiewicz, H. Solarczyk-Szwec, 2009:102–114).

Finally, it must be stressed that the model of critical education requires high metacognitive, metalinguistic and metacommunication competences from participants.

With high and changing expectation of the environment (personal and occupational), the significance of conscious constructing of competence also increases. Guidelines of technological, humanistic and critical model of educational work can be helpful in this area. It is worth remembering that each of the models mentioned here has an important role to play in this process. Without knowledge (technological model) and communication skills (humanistic model) it is impossible to have in-depth education (on values and attitudes), which is fundamental for changing attitudes towards others/strangers, going beyond traditional (technological) and one-sided (humanistic) strategies of acting. In the area of intercultural education I thus support sustainable education, i.e. the one taking into consideration the functions of all the models of adult education distinguished here.

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## **Learning in Adulthood – Difficulties and Their Compensation**

Every key psychological concept such as behaviourism, the humanistic theory or the cognitive theory understands the concept of learning differently, which also brings about a different way of treating the results of learning. Still, the aim of this article is not an exhaustive presentation of the mentioned above theories, but a selective presentation of researches that from the given researcher's point of view explain the phenomenon of difficulties and the effects of learning in adulthood. The classics of behaviourism (J. Watson, B. Skinner, E. L. Thorndike) have been searching for measurable results of this process, while the representatives of the cognitive psychology indicate the internal processes, treating the mind as a cognitive system thanks to which every human being receives and processes information and also stores and uses it.

Such a complex phenomenon as human intelligence cannot be reduced to one mechanism or a psychic process. Ipso facto conducted researches in most cases are of partial character. There have been only a few longitudinal researches, extended in time, that give the chance to observe the changes happening with age. Below, first the results of the earlier researches are presented, compared with the position of cognitivists.

When considering the changes happening in the intellectual sphere, it is vital to analyse the results of researches who refer to the concept of intelligence in adulthood. As early as in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

D. Wechsler, the author of a set of intelligence tests popular in Poland, compared the physical efficiency curve and the intelligence change curve measured with tests between the age of fifteen and sixty-five. He showed that 'all of the human abilities after the initial rise reach their maximum and then start to fall. This fall is at first very slow, but after some time speeds up noticeably. The age of reaching the maximum varies according to the tested ability, but rarely occurs after thirty, and in most cases happens in mid-twenties. Once it starts, it continues uninterrupted. Between the age of thirty and sixty it is more or less linear. With reference to most abilities, it can be described approximately with a simple equation in this age range' (1972:26-27). Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the fall of the intelligence level in adulthood is gradual and slow. Although the peak of intelligence occurs between the age of twenty-three and twenty-five, the changes in the following years are mild. Moreover, Wechsler emphasized that not all intellectual abilities decrease with age at the same pace. The slightest deterioration of results occurred in tests that required the knowledge and understanding of many words, whereas a bigger deterioration in the tests requiring memorizing and performing arithmetic operations (Pietrasinski, 1990:16).

In order to explain this issue, J. Horn and R. Cattell started their researches thus introducing the difference between two kinds of intelligence: fluid and crystallized. Fluid intelligence is inborn. In order to analyse it, Cattell administered culturally neutral tests that do not require knowledge but only focus on comparing series of simple drawings and discovering regularities hidden in their diversity and the way of alignment. Crystallized intelligence, on the other hand, develops in the process of learning, acquiring skills. It is represented by trained mental activities, the knowledge of languages, and possessed knowledge. Its development is determined by the environment where a person grows up and also individual's activity and interests. As Horn and Cattell's research showed, adult fluid intelligence decreases with age, which expresses itself in the decrease in the ability to concentrate intensively and multitask. As the researchers explain, this is connected with the worsening of the blood flow in the brain and oxygen supply in some of its areas, though those changes are not abrupt or sud-

den, but rather slow and gradual. It needs to be emphasized that those changes are not detrimental and do not stop further knowledge acquisition or adult intellectual experience, particularly in adults mentally active. Moreover, while performing tasks which require fast information processing, an adult person can easily compensate the decrease of fluid intelligence with the development of crystallized intelligence, which does not consist of the increase of knowledge and information only (Pietrasiński, 1990:24–25). Conscious of his limitations and fortes in the process of learning, an adult can work on new, better thinking strategies in order to organize knowledge more appropriately. Young people who are sometimes even better theoretically prepared, when learning often treat given contents only, while adult people have better chances to refer to life experiences. They have a more flexible approach to given knowledge, successfully adapting it to professional experience. In order to fight difficulties caused by gradual decrease of fluid intelligence, an adult learner must be equipped with knowledge how to learn best. The key issue here is the appropriate knowledge organization.

Many researches notice dependence between the ability to learn and a mental activity of an adult when learning. The lack of challenges in the intellectual sphere, stimulation to mental effort, and routine activities of the everyday and professional life do not enhance the individual's mental efficiency. Worsening of intelligence tests' results and ability to learn are often too rashly explained by the process of ageing, while experiences of a given individual and functioning on the verge of intellectual deprivation are actually the main reasons. It is not surprising that adult people, when coming back to learning after a longer break, meet difficulties in learning. On the other hand, intellectually active adults can achieve real successes even at an old age. Interesting results were obtained in this area by Wechsler, who stated that not all the people tested achieved worse results in the intelligence tests. The results of gifted and mentally active people were improved (Pietrasiński, 1990:30).

In his conception Erikson thinks old age to be the time of full maturity, wisdom and internal integration. On the other hand, analysing the concept of achievements in the old age, a large group of older people living in the conditions of intellectual activity deficiency can be

found and thus their functioning is influenced unfavourably. The lack of stimuli and specific intellectual challenges limit the chances to preserve current intellectual efficiency to a high degree (Erikson, 1997).

When analysing the concept of learning in adulthood, the research conducted by E. L. Thorndike needs to be mentioned. On the grounds of the research he conducted, he claimed that older learners (between the age of thirty-five and forty-five) usually obtained worse results than younger learners (between the age of twenty and twenty-four), yet in some cases (school teaching, learning to type, stenography) older learners obtained equally good or sometimes even better results, which can be explained by bigger interest in learning. Yet older learners obtained poorer results in acquiring manual activities (drawing segments, writing with the left hand). Moreover, they were worse at tasks requiring good mechanical memory (learning a code, associating numbers with symbols without logical justification) (Urbańczyk, 1973:44–46).

W. Szewczuk also mentioned the issue of memory worsening with age in his research. He studied adult illiterate people and their teachers. He noticed that both groups struggled with troubles remembering unconnected contents. Moreover, with new and similar material (e.g. words like *rosa, rasa, rysa, rota, rata*, etc), remembering is even more difficult. It is then important to vary the introduced content since the less varied the revised material is, the harder it is to remember it. The asset of an adult learner, particularly of an intellectually active person, is the compensation of a declining mechanical memory when learning by logical memory and using mnemotechnics that refer to associations, which enhance learning (e.g. Tony Buzan's mind map).

The representatives of cognitive psychology formulate learning in a completely different way, concentrating on different results of learning. As concepts taken from neurobiology, neurology and neuro-linguistics show, specific areas of the brain get active, even get bigger under the influence of actions taken by an individual on the basis of **selective attention**. Such a process of neuroplasticity of the cortex is an interesting subject for modern researchers concentrating on the process of information processing and also on the role of emotions in learning (Spitzer, 2007).

Cognitive studies in acquiring knowledge or abilities in situations dictate three main forms of cognitive activity:

- formulating the aim of learning,
- activating and bringing cognitive strategies into effect,
- using controlling strategies (Strelau, 2000:121).

Learning is perceived in terms of the aim and means connected with formulating the **learning strategy**. Organizing strategies and elaboration belong to the basic strategies used when learning complex contents. The aim is to select essential elements in the material and find connections between them, which in turn enhances understanding. There are numerous ways of doing it: by summarizing, mapping, selecting keywords, which are then surrounded by more concepts and contents. It is a prerequisite for cognitive activities to meet personal preferences and the learner's developmental abilities. Elaboration connects newly learnt material with already acquired knowledge (Ledzińska, 2000:127). With this end in view, the learner needs to report the text in their own words, invent examples, look for analogies, refer to associations and also attempt to formulate their own opinions or adopt the attitude of a critical analyst.

Cognitivists' research indicates on one hand how important an individual's activity is when aiming at achieving proficiency in learning and, on the other hand, putting it more generally, a reflexive activity. The research on proficiency has showed that not only the resource and structure of knowledge decide about the ease of performance. Expertness is conditioned on experience and **age**. When experts were studied, it was noticed that they work fast, update necessary information fast, notice regularities and relationships, and they also show precision in conceptualizing problems and self-control (Ledzińska, 2000:133). Referring to the effects of learning, cognitivists indicate consciousness, which is connected with experience. 'Childhood is dominated first of all by action – thus the definition of active consciousness. Growing up, young people do the introspection of experience. Conscious functioning, called **reflexive activity**, is characteristic for adulthood and constitutes an exceptional result of learning' (ibidem). In the context of research in cognitive psychology, the potential of an adult learner becomes visible. Consequently, it is essential to treat a learner subjec-

tively taking into consideration their individual properties in the scope of processing information. It is also crucial to create situations conducive to acquiring consciousness regarding somebody's own predispositions and corresponding abilities to structure knowledge. When working with gifted learners, emphasis should be put on their strong revitalization, using problem methods, while in the case of people with a lower efficiency, one should concentrate on eliminating deficiencies (Ledzińska, 2000:134).

To sum up, it should be emphasized that an adult human being is subjected to many changes including the regressive ones. It is not possible to use the same teaching methods and learning patterns for both children and adults. Below a few key rules improving the process of adult learning are presented:

1. It is possible to learn through both listening to lectures and doing activities. Learning is not a passive process. Action activates more psychic processes and gives better results of learning. Participants should not be expected to learn only by listening.
2. Learning is better when the content of teaching has its reflection in the reality of the participant. It is essential to refer to the professional or life reality of learners, it is also important to connect theory with practice. A teacher should give examples that refer to the specificity of a given group. Connections between taught contents and the reality need to be 'built'. Particularly when working with adults, **their experiences**, both life and professional, should be **referred to**. Adults are not like empty containers into which a teacher pours knowledge, but people who pass received information through their own cognitive sieve, locating it in a specific context.
3. In order to facilitate organizing knowledge in a system, cognitivists devised a strategy of learning – PQ4R<sup>1</sup>, which can be used in order to acquire big chunks of material. It activates different cognitive strategies contributing to better understanding of content, thus better remembering, which favours later exploitation. The followings stages are worth using:
  - skimming a text,
  - asking question relating to its separate parts,

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<sup>1</sup> P – preview, Q – question, 4R – reading, reflect, recite, review.

- reading carefully each part in order to find answers to the questions,
  - thinking over a given part in order to understand it in the context of already possessed knowledge,
  - updating information found in a given part taking into consideration the answers to the previously asked questions,
  - reflective looking at the text connected with reconstructing its main points and formulating the answers to the questions (Ledzińska, 2000:127).
4. The teacher should realize the factors that condition remembering and storing. The connection with acting is a crucial condition of effective remembering. The more important for our activity an object or its feature has, the faster we remember it. The attitude is of a crucial importance as well as the will to remember given contents not only for the next classes or exam, but for longer. If a person concentrates on a given object consciously or sets themselves a clear task to remember some material, they remember it better and longer. It is good when the teacher tries to focus an adult learner's attention on essential contents, stimulates remembering through a specially formulated instruction. Moreover, in the process of remembering emotions play an important role. Despite multiplicity and some ambiguity of researches in this range, it is known that pleasant events are remembered longer than unpleasant ones, which are forced out of consciousness. Thus learning should be connected with pleasant experiences so introducing elements of humour is also beneficial. It is easier to remember contents in accordance with an individual's beliefs and attitudes.

In order to improve the effects of learning, it is essential to use knowledge concerning metamemory, which is both general memory properties (repeating helps support/maintain memory traces) and properties of a given individual's memory (I learn better in the morning, when it is silent and quiet). On the basis of their own experiences an adult should gain awareness of their own predispositions and limitations. Mnemotechnics like acronyms, acrostics, the method of places, interactive images, etc. are beneficial in the process of teaching-learning, since they improve the effectiveness of remembering (Maruszeński, 2000:159-160).

5. As R. M. Gagne notices, in the didactic process external conditions need to be assured, since they are beneficial for the course of internal processes. It also refers to the use of time. In the traditional teaching about 70% of time is spent on transferring declarative and procedural knowledge, while it is postulated to spend more time on contextual knowledge, which is connected with coping in real situations and problem solving (Kawecki, 2000:145).
6. The techniques that enhance the effects of teaching need to be used. This means that after a single presentation of information, a participant will not remember much. Some concepts should be explained a few times, repeated a few times, and an appropriate number of practical exercises need to be done to make it possible for the learner to use the acquired knowledge (frequency law).
7. Learners differ when regarding strategies of learning and the speed of absorbing knowledge. Some remember information better when they see it in the written form (visual); others have a better auditory memory (audile); still others like to learn by acting and direct involvement (kinaesthetic learners). Thus during classes different methods of work need to be used, which allows all the groups to capture its contents.
8. A skilful selection of teaching methods for specific aims and contents improves the efficiency of learning. Most people prefer to participate in classes taught with different methods. When working with adults it is important to communicate contents in varied ways giving the learner the chance to use their abilities and preferred ways of active learning.<sup>2</sup>

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## **Mentoring as a Tool of Generating Social Capital**

The term capital is rightly associated with owning and accumulating goods. The economic capital is a financial gain and is fluid: it can be exchanged into different goods, multiplied or lost. Social capital is more durable and can be explained as a 'set of lasting social relations, networks and contacts' (O'Brien, Ó Fathaigh, 2005). There are many theories of social capital. In the text below I use the definition of social capital by P. Bourdieu, which emphasizes most the individual character of present and potential gains. Bourdieu defined social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu, 1986) and locates it right next to economic and cultural capital assuming their mutual conversion. Participation in groups and purposeful establishing relations (sociability) enables people to generate resources which facilitate the acquisition of further potential gains. By developing social capital an individual can come into possession of economic resources, develop their cultural capital by contacting experts or engage in relations with institutions which confer valuable diplomas (Portes, 1998:6). Social capital is thus a social network which enables development and productivity of both the individual and the group within which he / she functions. The resources are generated by the others, not by the individual. A single individual can mobilize the network in which they function and their social capital depends on the network dimension and the amount of capital possessed by everyone they are

linked with (Bourdieu, *ibidem*). Consequently, entering institution or informal social groups aims at consolidation of social capital and provides the individual with material (a number of services available to the individual by partners) as well as symbolic (being part of prestigious organizations and social groups) profits (Bourdieu, *ibidem*).

The mentor-mentee relation involves liberating social capital by starting the process of goods exchange (social aspect) and building individual resources (individual aspect). However, in order to make the process of mentoring successful, one has to clearly establish the starting capital (economic, cultural and social). The mentor needs to base on resources: contacts, knowledge and experience which the mentee already possesses. Ignoring the student's resources may lead to negligence of areas important for their development or even to intellectual regress. That is why it is crucial to comprehend the individual's role as well as multiple circumstances generated by social milieu, which aid the process of teaching and learning, which this article explores.

### **The role of mentor – a few philosophical notes**

The mentor's role is to confer the knowledge and skills to students, which are meant to support their personality development.

Many researchers, especially from the economic sciences, limit mentoring solely to supporting professional development. In a broader perspective, the mentor is a master who transmits not only professional knowledge but also shapes the student's system of values and considerably influences their outlook on life.

This however does not mean a one-sided relationship. A real mentor realizes the necessity to modify their old convictions and changes the strategy should their teaching prove inadequate. The constructive relationship in the mentoring process is dynamic. The earlier phase of cooperation, the more directive it is (e.g. teacher-student relation). At further levels of cooperation (senior teacher – student teacher) the mentor rather accompanies the student in their development rather than indicates paths of acquiring knowledge.

Another important aspect of mentor's role is its ambivalence. The mentors realizes the necessity to provide challenges to their student to

'broaden their risk field' as development always demands abandoning personal zones of comfort (Mentoring Guidance Notes, 2009). On the other hand, the mentor should also provide support and guidance. This dual role may provoke conflicts if the mentor also employs and derives gains from their student's work or is dependant on further instances – mentor's opportunistic attitude surely does not support the student's development. That is why mutual trust is the key aspect in the process of mentoring. It also constitutes a condition of generating social capital. From the educational perspective the trust is based on the willingness to act, the necessity to generate experience of a new quality, which is positive for both partners of the interaction. The trust involves the student believing that the teacher is able to confer procedural knowledge and also has access to 'the secret' leading to mastery. That is why the relationship with the mentor is often an initiating contact.

The mentor possesses knowledge in two dimensions: overt and covert. Overt knowledge is expressed in procedures which make work smooth. Its acquisition means learning procedures enabling the successful performance in one's profession. Covert knowledge, however, stems from experience and is subjective (a compilation of unique experiences) and rarely is documented. From the pedagogical point of view, identifying and utilizing mentor's covert knowledge by the student boosts leaning quality. Consequently, a mentor should first of all confer the knowledge about 'unwritten rules' that text books lack. This makes the mentor's role so special.

Looking for a mentor is a result of realizing one's lack of knowledge and necessity to be directed. The mentor is an expert in a given field but also is a life expert, a professional in human relations. That is why a student engages in an educational relation with them, becomes dependent. The first model of mentor relation is 19<sup>th</sup> century German idea developed by Goethe in 'Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years'. *Bildung* (creating, educating, shaping) – 'is not only conferring general or professional knowledge, this is a process of character shaping, growing into culture and growing to perform various social roles' (Janion, 1998:51–52). From this perspective the idea is valid not only for adolescents but also for adults preparing to perform new social roles or trying to cope with borderline situations (see K. Jaspers), underlying

changes in their character (in such situation a therapist, religious leader or a more experienced friend can become a mentor). Also the mentor is continuously ‘on the way’, they may not stop or limit themselves to the previously established standard (Witkowski, 2001:10), which nevertheless does not inhibit the apprehension of who they are and what they have achieved.

### Models of mentoring

Focusing on individualization of the learning process is one of the basic requirements of the modern knowledge society comprised of individuals required to make decisions alone, be capable of criticism and think rationally. This requirement bears a special meaning in adult education (both formal and informal). Consequently, further levels of education should be characterized by more subject approach, in practice meaning shifting stress from learning to self-learning. Looking at various criteria there are the following models of self-learning (Table 1).

Table 1. Types of self-education

<b>Supported (directed) self-learning</b> (counseling, consultations, correspondence learning)	
<b>Indirectly supported self-learning</b>	<b>self-directed learning</b>
(using textbooks, guidebooks, multimedia packages etc.)	(acquiring knowledge from scientific resources, materials not meant for educational purposes, also observation of the reality).

Source: Jankowski D. (1999:91)

Although these processes complement one another and forms of acquiring knowledge can be useful at one certain level of learning, it can be said that, in a sense, they are hierarchical. Self-directed learning (education) is at the top level as it requires such competences as: intellectual maturity, ability to analyze, interpret and draw conclusions. Mentoring is located within the supported self-learning process but its main aim is to guide the mentee to think and act independently. At the

same time, the mentor never gives specific solutions but teaches how to find them. There are three models and strategies for actions depending on the aims set in mentoring (Table 1).

Having analyzed the approaches presented below you can notice their sequential character as critical reflection about the teaching/learning process is a consequence of knowledge and experience verification in this respect, which can only be gained by modeling and prior training. Thus the strategies presented might as well be used by the same mentor at different stages of work with the mentee. Adequately, the mentor's task is to develop their student's proactivity by gradually 'releasing knowledge' and encouraging towards work by using various strategies, not only one, which is the mentor's favourite. At the same time the mentee's task is to cooperate in this respect by gradually increasing their responsibility for self-education.

**Table 2. Models of mentoring**

Name of model	THE APPRENTICESHIP MODEL	THE COMPETENCY MODEL	THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER MODEL
How does it work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modelling experienced practitioners and supervising practice under guidance.</li> <li>• Acting over instruction.</li> <li>• Articulating and presenting 'proven' recipes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic training on a list of pre-defined competences.</li> <li>• 'Learning by doing a job'.</li> </ul>	Switching from a focus on teaching focus on learners' needs and possibilities.
Aims for learners	'Learning to see'	Learning behaviours and skills. Taking responsibility of learning progress.	Mastery of teaching skills. Critical reflection about learning and teaching.
A role of mentor	Model and interpreter.	Systematic trainer.	Co-enquirer.

Source: T. Maynard, J. Furlong, 1994.

In proper teaching / learning process both the mentor's and the mentee's approach should evaluate. The teacher's role is to adjust themselves to their student's possibilities for self-development. According to Hersey and Blanchard (Grow, 2009) the teaching style should be suited to the student's 'readiness', meaning their abilities and motivation. 'Readiness' is situational, changing according to the task which the student faces. Thus the teacher needs to adjust themselves to situational changes bearing in mind the ultimate goal of developing student's self-directness.

G. Grow's model shows subsequent phases of cooperation between teacher – student as they emerge in the self-direction process.

**Table 3. The Staged Self-Directed Learning Model**

	<b>Student</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Stage 1</b>	Dependent	Authority, Coach	Coaching with immediate feedback. Drill. Informational lecture. Overcoming deficiencies and resistance.
<b>Stage 2</b>	Interested	Motivator, guide	Inspiring lecture plus guided discussion. Goal-setting and learning strategies.
<b>Stage 3</b>	Involved	Facilitator	Discussion facilitated by teacher who participates as equal. Seminar. Group projects.
<b>Stage 4</b>	Self-directed	Consultant, delegator	Internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group.

Source: G. Grow, 2009.

Being a dependent learner does not signify the lack of creativity. Getting dependent is a natural consequence of encountering a new, unknown situation (educational problems). Some students may expect to be instructed and guided only at the most difficult stages of problem solving, some due to low self-esteem or lack of skills may experience bigger problems getting active (Grow, *ibidem*). There are also those who may never want to open up, which does not necessarily mean that

their learning process is wrong. The lack of communication skills or resourcefulness does not impede achieving professional mastery (especially if we professionally execute tasks commissioned by others). The dark side of his approach however is that one has to adjust and fulfill other people's dreams rather than one's own on a regular basis.

On the other end of the scale there are learners of high-self direction. These students have put in practice the ideals of self-learning. They are capable of setting goals, finding tools to meet them and evaluating the results of their work (Grow, *ibidem*). The teacher plays a peripheral role with students using his / her resources only when necessary. This constitutes a typical relationship between the mentor and the mentee who become colleagues by problem solving.

### **The dark side of mentoring**

Another important aspect of mentor's work is having an individual approach and their own, original idea for work with the mentee. Moreover, common outlook, work styles or personality traits of teacher and student may render mentoring successful. You cannot become a mentor for everyone as the relationship becomes constructive if the parties are well-suited. Nevertheless, practitioners who work individually with large groups of people (e.g. bachelor's and master's thesis supervisors) are well aware of the fact that it 'only' takes to be a good teacher to achieve a common goal. We must come to terms with the fact that only students interested in self-development look for the mentor, and those constitute an elite group.

F. Rodger (2006) has researched student teachers' expectations towards mentors and has distinguished 4 types of mentoring:

**Open, flexible and challenging** – these mentors are effective, reflective practitioners. They engage students in presenting their previous experiences, personality and hopes for the placement which can form a base for further cooperation. They teach students in the range of work management, are open to innovative ideas and student's creativity. Moreover, they never feel threatened by students and they have enough confidence to show their example. The important aspect of their work is raising the bar but in a supportive and flexible way.



**Open and flexible** – mentors located within this model take a maternalistic approach. They encourage students to use previous knowledge to move on their learning and view their students as colleagues and therefore this style of mentoring may not be very demanding.

**Closed and inflexible** – this is a rigid style which establishes a set of rules regardless of student's experience and personality. Focused on his/her method, the teacher is not interested in student's initial knowledge as they start from the beginning. The model is focused on transmission of knowledge without encouraging students to develop new and innovative ideas, which can be very frustrating for them.

**Negative and destructive model** – severely restricted model, with entirely negative criticism. The attitude of mentor is inconsistent and oscillates between aversion and allowance. This style is demotivating and conflicting, actually this is not a style of mentoring.

It is not surprising that the researcher deems the first model the most effective. In the 'open and flexible' approach there are no motivating factors since students are not challenged. Although students in this model may feel comfortable, their full development potential is not activated. The third model, ironically speaking, is aimed at students not interested in self-development. Passive and submissive attitude promoted by inflexible supervisors does not allow self-fulfillment in one's profession. Finally, there is the negative model – typical of burnt out teachers, lacking in communication skills and consequently ineffective in teaching.

A question arises in light of the research presented above why some teachers who lack necessary skills and vocation to do the job still teach. In most cases they are motivated by academic tradition or corporate culture which makes every lecturer or supervisor a mentor. However, only those who treat this role as important for their social identity and important aspect of development can become good mentors.

Moving away from the lack of competence to fulfill mentor's role, another problem is abusing the position and intentionally distorting the academic teacher's ethos. By stimulating their student's development, the mentor has power over their mind, which might lead to 'seduction'. The master discovers the temptation to be admired and the student becomes their disciple and exact copy (Czerka, 2005). The

need to influence, experienced by the mentor, stems from the convictions 'that they possess knowledge about themselves and the others'. The mentee, on the other hand, reduces the master's personality to the knowledge they confer to his / her<sup>1</sup> (Doda, 2002) failing to observe the situations when the mentor more or less consciously manipulates the student. This destructive fascination inhibits student's self-realization since their goals, values and expectations are ignored by the mentor. The situation can be prevented by involving social capital in form of the student's relationships with other participants of the education process (namely other teachers, students) in order to analyze one's status from a different perspective.

### **Breaking free from a mentor**

Looking for a mentor becomes evident in transition stages in adults (in between phases) which in psychology are called development moratoria. As E. Erikson (1968:157) writes in his theory of psychosocial development this is time of youth (in most cases transition between adolescence and young adulthood), characterized by 'a period of delay granted to somebody who is not ready to meet an obligation of forced on somebody who should give himself time'. At this stage 'slowing down' fosters identity development by experimenting in different roles and searching for their social role.

In J. Marcia (1980) development concept, moratorium is an identity status of individuals characterized by acute crisis and high anxiety level. A person at this development stage 'self' faces professional and ideological problems. Moratoria may appear when an old identity structure stops being satisfactory or becomes useless due to traumatic events such as losing a job or death of a spouse, etc. (Stephens, Frasier, Marcia, 1992). In this theory human development is shaped by continuous MAMA cycles (moratorium-achievement-moratorium-achievement)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> However, as Max Scheller reflected, 'The signpost is for walking directions, not walking'.

<sup>2</sup> Achievement identity status refers to people who have undergone a crisis and made a commitment about occupational and ideological values. According to Marcia (*ibidem*) it is characterized by postconventional morality and stable (relatively high) self-esteem.

Mentor acts as a guide in a crisis situation. In the identity shaping phase he / she introduces youth into adulthood (advises on career and ideology). At further development stages the mentor supports the identity redefinition and setting new life goals.

Learning under mentor's supervision plays an important role in changing processes as thanks to him / her wrong ways of thinking are changed and more adequate goals set. When the new conception of Self is crystallized the mentor's role ceases. Similarly, in an educational situation as new work strategies are mastered and professional position asserted the mentor – mentee relationship becomes less tight. The more self-directed the learner, the more constructive the relationship breakup is. Students who have not constituted their identity yet tend to assume a more subordinate role and try to extend the relationship into the indefinite future. In such a situation the mentor should consciously loosen the relationship in order to induce the student to start their own development.

## Conclusions

The social capital in mentor – mentee relation is generated by mutual resource exchange. However, this is not a bilateral relation. Real resources are generated by connections within the social milieu, colleagues, other teachers, educational institutions managers, etc.

The more effective the functioning of the network is, the more successful its participants are and the other way round. Without the social background or in a malfunctioning network the mentor – mentee relationship is weakened as they additionally focus on overcoming difficulties (competing for subsidies and grants in vaguely defined granting conditions, gainsay the policy-makers' decisions, etc.) The problem described here refers to mentoring in the institutionalized context. Naturally, the contact with the mentor also has a less formal side. It is impossible to separate the two as it is impossible to call someone's personality only individual or only social.

As the mentor realizes the complexity of the mentoring relationship, the following tasks as for the mentee emerge, including (Mentor's role, 1998):

- diminishing the fear that comes to have to do it alone,
- provide support for developing course content,
- interpreting departmental practices and policies,
- provide demonstrations of good teaching practices,
- providing timely and constructive feedback on the mentee's performance,
- encouraging the mentee to be self-reliant,
- being a colleague.

Nonetheless, the most prominent mentor's role is self-development. Just like Odysseus leaving for the Trojan War left Mentor in charge of his household (his family), the mentee nowadays entrusts his development to him / her. This is a serious commitment. That is why only those who continuously work on their personality, learn and overcome their weaknesses should become mentors. A good mentor should realize that he / she is not cleverer than his mentee but merely illuminates the path he has already taken.

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## **Identifying Training Needs in Relation to Diversity and Intercultural Education: The Case of Spain**

Intercultural education refers to an educational paradigm the aim of which is to transform education (understood in a broad sense, as a lifelong process that occurs in formal, non formal and informal settings, related to human interaction and communication) as well as the society as a whole, into fairer and more equal systems. As a first step to achieve towards this transformation process, there is an actual need to train educators and other professionals (health care, lawyers, social workers, administration, etc.) from the intercultural perspective, which implies, among others, a very deep change in the way we conceive diversity and deal with it. This chapter presents some of the results of a needs assessment on Intercultural Education training in Spain, which has been developed under the frame of a Euro Latin-American cooperation project, the INTER-ALFA project, aimed at designing a postgraduate programme in Intercultural Education<sup>1</sup>.

The needs assessment process developed within this project (Mata, Ávila, 2009) intended to collect and analyze meaningful data on three relevant dimensions that we considered would provide us with an overall picture of the situation in the field of intercultural education:

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<sup>1</sup> INTER-ALFA Project: *Postgraduate Euro-Latinamerican Programme in Intercultural Education*, funded by the European Commission under the ALFA Programme – Cooperation between Europe and Latin America, 2007-2009, Reference: II-0534-A. [www.interalfaprogramme.com](http://www.interalfaprogramme.com).

Images and concepts about diversity; Policy and legislation on cultural diversity; and Postgraduate initiatives on intercultural education. In this chapter we will focus on the needs assessment which was carried out by the Spanish team, coordinated by Dr. Teresa Aguado.

This needs assessment has been a systematic exploration of the way things are and the way they should be. It has implied examining the current situation, determining the state of each dimension and identifying training needs, taking into account the assumptions and practical implications of the intercultural approach. It has allowed us to identify priorities and to design a Postgraduate training proposal that meets the needs and expectations of the target groups and the contexts involved.

### **Images and concepts about diversity**

A former report on teacher training needs (Aguado, 2006) showed that some key concepts on intercultural education, such as 'diversity' and 'cultural diversity', were used in an ambiguous and rhetorical manner: there was a general consensus on the 'value' of diversity, however diversity was systematically associated with difficulty, deficit, disability, special groups. Our objectives regarding this dimension have been to explore the assumptions of our target groups in relation to diversity, looking for the categories and terms socially used to think and speak about this concept.

To do so, in the first place, we briefly interviewed people that we considered part of our 'target groups', whether they were potential students of our future postgraduate programme or part of the group that we could define as 'public opinion'. We asked them not only about categories but also on the 'images' they associate with diversity.

Regarding the results of the interviews, the terms and ideas more associated with the word 'diversity' were: many things, variability, being able to choose, biodiversity, plurality, multiculturalism. 'Cultural diversity' was associated with: different races, other cultures, emigration, different ways of understanding the same thing within a country, folklore, enrichment from learning from different cultures, different value systems. As for the images associated with these words, they

spoke about biodiversity (jungles), markets, fruit shops, and racially diverse people, of ‘many colours,’ different ways of seeing things, eagerness to learn.

It is interesting to note that most responses were related to the idea of enrichment and are, therefore, ‘positive’ terms.

Secondly, we tried to analyze the ‘ideas’ about diversity embedded in institutional contexts, by exploring the use of the term ‘diversity’ in official web sites of some institutions we consider representative. In order to respond to this ‘institutional’ vision of diversity, we carried out general searches in the web pages of different kinds of institutions: political, academic, mass media, civil society. The search was done with the terms ‘diversity’ and ‘cultural diversity,’ and has covered both basic documents of the institutions (statutes, regulations, orienting principles, mission statements, etc.) as well as different sections arrived at by means of the internal search engines of each page. Regarding the term diversity in basic institutional documents, we found that the term hardly appears in any of them at all. There were only a few exceptions:

Political institutions: a political party formed by the coalition of several parties alludes in its statutes to ‘internal ideological diversity.’

Academic institutions: two school centres include respect for and valuing diversity in their principles of identity and general objectives; only one out of twelve universities analyzed includes respect for diversity as part of the teaching function in its statutes.

Civil society: two NGO’s, in their inspirational principles, alluded to the richness and value of diversity and the importance of acknowledging it.

On the other hand, the results (grouped by institution) of the internal searches in their web pages are as follows:

#### Political institutions

*Government, Parliament, political parties:* Diversity is associated with issues related to *Autonomous Communities*, where it is declared as a value to be respected and acknowledged, but it is made problematic in an implicit fashion: statute development, unity together with diversity, etc. Diversity is also associated with *biological diversity or biodiversity*, finding here protection regulations. It is associated with *immigration*,



which is usually considered a problem (implicitly or explicitly). Cultural diversity is understood as a *cultural product* to be promoted, disseminated. *Sexual diversity* also appears in some occasions. *Diversity in education* is approached in an imprecise way (for example, ‘addressing’ the diversity of the student body is mentioned, without being more specific). And finally, there are very few documents associated with *religious diversity*.

*Ministries:* The search focused on the ministries that, a priori, we considered most related to the issue we were interested in: Ministries of Education and Science (MEC)<sup>2</sup>, Culture (MCU), and Work and Social Affairs (MTAS). In the case of the MEC, it leads us to subjects related to *special educational needs, compensatory and intercultural education, and to immigration in the classroom*. One of the areas of activity that appears in the Education section of the MEC, is addressing diversity, which includes: special educational needs, disabled students, gifted and talented students, late starters in the system, compensation of inequality and equity in education. Both late starters in the system and equity remit to specific needs or unfavourable situations. All labels of Intercultural Education, including the link with the CREADE (Resource Centre for Attention to Cultural Diversity in Education) are under the heading ‘Compensation of Inequalities,’ which implies a deficitary image of diversity. In the case of the MCU, the search led directly to subjects related to cultural diversity, issues related to ‘*cultural expressions*.’ In the MTAS, we can find references to *ethno-cultural diversity, biological diversity, family diversity, people with disabilities, migrants, diversity of business*. There is a direct link to the Summit of the Americas celebrated in 2001 [http://www.mtas.es//mundo/consejerias/canada/Publicaciones/informes/qc\\_cumbreamer.html](http://www.mtas.es//mundo/consejerias/canada/Publicaciones/informes/qc_cumbreamer.html), where cultural diversity was approached in the following terms: ‘*States affirm that globalization offers great possibilities for promoting cultural diversity, but they also acknowledge that this also creates worries about the capacity of some communities to express the aspects of their cultural identity,*

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<sup>2</sup> The name of the Ministry of Education and Science has changed recently, this was its name at the time when the needs assessment was carried out (2007). Competencies have been divided between *Ministerio de Educación, Política Social y Deporte*, and *Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación*.

*therefore they commit themselves to watching over cultural diversity with programs that promote social cohesion, development, and mutual respect and eradicate the illicit traffic of cultural property.'*

*Councils of Education:* Addressing diversity is related to the environment or to immigration, with initiatives that divulge knowledge about the cultures of the different countries the students come from, which in some cases turns directly into an association with *exotic things*. It is also associated with *special education*.

*European Institutions:* Diversity is generally associated with languages and multilingualism in the European framework. The importance of promoting language learning and respecting *linguistic diversity* is spoken of. One curious detail we encountered was that the European Union celebrated a photograph contest within the campaign: 'For diversity. Against racism,' with the purpose of gathering images of diversity. More information, as well as the winning pictures and a general album, can be found at the following link: <http://www.stop-discrimination.info/434.0.html>. The three winning photos referred to the *white-black dichotomy*; the vote was a popular vote.

### Academic Institutions

*Universities:* Most of the internet searches led us to results referring to courses and publications. The associations with the term diversity are related to Biology, Genetics, Anthropology, Education, and Bioethics, mainly. The results referring to cultural diversity are associated with courses and publications on *multiculturalism, migration, linguistics, anthropology, integration, minorities, and citizenship*.

Conference of Spanish Universities' Rectors (CRUE): Diversity is dealt with as a positive aspect, as the links lead to documents and references that praise it and give it as an example of progress in the search for *quality in university teaching*. It is also associated with institutional autonomy in relation to curricula.

*Public Schools:* Most of the schools consulted have a Plan to Deal with Diversity; however, public access to the contents is not allowed. In one of the schools, the professionals in charge of dealing with diversity, compensatory education, therapeutic pedagogy, and educational guidance are specifically mentioned, among the rest of the team of teachers.

## Civil Society

The search included mainly NGO's and AMPAS (Parents associations). In NGO's, the term diversity appears in the following contexts: *immigration, racism, and xenophobia*; diversity and cultural diversity appear as: *richness, sexual minorities, gender*. In the AMPAS we found no mentions of diversity.

### *Media*

The search in the main national newspapers provided images of diversity and cultural diversity associated with different areas or news sections, such as:

*Education*, with terms such as religion (using a veil) and addressing diversity understood as compensatory education and prevention of failure at school.

*Society*, understanding a diverse society as a complex one, is associated with immigration (insofar as immigration is what causes diversity), sexual orientation (but associated exclusively with the homosexual community), and gender differences.

*Languages*, where it is considered enriching, transmitting the idea that it is necessary to take steps to protect them.

*Economy*, as a positive element and a factor of balance, and in the trade sector, diversity refers to markets where exotic products are sold.

Whenever diversity refers to concepts related to economy, biodiversity, heritage, etc., diversity is used in a positive way, related with enrichment. However, when diversity is spoken of in relation to social issues such as education, religion, gender... the term becomes more complex, not necessarily in a negative sense, but as a dimension that requires different kinds of measures to 'deal with it.' Diversity should be accepted as normality, not as something to 'compensate,' in the search for homogeneity, or as some exotic thing which has nothing to do with our immediate environment.

In addition, a direct search for photographs and images was done on an Internet search engine, both in international domains and in '.es' (Spain) domains. All the images found respond to a similar pattern: people with different skin colours, indigenous peoples, fabrics, jungles. However, in the Spanish sites, more than photographs, there are books

and periodical covers, indexes and tables that refer to studies on immigration, economy, and gender.

#### *Trans-national institutions*

The institutions analyzed are UNESCO and the World Bank. In the case of UNESCO, the topics presented under the heading ‘Cultural Diversity’ are:

*Diversity of cultural expressions*: Emphasizing the development of new approaches to this issue in its different manifestations (books, television shows, music, and life shows, etc.).

*Heritage*: As richness that is part of the development of societies and the construction of peace.

*Languages and Plurilingualism*: Linguistic diversity is an essential element of cultural diversity. Just like plurilingualism, it plays a part in sustainable development and in reinforcing dialogue, social cohesion, and peace.

*Culture and Development*: Placing culture at the heart of development is an essential investment in the future of the world and it is the condition for the success of a properly *understood* globalization that takes into consideration the principles of cultural diversity. One of the UNESCO’s missions is to remind the nations of this important challenge.

The World Bank only mentions *Biodiversity*.

## **Policy and legislation on cultural diversity**

Regarding this dimension we tried to describe and analyze Spanish educational policies in relation to cultural diversity within the regional and national context, showing how diversity and cultural diversity are considered and defined within them.

In the national legislation on education, the word ‘intercultural’ appears only once, in the preliminary section of the LOE<sup>3</sup>, where the objectives of the educational system are stated, and it appears together with the plurality of Spain (boldface print is ours):

g) *Training in respect for and acknowledgement of the linguistic and cultural plurality of Spain and of interculturality as an enriching element of society*’ (LOE, Preliminary Section, p. 17165).

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<sup>3</sup> *Ley Orgánica de Educación – LOE (General Law on Education)*, 2/2006, May 3; BOE, 4 May, 2006.

The web site of the Ministry of Education has no direct link with the heading 'Intercultural education'. Nevertheless, we can access a page under this name if we click on 'compensation of inequalities' or 'students in unfavourable situations.'

We have exemplified the regional policy level through the exploration of regional legislation in two Autonomous Communities that we consider representative: Madrid and Catalonia. The Community of Madrid legislation mentions intercultural education on two occasions: as a reference among the programs of 'attention to diversity,' and in the chapter on teacher training in the Programs of Welcome Schools. What they mean by interculturality is not specified. The most important program of 'attention to,' or to 'deal' with diversity in Madrid is the 'Welcome Schools,' which materializes in the 'Linking Classrooms,' special classrooms for immigrant students without knowledge of the Spanish language, where they must stay at least for one academic year before entering the 'normal' system. In Catalonia, the mention of intercultural education refers to a professional role: 'person responsible for intercultural education,' who watches over how intercultural education is put into practice in educational centres. Attention to diversity in education is included in a 'Citizenship Plan' as well as in the 'Welcome Classroom' programme, focused on learning the Catalan language.

In general terms, Spanish policy, programmes and practices on diversity are proposed from a compensation philosophy. In no case is diversity dealt with from an intercultural perspective: the programmes focus on learning the vehicular language and leave other aspects unattended, such as learning or valuing other students' languages.

### **Training initiatives at the postgraduate level**

The third part of the needs assessment analyzed existing postgraduate initiatives related to this field, and the assumptions they held on diversity and intercultural education.

We browsed through the Master's degree proposals in Spanish universities, both public and private, trying to analyze their underpinning approach. Since we could not locate many training proposals under

the heading ‘intercultural education,’ we used other key words, such as ‘diversity,’ ‘intercultural training,’ ‘multiculturalism.’ Because of this, certain questions have risen in the selection process: if what we are selecting is not in itself intercultural education, then there is a previous bias that could explain, to a certain extent, the lack of adjustment between the training proposals analysed and our own concept of intercultural education. However, the proposals under the heading of intercultural education, even though they are listed under that adjective, do not seem to be in accordance with our concept either.

We have found two kinds of Master’s programmes: those that are specific and those that incorporate interculturality in some of their modules. Most of the Master’s we found link diversity with three foci of specific attention: immigration, disabilities (special educational needs) and gender. The analysis of these programmes has yielded certain incoherencies between the objectives they set themselves and how they approach them. For example, although dealing with objectives and contents that are theoretically intercultural, the methodology proposed does not fit these issues. At other times, the contents and materials are not always clear, which reinforces the idea of dispersion and incoherence among the elements of curricular design. On the other hand, we have noticed a certain diversity of approaches within a single Master’s programme, especially in those that propose intercultural education as a specific course within a programme aimed at a specific group. It is interesting to highlight that mediation (intercultural mediation, sometimes together with intercultural education) appears in online Master’s programmes with a focus on interculturality and diversity that is closer to our own approach.

## **Discussion**

Regarding the implications of the needs analysis with respect to our postgraduate programme proposal, we can highlight the following issues:

In general terms, we find that the declarations of intentions and principles regarding diversity consider it to be a positive value. However, in practice, diversity is approached in a *frivolous* way and related to

something *exotic* when it is felt to be distant (other countries, distant cultures); it is considered *problematic* when it is felt as nearer (migratory issues, issues of autonomies); it is *commercialised* in relation to the so-called 'cultural products or expressions.' Ethnocentrism is still embedded in the references to diversity: those who are diverse are always 'the others' and a certain degree of paternalism or light tolerance can be observed in the declarations in this sense. The 'visual' images associated with diversity are marked by colours, often translated in terms of 'races.' In issues directly related to education and the educational system, diversity is persistently associated with deficit and special needs; despite the constant declarations about its 'value,' actions with respect to diversity are of a compensatory kind.

These findings must encourage us to reflect on the need for transforming the conceptualization of diversity, avoiding its association with a 'problem,' as well as seeing it in a superficial and folkloric way, or as a matter of commercialization. An explicit approach to racism is another one of the needs we detected in this analysis.

The intercultural approach is usually present but only at rhetorical level and associated with specific groups or situations: people with disabilities, foreigners, differences in sexual orientation and in gender, national identities (how to 'be Catalan') and linguistics. These specific situations, in addition, are considered to be deficiencies that must be completed or compensated for with the intention of assimilating them. We have seen this in the different dimensions, with different nuances on the institutional level due to the different characteristics of the institutions. When we analyze the images of diversity, we find that, even though the declarations of intentions and principles concerning diversity are considered as a positive value, they tend to be made frivolous, problematic, and commercial; that ethnocentrism pervades (the ones who are different are always the others), observing a certain style of paternalism or light tolerance in declarations regarding this subject and, finally, that the visual images are always associated with the term 'race.' As for the norms, on the European level we find that there are recommendations, but they have no binding strength for the states. In Spain, there are no references to diversity in the legislation; only in the case of the Autonomous Community regulations exist concerning

special needs, late incorporation to the school system and educational compensation alluded to it.

We consider that our Postgraduate programme should comply with the following requirements in order to be coherent with the intercultural approach and its transformation goal:

- Make the approach clearly explicit from the beginning and enable it to permeate through all sections of the Master's so that they are congruent with one another.
- Guarantee coherence among objectives, contents, methodology, structure, evaluation, etc.
- It should respond to what we think interculturality is.
- It is thus necessary to clearly expose the idea that we have of diversity, cultural diversity, cultures, and interculturality.
- Seek strategies to share power among the members of the Master's regarding structure (design of the curricular itinerary), methodology (contribution of materials, etc.), and mutual evaluation.
- Make clear which dilemmas are probably going to come up in the design of the Master's: normality / deficiency, differences / diversity, plurality / homogeneity, indigenism, migrations, etc.

So the priorities defined are:

- Make more flexible the conditions of the Master's to adapt them to the administrative and academic requirements and conditions of the partner institutions.
- Ask ourselves how we could contribute to avoid commercialization, problematization, and folklorization of diversity.
- Propose, understand, and experience diversity as normality.
- Include the following contents: ethnocentrism and anti-racist education.
- Use clear and simple language, language that is not specific to the disciplines and methodologies (avoid 'expert' language in order not to exclude anyone), make the intentions, concepts, and expectations clear.



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## **Demographic and Intercultural Challenges on Education in an Aging Society The Description of Project *LernZeitAlter* and One of its Course Concepts**

Demographic change processes and how to react adequately point to an urgent need for action in all European countries. In this article we focus on a short description of the actual situation in Germany, the concept of project *LernZeitAlter* in this context and on intercultural perspectives on demographic change processes. Thus we chose to present exemplary course concept No. 6: *Interculturalism in an aging society*, which has been developed in the project. Closing, we will give a short prospectus on additional needs in further education.

### **Demographic change processes and the project *LernZeitAlter* including an overview of the different course contents**

#### **1. Demographic change processes in Germany**

Like many other European countries, Germany is also affected by demographic change processes. The birth rate is declining over the last decades and cannot compensate for the growing decrease in population. In addition, there won't be a positive migration balance in future, which would reverse the decrease of the German population. The German demographer, Herwig Birg (2006), who looks sceptically on

a general interference of the demographic change processes, points to the following trends:

- The most important reason for demographic aging is the low level birth rate in the past.
- The increased life expectation doesn't influence the demographic change processes notably.
- The immigration of young population can only alleviate the effects of demographic aging, but cannot stop or reverse it.
- Also a rapidly increasing birth rate couldn't stop the demographic aging process immediately.
- Until the year 2050, the demographic aging processes are irreversible.
- The public discussion about how to react to the upcoming demographic change processes is labelled with alarmism, appeasement or even ignorance.

However, many scientific professionals already work on this subject, in parts also interdisciplinary (e.g. Rostocker Zentrum<sup>1</sup> or Share<sup>2</sup>). Some researchers who allow scope for design in demographic change process include demographer Hans Bertram (2008), gerontologist Andreas Kruse (Kruse, 2008) as well as former German Minister of Health and psychologist Ursula Lehr (Lehr, 2003).

In the main we agree with the trends Birg mentioned, but on the other hand we assent with the other named researchers that demographic change processes include diverse potentials which have to be discovered and developed.

Diverse projects, which meanwhile work on the implications of the demographic change processes in Germany and which are funded by several responsible bodies and subsidies, show some immediate effectiveness especially when being integrated in regional settings. These projects frequently demand a close cooperation between commercial enterprises and scientific facilities.

In the following paragraph, our project *LernZeitAlter*, which is settled in Hannover and its surrounding region, will be presented.

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<sup>1</sup> Max-Planck-Institut für demographische Forschung (Rostock): <http://www.demogr.mpg.de>.

<sup>2</sup> Share: The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (Mannheim): <http://www.share-project.org>.

## The project *LernZeitAlter* and its contents

The contents of *LernZeitAlter* can be characterized as follows: *learning needs time; aging brings experience; we learn our whole life long and we all live in present time more than ever in a so called 'learning era'* (which could be an adequate translation for *LernZeitAlter*).

This project has been initialized and applied by the adult education center of Langenhagen (*Volkshochschule Langenhagen*) as officially recognized institution of further education in Lower Saxony and the *Central Institution of Further Education (ZEW) of the Leibniz University of Hannover*. Together both institutions applied successfully for a triannual sponsorship from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Along with the adult education center of Langenhagen and the Leibniz University of Hannover there exist three more project partners: the *target GmbH* as an institution of professional development, the *Wirtschaftsclub Langenhagen* as a non-profit society of medium-sized enterprises and *Holtmann Messe+Event GmbH* as a medium-sized enterprise itself. This cooperation assures that the course concepts, which are being developed in the institutions of further education under scientific-theoretical perspectives, will orientate on practical needs, terms and conditions of the small and medium-sized enterprises.

So what exactly is the content of *LernZeitAlter*?

Facing the demographic change processes with all its implications, on the one hand the integration of elderly people in current learning processes and on the other hand the understanding of the knowledge of elderly people as a resource becomes more and more important. There still is a lot of development potential necessary to enable learning processes establishing the issues in private and professional surroundings as well as in individual and public contexts – especially in educational settings. The need of such developing processes in educational settings has been demonstrated in several studies and publications about life-long learning aptitude (Kruse, *ibidem*) and need for further education (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2008; BMBF, 2008). Practical concepts about age-sensitive teaching and learning – especially in settings of professional development and scientific further educa-

tion – have only been developed yet in sparely amounts. *LernZeitAlter* wants to close this gap. Project objectives include the development, testing and implementation of age-sensitive learning concepts in further education, in small- and medium-size enterprises, in professional development and in universities.

The main part of the learning concepts are eight different courses with an amount of 26 lessons each, which consciously offer a variety of different age-specific themes. By testing these courses for their practicability and target group specific designation, about 100 participants from different target groups (s. chart) shall be reached.

<i>Overview of the different courses in LernZeitAlter</i>			
<i>No.</i>	<i>TITLE</i>	<i>CONTENT</i>	<i>TARGET GROUP</i>
1	Age-sensitive teaching and learning.	Scientific foundation of learning in the biography and its age-specific particularities.	Lecturers in further education.
2	Economic consequences of demographic change processes and Age(ing).	Economic perspectives on population development and its outcome.	Management and employees in small and medium-sized companies, students, citizens, further education participants.
3	Demographic change processes and its challenge for small and medium-sized enterprises. Solutions for human resource and organizational development.	How can small and medium-sized enterprises react to demographic change processes through human resource and knowledge management.	Management and employees in small and medium-sized companies.
4	Age as factor of success: demographic management in small and medium-sized enterprises.	Operational fields and possibilities of age-sensitive human resource management in small and medium-sized enterprises.	Management and employees in small and medium-sized companies, professional development.

5	Knowing of each other, learning of each other: appreciated communication and knowledge transfer for successful cooperation between different generations.	Connecting the different excellences of generations.	Management and employees in small and medium-sized companies.
6	Interculturalism in an ageing society.	Intercultural perspectives on chances and challenges of demographic change processes.	Students in their job-entry phase, human resources managers, further education participants.
7	Reading and aging – Literature and experience of life.	Reading experiences in the curriculum vitae – function, biography, attitudes towards old people, perspectives.	Students in their job-entry phase, further education participants.
8	Enterprise future and conflict management.	How to avoid or work on conflicts between generations?	Management and employees in small and medium-sized companies.

Developing the different course contents, requirements on an institutional level (e.g. at the small and medium-sized enterprises) as well as terms and conditions on an individual level from learners and lecturers will be regarded. In the project, competences and potentials of elderly people will be considered in all different subject areas of the courses. Life and work experience, for instance, will be seen as resources of elder employees in small and medium-sized enterprises. However, designing age-sensitive course contents doesn't mean that only elderly participants are the target group. In contrast, especially young and middle-aged participants working on direct and indirect implications and connected operational fields of demographic change processes in the region of Hannover shall be activated.

The results of the project will be published. Thus students, citizens, employees and enterprises will be able to react adequately to the differ-

ent challenges based on local demographic development. Local further education will support them in different ways, so they can improve their innovative ability and their competitiveness. In addition, after being tested and evaluated, the developed course concepts will be published on the project homepage ([www.lernzeitalter.de](http://www.lernzeitalter.de)) for further use.

Facing increasing economic pressure, small and medium-sized enterprises need tangible results out of “LernZeitAlter” and its courses. Nevertheless, the balance between intended purpose and individual human requirements needs to be kept. In conclusion, the intention of the project *LernZeitAlter* is not only a functional accommodation on demographic change processes in its local settings, but it is a holistic understanding of education.

## **2. Exemplary course concept: Interculturalism in an aging society**

The course *Interculturalism in an aging society – Intercultural perspectives on chances and challenges of demographic change processes* will focus on Germany as a multicultural society. It will take place as a weekly course at the Leibniz University of Hannover in winter term 2009/2010. As target group, students in educational study paths are defined, because in their further professional life they will have to work in intercultural settings, which will be more and more influenced by demographic change processes. In addition, further realizations in institutions of further education with other target groups are possible, but not planned as yet.

### **Background information about migrants in Germany**

The amount of migrants in German population is increasing; almost one-fifth of the whole German population currently belongs to this group (Avenarius, 2006). Nationwide, there is an enormous range: in Eastern Germany only 8% have a migration background, in Western Germany this group counts 21%. But not only regional differences carry weight in this subject, especially the different age distributions appear important. In the age-group of up-to-25-year-old people, already 25% of the whole group have a migration background, whereas

in some overcrowded areas such as Berlin or Hamburg, for example, almost half of all children and teenagers belong to that group (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, *ibidem*). However, in the age-group of 55 and older, only 8% of the entire German population have a migrant background (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2008; authors' own calculations). So far, this doesn't sound like much – but for the first time in German history, a relevant group of immigrants retires with a further upward trend. Indeed this group is still comparatively small, but as we can see from the number of young migrants, the numbers will increase in further decades (BMFSFJ, 2005). The German society actually is in an elementary development phase – in the end migration will constitute an ordinary chapter in normal biographies. Nevertheless, watching results from different educational studies, these statistics appear problematic, because in the German educational system migrant children and teenagers still are unprivileged. The risk of repeating a school year in elementary school is about four times higher compared with children without migration background. Owing to the three-tiered school system in Germany, migrant teenagers appear more often at the low-level-part of secondary school than teenagers with a German background (Avenarius, *ibidem*). Thus, twice as many teenagers with migration background leave school without any graduation. In return, three times as many teenagers with German background achieve their higher education entrance qualification (Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, *ibidem*). International studies like IGLU and PISA show that in no other European country the gap in school achievement between children with and without migration background is as high as in Germany (Schwippert, Bos and Lankes, 2003).

This discrimination, founded in the educational system, also influences the chances in vocational education and furthermore in the whole working life. Even while having the same school achievements as teenagers without migrant background; migrant teenagers have worse prospects in reaching apprenticeship training positions. Prejudices regarding disturbing socialization criteria (for example, absence of cultural knowledge or problems with work routines based on sense of time or adequateness of the job) seem to be one important reason. Supposed customer interests also might play a role in this context



(Boos-Nünning, 2008). As a result, especially teenagers with migration background stay in educational transition offers (like e.g. vocational preparation) without getting any chances on the job market (Baumgratz-Gangl, 2008).

These discrepancies also appear as a part of migrant work biographies: Employees with migration backgrounds mostly work in low-qualified jobs without executive functions and often under their real qualification (Boos-Nünning, *ibidem*). The group of successful educated migrants doesn't appear in public discourse; many of them emigrate to other countries because they don't have many chances to achieve adequate jobs (Farrokhzad, 2008). As a result, a part of migrant population spent the time of school and work education in Germany without having achieved any graduation – and this group is still growing (Boos-Nünning, *ibidem*). Among others, this is one important reason why people with migration background almost do not appear in institutions of further education. Thus, there cannot be offered basic or even continuing education either (Fischer, 2008).

In the course of demographic change processes and the attended lack of specialized workforce, Germany can no longer afford this development. There is an urgent need for action, especially for the whole German educational system (Baumgratz-Gangl, *ibidem*; Fischer, *ibidem*).

### Course concept

At this point, the course *Interculturalism in an aging society* applies: On one hand, educational aspects of the subject will be discussed from different positions, because the participants are students of educational science, who all will work later on getting in touch with the implications of an aging, intercultural and multilingual society. On the other hand, the course will approach the subject from a social view. The relevance of interculturalism in demographic change processes will be confirmed and the decisive role of all educational institutions – preschool, school, vocational education, universities and further education – will be defined.

The course overviews several subject areas, which are concerned with the phenomenon of interculturalism in an aging society:

Importance and dimensions of demographic change processes

“Demographic change processes” is a keyword in current popular discussions, but what exactly does it mean? Actual data and facts about this development will be presented, the origin of this process will be explained, different scenarios and prognoses will be discussed. A close look on the actual situation in different countries will illustrate the global dimension of this development.

Germany as an immigration country

With its declaration as an immigrant country, Germany had a lot of difficulties. Although immigration history goes back a long period of time – of course, much longer than only fifty years, when the first migrant workers were recruited – an immigration act was not passed until 2005. Immigration to Germany and emigration from Germany will be presented as well as the position of people with migration background in the educational system. Furthermore, the possibility of solving demographic problems with immigration will be discussed from different local and global points of view.

Transnational living facilities

The traditional model of immigration and emigration will be replaced more and more with different forms of transmigration: seasonal living in different countries, conservation and development of global social networks or increased vocational mobility all over the world. How these changes influence the society as well as the educational system and which challenges are connected with it will be worked out and debated.

Multilingualism in the school system and in the job

In contemporary popular and scientific discussions, language has a key role in educational and integrating processes. Following themes will be presented and discussed: Different positions of how to handle multilingualism in school in a productive way; actual research results of how first languages are used in different vocational contexts; the conception of German integration courses; the perspective of monolin-

gual habitus (Gogolin, 1994); the different significance of different languages; the biographies of language acquisition of elderly migrants.

### Attitudes towards old people – rethinking of age

Influenced by demographic change processes, the attitudes toward old people and aging change. People who retire in present time normally are neither ill nor fragile and invalid but want to participate further in social life. So what exactly does aging mean? Which attitudes towards old people exist? How can resources of elderly people be used more effectively? These questions will be answered from intergenerational, intercultural and educational perspectives.

### The role of educational institutions

Education is a resource, which forms the base for successful cooperation in society. There is an urgent need for action not to let migrants fall out of any qualification processes in the educational system. On the other hand, it is absolutely necessary to start and accompany reflexive processes regarding discrimination, equality and power structures. Because of demographic change processes and their sustainable social changes, educational institutions play a key role in this process, the fact they have to accept. Different positions will be discussed; ideas and suggestions will be developed.

### Didactical advisements

The innovative concept of the course *Interculturalism in an aging society* is basically based on the course contents: usually the subject of demographic change processes is connected with elderly people. But in this case, young people work on this subject to develop age-sensitive competences for their further vocational life, which has rather indirect implications than direct effects. In line with the course at last occurs a learning process in double respects: on one hand, students learn about what age-sensitive teaching and learning means; on the other hand, they learn how to use these competences. Thus, in their vocational field the students will act as multipliers for their colleagues and their clients.

Educational objectives of the course are:

- Founding a theoretical background of the subject interculturalism in an aging society;
- Giving examples of actual good-practice;
- Developing implications for practical use in different vocational fields;
- Sensitization on migration in an aging society and the social development for the next fifty years;
- Connecting the scientific results with the students' individual backgrounds and settings.

So in practice, the course is built of a mixture of methods, which fit the contents of each lesson and which also fit the learning group. Because it's a scientific setting, of course, lectures and presentations will play an important role, especially to describe scientific results. But to activate the students, there is a big need for other approaches. Discussions take place each lesson, subgroups will be founded for intensive work on special aspects, role-plays will help to debate a subject from different points of view. In one lesson, an expert with migration background herself will join the course. Dependent on the group, multiple other methods will be added. The intention is to make the course as lively as possible without disregarding the contents.

### 3. Conclusions

The intention of *LernZeitAlter* in general is an advancement in handling demographic change processes in Hannover and its surroundings. The development and testing of the different courses as well as the publishing of the age-sensitive contents will be helpful to prepare effectively for demographic change processes. One big effort is the close cooperation between science and business practice. Thus, especially small and medium-sized enterprises shall enhance their employability and competitiveness; e.g., by developing and using actually unemployed potential of elderly people for balancing the upcoming lack of specialized workforce or by advanced intergenerational cooperation. In terms of ERDF, this project is a contribution for social equitableness in this region.

Combining different and economically relevant subjects with aspects of demographic change processes is the main method of the project. At the same time, this approach forms the first step to establish demographic problems as cross-cutting issues in general settings as happened in the exemplary course concept. In this special case, connecting intercultural aspects with demographic developments especially focused on educational students actually combines two themes, which both have sustainable effects on the society. Thus the explication of further educational requirements also has indirect efforts on developments in small and medium-sized enterprises: If more migrants would be successfully qualified in school and if migrants would have better chances on the job market, then they really would be an important alternative for the lack of specialized workforce. Next to these consequences, main intentions of the course are (1) a critical approach to the actual situation and (2) the education of multipliers and their ability to adapt and empathize with current and further migrant situations in an aging society.

Concluding, some prospects are defined which will have importance in further educational settings:

It will be an enormous challenge to establish cross-cutting issues; e.g. demographic development or interculturalism in general course contents. At present, these subjects usually seem to be offered separately; e.g. as courses for intercultural competence. Because of further changes in population and society it will be absolutely necessary to introduce these themes to general curricula.

In addition, intergenerational and intercultural learning situations should be created. Activating and accompanying respective learning processes will be one important task for educationalists in every occupational field. Therefore, they need specialized vocational training and methods, which have to be offered; e.g. by universities.

Until now, migrants are an absolutely under-represented group with a lot of undiscovered resources. The principal task of further education will be to change actual concepts (Fischer, *ibidem*) so that they can reach the new target group and to help them in developing their potentials. However, developing potentials will only succeed if learners can start their learning projects in a self-directed way.

Last but not least these prospects may refer to Jaques Delors (1996), who defined the intentions of further education as follows: learning to live together; learning to know; learning to do; learning to be.

In other words: learning today for tomorrow – of each other, with each other and for each other. For this purpose, *LernZeitAlter* stands as well.

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## **Repatriates' Education: from Language to Profession**

Almost 5 thousand repatriates settled in Poland between 1990 and 2005, including almost 2 thousand before Repatriates Law was introduced (Elrick, Frelak, Hut, 2006:18). Most repatriates have come from Kazakhstan, followed by Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Although it was estimated that 20–30 thousand compatriots would come to Poland from the East (Hut, 2002:18), these estimates were proven inadequate. The numbers probably included people of Polish descent (Grobewska, 1996:25). Although most declared Poles in the 90's expressed the wish to leave Kazakhstan, this didn't mean that all would eventually leave the country. The number of people coming back to their fatherland has not increased in the recent years, in fact the opposite happens. Decreasing numbers of admitted repatriates and fewer invitations issued by Polish gminas (communes) have influenced the fall in the number of repatriates.

Although the number of repatriates is not as large as expected, the Polish state feels responsible for its compatriots returning to the fatherland. The 2000 repatriate law guarantees help in adjusting to life in Poland to this group, including the possibility to learn the Polish language and frequent professional training courses.

This article presents and reviews educational activities aimed at repatriates. In its first part I am going to present problems concerning defining the repatriate. In the consequent parts I am going to present the suggested courses for repatriates, showing their diversity and complexity. I am going to analyze the courses provided by the legisla-



tor together with additional aid action beyond the 'obligatory curriculum'. I am inclined to think that the program offered to repatriates is complex and to a large extent meets their needs. Language training is provided to repatriates prior to their coming to Poland and continued in Poland in form of language and adaptation to life in Poland courses. Professional training courses aimed at improving qualifications are also available. In addition, repatriates can seek advice as so-called support groups are organized for them with the help of volunteers.

This article is based on research conducted between 2006 and 2008 on repatriates and people working with this group. The main research method used to collect material was the informal conversational interview. The focus was on the research aim. The field research was conducted in Warsaw, Krakow and Wroclaw. Seven people working with repatriates and 3 women repatriates took part in the research.

### Who is a repatriate? Definition problems

The term 'repatriate' stems from Latin 'patria' (fatherland), prefix re- signifies action restoring the original state (Hut, 2002:17). When talking about repatriation we mean 'coming back to fatherland' although in some cases this is coming back to 'historical fatherland'. In essence, this is a symbolic return to predecessors' country. In Great Encyclopedia of World Geography the term is defined as *'migration of people from repatriates areas, diaspora forming areas and regions belonging to different countries to counties formed by their own national communities'* (Posern-Zieliński, 2000:350).

Although present in the Polish language for years, the term is not unambiguous as many researchers notice, and its meaning fluctuates under influence of historical and political circumstances. The term was deemed inappropriate in reference to individuals who have never left their place of residence as they have always lived there – as it happens in case of inhabitants of Zaolzie areas, the vicinity of Vilnius, Grodno and Lvov (Elrick, Frekak and Hut, 2006:25). In their case it is perhaps more appropriate to state that *'it is their state that abandoned them'* (Ruchniewicz, 2000:11) as a result of international agreements on changing the border line.

Also, the repatriation nowadays can hardly be treated as a continuation of post-war repatriation. Modern repatriates are not those who return but those who come to the country of their fathers, grandfathers, even great grandfathers. They were born in a different country and their entire life experience is connected with a different country. Even those who were born in Poland and now, 60 years later, are returning to her, experience adaptation problems similar to problems faced by typical economic immigrants. They are motivated by hope for much better living conditions and better future for their children rather than repatriation to their country of origin. This new type of repatriation was called impatriation by Hut (2002).

In the situation when economic motivation prevails the patriotic one (Elrick, Frelak, Hut, 2006:27) it is vital to answer their question concerning the character of modern wave of repatriation becoming a specific economic migration. The legislator who guarantees laws stemming from the repatriates status is driven by the rule of paying off the historical debt to people of Polish origin and does not seem to recognize the problem.

Right given to repatriates are described in Repatriation Act from Nov. 9, 2000 (Dz. U.04.53.532). A repatriation visa can be granted to a person who upon submitting an application declares Polish nationality and in the past one of person's parents or grandparents or two great grandparents were of Polish nationality. In addition, the applicant shall be able to demonstrate links with Polish provenance, in particular by cultivating Polish language, traditions and customs. Repatriates are not treated by the Polish state as aliens (who in fact they formally were) but as individuals towards whom the State feels a special responsibility expressed by the drive to enable their relocation to the country and help in adapting to new circumstances (Iglicka, Kaźmierczyk, Kazur-Rafał, 2003:22). And it is to this end – to support the adaptation of repatriates in new – old fatherland that education activities are provided for this group.

### **Education prior to arriving in Poland**

As Elrick, Frelak and Hut (2006:13) state the repatriates' education should begin already in the country of origin and should include

obligatory language courses and extensive information campaign on formal issues as well as living conditions in Poland. Art. 18 of Repatriation Act enables participation in the Polish language courses.

Currently, the Polish language courses are run in larger aggregations of Polish people. Since 1989 the National In-Service Teacher Training Center (NTTC) have been sending Polish teachers to former USSR, including Kazakhstan. Polish classes are run in different forms: as extra curriculum activities, as part of the curriculum and also in courses run by priests and nuns for different age groups: children, youth and adults (Gawęcki, Jaskulski, 1997:106).

The activity of Polish teachers in Kazakhstan is frequently assessed neutrally and negatively by its residents. Lessons run by teachers sent by NTTC *'enjoy quite limited popularity. Especially middle-aged people do not have enough stamina to frequent them'* (Elrick, Frelak, Hut, 2006:36). One of my interviewees, a repatriate from Kazakhstan talks about the course:

*'This is a preparation course to come to Poland. The teacher was nice. She talked more about Polish culture, history, but less grammar. And I was interested in grammar, to pass my exams. (...) I started the course there was general information about Poland, but for me not enough grammar. (...) First only people interested in settling in Poland went to the course, then everybody'*

As Poles say, it is unfavorable for teachers to change so frequently and, unlike priests who they are often compared to, they do not grow into the community (Grobewska, 1996:51). This might mean that Polish people expect their teachers not only to help them acquire knowledge but 'maintain Polishness' where they live. This leads to the question whether the aim of the courses is to prepare them to come to Poland or maintain Polishness where they are run.

## **Education after settling in Poland**

Art. 18 of Repatriation Act (2000) and regulation on types of language and adaptation courses and the method of their organization (2002) assures state-guaranteed repatriates' education. Repatriates and members of their immediate families arriving with them in the Repub-

lic of Poland may be granted aid in the form of free Polish language courses and courses adapting these persons to life in Polish society. Polish language courses may last from 30 to 100 hours whereas course adapting to life in Polish society should last a minimum of 40 hours. The courses may be run in the form of language – adaptation camps, evening classes or weekend classes. Free-of-charge board and lodgings are provided and transport costs reimbursed in all cases for all repatriates and their families.

The body responsible for the organization of language – adaptation courses is Ministry of National Education or social organizations which won the competition and bid themselves responsible for running the courses. It is worth mentioning that in addition to the government programs, extra action are initiated by non-government organizations who support the repatriates' education. It is also worth mentioning that it is Polish Humanitarian Organization (PAH) which has realized most projects in aid to repatriates and since 2002 has been operating the Aid Program for Repatriates.

### **Polish Language Courses**

Among all kinds of courses it is language courses which are most wanted by repatriates. Polish language courses which I analyzed in my research were conducted by Polish Humanitarian Organization in Warsaw and Krakow and the Centre of Continuing Education in Wroclaw. The courses are based on Polish Ministry of Education – approved curriculum (2003). Yet, as one of people responsible for the courses in PAH reports, *'This was a basic curriculum but it was adapted to repatriates' needs.'*

Language courses for repatriates are run as weekend classes under the condition of the satisfactory number of participants. However, in Warsaw language courses are run on a regular basis with short breaks in between. As one of the people responsible for the project says, *'This is a continuous project because there are new people coming who need help in Polish'*. Unfortunately, the timing of the courses leaves much to be desired. A respondent from Krakow says:

*'in Krakow the Centre of Continuing Education is responsible for running the courses (...) unfortunately Krakow administration files for*

*this money and this money never comes. In the last 3 years we have had the course only once and it should happen every year.'*

Polish language courses for repatriates are run on the basis of course books and materials selected by the teacher. Usually, they are courses of Polish as a foreign language. A teacher talks about his lesson with the repatriates:

*I would always devote the first part to grammar, and it didn't last long – 20–30 minutes in the lesson. I did various exercises from the book. And then we did various literary pieces, from my ideas, read poetry, Stasiuk's essays and so on, that's how it looked. We interpreted different essays, I checked their reading comprehension by asking various questions. For example I made a chart and gave them 10 questions. First I read the text, say 4–5 times, then they covered the text, then read the text themselves and wrote down the answers on the other side. I later gave them points for correct answer. This was a cool exercise, it worked very well'.*

Polish language lessons are enjoyed by participants who frequent them willingly and systematically. In view of my interviews I can conclude that these courses are useful, especially to people whose Polish is weak and their families who are not of Polish descent. Some even claim there are not enough courses, they should last 200–300 hours instead of 100. One of the repatriates says, *'I would like to do this course once again but they say you can only do it once. For me this is not enough.'*

The most common language problems that repatriates face are grammar, pronunciation (accent) and vocabulary. A teacher draws attention to deceptive similarities between Polish and Russian:

*'As for vocabulary there are some words that these ladies use, which mean something completely different in the Russian context (...) and I need to explain the context to them. With teenagers I don't have such problems, they quickly notice and grasp the context.'*

Despite all language problems especially people willing to learn Polish quickly make substantial progress.

### **Adaptation courses**

The other type of courses assured by Polish law are adaptation courses, which should last a minimum of 40 hours and include

3 modules: matters of the Polish State and legal system, classes with a psychologist and culture and history of Poland. However, it is up to the teachers to decide on the details. In the course of my research I have analyzed 3 courses, run by different institution at different times: the Centre of Continuing Education (CKU) in Wroclaw (2007), Polish Humanitarian Organization (PAH) and Warsaw School of Social Psychology SWPS (2002) and Agency for Problem Prevention (PPP) (2002–2003).

Having analyzed the curricula I have noticed that the content is selected according to the organizer's understanding of adaptation and possibilities to use the course time in a manner most useful for repatriates.

In case of CKU, Polish language course was the most important. The adaptation course was merely an addition to support the learning, that's why the organizers focused on meetings with local authorities and conversations. A person responsible for CKU courses says:

*'We had meetings with voivodship office officials about their visas, from the town hall, County Centre for Family Support – asking what they can ask from the starost, meetings with Social Insurance in Poland, but also civil education. These took 1–2 hours. There are also meetings with a lady from School Career Centre about job opportunities (how to write a CV) and with psychologists.'*

The main aim of Agency for Problem Prevention is to *'provide participants with solid knowledge and skills necessary for adaptation to the Polish reality, to get self-assured and also to get support and use self-help'*. The participants mastered these skills during a psychological training. According to its authors, the most important parts of the psychological training was coping with stress, improving people skills and using individual potential to adapt to new living conditions. Moreover, in addition to knowledge about the structure of the state and its functioning and the history of Poland, it was important to get in-depth understanding of Polish history by taking trips to Jura Krakowsko-Częstochowska (Gryczyńska et al., 2003).

SWPS and PAH also focused on cultural training besides the information part. As Małgorzata Chodynicka and Joanna Więckowska report in the text describing this training *'cultural training for repatriates*

*in a complex and exhausting process. In order to be successful we need to support its participants'* (2004:195). That is why the perfect program supporting repatriates' adaptation should include the history of Poland, introduction to law, as well as psychological and cultural courses. The Polish language training should be provided prior to other courses or simultaneously. The following topics should be included in the cultural training: experiences and difficulties related to repatriation, the image of Poland and Polish people and inhabitants of their former country of residence, the expectations and the reality in Poland.

It is worth mentioning that although some modules of the adaptation courses are similar in each version, some are quite unique. Regrettably, there is not sufficient information regarding the training results which makes the comparison between their quality and effectiveness impossible. Thus it is difficult to deem training including psychological aspects more effective than those who merely focus on teaching the repatriates their rights and administration structures.

### **Professional training**

Professional training courses and learning for extra qualifications are not merely methods of training but also aim to boost competence and professional skills. Such courses are run by employers, job centres or NGOs which deal with job training. The need for such courses is generated by difficulties in job searching, unrecognizing qualifications and experience gained in the county of origin and problems connected with diploma nostrification. As a result many people experience professional degradation, the problem recognized by one of the interviewees:

*'the inability to find a job in spite of necessary qualifications, job experience, prior job position, here they have to downsize, and this is a serious problem.'*

A PAH program for job activation for women repatriates ran in 2007 *'aimed to help women repatriates find themselves on the job marker, become more competitive, make them more active to feel more self-confident on the job market in Poland'*. The syllabus of professional training included, among others, computer and internet classes, job adaptation meetings and professional trainings (accounting, computer graphics,

message) individually suited to repatriates. One of them, referring to the course she chose and why she did said, *'I cared most about the language and professional training. I also did the computer one. Before I never used a computer but you can never have enough qualifications. A very good level.'*

The individual approach to repatriates in respect to providing extra qualifications, generally speaking, was effective. A dark side of this approach however was some repatriates' demanding attitude who complained when they could not do a driving course saying *'a driving license is always useful'*.

### **Repatriates support**

Beside the training courses offered to repatriates, other forms of support include counseling, guidance, meetings with experts organized by institutions working with the group. Some of these meetings were held at the request of the repatriates:

*'we run meetings for bigger groups of repatriates about given topics (...) that repatriates ask about and sometimes it happens that in a month or a quarter the leading topic for repatriates is paying taxes to the tax office. Then the meeting is held with a person who explains how to pay taxes, etc.'*

For quite a long time, Polish Humanitarian Organization ran a project 'Volunteers for Support' in which volunteers acted as *'sort of everyday counselor, a guide to one repatriate family'*. Previously trained volunteers assisted repatriates in everyday problems, helped them look for work, went to offices. As one of the project coordinators reports about the cooperation between the family and the volunteer:

*'As for the cooperation between the family and the volunteer, it usually lasted from six months to one year, normally a year but sometimes a bit longer because the family usually needed this support, but if we knew that the family was adapted enough to function independently we suggested ending this formal cooperation, this didn't mean severing all contacts, they usually stayed in touch, but more informally, privately.'*

As the project coordinator claims nowadays there is no need for support volunteers because *'repatriates who come to Poland have bigger*



*knowledge than those who came first, their situation has slightly changed. They need occasional contacts, information, meetings and guidance rather than constant help'.*

Repatriates can provide support for one another, therefore the idea to create 'peer support groups.' Support groups integrate, *'but also develop personality, provide emotional support, enable sharing experiences'*. The groups meet on a regular basis and discuss topics interesting for repatriates, such as integration, communication, assertiveness, openness, setting new life goals, self-presentation, creativity. Repatriates also meet privately or on the occasion of holiday meeting, creating informal support groups.

Another form of support is a Polish-Russian publication entitled 'Poland for You. Guidebook for repatriates' (Tyrz, Gaczyński, 2005). The guidebook is supposed to provide information about the repatriation procedure and the general situation in Poland. It includes information concerning the repatriate legal status and rights, legal information about the social help they are entitled to, healthcare, accommodation, work opportunities, pension system and also advice on contacts with offices, how to register a company and other useful information, a phone directory and typical applications.

## Conclusions

Supporting repatriates should be individual and comprehensive. Repatriates Law guarantees a certain support and various institutions and non-government organizations fulfill its articles. Polish Humanitarian Organization acts on the largest scale. It runs projects addressing repatriates adaptation needs: language courses, professional and computer training, psychological guidance, law courses, integration and cultural meeting, personal development trainings. The program is run in several Polish cities: Warsaw, Krakow, Torun and Wroclaw. Those families who are scattered around the country and live far away from big cities experience problems gaining access to the programs.

To sum up, I examined those forms of education provided to repatriates, which can still be improved and bettered. Only language courses need not to be improved although some say there are not enough

teaching hours. According to the participants, language courses run prior to arrival in Poland although have a big potential, the teaching does not meet their needs. Consequently, the possibilities the preparation courses offer are not explored.

As for adaptation courses, in my opinion, they are meant to teach repatriates 'Polishness', to assimilate with the society. Repatriates are helped to 'lose their accent' they are ashamed of, taught the Polish law and language. Cultural differences, identity and nostalgia for their country of origin are infrequently discussed. Repatriates assimilation, their gradual adaptation to the Polish society is the only strategy, also accepted by the repatriates. The alternative approach could include creating cultural courses, which would cover issues such as identity, understanding modern Polish culture, image of the Polish culture abroad and feeling alienated in spite of being Polish already in the country, adaptation difficulties, and how the situation is perceived by the hosts. Spending some time to appreciate the diversity – the resource the repatriates have brought with them would also be worthwhile.

Also methodology should deserve a more closer look. Traditional in form Polish courses, meetings and discussions with local authorities are not surprising unlike psychological training used in adaptation courses, which may provoke different reactions in the group.

A psychologist from Agency for Problem Prevention reports the experience, *'at the beginning they could not understand they needed to sit in a circle for psychological training and some – although I explained everything in detail – still tried to sit separately, in the corner, behind someone else's back.'* (Gryczyńska et al., 2003:49).

It is worth remembering that repatriates, although Polish citizens, have a different cultural background. The author writes that some participants, usually elder ones, acted in a reserved way, saying they were not used to 'opening up', somehow forgetting that the methods she suggested are completely unknown to the culture where the repatriates are from. These methods and rules for functioning in the Polish reality take time to get used to and comprehend.

All educational activities for repatriates should be praised equally, Polish lessons, adaptation courses and professional trainings. One

should nevertheless always bear in mind who the education is aimed at, take into accounts the repatriates' needs and not impose one's expectations on individuals who have not come back but arrived in Poland.

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## **II. Recovering and Creating Reality by Biographical Learning**



**Dirk F. Becker**

**For a More Advanced Culture of Contemplation.  
Theatre Pedagogy and Biographical Practice as  
Part of an Experience-Oriented Education for  
Children, Adolescents and Adults**

Are you doing what you love to do?  
We are creatures that are able to love,  
A wonderful circumstance.  
Let us not waste it!

**Hansen:** *Mr. Becker, you are biographer, philosopher and adventure-based teacher. How did you come up with the idea of combining adventure-based education with biographical work?*

**Becker:** The idea grew while I was studying philosophy as well as social, literature and theatre sciences at university. Each field offered me important perspectives on the questions smouldering in me, questions of identity, such as where we come from and where we are going to, or questions of what we are capable of and what we have to expect both individually and as a society. No later than at the end of my studies, all these questions and studies finally condensed in my master's thesis: 'Nietzsche's anthropology with regard to nihilism – how you become what you are – an examination of self-development as a basis for moral acting.'

One's self and the idea you have of it has basically been a fragile matter. For as long as we are gaining new experiences, previous experi-

ences are likely to be interpreted from a different perspective, which has not been considered before. In a word, if we ask for identity we will always come across our own self as a dynamic, both physical and intellectual, experiment. And should one's self come to a standstill, according to its nature, it will collapse. One's self is a construction of awareness to the same extent as the image that it has of itself. We are therefore able to act morally/virtuously, and that means with sole responsibility, only if we are ready to reconstruct and analyse ourselves again.

The biographical practice is a consequence of these studies and the adventure-based education has proved to be an excellent means to make biographical work practicable.

**Hansen:** *I have always thought that a biographer's work was to document events of the life of a socially acceptable or financially well-situated person.*

**Becker:** I have heard of that, too. In this case we, however, deal with a different sort of biographical work. It is not me, the biographer, who writes down and documents somebody's life story (although I do offer that, too), but I pass on various methods and assessments and support and give advice to anybody who refurbishes his own life story.

**Hansen:** *That means you make somebody write.*

**Becker:** Yes, you could say that. Writing down and conserving your life story is, however, only one aspect of biographical work. The text may be regarded as a script, a draft of what is going to follow next. Let's say it is a great treasure which should not be underestimated. Moreover, there are in fact further methods to approach one's own topics of life. The drama or performing play, narrative skill and experience-oriented philosophizing are approaches that I would like to mention here.

Here, the important thing is that you thereby create ways which make it possible to access your past, present and future life appropriately in order to recognize yourself and to get things straight with yourself.

After the idea of lifelong learning, this concept can help to better understand your own life and thereby your own self. In this case, lifelong learning means to learn about yourself.



**Hansen:** *Is one method not sufficient, for example, to write a diary reflecting the occurrences written down?*

**Becker:** Yes, sometimes. But on the other hand, that depends on what type of learner you are. Writing does not suit everybody, and even if you do keep a diary it does not mean that you are a good writer. Just like the other methods to gain access to your self mentioned before, there are many ways of writing. Keeping a diary people often lose all interest in writing because in most cases it ends up as a kind of reporting, of which you grow tired, or frustrated you come to the conclusion: I am so boring and untalented that I would not even want to read my own diary once more. And yet, even without the supposed talent, anybody is able to write in such a way that you would always like to read it again. ‘Creative writing’ is above all a technique, it becomes an art by itself.

An example: should you sit over your diary this evening, simply ask your senses how the day has been. Find a comparison: How has the day tasted? Of what did it smell? Does it remind you of a sound, a song or a melody? Think of a colour for the day, try to feel the day and find an equivalent to some sensory experiences, which occur to your mind. Find the special expression. The report thus turns into a vivid story without great effort. The day receives a face. Through writing you can experience it again and again.

The fields of adventure-based philosophy, drama and narration also offer special techniques. It is important that here every method can point out special aspects, ideas, talents as well as memories, which may not come to one’s mind by means of a narrow-minded method.

With all those approaches to learning with and about oneself, biographical work also deals with creating a foundation for self-responsibility, on which we still have to catch up in many areas.

We have been taught to and we are used to take responsibility for other people. If we are, however, dealing with ‘the responsibility for ourselves,’ we are often helpless and tend to escape.

**Hansen:** *You have just spoken about an escape from self-responsibility. What do you mean by that? Is there a difference between taking responsibility and self-responsibility?*

**Becker:** In most cases, we are taught to hide our own weakness and flaws and to identify ourselves with our strength. In the face of the fear

of threatening punishment with all its different facets of rejections, we learn to lead an 'as if'-existence.

The rest of our personality is pushed/moved into darkness, into subconscious, where it is constantly lurking and trying to come back into daylight. That is what I among other things mean by escape. Here, you could imagine the 'Ego-I,' which has to master everyday life, as a kind of 'guard' or 'policeman.' While the Ego-I struggles through life and gets older, all hidden aspects of life as though being conserved are waiting for the chance to break out and take revenge. It is the human drama that we are brought-up, but we do not learn how to teach ourselves appropriately. I call that cultivating. As a rule, this is taken for granted. But to deal with your own feelings and experiences appropriately, the so-called 'care of the soul,' is not given to us. It must be learnt and practised exactly in the same way as the contact with others. Instead, we learn to deny and to suppress feelings which are not socially welcome. Nobody should realize what or who we really are. As a result, we are strangers to ourselves, because we have not started to know and understand ourselves. Those who could prove to be 'dangerous' to us, may know of our split personality. This would not be that dramatic. But it becomes dramatic at the point we begin to hide us from ourselves in order to be capable of meeting others and ourselves with a clear conscience and open minded.

So, to be on the run also means to run away from yourself by trying to push aside what you have to cope with and finally to protect you of yourself, of your own judgement of mankind and of what you are and what you were. In my opinion, part of this escape is also that we swamp ourselves or let us be swamped with external responsibility. There are by the way further variants of excuses which help you not to face yourself, especially during leisure time. In this respect, you can regard your own life as a kind of game with the following option: do I succeed in hiding me from myself for so long that a point in time will far have passed and I cannot help not being accountable to myself? Life is then enigmatically turning into a race against time, that means a race against other people discovering my 'supposedly bad or evil traits of character' and who could reveal my lie, and a race against quiet moments, in which I am forced to confront me with my own self

and to stand bare in front of myself despairing of my own disgrace, of all personal deficits, weaknesses, the loaded guilt, the lies, hypocrisies and fears...

Hardly anyone will be able to protect himself from moments like that, because the spirits of the past are going to wait for you at the end of your life at the latest. In these moments, hours, days, weeks, years, when the heroic 'Ego-I' or the policeman is getting weak and tired, and the covered and hidden self is showing through the façade of your sham existence with all the lies piled up, the whole life drama is manifesting itself as well as the guilt and shame of the escape from yourself and your deeds.

Many people have to endure this fate, not due to a weakness of character but because they never learnt how to and never had the habit of dealing with themselves. A more advanced culture of contemplation, which I demand, deals exactly with this subject, and biographical work is the key to it.

**Hansen:** *So you are saying that because we cannot take responsibility of our own life we take responsibility for other people?*

**Becker:** This sounds like a paradox, doesn't it. But I believe that this is true in many cases. Suppression and not taking over responsibility for oneself is an escape from oneself, because we do not know how to deal with ourselves. The problems, conflicts and un-dealt subjects do, however, remain. They are there, they are lurking. They can also convert themselves, apart from psychic illnesses, into stiff joints, into bitter wrinkles around the corners of one's mouth or into a stoop. They may also become encapsulated like a cyst, which will get inflamed some time or other, break up and draw all attention to it.

**Hansen:** *With this 'cyst' do you mean symbolically 'now'?*

**Becker:** Yes, I used to think like this while I was still at university, but not any more. You see, we have been brought up ambiguously. We are used to clearly separate our psyche from our physical body to some extent. We do submit that one is likely to influence the other in some way, but overall we separate didactically.

When I studied Nietzsche's body concept, my attitude towards things gradually changed though staying abstract at first. But when I took lessons in theatre pedagogy at 'arco Erlebnispädagogik e.V.'

(association for adventure-based learning), I realized that Nietzsche's body concept was more than a cognitive, integral model of identity. Arco, with their theatre-based approach to movement, assume that the whole body does not only work like a memory but it is a memory. By means of certain movements, a process of thoughts can be activated. Memories, suppressed and forgotten subjects are activated in that way and updated. The approach to movement through motor activity results in the fact that a great variety of subjects can be resumed and assimilated again not only cognitively but also physically. The techniques of motion theatre and dramaturgical play can here be understood as a kind of 'working process,' and in some cases, as a 'convalescence.'

**Hansen:** *Your descriptions remind me of the term 'therapy'?*

**Becker:** It is good that you mention the term. Our work has a therapeutic effect, that is beyond question. But it is not a therapy. How strong the therapeutic effect – in this case meaning to learn about yourself – of the theatre-pedagogic methods, also developed by arco, indeed is depends on which setting the participants have agreed on before.

**Hansen:** *So what can we learn from you?*

**Becker:** As a rule, this varies from person to person. I would like to refrain from burdening you with a listing, above all because it would not really have a meaning and it would stir up expectations which we cannot fulfil. We assume that you will only learn what you are ready for and open to.

**Hansen:** *But if what you have said before is true, e.g. that conflicts can be assimilated with the help of bodywork, it should also be possible to produce specific conflicts and subjects by certain movements.*

**Becker:** I'm afraid I understand what you mean. I basically agree to the opinion that certain culturally and socially formed movements or gestures (routines) can cause corresponding reactions of other people. Dealing with the subject of bodywork, nobody will know beforehand which problem or conflict each person has 'put' into which limb or part of the body. Often, this does not reveal itself before those zones are re-activated by dramaturgic bodywork, thus dissolving the mental block (or the door to the dungeon).

**Hansen:** *But why should people go through all that?*

**Becker:** Thank you for this question. I can just the same ask why you should go through a lifelong escape and suppression and risk that your behaviour becomes pathological, risk that you never learn to respect and love yourself, that you have to be ashamed of yourself and finally stand in front of the ruins of your life, because you have, maybe due to ignorance, laziness or fears, missed to take responsibility for yourself.

By dealing with our own biography as a place for experiences and occurrences, we get the chance to meet other people and ourselves anew. In this consideration, we enable us to assess passed and present situations again. We get the opportunity again for reconciliation, forgiveness, respect, acceptance, understanding, recognition, love, clarification, conclusion, finding peace, mourning, laughing, etc.

The real drama of these days is that we, despite our supposed progressiveness particularly in the economic production areas, have not drawn our attention to the fundamental human needs and necessities, even though the ability to form an image of ourselves and to be responsible for ourselves are foundations for a 'more advanced civilization of contemplation.'

**Hansen:** *What exactly do you mean when you talk about the ability to form a self-image during biographical work?*

**Becker:** It has to do with self-determined people who, all in all educated, are capable of acquiring an inner attitude, who cultivate their character and develop social as well as ecological competences. Consequently, the intention is to reach a more advanced culture of contemplation both on an intellectual and physical level and individually as well as in community. Here, your own self-esteem is the condition for respecting yourself and others. Being able to hold something in high esteem is the ability to understand. True understanding develops by experience and not by conveyed knowledge. For understanding it is substantial to overcome solipsism, the unselfish devotion or the ability to treat everything 'with love.' Only then criticism and dissociation are an act of freedom instead of a consequence from prejudices, from opinions taken without reflection.

While playing with perspectives, in biographical practice, what you seem to know shall be seen anew, with the eyes of a stranger, of an

explorer, who is so finding the way to himself and to the other person. Here, the central idea is ‘How do I find the way to myself? By creating myself.’

In my work, I have developed four different perspective approaches, which I have divided into modules.

## **Theatre Pedagogy and Biographical Practice**

### **The four Methods of Learning about Yourself in the Theatre and Experience-Oriented Education for Adolescents and Adults**

The area of theatre pedagogy offers a great variety of methods to produce self-competence. In terms of biographical practice, four ranges of subjects have emerged: to narrate, to perform, to write and to philosophize. Up to now, the conception is divided into four modules. None of these modules has priority. The order has merely been chosen for the sake of clear structuring and due to the medium.

### **Practical Biographical Work Module I – Writing Workshop**

How do I reconcile myself with my life?

By means of this introduction into creative writing, we open the doors to our own self. Here, we get to know rhetorical devices and narrative forms of our language, with the help of which everybody has the chance to find his own peculiar expression of life and to sense himself.

### **Practical Biographical Work Module II – Narration Workshop**

How do I reconcile myself with my life?

By means of this introduction into creative narrating, we playfully get to know the narrative and dramaturgical varieties of spoken language and our own range of narrative depiction. Here, by means of theatre based exercises we learn some of our language’s stylistic devices in body, form and expression.

## **Practical Biographical Work Module III – Performing Workshop**

How do I reconcile myself with my life?

In a regular drama group for actors and non-actors, we learn, according to theatre techniques of Augusto Boal and arco, techniques of drama as an instrument to convert conflicts with ourselves and with others from the past and present into scenic play. This is a way to make individual and social constraints visible and transparent. The realization of suppression in its various manifestations, enables us to break through the suppression.

## **Practical Biographical Work Module IV – Adventure-Based Philosophical Workshop**

How do I reconcile myself with my life?

Here, point of views about life and about the general idea of our existence are investigated together in intellectual and dramaturgical experiments. Various philosophical options for interpreting the meaning of history and the backgrounds of human behaviour do offer potential starting points towards the questions of where we come from, where we are going to and what we may hope for.

The approach through adventure-based philosophy can help us here to sense our individual and common history and ourselves and to learn to read with ‘new eyes.’

To make philosophy practical, techniques taken from theatre pedagogy are brought in. In the course of this, answers to questions that we forgot a long time ago, will appear with the help of certain approaches to bodywork.

This method arises from an ‘Experimental Philosophy,’ the aim of which is to creatively unfold free thinking and the access to consciousness and subconscious both theoretically and physically. It is a ‘school for freethinkers,’ who can search for and win/find inspirations for a new philosophy of self-knowledge in free experience-oriented experiments.

**Hansen:** *To which age group do you address these offers?*

**Becker:** These offers are manifestations from true cultural techniques. In accordance with the principles of experience-oriented/adventure-based learning, you can start this already from the age of three. Once you have learned various techniques to gain competencies of self-development and self-responsibility, you have got the skills to learn how to deal with a variety of situations, challenges and conflicts and to integrate them into your life.

*Translation by Esther Ehrmuth*



## **Teaching and Learning Through Storytelling in Greece**

I decided to propose an innovative approach to teach a group of seniors how to be good storytellers and then have them apply their newly acquired skills to different settings. I have been using story telling in the teaching of English in our schools for many years and I have assessed children's stories written for local competitions.

There is a strong theoretical background to support me and my long teaching experience helped me deal with the practicalities of applying the theories in the workshops.

The whole project lasted 4 months in which ten senior Greeks, residents of Hania Greece were directly involved. Also, about 70 children aged 5–15 were indirectly involved.

This project was part of a bigger one initiated by the Association of Friends of the Museum of School Life in Hania.

I present here a brief overview of the theoretical approaches used, the highlights of the workshops, the stories and the presentations, the benefits acquired by both the storytellers and the listeners and short concluding statements.

### **Theoretical approaches**

There are scores of articles, publications, and research findings which support the notion that adults learn by listening to stories equally well as children do. The presentation of a few sources here does not demote the importance of the rest.

## Communities of practice

Verbal instruction has been assumed to have especially effective properties with respect to the generality and scope of the understanding that learners come away with, while instruction by demonstration produces a literal and narrow effect (Lave, Wegner, 1999).

Learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk and be silent in the manner of full participants. Stories told by experts play a major role in decision making as they are elaborated, ignored, taken up, characterized as typical and so on...

These stories are packages of situated knowledge (Jordan, 1989).

## Reflective learning

Using storytelling as a learning tool, students' past experiences, attitudes towards storytelling and the intensity of their feelings engendered by particular stories, along with the way they are processed, influence how and what is learned. According to McDrury and Alterio (2002) there is a five stage approach to learning. This is related to the Map of Learning (Moon, 1999) as follows:

Noticing = story finding

Making sense = story telling

Making meaning = story expanding

Working with meaning = story processing

Transformative learning = story reconstructing

I wish we had the time to explore all these five stages in depth.

## Multiple intelligences

'A key strategy for leadership success is the creation of dramatic stories. Stories have a structure that can contain information that can appeal to and be processed by most of the other intelligences: existential themes, bodily action, interpersonal dialogue, intrapersonal reflection, spatial setting, logical progression, and musical pacing' (Gardner, 2006). 'Individuals put material together into a coherent narrative. Examples range from the Bible to social science textbook, in fiction and non-fiction realm. In all these cases individuals seek to becoming synthesisers' (Gardner, 2008).

## **“...mortals and immortals with my tales rejoice” Odyssey X 346-7**

The Greek society is a storytelling one as oral communication in Greece is a delight for the participants. The non-Greek listener may be astounded as our style is dramatic, incorporating gestures, raised voices, taps on the shoulder, squeezes, grimaces etc. Unfortunately, this predilection for oral communication has declined rapidly in the last decades. Stories are no longer used in everyday exchanges and have almost vanished from the nights at the open-air taverns. The recent revival of storytelling in Greece began in 1990 not as a theatrical or literary experiment but as a conscious effort to reinforce a rapidly declining oral tradition and to remind people of the social function of storytelling. As all folk art forms, storytelling seeks not only to provide aesthetic pleasure but to be useful as well. The storyteller becomes the mortar binding together the community offering entertainment, education, a sense of identity, healing and counselling, even spiritual guidance ([www. story telling.gr](http://www.storytelling.gr)).

### **The story telling tradition in Crete**

There has been a long tradition in Crete for story telling to relay local customs, old tales and life experiences, in the family environment or in the old style cafes. Priests use stories in religion lessons and in Sunday mass through the Christian parables. Story telling is still very popular in the kindergarten and in elementary education in the island provinces. Today, Cretans of all ages possess vivid imaginations and they are eager to start a conversation in the street or at work by relating a personal incident, or by describing a learning or job experience or a news item.

### **Our group**

It was a diverse group, but it turned out to be a cooperative one. All were Greeks, retired, above 65 years of age and members of an elders club in the historical suburb of Halepa in Hania, Crete, Greece. The group consisted of 10 people – mostly housewives from different cul-

tural backgrounds, a former elementary school principal and a former bank manageress.

### **The introductory session**

My aim in the first session was to persuade some of the elderly people to participate in our workshops. So I related the following benefits in plain terms, i.e. the benefits of listening to, reading and making up a good story.

In general, adults are attracted by well-structured and richly described fictions because they get the opportunity to have vivid imaginings (Scientific American Mind, 2008).

The primary reward of fiction is emotional. Listeners may get amused, sad, frustrated or they may attempt to get deeper understanding through reflection – in/on action (MacDrury, Alterio, 2002).

Generally, fictional characters and events are not part of the reader's world. If our imagination gives us a window into the minds of characters by having us see and think about the world as another sees and thinks about it, it should have us respond emotionally (Scientific American Mind, 2008).

On the other hand, readers who identify themselves with the reality of the story, have perfectly respectable desires concerning the welfare of the characters. This is the case when the narrator has managed to generate in the readers' minds narrative desires (Scientific American Mind, 2008).

Adults readers develop empathy which is crucial to social interaction and communal living. This enables the comprehension of real life social situations, an undeniable evolutionary advantage for both individuals and groups alike (MacDrury, Alterio, 2002).

Stories have both powerful and universal appeal making them a very powerful learning and metacognitive tool. They may be used as schema activators just before a lesson, lecture, presentation (Howe, 1984).

Story telling promotes social cohesion as it comprises 65% of our speaking time regardless of age and gender (Scientific American Mind, 2008).

Narrative is a potent persuasive tool used by advertisers. People accept ideas more readily when they are in story mode as opposed to when they are in analytical mind-set. This may be a useful strategy to be used during interviews by either side. They are also used to promote positive health messages (Scientific American Mind, 2008).

Narratives carry the oral cultural traditions all over the world. Young children find stories easier to understand if they conform to the familiar, 'well-formed' structure of a traditional tale (Howe, 1984).

Story writing is a universal assessment tool in interviews, English as a Foreign Language, (London Exams by Edexcel, [www.londonexams.gr/index2](http://www.londonexams.gr/index2), ESOL exams by University of Cambridge [www.cambridgeesol.org](http://www.cambridgeesol.org)) and mother tongue competitions.

On top of that, story processing activates regions in the right brain hemisphere, that is the areas of:

- working memory, which helps to sequence info & represent story events,
- visuospatial imagery and connecting personal experience with the story to add understanding,
- providing aid in the identification of character's mental states.

### **The power of a life story in Africa**

Ten people gathered in our first session and my aim was to break the ice and at the same time impress them. Firstly, I told them that my favourite application of story telling is when I teach English to Greeks of all ages. Spontaneous story telling linked in time to practice settings frequently has a strong affective motivational force. And I described my approach:

No matter what the topic is that they are being taught, I craft the details around it, emphasizing or minimising these to ensure that the drama of my 'near authentic' event in an exotic country is shared by everyone (MacDrury, Alterio, 2002) The moment their eye pupils are dilated and their body posture changes everything is easy. I am in position to add any vocabulary item I consider appropriate or any grammatical structure that is referred to in the current unit of their course book. To make my story look realistic I always ask them to stand up

and come close to a huge world map I have on one wall. There, I start using more gestures, pointing at some remote places, and following an imaginary trail on the map. I am sure that my adventures in Africa as a twenty year old ship's officer make a permanent impression in their minds, helping them to remember the use of tenses, the passive voice and the vocabulary items I used.

The next step was to tell them a real life-experience of mine which took place in an exotic place in southwest Africa (Vasilomanolakis, 2008). The place was called Lobito, a natural harbour in Angola. There, I met an old classmate of mine and we had a series of adventures for three days, the climax of which was when we were chased by a troop of monkeys on a sandy beach. I had prepared a power point presentation with photos from my personal archives and the Internet. I used the photos, because they can further understanding of the story, can act as triggers for activating prior knowledge and they can support the process of establishing mental models (Steiner, 1999). As I observed them looking at the photos, I realised that their old bodies had taken the same universal postures I usually observe in my students. They leaned forward, eyes dilated, arms unfolded. 'Yes,' I said to myself 'it worked'. Then, after I had finished, they fired a myriad of questions about Africa, just like teenagers. The time went flying so I set the themes for our next meeting that is: Comment on my story. These questions will help you in your comments.

Did I use a lot of body language (kinesthetic intelligence?) or diagrams (spatial or logical) or word picture descriptions (spatial)? How do these different aspects of telling enhance, balance, or conflict with each other? (Gardner, 2006).

### **The sounds and the power of the adjectives**

In the second session they were all in time and had our coffees ready, just like the way the news was spread in the old Cretan cafes. I realised that they needed some time to unwind so I decided to tell them how powerful the adjectives are in any story. It was warm, so we moved to a nearby park at the historic centre of the suburb. There, I asked them to listen carefully to the sounds around us and pointed

out that they are an expression of mother Nature and they provide the basis for every human language. I told them how lucky they were since, as residents of small communities, they are close to nature. That explains why our everyday social interaction is quite different to that used in the big cities.

I pointed out that their description will be powerful if they use words that combine all the letters of the alphabet, the vowels and the consonants. Many adjectives will make every story perfect as the sound of each adjective adds a certain vibration to the noun. Then I asked them to be silent for a minute and instructed them... 'If you listen carefully, you'll notice that a wide collection of sounds will remind you of the sounds of nature. That is the sounds of the wind, of fire cackling, of the hens, of the birds, of the stream rushing by, of the sea waves crashing on the shore. If your text vibrates then, it is rhythmic, musical, and pleasant. Your readers who hear your story in their mind's ear will be pleased because Nature is in vibration all the time.'

My advice was to use a few adjectives each time. The problem with the Greek language is that there is not a set sequence in the order of the adjectives. The only rule which is applied is that the qualitative adjectives are used first with the quantitative ones following. On the other hand the order is specific in the English language so any instructor may come up with a mnemonic rule. Here is a number of ideas: The order of adjectives is: opinion, size, age, shape, colour, origin, material adjectives so you can ask them to remember the acronym OSASCOMA or this peculiar descriptive phrase: Orgulous Small Ageless Spherical Cyan Orphic Metal Alien.

### **Educators-storytellers**

Educators' roles are varied: they have been called facilitators, organisers, directors, conductors etc. I would add one more defining term 'storytellers' as they can't help but relate their learning, teaching and life experiences when they teach. Educator- storytellers employ certain tools to present their tales or teach students to make up ones. I tipped my group of seniors with the following ideas:

Each story needs to be colourful, to have heroes who play all sorts of roles, to present thoughts across the spectrum and to have a framework. Having this in mind I presented the theories and practical applications of the ‘Story Grammar (Green, Coulson,1995) and of the six thinking hats (De Bono,1986).

### **Start of writing stories**

Firstly, I pointed out that each storyteller should be reading books, newspapers, magazines so as to keep up with their students’ culture. They should also...

- be observant when traveling or walking in town or in the countryside so as to spot the trivial, or capture the big picture,
- reflect on any issue related to their students,
- free their imagination,
- examine each issue from several angles.

Just before writing the story the educators reflect on their learners’ age and gender, their cultural and educational background and interests, which aspect of the subject being taught to focus on, what message they want to pass on and how to facilitate their learning and what didactic approach to incorporate.

### **The educators’ recipe for an exciting didactic short story...**

There are one to three heroes, all curiosity seekers and adventure lovers. They are able to face dilemmas and problems, they take risks, and they deal with unexpected coincidences. When they are careless and make mistakes then they have to struggle to get things right. They like games, they are friendly and inventive when they need to overcome obstacles. Their features are simple and all related to the plot. We never learn anything else about them.

When educators finish writing a didactic story they rewrite it, to be more focused on their teaching point. Then, they let it rest for a few days. They rewrite it to make it livelier and more student oriented. Then, they ask a colleague to read it and comment on it. Finally, they edit and print it ready to present it during their mid-lesson break.



## Story Grammar Framework

I pointed out to the group of seniors that their story, no matter how long or short, should have a certain framework that is:

### *The beginning*

The story starts calmly although it provokes curiosity or thought. The writer/ storyteller provides just the appropriate information to help students learn about the setting, the time and the hero(es). At this point any extra information kills the students' interest!

### *The episodes*

In the first episodes the hero(es) deal with their everyday life events. Thus, the features of their character are gradually presented and the students start feeling like they are part of the picture. Then, a few strange events take place. In one of these episodes the situation becomes unbearable for the hero(es) so they have to take action to deal with the dilemma, the threat or the problem.

### *The climax*

The etymology of the Greek word κλίμακα climax provides a vivid representation of the gradual rise in tension when the hero(es) is forced to deal with the unexpected.

The climax starts with a sentence that describes a sudden happening, event or piece of news. Then, a few short sentences illustrate the agony and the tension of the hero(es).

The writer/storyteller uses a number of verbs which describe the same action and a couple of verbs which shed light to different aspects of the scene of the action or the setting. In folk stories the resolution is provided out of the blue by the 'deux ex-machina' as was the case with all Greek mythology tales.

### *The end of a good story is not the end...*

Each and every good storyteller-educator continues unveiling the plot after the resolution has been provided. The story ends in a balanced way at a quiet stable point. The storyteller gives a few clues to facilitate the listeners' imagination as to what happened after the resolution or they let them choose the extension of the plot they prefer.

## Windows of the mind

I have used training in thinking for more than 20 years to improve our students' performance in learning English (DeBono, 1976) so I decided to introduce the subject to our seniors in their session. My intention was to help them see story telling from different perspectives as listeners usually do. So, I picked the 'Six thinking hats' tool of thinking (De Bono, 1986). I made 6 hats – from hard paper– representing the appropriate colours and distributed them to 6 seniors. I explained the theory briefly that is putting on the white hat means that you are in logic info based mode, the red hat asks for feelings-premonitions, yellow hat for positive ideas, black hat for caution and negative thinking, the green hat for novelty and fresh ideas and finally the blue hat revises, reviews and controls the chain of thoughts. Then, I asked them to comment on my story from the point of view of the hat they had on. Afterwards, we applied it to local issues and problems, a process which they enjoyed tremendously.

They were so happy to have new windows of thinking opened that they asked me if I could teach them how to solve sudoku. I agreed and for the next half hour we solved an easy sudoku from a newspaper found on the premises. I explained to them that lots of adults feel the need to use alternate logic and language activities in their spare time to maintain a sense of balance.

## More practical tips

Then I told them that it was time they had shared stories from their life experiences or stories that they had been told. I pointed out that a life story may contain day-to-day activities, their neighbourhood – Halepa – local events or even an exotic experience in a far away place. I urged them to seek clarification, elaboration or expansion during the telling. And that was welcome since If they did that then they would become part of the story and gain understanding and insight.

Personally, having stories read helped me reflect, realize the way the theme was developed, and uncover the plot. The storyteller created suspension, posed questions to help me discover the resolution. I understand that the strong oral tradition of Cretan society helps lo-

cals develop tools to enhance reflection and imagination. That applies to toddlers listening to stories. Later when able to read these children devour books, and find themselves immersed in the lives of fictional characters. I carried on and asked them to get that marvelous time machine and travel on their own along the years of their childhood, adolescence and adulthood. I asked to ponder on the way they were taught at school and relate to the group which tradition their teachers had followed. I told them that, some educators seem to confine their teaching within the school walls. This traditional model of teaching which separates 'knowing that' theory from 'knowing how' endured because it was believed that 'practical knowledge was context bound while theoretical knowledge was comparatively context free. These educators insist on teaching theory not practical applications.

We now recognize that theoretical knowledge is affected by context. For example the way we use the language in a tourist resort differs from the application of the language in the foreign exchange department of a bank. Today, a significant proportion of the learning associated with any change in practice takes place in its context of use. That means that we acquire knowledge for immediate use.

I rounded up telling them that in a nutshell what they need to do is re-construct their experience. They should tell us, first its holistic image that is the social and cultural background, and about the locality and the time setting. And then describe a socio-emotionally constructed episode of their life.

We arranged that next time three volunteers would present their stories.

### **Their stories**

The first volunteer, a well-educated grandmother, told us how rebellious she was in a disciplinarian family. The ex-principal related a series of cases where she would instruct her pupils through real life stories from the war. Our only gentleman described the hard life of a teenager who had to work part time in a local hides processing factory. Then we had more stories about the life of Greeks who fled their homes from Asia Minor and migrated to Hania, about farmers'

lives in our countryside, and school life incidents both in town or in the villages.

In story telling there are no right or wrong answers, so as soon each senior rounded off their stories I used a number of responses to give them a sense of value (DeBono,1976) that is:

‘That’s the most original/unusual story I have heard’, ‘That’s very interesting/important piece’, ‘That’s what younger people should be aware of” etc.

In the end, we reflected and discussed how to make each story more fascinating by adding gestures, incorporating adjectives, using a soft voice or speeding up their delivery.

Their stories were retold in subsequent sessions. We made sure that there was one clear teaching/learning point in each story. We added some features to extend them, a couple of phrases from our local dialect, which is on the verge of extinction, and we timed each story. We, also, practised ways to relax prior to presentation. I pointed out that the simplest technique to apply was the three deep breaths (Silva, 1991).

Finally, I informed them about the next phase that is telling their stories to children and about the arrangements made to visit a kindergarten and a high school and have a class of an elementary school visit their club.

### **Visiting schools**

The arrangement made with the high school in Souda, a small town near Hania, was to be there at 11 o’ clock. Our group met earlier at the town square to have coffee and relax. I realised that my three seniors were obviously anxious, as it was their first time to present their life stories in public. I assured them that everything was going to go smoothly and reminded them how powerful the three deep breaths technique is.

We walked to the school and we were just in time to meet about 25 restless teenagers. I sensed tension in the air, so I started my introductory talk by speaking slowly about the Grundtvig programme. Then, I related an incident of my being a teenager in their hometown

stealing tomatoes on my way to a nearby beach. That was it. I sensed that everybody had unwound and was ready to hear more stories.

I asked the educated lady of our group to tell them how rebellious she was in a disciplinarian family. She had learnt her lesson well. She paused, looked them in the eye and varied her speed. Soon, they were enchanted, eyes wide open and they remained motionless till she finished. Then, it was a gentleman's turn to relate his hard working life as a teenager in a hides processing factory. He used lots of hand gestures and he was carried away so he extended his story. Last, it was a lady who captured their attention by describing the days before the war, when there were lots of Greeks immigrants in town who originated from Asia Minor. When we finished, we had been there for over an hour. They fired lots of questions and left puzzled with all this new information to reflect in their heads. The seniors were elated, satisfied with their performance and eager to face their next visit.

Twenty 10 year olds arrived at the elders club one morning eager to listen to grandparents' stories. To their surprise, I met them as they got off the bus at the historic centre of the suburb and I asked them to listen to a brief account of the history of the place, dating back to the time Crete was an independent state one hundred years ago. It was sheer coincidence that we stood in the middle of the square in which there was a site of historical importance in each point of the horizon.

I asked them to turn each time I pointed to a new point. My aim was to trigger their spatial cognition while relating the relative information.

### **Look I said to them...**

'To the North there is the impressive Prime Minister's mansion, to the East a small Catholic church and monastery, to the south an onion topped Greek Orthodox church built by the last Czar, to the West this all white building used to house a college run by the French Catholics and in the North West the now dilapidated Palace of the Greek Prince-Governor of the island. Now, imagine that on this very spot we are standing there were stationed English, French, Italian and Russian

patrols. These troops were guarding or escorting the ambassadors of the great powers to their visits to the Prime Minister or to the Prince Governor.’

It was a hands-on simple history lesson which they remembered a couple of hours later. At the elders’ club they listened to the stories attentively, they fired questions and then they sang and danced for us. Finally, it was the most touching moment when they gave each senior a handmade goodwill card with drawings and a wish. In the end everybody was treated with cones of ice cream, a rare sight to witness in a story telling context.

Our visit to the modern public kindergarten in the countryside was a delight for everybody. First, I presented a simplified version of my story ‘Chased by a troop of monkeys’ on PowerPoint. Then, it was the seniors’ turn. I had instructed them that their stories should be shorter and use very simple language. It turned out though that the pupils were well trained and educated as they didn’t cause undue noise or disturbance. In the end, they sang some nursery rhymes and then each of them prepared a personal card for us, writing our names on it.

Overall, the group of seniors enjoyed immensely their participation in the project. They still remember it as a wonderful experience of learning, socializing and telling about their life experiences to younger generations.

### **The Grundtvig group workshop**

The workshop took place in my home town of Hania, on the island of Crete on 4–5 October 2008. Thirty participants from Cyprus, Germany, Greece and Poland spent two days in the premises of the Museum of School Life. On the first day, I trained the participants in how to relax in different settings and I pointed out that relaxation is a prerequisite for any effective learning situation. After an hour of being in a relaxed state, I presented, briefly, the stages of my workshops with the seniors, the practicalities of making up a good short story and my own story of being chased by a troop of monkeys (Vasilomanolakis, 2008).

I pointed out features of the body language of a receptive learner (Vasilomanolakis, 2004) in my PowerPoint presentation. I also stressed the power of suggestion which storytellers may employ through the use of tone of voice, varied speed of delivery and visual clues or realia (Lozanov, 1990).

Then, I asked them to make up their own stories either individually or in groups. When each story was presented in public, I was so pleasantly surprised by their inventiveness and richness that all of them are still vivid in my memory. We then discussed the numerous benefits of story telling.

Learners of all ages learn easily by listening or reading stories for many reasons:

- The unveiling of the story helps in forming a series of representations or pictures in the listeners' minds,
- Each representation may contain up scores of pieces of information,
- This information is easily incorporated as it may be related to lexis, sounds, or gestures or movements,
- The sequence of the vivid representations helps listeners to recall them in order,
- The power of the adjectives of each episode enlivens the listeners' memories,
- Overall, listeners and storytellers expand their working memory capacity and they are facilitated into recording the data in their long term episodic memory.

Finally, I related to them what an old Cretan told me: namely that the best remedy when you feel you are in a low energy condition is to listen to some good news or to a good story. He claimed that in an instant you feel energized and happy to be alive. That means that you are among friends, part of the social network of your community, you share something. He argued that by listening to a positive story, we develop a powerful metabolism. Rescripting your inner tale, means that your mind and body enter a positive and enlivening mode, thus you literally reprogram your metabolism.

We shared more stories when we dined out later that evening and each group sang songs from their country.

## Concluding remarks

I believe that every individual learns and relearns, in any context, through stories, no matter what the subject is or what their profession is.

Had their educators employed extensively and rigorously all the tools and the techniques of storytelling mentioned as well as their own personal ‘flavour,’ then short stories or long accounts would all form vivid images and representations in the listeners’ minds. Stories would help listeners reflect and eventually would become indelible memories. They would surface each time learners reflect back to seek help so as to solve problems or learn something novel in the course of their lives.

I wish more senior citizens had the opportunity to attend storytelling workshops so as to realize the transfer of old knowledge to younger generations. The poem of a life long learner, which I quote here, is full of scores of rich personal accounts which take each of us to Ithaca.

### *Ithaca*

When you set out on your journey to Ithaca,  
pray that the road is long,  
full of adventure, full of knowledge.  
The Lestrygonians and the Cyclops,  
the angry Poseidon – do not fear them:  
You will never find such as these on your path,  
if your thoughts remain lofty, if a fine  
emotion touches your spirit and your body.  
The Lestrygonians and the Cyclops,  
the fierce Poseidon you will never encounter,  
if you do not carry them within your soul,  
if your soul does not set them up before you.  
Pray that the road is long.  
That the summer mornings are many, when,  
with such pleasure, with such joy you will  
enter ports seen for the first time;  
stop at Phoenician markets,  
and purchase fine merchandise,  
mother-of-pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
and sensual perfumes of all kinds, as many  
sensual perfumes as you can;  
visit many Egyptian cities,



to learn and learn from scholars.  
Always keep Ithaca in your mind.  
To arrive there is your ultimate goal.  
But do not hurry the voyage at all.  
It is better to let it last for many years;  
and to anchor at the island when you are old,  
rich with all you have gained on the way, not  
expecting that Ithaca will offer you riches.  
Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.  
Without her you would have never set out on the road.  
She has nothing more to give you.  
And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.  
Wise as you have become, with so much  
experience, you must already have  
understood what Ithacas mean.

Constantine P. Cavafy (1911)

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## **The Life History as a Learning and Career Development Method for Adult Women**

This article will present the ways in which life histories benefit learning in adults. In the first section, the main characteristics of the research will be presented, highlighting the precedents and justifying the reasons for using life histories as a method for learning and personal-professional development for adult women. The methodological aspects upon which the research is based will also be explained briefly, using an interpretative-critical focus, reconstruction of experience, qualitative methodology, and a biographical-narrative focus.

The second part of the article will expressly deal with the theoretical references that define the research and intervention processes using life histories. The concept, its characteristics, and its potential as a technique will be mentioned. In the third section, we will focus on the methodological assumptions which underlie this process. In order to do this, we will base our discussion on our own experience using life histories in the case of adult women (with low qualifications and from rural contexts) who want to enter into employment.

### **Introduction**

The life history is one of the most potent techniques for benefiting learning and existential development. This is even truer in the field of career orientation and when we work with groups of adults. To study women's professional trajectories, in our opinion, the previous experi-

ences they have had on different vital levels (personal, academic-training, and professional) must be taken into account. The context itself and the historical period in which the women live must be added to these analytic dimensions. Specifically, the forty women who participated in this study belong to four rural contexts in Andalusia (Spain), they are between thirty-five and fifty-five years old, they have developed their lives in the period of the 1950s and 1960s, when there were not many training or professional opportunities for women, and their life plans were conditioned by a patriarchal system, limited to carrying out the traditional roles of wife, mother, and housewife. These are the roles the women we worked with devoted themselves to for most of their lives.

At the beginning of the 21st century, in 2003–2004, we contacted several groups of women through Municipal Women's Centers. At that moment, these women were showing interest in professional training and access to employment. Starting out from this background, we decided to investigate what was happening in these women's lives to make them desire to get training, find a job, or improve the conditions of their lives at this moment.

In order to carry out this research, we felt it was necessary to use life histories as the main technique for women's self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-determination. We consider this technique to be a means for professional reorientation, thus contributing to prepare professional and life projects according to the women's new interests and expectations. The objective is to analyze women's professional development from the triple time perspective (past, present, and future) essential for preparing life histories, and this perspective marks the research transversally. First, we intended to explore the women's training and work situations, in order to understand the changes that are taking place in their lives. Second, we wished to become familiar with the references that they had acquired in the past in their lives, because they will allow us to find meaning in the present, and to establish the possible reasons on which this present is based. Third, we wanted to know about the women's interests, desires, and expectations, establishing paths toward future professional/life improvement.

The framework of this study is an interpretative-critical approach to scientific research, directed toward self-exploration and recon-

structuring experience. It is framed in a qualitative methodology and, specifically, uses a biographical-narrative method. Taylor and Bogdan (1986) point out that qualitative research possesses general characteristics that provide signs of identity regarding how the reality studied is understood, how the researcher approaches this reality, and, therefore, how he or she designs and prepares the research, accesses and exits the research contexts, gathers information, and uses it. In the present case, reality is holistic and the natural contexts are studied in their full complexity. We are concerned about how the phenomena occur and why they happen one way and not another. The design is open, reflexive, dynamic, emergent, and progressive. The techniques for gathering data allow us to describe and characterize reality faithfully.

In order to specify these general characteristics, we followed a biographical-narrative method. Pineau (2000) highlights the relationship between narrative and constructivist and systemic learning processes. This is precisely where life history, as a technique for professional exploration, crystalization, and specification becomes especially interesting. This is because this procedure tries to respond to how people endow their own lives or specific moments and situations in them with meaning and/or significance. It is particularly useful to ‘accompany, orient, give rise to, and facilitate the construction of personal projects’ (Josso, 2000:71).

Through this method, importance is given to the word (voice/ voices) and to experience (meaningfulness of subjectivity). According to García Pastor (2005:180), ‘the concept of voice is related to the acknowledgement of the right to express oneself and to be taken into account, each person as he or she is, without the condition of having to adopt a foreign, imposed language or way of expressing oneself (as this is defined in the concepts of symbolic violence and cultural dominance).’ Importance is given to the fact that people are given the chance to speak, above all, people who are socially excluded. Listening to their voices and the sensitive issues that they express with their voices involves signifying one’s own subjectivity, acknowledging that they form part of society. Along these lines, the value of writing and orality (present in life histories) is highlighted, insofar as ‘narration allows a discourse that is closer to life, to lived experience,

to experience; it can also, in turn, naturally envelop the expression of the thoughts, feelings, and desires of the people involved' (Arnaus, 1995:224).

Orality and writing, interiorization and exteriorization, individuality and socialness, allow each person to explore his or her experiences, identify their values, models, interests, translate their personal and professional skills, and prepare their life projects. Thus, narrative, according to Bolívar, Domingo, and Fernández (2001:10), situates itself within hermeneutics. 'It allows us to jointly endow with meaning and understand the cognitive, affective, and action dimensions. To tell one's own experiences, and 'read' (in the sense of 'interpret') these events/actions, in light of the histories that the agents narrate.'

Biographic work necessarily involves a laborious deconstruction/reconstruction of identity, taking into account the changes it undergoes. Two main issues make this idea interesting. First, the influences that the transmission of culture – inscribed in gender patterns – can have on shaping women's identity are interesting. Second, there is the concept of the subject as an active being, a concept necessary when we allude to processes that restructure or transform one's own experience. Both aspects interact, because the subjects, as social actors involved in the creation of their own history (Laine, 2000), construct and reconstruct reality from the particular meaning that each one gives to it. Alonso (1999) reinforces this idea when he refers to the historical memory of each subject. It is not an aseptic description of facts or events that is made, but rather a narrative that refers to past experiences and expresses the meaning the appropriation of culture has for each individual.

## **Theoretical framework**

The main strategy chosen for this research process, with the aforementioned characteristics, was the life history/story. This technique provides an in-depth, systemic, and intensive analysis carried out individually by the women. It also contributes a diachronic vision (as well as a synchronic one) that allows us to know and understand the object of study.

The life history/story is defined as a conversation/narration technique and its framework is biographical-narrative research. It is involved in reconstructing development and learning processes, using narrative, orality, or writing. It involves a retrospective narrative by the person him- or herself, as the main actor of their life history, based on part of their experience or approaching it as a whole. This process, according to González Río and San Miguel (2002:116), 'is particularly ideal for researching processes of social change, especially processes involving social groups which are being excluded or pushed to situations of increasing social marginality.'

Because of this, according to Laine (2000), the analysis of life practices and/or experiences is carried out from the complexity of a multidimensional identity. The life story/history joins that which is individual and that which is collective, fruit of the cultural construction that is projected in it. However, the trajectories of the subjects and their narrations do not depend solely on the scenes or contexts where they develop, but also on the decisions that the people involved make throughout the narration. What they tell and what they say, as well as the way they interpret it, depends on the characteristics of the process, on the people who participate, and on the degree of awareness or level of reflection they have reached regarding the situation, before telling the story.

This necessary reflection on their experience is carried out from a temporal perspective which begins by manufacturing times, spaces, and particular meanings from their own memories. As Josso (2000:79) proposes, 'life histories embrace the globality of life in all of its past, present, and future dimensions, and within the very dynamics of existence.' The history is constructed and modified at certain moments in time and in changing circumstances. How people perceive and interpret their lives changes according to the historical moment in which they find themselves and the internal evolution (interiorization process) that they have undergone from past reflection and their present positioning.

Life histories/stories are developed through the application of successive interviews that take on the form of open, in-depth, interviews. These interviews attempt to make an in-depth study of the problems to be dealt with and to obtain subjective information produced by the

main characters themselves. However, qualitative (open) interviews are not informal conversations; on the contrary, the researcher brings clear purposes and intentions to the interview, needing implicit outlines throughout.

The initial script of questions to be dealt with in the interview process thus becomes relevant. This script is orientational in nature, and gains in nuances and specificity as the interview cycle unfolds. The question script takes the shape of a list of subjects on which the interview will focus. Similarly, the questions become important because the kind of questions formulated depends, to a great extent, on the response given by the person interviewed. Because of this, the questions in this kind of interview should be generative (with guiding questions and supporting questions) in order to stimulate conversation.

Following the suggestions of different authors on this subject (Spradley, 1979; Woods, 1997; Gotees and LeCompte, 1998), in addition to the type and form of the questions, in-depth interviews have other differentiating elements, such as an explicit purpose, giving the interviewee explanations, which involves a mutual learning process, the interpersonal relationship that is established in the process, the roles taken on throughout by each person involved, the researcher's previous training and experience, as well as establishing the conditions for carrying out the interview.

The development and execution phase acquires greater relevance with this type of technique. The *development* process is open, flexible, and complex, and requires consensus and negotiation among the participants (interviewer-interviewee). The *relationship* should be characterized by *rapport*, although there is mutual mistrust at the start, until both parties have been in contact for a time. This time requires a general analysis of the situation that is being explored. To achieve this, the *researcher* should maintain a constant attitude of listening, attention, affective involvement, and sincerity. In order to *record* the information, it is convenient to use a recording device, as it would be impossible, otherwise, to accurately collect all the information generated as the interview progresses. In this process, the *support of other procedures*, such as field/diary notes or a research notebook, is particularly useful to make it easier to triangulate the information.

## Methodology

The women who participated in the life histories were selected following criteria of diversity of profiles and maximum variability of the informants. Aspects such as age, personal and professional situation, involvement in training activities, context of origin, and availability to participate in research were taken into account. Preparing one's own life history implies continuous direct involvement and active participation. This is a key aspect and people who participate in analytic processes of this kind must be aware of this.

Regarding the number of histories taken, it is important to consider the criteria of information saturation. A field of study should be studied until adding a new case no longer contributes anything new and becomes redundant with respect to the information previously obtained (Bertraux, 1993). In general, saturation in the fields of speech tends to occur with a rather low number of histories/stories (considering that very rich productions are obtained from each informant). This occurred, in our study, after eight cases.

An orientative *question guide* was used as a tool for producing the life histories/stories. This guide was made up of a series of clichés to be explored, clichés that were ordered (time sequence) and that allow both the interviewer and the interviewee to situate themselves when it comes to asking and telling/narrating, respectively. In general, three *biographical stages* are developed. In the *first* stage, a general sketch of the trajectories covered by the women is obtained, placing the accent on the previous (past) references that characterize them. In this sense, issues relating to the circumstances in which the informants are born and grow up, the most meaningful stages or milestones in their lives, and their previous and present professional situations, are discussed. At the end of this stage, a balance of all the contributions is made, highlighting relevant points to give the accounts continuity.

In the second and third biographical stages, in-depth work is done on the informants' specific situations, although emphasis is placed on exploring a series of topics in each case. Specifically, the *second* stage focuses on exploring the present dimension (professional/life transitions). The way the women perceive and interpret transitional mo-



ments (professional/life change) is emphasized, as well as the way they evaluate them with respect to the future. Other issues, such as the subjective meaning of work, the centrality of the job role, lifestyles, self-concept, and the women's professional and vital representations, are also considered.

In the *third* stage, emphasis is given to exploring the women's projections for the future and on professional/life planning. At this point, previous aspects converge with those being explored (future aspects), establishing connections among significant milestones. Issues regarding the women's professional projections (job values, interests, and decision-making), the degree of definition or specificity of professional/life plans, and the characteristics of these plans, as well as the aspects that condition women in reorienting their careers are dealt with. In this final stage, the women are also asked to evaluate the process subjectively, analyzing its functional qualities as a learning method.

Three successive interviews were carried out with each of the women, lasting approximately an hour and a half each. Previous to these interviews, the women were each contacted again, and the requirements and general approach of the research, what they would be asked to do, and the tasks they would need to undertake were explained and negotiated. Personal reflection was required, as well as personal interest and a commitment to the task undertaken.

Thus, a cycle of biographical interviews begins, where the person as a whole comes into play. With the person's commitment to the research and a clear delimitation of the roles, *rappport* is established between the women and the researcher. Information is gathered in the first interview, and it is transcribed, coded, and analyzed in an exploratory manner before the next contact (the second interview), in an attempt to interpret the material and obtain elements to understand it for the next (third) interview. After the successive interviews, improvements in the process of carrying out the interviews which will, later, be shaped into histories, are made.

Other narrative techniques are also important as complements to the life history. Some of the techniques to which we refer, such as the discussion group, the exploratory discussion, and the field diary, were essential in the data-gathering phase. Others, however, such as record-

ing critical incidents, conceptual maps, and biograms, were transcendental in the phase of analyzing the information. These techniques were used to gather information that was particularly relevant for endowing the findings with meaning. Once the process is completed, very rich qualitative material is available, which can then be analyzed in a global fashion. This material is given back to the participants through the partial reports made at the end of each biographical stage. Once this process is over, the women analyze the final report globally.

### ***The research: we learn from re-constructing our own life histories***

Although the women provide a lot of results that deal with exploring and planning their professional/life trajectories in this research, (e.g. Suárez Ortega, 2008, 2009), we will describe the subjective evaluations of the process of working with them in this section, from the career development approach. The process followed attempts to carry out the vocational development stages proposed by Pelletier (1986, 1995) with the women, stages that deal with exploring, crystallizing, identifying, and carrying out vocational development.

Starting with the first stage focused on professional exploration, we worked with the women to identify their needs and the necessary professional skills, in order to reorient their professional projects. Although the women developed more skills for professional exploration, this process was, according to them, a starting point for projecting their lives, an achievement in itself.

*'By thinking about myself, about my life, I am learning to plan what I want to do, to clarify my thinking. I have seen the connections between what has happened to me and my present situation, and I have been able to understand why I feel the need to change professionally now, as well as personally, because these aspects are related.'*

The women's subjective evaluation of their own processes contributed some methodological references for constructing women's projects. These processes help us detect the women's very strong need to relate to other people, people with whom they can talk and share their experiences and feelings. In this sense, the informants highlight the

way the researcher listens as positive, because it reflects the feeling of value that they have about their own lives when they are considered objects of study. The time devoted to the interviews reinforces the informants' own feelings. These women's needs to establish relationships with other women and to have time for themselves and to encourage self-exploration are reflected.

*'The truth is, this whole process has been very useful for me, because you can realize things on your own, but since you don't talk and think about them, since you don't reflect on them, you don't really become aware of how they influence certain aspects of your life. Nobody had shown so much interest in my own life, in how I had felt and in how I feel right now.'*

Doing the interviews and exploring specific aspects that the main characters value gives them the chance to narrate, explore, and evaluate their own life experiences. It also gives them the chance to become more aware of the life events they have experienced, and to give them meaning based on their own desires and expectations. In this sense, the interview process has served to reinforce their decision-making and to understand their concerns and motivations regarding the world of work, linked to their life plan.

The work carried out to select, describe, interpret, and analyze the meaningful milestones in these women's lives made it easier for them to become more coherent with their life trajectories, making them feel that they were in charge of their own lives. In addition, the analysis of their life trajectories allowed them to identify gender stereotypes and other conditioning factors, as well as some of their own self-limitations, and even detect possible sources of support for professional development. The process of introspection and reflection, together with detecting limiting and facilitating aspects of their careers, leads them to become aware of the situations that they experience and to move toward action more successfully.

*'I think that these interviews help you to clarify, to remember things that have happened to you, to understand them... they help you to think about what you really want in life, and if you're not really clear about your ideas, they give you clues that make you see things more clearly. They have also helped me to become aware of some of the aspects that*

*were making my life difficult, as well as of people, centers, and resources that can help me to improve my future.'*

Throughout this process, it was important for the women to be able to project their own difficulties, fears, and uncertainties, and to perceive the researcher's complicity. Giving them a release for these difficulties let them become aware, little by little, of the situation they were experiencing, analyzing the situation from each woman's specific reality. It also served to give the women more confidence, become personally and professionally motivated, to make them wish to innovate and to do things differently from how they had done them in earlier life stages. The confidence the women gained in this process also allows them to eliminate, little by little, resistance to change, to perceive change as possible, and to feel that their lives belong to them, that they are in charge of their lives.

*'This process has stimulated me, it has encouraged me, I have been able to talk about things and share experiences with other women, and that makes you feel better about yourself, and makes you readier to change. Just talking does you good, it must be that I hadn't ever talked about such personal things..., and, also, you reflect a lot on what has happened to you, about what you want now, about what you would like change... I've learned, gotten to know myself better, and become motivated to do things, not just to think about doing them, because I have also realized that everything's not closed when you're forty years old, but that there are chances to do things.'*

The process they have experienced has allowed them to accept life the way it has been, verbalize it, interpret it, and rewrite it. They have learned about themselves and they have also developed the skills to identify needs and to make their life plan concrete, little by little. Vocational choice and decision-making play a relevant role, starting with the way they carry out the different life roles that they put into play. This requires them to reorient the life scheme they have developed up to the present, and to take on changes regarding their future projection. This generates satisfaction in these women and it also facilitates women's progress and self-determination.

As they work on their own professional projects, the women have highlighted the usefulness of the interviews and other techniques

applied at the same time, such as the biogram. This is an analytic technique that allows us to obtain meaningful information from the women. It allows us to establish their life paths, highlighting the most relevant events and facts, their chronology, and the women's interpretations and evaluations. This analytic process was very significant for the women, who valued it as *'a path that helps to reflect on life, which enables you to make sense of a lot of things that happen to you, discover things about yourselves, and also a way to learn that is not just for now, but for other times, later.'*

Because of this, the women have raised the need to continue this process for a longer time, to give them useful references for improving. In this sense, the process has been tested as an orientation (reflection) strategy, a mechanism that helps them to increase their own motivation, reinforce their desire to improve, and seek alternatives to put these changes into action.

The women have highlighted, in this sense, the usefulness of incorporating this process into professional job training, specifically, in the employment activities and courses that they take. Their own words tell us how necessary it is to work with the women on their own life projects before (or while) they carry out specific training for job insertion.

*'In my opinion, this process should be included in the courses and in the centers that work with women because, for example, I've gone to talk to a professional, for them to orient me, but it isn't the same. They gave me clear information, of course, but it didn't help me to think about what was best for me, it didn't help to clarify things for me, it didn't pose such deep questions, they were more mechanical things, less adapted to me, less personalized, and I think that this is very important before you do any course or go ahead and start your own business, I think this process is necessary first so that, whatever you do, you do it with confidence. Maybe it's impossible to cover all the people that go to the orientation services in such an analytic way, but this would also help the professional to be more familiar with the women who go asking for help, because if you don't know the people, if you don't understand why they're there, there's no way to help them.'*

The women need to make sense of their desire to change and to make their own decisions in a conscious way, knowing what condi-

tioning factors, both positive and negative, they will find later. They also need to reflect on their own chances for improving, and thus avoid as far as possible generating false expectations. All of these aspects are essential for professional orientation to have real effects in practice.

## Conclusions

We can conclude that the biographical-narrative method and, specifically, the development of life histories, makes an important contribution to constructing people's individual and collective identity in a variety of processes of adaptation and change. In this method, subjective issues are considered interesting and existential projects tend to be made explicit, influencing decision-making concerning the most relevant and meaningful aspects of people's lives. This is mainly due to the reflection that this method involves. People who participate in this action develop reflexive processes regarding their own existence and for putting their own desires and projects for the future into play, from the past that has characterized them.

Specifically, the methodological process followed with these women contributes to the field of professional orientation. The stages of exploration, crystallization, identification, and carrying out professional development are worked on. This procedure is useful for dealing with transitions because, as we have analyzed with these women, changes, crises, and life transitions are not negative aspects but rather natural events and circumstances that happen as life goes on, at different moments throughout one's career, and that help us to grow. Therefore, we can conclude that another positive aspect of this process is that it helps people to get used to facing stressful situations that happen as life goes on and to know how to face them by reorienting their own life plans. This life plan is constructed throughout their lives, more so in moments of uncertainty such as the present, which require people who are skilled in this subject in order to face each life stage successfully.

The analytic process carried out with these women can be transferred to other groups of adults with similar needs regarding professional development. Specifically, women's life paths, as well as conditioning factors and changes in the women, are examples that can

be useful for other women who are in the transition to adult life. At any rate, we can conclude that this method is useful when applied to learning and existential development. Using this method, according to Ginette and Blanche (2000:193), 'the subject not only makes his or her experience explicit in terms of learning, but can also transfer and modify the knowledge acquired in order to recognize it (use it) in other situations.'

According to this, and due to the positive aspects that the women have highlighted in this process, (*it increases reflection and knowledge of your own life facilitates learning, should be included in professional job training programs for women...*), we can highlight the need to include qualitative procedures in professional orientation and job training. Specifically, life histories, together with other narrative and analytic techniques, can become powerful learning methods, methods which are useful for preparing professional and life projects. This method, taking into account our experience working with adult women, can be applied not only to the diagnostic stage, but also as a training method and a method of existential development. Above all, in the adult stage, critical, conscious reflection on previous life experience is essential. This makes the process necessary for projecting one's own professional and personal development.

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## **Biographical Learning. Education Research Project for Students of Polish-German Borderland**

In order to understand learning and cognitive processes that accompany it, it is necessary to consider circumstances and conditions in which learning occurs. Researchers who treat it as a socio-cultural phenomenon perceive knowledge as a constituent of the identity that is situated within the world rather than something that is 'supplemented to a human.' In line with that approach, an individual and the corresponding social reality are no longer distinct elements but complementary constituents of a 'social being' that is dynamically coming to life. Therefore, the position of the individual 'in relation to the world' disappears, making him or her become instead a 'person-within-the-world.' In this way, teaching adults gets situated in social relations, acquires a lifelong dimension and is perceived as a social practice, which becomes the stage for constant interactions between social reality and (re)constructed subjectivity (Malewski, 2006:45).

As far as the conception of lifelong learning is concerned, I am particularly interested in the pedagogical perspective of conditions and possibilities for biographical learning among members of society. Learning is being meant here as (trans)forming the structures of experience, knowledge and activity within the context of people's biographies and their realities, that is within the context of all aspects of life (Alheit, 2002:64). According to this perspective, educating and

‘improving’ adults is not solely the domain of organized and institutionalized forms, but also includes everyday life experiences, crises and transitional periods in one’s life. Biographical learning is set in social structures and cultural contexts of interpretations; therefore, while analyzing educational processes, it is important to gain ‘insight’ into the internal structures that determine the course of life. ‘Historical and structural comparisons reveal that this process follows the key axes of social diversification – class, cultural gender, or ‘ethnicity’, and that the course of life distributes opportunities in an uneven manner and groups them according to social position’ (Alheit, 2002:67). Learning is always connected with both the social context and the context of a given biography, but is also a condition that must be fulfilled for the biography under (re)construction to become a conscious form of experiencing. As Alheit writes: ‘without biography there is no learning, without learning there is no biography’ (2002:60)

The basic instrument (tool) of biographical learning is a narrative, that is a life story being told or described that involves the depiction of one’s life, reflections, experiences and knowledge. It is through telling these stories to ourselves and to others, through using self-consciousness and self-reflection that we are learning from our own biographies (Bron, 2006, 2009). Narratives, in particular self-narratives, which have the authors themselves as the main characters, provide the cognitive context of human actions while being, at the same time – according to Jerzy Trzebiński (2002) – the way humans understand the world. Self-narratives make it possible to experience life situations more deeply, to assign new meanings to them from the perspective of time, to accept reflexive attitudes towards them and to develop the narrative identity. ‘The narrative identity influences the behavior of an individual because it shapes one’s understanding of his or her goals, plans and the surrounding in which he or she pursues them’ (Trzebiński, 2002:38). This psychological approach corresponds well with the biographical concept of education, represented in Polish andragogy by Olga Czerniawska among others, and by foreign researchers e.g. Peter Alheit, Agnieszka Bron, Pierre Dominice or Duccio Demetrio. According to Czerniawska, constructivism plays a major role while analyzing human biographies as each biography is a distinct construct, told in

various contexts and in different ways, unique due to the uniqueness of both the teller and the listener. The biographical work that Czerniawska writes about can make an individual realize the complexity of education and the institutional influences he or she is/was subjected to, but also the influences of 'everyday life, conditions, circumstances and social contacts that affect the individual – making him/her learn how to and how not to at the same time' (Czerniawska, 2002:21). Similarly, in his book entitled characteristically *Learning From Our Lives*, Dominice (2006) describes the method of educational biography, which provides adult learners with opportunities to interpret their never-ending struggle for identity and can help them to get the full picture of their learning process, develop understanding, and (co)interpret and assign new meanings to past experiences and influences that the learners were subjected to during this difficult process of becoming themselves (Dominice, *ibidem*).

Biographical learning and biographical work were also addressed in the education research project I conducted in 2005/2006 among external students of the three-year undergraduate pedagogical studies, specialty – social work and rehabilitation, in the Łużycki College of Humanities in Żary (Lubuskie voivodeship). Before I proceed to describe the project, I will briefly characterize the school.

The Łużycki College of Humanities in Żary is one of the youngest privately owned vocational colleges in Poland (holding the rights of a public school), which has directed its offer mainly to inhabitants of the Żary region and the neighboring area, that is cities, towns and villages in western Poland situated along the Polish-German border. Due to its remoteness from the main decision-making centers, the borderland, which is home to most of the students, is often referred to as a peripheral area – in respect to political, economic or cultural issues. Its relevant feature is the nature and specificity of social and cultural relations that operate within its boundaries. After the German border was opened one could notice in the region a significant rise in dynamism in the field of economic exchange and implementing market mechanisms to achieve economic success. On the other hand, however, there appeared such observable phenomena as numerous inequalities, economic asymmetries, deepening unemployment and growing

poverty. Additionally, the specificity of this region finds its reflection in an increasing number and acceptance of deviant and pathological behaviors (see Kurzępa 1998, 2005, 2007), as well as in the popularization of various negative models of social behaviors (Gołdyka, 1999). Jacek Kurzępa, who in recent years has researched various pathological behaviors among young people of the borderland, described this social space in the following way:

A young man living in the borderland is consistently subjected to delinquent behaviors that remain within his grasp. At the same time, this area is being rapidly sucked into a civilizational ‘black hole.’ A whole strip of the western borderland is filled with post state farm<sup>1</sup> villages and former garrison towns from which troops are being constantly withdrawn; this, in effect, will result in situations similar to the ones that materialized after the one-sided decision to close down state farms. It is an area that falls out of favor in every respect – social, economic, cultural and educational one. The process of marginalization progresses quickly with more and more inhabitants of the borderland being subjected to its effects (Kurzępa, 2005:219).

Starting work in the newly founded college in Żary I was not fully aware of the environment that my students may be coming from, in particular, what kind of problems they are faced with in everyday life. It made me consider with special care both the content and form of the adult education classes for such a large group of people (about 180 participants), which initially appeared to me as an unknown and, in a sense, unpredictable world. In the first part of the education research project, which came to life and later developed as a result of questions and doubts that had been gradually arising – but which was also inspired by biographical conceptions of education – I asked the students for anonymous answers to a few open questions that dealt mainly with their motivation for studying, expectations concerning the studies, and the possible problems they encounter while studying. In addition, I asked for standard information on their age, occupation and place

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<sup>1</sup> State farms were large state-owned establishments which emerged in Poland after 2nd World War and were primarily, yet not exclusively, aimed at agricultural production. See A.Karwacki, *The Culture of Poverty in the Post-State Farm Community*, “Eastern Europe Countryside” 2002, issue no: 8, pp. 79–93.

of living. Among the 172 interviewed students there were people aged between 20 and 46, half of whom (85 people) inhabited borderland villages and towns (up to 15.000 inhabitants), while the rest lived in cities such as Żary, Żagań, Szprotawa. What surprised me most (despite my general knowledge of the borderland unemployment) was the fact that among students inhabiting nearby villages and towns every second person did not have a regular job. The remaining ones were most often employed as: salesmen (at bazaars, in shops and wholesale outlets), administrative office staff, policing services (soldiers, policemen, wardens, border guards), bartenders, cooks, cleaners, but there were also single individuals working as: a social worker, teacher, journalist in a local newspaper, driver, gas station attendant, storeman, assembler, and a bender operator.

Two issues of particular interest that I was able to clarify at the first stage of the project include:

Firstly, some of the students' answers to, what seemed to be, routine questions clearly took a narrative form of a biographical character. The students quite often went beyond the scope of a question and to some extent indulged in some form of storytelling in which they either referred to their particular life experiences or depicted in detail (though nobody expected them to) their current family and professional situation, or described the place that they came from and which they lived in.

Secondly, what characterized this group was the fact that the vast majority included those who could be referred to as student of the second (third, fourth...) chance, that is those who at some point of their lives had abandoned formal education (sometimes more than once) and 3, 6, 11... years later decided to pick up where they had left. A significant number of people in this group also included those who, for many reasons (economic, health, social, cultural), could be referred to as 'non-traditional students'. I borrowed this term from the European research project realized within the frames of the Socrates – Grundtvig program – Promoting Reflective Independent Learning in Higher Education, which involved research teams from eight countries, including Poland, represented by the University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław (Kurantowicz, Ligus, 2005). According to

the authors of the project, the term 'non-traditional student' refers not only to those who left the educational system to return after some time, but also to those who, for some reason, are a minority group in a higher education institution (i.e. the disabled, the ones coming from marginalized environment, the culturally or economically poor, etc.) (Kurantowicz, Ligus, 2005:103; for further reading see Kurantowicz 2007:109–129).

The second stage of my project was to construct such a flexible, in terms of form and content, course syllabus that it would include the information obtained earlier, be provocative and provide spaces for reflection and communication (see Alheit, 2002:71). It was an attempt at entering a mutual dialogue that would include varied students' needs and relations between knowledge and experiences acquired in their places of living and various worlds they inhabited. Referring to Dorota Klus-Stańska (2005), I can say that my thinking, which was revolving around meetings with the students, did not focus on how to run the classes but on the following questions: 'Who are my students, where are they coming from and who are they becoming through getting acquainted with the reality?' (Klus-Stańska, 2005:110–111) The key measure that was supposed to provide me with the answer was a dialogue understood in a proper way, that is neither – what Klus-Stańska emphasizes – a mere reversal or a higher-level monologue, nor a conversation with the smartest ones, an ice-breaking activity of a kind. It was rather meant as a dialogue between meanings rather than between people; an opportunity to give the floor not to different speakers but to different meanings, perspectives and worlds that can be 'thought.' Such dialogue 'likes' negotiating between knowledge coming from various sources, reversing meanings, distancing from the reality and conscious experimenting with interpretations. It requires, however – according to Klus-Stańska – a common rejection of the monolithic nature of how one understands the world and a joint consent to problematize it. The dialogue also gives an adult the feeling that learning is not just a temporary duty supposed to be accounted for, but concerns him or her as a human being (Klus-Stańska, 2005:121–122).

A characteristic feature of work in small groups at this stage of the project was biographicity, that is natural and autonomous attempts

made by students to relate the knowledge they were faced with in scientific texts to their previous everyday experiences, and to the knowledge they had possessed before (re)entering the studies. These shared, critical and reflective attempts to examine one's own understandings, beliefs and feelings within the context of biography, to interpret 'with others' experiences that belonged to 'us' and to the 'others' varied, of course, in intensity, range and the level of reflectiveness. It depended on both the competences of those running the course and the atmosphere in the group, but also on the text – the problem that the discourse was supposed to evoke. Nevertheless, those attempts were characterized by significant, or even unexpected, participants' engagement and activeness, particularly when they were referring to such topics-problems as: Educating misfits and the socially rejected; Consumerism and educational egalitarianism as opposed to adult education; Obligation and freedom in adult education; Nonformal and informal areas of education; Transformative learning; Learning through biography of place; Learning by experiencing; Contexts of learning, etc.

In the third stage I asked my students to write papers of a biographical character that would describe their learning in everyday world, by which I did not mean routine, repetitive activities, circumstances and situations, but 'the entirety of their everyday life' including unusual, exceptional or even some 'festive' events. I received nearly 180 more or less extended narratives, some of which – with a help of the students and narrators (those who agreed to it) – were reflected upon and interpreted. In this way, students' life stories became biographies equipped with the educational potential that showed in the process of narration and self-reflection, but also while interpreting educational situation (learning) with the other participants.

Of particular interest and importance – from both the research, social and educational perspective – seem to be the results of analyses and interpretations of those self/narratives whose authors inhabit nearby borderland villages and towns (85 students); especially when we consider the specificity of these small local communities, their growing poverty, unemployment rate reaching 50 percent and the fact that this environment, in particular, is the home to the students that can be referred to as the 'non-traditional ones' (see also Olejarz, 2007).

Obviously, each of these dozen or so analyzed narratives requires a separate thought to spare and an attempt at an interpretation. Due to editorial limitations I decided to present the general results of the analysis from the perspective of the following question, which appeared while interpreting the stories told: what meanings do students assign to their learning when looking back upon their past life? Consequently, there appeared at least three most common ways of assigning meanings to learning, which are as follows:

1) Learning as acquiring propositional knowledge that leads to obtaining diplomas and certificates

In this group of narratives learning was mostly associated with school as an institution and with requirements, necessities and obligations forcing students to learn material (often by heart) only to reproduce it at a later stage during tests, exams, etc. Knowledge was understood here as a collection of ordered pieces of information on science, technology and culture that needed to be learnt. These narratives were dominated by students who thought of themselves as of assuming social roles of pupils or students, therefore their reflections on learning were connected with such issues as: achievements at school, role of teachers (both good and bad ones), interests in given school subjects, difficulties with learning, successes and failures at school, learning strategies (acquiring and mastering material), etc. While interpreting those biographies it was hard to resist the impression that learning at school and the resulting knowledge are something disconnected from the authors' world, something separate that is happening next to the 'real world'. Some of these narratives could even be entitled: 'How I dealt with school duties.' Interestingly, heroes of this kind of narratives were most often well-socialized students, whose educational biography progressed with no greater difficulties or disruptions, and who were perceived by others as above-average students. Learning was analyzed here mainly from the perspective of one's own successes and achievements at school, while the remaining contexts and areas of learning (family, local environment, peers, critical events in life) were described and analyzed solely from the point of view of aiding or hindering this institutional, technological learning. Here, the students



wrote/told of their (institutional) learning as of a chance to get/keep a job or be promoted. Learning, in this sense, meant getting grades, diplomas, certificates; it was a necessity, obligation and requirement of reality. In these narratives learning was always closely related to educational institutions, but also, on many occasions, appeared as external learning, to which Joanna Rutkowiak refers as 'cognitive circumstantial activity' manifesting as a result of external requirements that a human tries to live up to, frequently against his or her own attitudes (Rutkowiak, 2005:49).

Among authors of the narratives that qualified into this group there were also those who, for many reasons, did not undertake higher studies in Zielona Góra, Wrocław or Poznań, even though that was what they had originally intended or dreamt of. These students felt somehow 'condemned' to studying in Żary and perceived it only as a transitory stage of their educational career, which was supposed to 'take them away from the borderland environment' and make it possible to start a 'new life' at a new place (a big city) that would provide them with better educational and professional opportunities. Institutional education appeared to them as a chance to escape from problems of the borderland, which was presented in their narratives as a place unworthy of attention, uninteresting, unaccepted or even shameful.

## 2) Learning as overcoming difficulties and handling problems that leads to change in life

This way of assigning meanings to learning was especially characteristic for students that came from the smallest local environments like villages and post state farm milieus. This group also included those who belonged to bereaved, poor (both culturally and materially), or lone-parent families, which were, in addition, often subjected to social pathology. This type of narratives were characterized by reflections on one's learning that were concentrated on a given life problem, event, crisis or traumatic experience. In many of these narratives it was possible to single out two parts of the autobiography that could be entitled: 'my life before...' and 'my life after...', or: 'my knowledge before...' and 'my knowledge after...' The 'thing' that most often separated the two periods in the authors' life, or the two kinds of knowledge (about one-

self and the world), included events and breaking points in their life stories such as: death of a parent, sibling, spouse, child; serious disease of the author or a relative; parents getting a divorce, breakdown of one's own marriage; sudden loss of a job leading to a deterioration in the standard of living or even to poverty; financial bankruptcy due to e.g. bad investments, firm's collapse; diagnosed addiction (alcohol or drug abuse), more often that of a close relative (of a parent, sibling, spouse, child) than of one's own; problems with the law – crimes revealed and crimes committed by either the author or a close relative (illegal trade, assaults, thefts, drug possession, etc.)

In this sort of narratives students described/said not only how they (had) tried to deal with the critical situation and what they (had) needed to learn, but also how it affected their future life. These reflections included answers to the following questions:

- what, through experiencing the critical situation, did the students learn about themselves, about others and the world?
- what did they have to cope with to handle the critical situation, what sort of external problems and personal weaknesses did they overcome; how was it 'going' in their lives and how is it still 'going'?
- what advisors, guides and 'teachers' could they count on at that time, who 'found time for them' and helped them with difficult situations, how was this help 'progressing' and what areas did it concern?
- how did the learning processes lead to transformation?
- in what way – in the narrators' opinion – did the critical situation they had experienced influenced 'who,' 'where' and 'like what' they were that day?

It is interesting that in most of these narratives, as well as during the joint interpretation, the students 'created themselves' as 'learners' who, in a sense, 'passed the exam set by life.' It is characteristic that this kind of 'learning life' was much more appreciated by the participants than institutional learning in schools of all sorts. Most often these students were not successful in terms of learning achievements (some of them experienced all kinds of difficulties at school); moreover, they remembered school as a place where support and understanding were hard to find. Therefore, many of them left school to return after 3, 6, 10, 15... years.

Another characteristic thing the narratives and joint interpretations revealed was that the 'significant others' who helped the authors change their life and handle problems rarely included professional counselors, social workers or facilitators; much more often the 'significant others' included: life partners, friends, colleagues, family members. For some students it was the knowledge they had gained through these, sometimes tragic, experiences (breakthrough in life – as one student put it) and help from some particular people that considerably impacted the decision to reenter institutionalized education – despite many adversities and personal doubts that accompanied this return (problems at home, difficult economic situation, low 'educational' self-esteem, etc.) Studying at the College in Żary was for them an actual confirmation and a proof that they had come to terms with their life; dealt with problems; taken matters in their own hands; stood on their feet; changed their fate; restored dignity... etc. Higher education provided them with an opportunity not only to get or keep a job, but also (what they describe as equally, or even more, important) to enhance their social status, self-esteem and the regard society held for them.

### 3) Learning as searching and forming one's identity resulting in conscious and subjective being in the world

This group is made up of narratives that seem to share common elements with the previous life stories. They were, however, constructed not around some specific life events and experiences but focused on general evaluation/examination of oneself, of one's biography and one's place in the world. Here, the narrators, while writing/telling about learning in everyday life, asked themselves general questions like: who am I? where am I coming from? where am I going? what is most important for me? what is my life to me and what am I experiencing in everyday life? It does not mean that each time the process of narrating provided them with a clear-cut answer; it was more like looking for answers, sharing doubts with one another, reflecting more or less deeply upon this sort of questions. In this case, learning can be perceived as a process of searching and forming one's identity. It was more to find here some quandaries, apprehensions, reflections on a constant struggle with oneself and with adversities, feelings of helplessness and fears

about what the future holds for the narrator or his/her closest ones, whereas feelings of deciding about one's fate, accepting oneself, one's situation, and the place where one lived were in short supply.

These narratives often referred to the period of childhood and early youth when the authors were on many occasions stigmatized due to e.g. their rural origin, living in state farm milieus, poverty, alcoholism in the family, attending vocational school, problems with learning (i.e. repeating grade). Their answers suggested that they could rarely count on support from families (who were faced with their own problems), friends (who often bullied the narrators with names like: redneck, simpleton, broke, boor) or teachers (who also stigmatized the narrators as bad, troublesome students; having no room for improvement; doomed to fail in life). Reading the narrative or listening to their authors one could get the impression that some of this stigmatization was still rooted in the students – making them struggle to find their identity, in a sense, on their own.

A conception I found particularly useful while trying to (re)interpret the borderland students' biographies was Agnieszka Bron's floating (2006), described as a condition that makes a human feel like 'floating in vacuum' in the aftermath of various life twists, personal, emotional, psychological or cognitive difficulties, or a combination of the above. It is a condition where one feels devoid of sense of security, ability to control his or her life, or even identity. This is common when an adult finds himself or herself at the crossroads and needs to decide what to do next, or encounters an entirely new situation in life – changes place of work, enters higher education, leaves for another country, etc. Being confronted with a new culture and environment can also give rise to this condition, especially when one cannot fit in and the new identities and roles he or she is expected to assume appear unclear and problematic (Bron, 2006:20). The narratives I classified as the third way of assigning meanings to learning fit into the concept of floating, although each of them can be further classified as relating to a particular sub-category of this phenomena. Bron refers to four levels of floating as: Feeling uneasy with the decision, Losing security, Facing a crisis, Trying to cope with the situation. At the same time, she argues that in practice they can overlap, take shorter or longer, sometimes even up

to a few years (Bron, 2006:21). The analysis of the two previous ways of assigning meanings to learning (especially that of the second type) suggests that their authors also experienced something similar to floating – feeling of helplessness and crisis – in their life stories. It seems, however, that those students, partly thanks to help and support from the “significant others”, had managed to overcome this crisis, or were finding themselves in the last stage of floating, that is they were handling the crisis and searching for a way out, or had already found one.

Preserving all that is unique and special in the biographies of Żary students one could say that all these life stories share the category of a place the students come from, live in and experience on everyday basis. A place which is not only a geographical space, but also – as Jerome Bruner (1990) writes – an intricate construct whose language predominates in narrators’ thoughts. In his opinion, places ‘allow for something, make something possible, let something happen’; they are of key importance, shaping and limiting the stories told (Bruner, 1990:12–13). It is no different in the borderland students’ narratives, where a place – the borderland – transcends the mere physical space and embraces the socio-cultural space, along with different worlds in which the students live and struggle with everyday problems and their own identity. Among the students that were most willing to write/tell about the borderland – a place they came from and lived in – two types of narratives appeared more often than others:

– The first type includes narratives whose authors identified with their local community and for whom living near the German border (particularly in terms of job opportunities) was something of a positive nature. Here, students wrote/told about a community they were bonded with by neighborly ties (including German neighbors); the place where they had learned to live and work (‘to earn extra money’), where they felt safe and had learned the meaning of friendship, solidarity and neighborly help. A big city, or, in more general terms, central Poland appeared to them as an ‘alien,’ ‘different’ world, which they did not understand or were overwhelmed by and uncomfortable with; a world where – as they said – they would not like to live, work nor study. Therefore, the privately owned college in the borderland was sometimes the only chance for them to get a higher degree – due to

its closeness, low costs of studying and the sense of security resulting from the fact that it was a place they knew well. One could get the impression that large urban areas of Poland instilled greater fear in those students than living in the direct vicinity of Germany, which, on the other hand, appeared to them as a socio-cultural space that was much more familiar, accustomed, and accepted.

– The second type of narratives the ones that were critical towards the place of living, that is towards the borderland. It was described as the root of many problems in students' life; a place that deprives them of chances for development, condemns them to life of misery, hinders realization of goals and dreams; a place that is unfriendly, hostile, unaccepted, which they have no ties to. Those students indicated numerous problems associated with living within a small local community in the borderland. This, however, had nothing to do with neighboring Germany, but was more connected with unemployment, some transport issues (bus arriving only twice a day), or with no access to cultural and educational institutions (no cultural centers, school was closed down, next they are going to move the library; all that is left is the TV and some dumb sitcoms, that is why I enjoy my time at the college as it provides me with the opportunity to keep in touch with the world, with other people). Considering the context of their place of living students regarded learning as acquiring skills helpful when overcoming inherent problems associated with living in the borderland, or as seeking possibilities of getting away.

The education research project I conducted among students of the Polish-German borderland was met with their positive feedback and much appraisal. The students/narrators especially appreciated the keen (in their opinion) interest shown in their biographies, experiences and the knowledge they possessed of the world, of other people, of themselves, and of the place they came from or lived in. It seems that a necessary condition to conduct this kind of project was winning its participants trust and evoking such sense of security that would ensure students' privacy within the limits they had set themselves. Still, I have to admit that students were quite eager to engage in the dialogue I had initiated – they openly invoked and interpreted together their past life, former experiences, specific events. I suppose that, on the one hand,

at least some of them longed to be heard and to make their own voice heard when talking about important issues, while, on the other, they could get the feeling of being understood, of sharing experiences with those who also lived in the borderland and, therefore, knew 'this place' perfectly well, encountered its specificity, and whose biographies were also full of similar problems and equally tough experiences. I, on my part, did not assume the traditional role of a university teacher. I rather tried to be a facilitator – an active and reflective participant of the discourse, cooperating, listening carefully, supporting students with communicative or notional issues, but sometimes also stimulating the discourse and provoking or exploring some problematic issues.

Students' reflections and remarks expressed during and after the project, as well as my own insights and observations, give hope that my methods of work based on the concept of biographical learning allowed students, at least partly, to re/interpret their life, make it easier to assign meanings to their past experiences, and to construct knowledge – about themselves, their uniqueness, autonomy (cf. Bron and Lönnheden, 2009), and the socio-cultural contexts of their learning – in a more understandable manner. This kind of knowledge is constructed in the process of biographical learning, can help adult learners to face their own identity and transcend the world they live in, providing them, at the same time, with the opportunity to emancipate themselves and to reenter the world as conscious, subjective actor.

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### **III. Examples of ‘Good Practice’ in Cultural Diversity**



## **Resources for Teacher Training in Intercultural Education. Report on INTER Research Group Activities and Products**

### **The assumptions and approach to cultural diversity**

The INTER Group is an international team of professors and researchers dedicated to intercultural education in different fields: school practice, teacher training, educational resources, etc. The coordination of this group, to which the authors of this text belong to, is based at the Spanish Distance Education University (UNED). In the last ten years (since its consolidation in 1999) the members of the INTER group have coordinated various research and cooperation projects in Spain, Europe and Latin America, besides developing teaching and learning experiences at different universities and educational scenarios (teacher training centres, associations). The different exchanges and experiences of the INTER group have contributed to make explicit the assumptions that its members hold about cultural diversity and the intercultural approach itself. In this sense, the team that participated in the elaboration of the *Inter guide* (INTER Group 2007, explained in a further section of this document) agreed to share the following principles:

- We do believe in Social Justice, Democracy, and in sharing Power.
- Human beings have more in common with each other than what tells us apart.
- We do understand and accept diversity and conflict.

- We also think acknowledging diversity improves creativity in order to find differing solutions to the same problems.
  - We are aware that we all have and use prejudices and stereotypes when we relate to other people.
  - We should know and learn about societies and human groups which are different from our own.
  - We should also adopt a global perspective that will provide us with a broader understanding of human groups beyond ethnicity and beyond any kind of labels.
  - We should make participation available for everybody.
- (Inter Guide, p. 3)

The conception of what intercultural means is understood in the following way:

*‘[An] Educational approach based on the respect and appreciation of cultural diversity. It is targeted at each and every member of society as a whole, proposing an integrated model of involvement in the student’s education that arranges all the aspects of the educational process in such a way that we achieve equal opportunities / results for all, overcomes racism in its various manifestations and establishes intercultural communication and competence’ (Aguado, 1996).*

As agreed in Madrid in December 2003 by the INTER group,

*‘The idea is to establish an approach from which we can deal with the questions relating to the management of diversity in Education on the understanding that this diversity manifests itself in forms that go beyond the established limits of cultural and ethnic or nationalistic groups. From this approach we can deal with all other significant variables in both a formal educational context and in other informal and less structured contexts.’*

So we think *Intercultural Education* is not:

- Isolated celebrations: the often named ‘Intercultural week,’ ‘Gastronomic Day,’ ‘Peace Day,’ and so on,
- Just learning about the characteristics of certain groups as ‘others,’ so as to ‘get to know them better,’
- Having recipes to solve conflicts, or to address so called differently labelled groups,
- Educational programmes aimed at specific groups, such as compensatory classes and the like,

- Mixing students from different backgrounds without promoting positive relationships or other wider aims,
- Avoiding conflicts! Conflicts are part of our everyday life, the key is to manage them properly, and to be aware of our biases, positively and actively learning to fight discrimination and prejudices. (Inter Guide, p. 4).

## The needs addressed

According to these assumptions about what an intercultural approach means, we have identified the needs of the professionals who work in culturally diverse educational settings (mainly teachers at different levels), bearing this perspective in mind.

Two research projects developed in the past years by the INTER group (Aguado 2005, 2006a: Malik, Ávila, Espinosa and Baumgartl, 2009) highlight the following results about teacher training needs concerning cultural diversity:

- Teachers and administrations have a concern about cultural diversity in education
- Training initiatives are usually optional and not a part of the core curriculum in teacher training programmes
- Cultural diversity is identified with immigration and special education
- It is difficult to find training experiences that approach diversity in education from an intercultural perspective, considering it from a global and holistic view and facilitating reflection tools.

Within this frame, the INTER group has developed different educational resources (specially addressed to teachers or educators) and experiences (courses, workshops) that try to fill these gaps and provide both theoretical and practical tools to analyse, implement and improve educational practices from an intercultural perspective.

According to Giroux (1990), teachers are conceived as reflective intellectuals and not as mere technicians; thus, both resources and training experiences appeal to re-think and re-shape teachers' ideas and practices about education. For instance, the *INTER guide* (INTER group, 2006) tries to place the reader ('you') in a position from which he/she will be able to:

- ‘Make explicit your implicit ideas with which you are currently teaching and learning,
- Critically think about them related to actual practices,
- Consider different ways and ideas in order to teach/learn,
- Decide if you will change and what you would like to change,
- Have access to information, examples, resources, and materials to help you to change your practices if you decide to do so.

In doing so our main objectives are to CHALLENGE:

- Implicit goals of current Education,
- The homogeneity perspective,
- The ideas of academic success and academic failure,
- The idea that Education should be the transmission of knowledge,
- The association of cultural diversity with some social label or categories (immigration, ethnicity, minorities, nationality),
- The idea that Intercultural Education consists only of celebrating diversity,
- Compensatory Education as an integration/adaptation strategy,
- The idea that Intercultural Education is a tool to give recipes to solve specific problems,
- The myth that IE evaluates only students’ academic performance.

And to PROPOSE INSTEAD:

- A critical revisiting of the main ideas and goals of Education,
- The perspective of Intercultural Education as a strategy to train the citizens of a multicultural society which provides strategies to see diversity as a common richness,
- To understand Education as a way to develop individual capacities and strategies to live in a multicultural society,
- To develop a critical attitude towards values, to learn how to solve conflicts, and to live along with differing norms,
- To use cultural relativism as a strategy of Intercultural education,
- To show the need to include in classrooms antiracist education for everyone including ourselves,
- To make curricular adaptations in classrooms bearing in mind the students’ points of view, and to promote co-operation and empathy,
- To develop communicative skills, group work, cooperation and social mediation,

- To be aware of the need to fight structural and individual discrimination and racism: their processes, factors, and consequences,
- To promote better and tighter Family/School/Community relationships,
- To assess and evaluate the process of teaching/learning, instead of solely the evaluation of students.’

(Inter Guide, p. 2)

### The resources

This section introduces two guides that have been developed by members of the INTER Group: the INTER Guide and a guide about Racism. The first one has been awarded with the *Evens Prize* in 2005 and *Premio Aula* in 2006.

#### **A) INTER Guide: a practical guide to implement intercultural education at schools**

The INTER Guide is the main result of a European Project developed with the support of Socrates Programme Comenius 2.1. in the period 2002–2005. The guide has been designed as a practical tool to analyse, implement and improve Intercultural Education in school practices. It is meant to encourage the reader to consider which are the main challenges to re-think and to re-shape her/his current ideas and practices about education, as stated before.

The structure of the INTER Guide shows eight modules, each one addressing Intercultural Education and how to implement it from a different angle, followed by a Glossary of terms:

*Module 1: Compulsory Education* – Challenges the reader into rethinking the significance of compulsory education today, critically analysing the aims and function of compulsory schooling in our societies, and introducing the Intercultural approach as a proposal for transformation of schools.

*Module 2: Diversity versus Homogeneity in Schools* – We define here the ideas of homogeneity and diversity, helping the reader to identify both in her/his school environments. To show the benefits and difficulties we see in switching from a mostly homogeneous perspective (which is currently operating in most classrooms) to a diversity per-

spective in the process of learning which acknowledges and works out of individual variation.

*Module 3: School, Home, Community* – Reflects on the importance of good relationships and collaboration among families, schools and other community agents, considering different alternatives of collaboration which may occur and to understand them as a continuum. We will also show some examples of projects and practices which promote this kind of participation.

*Module 4: Theoretical Assumptions* – Focuses on identifying the implicit/explicit theories of teachers, showing theories underlying the Intercultural approach (about teaching/learning/communication) and reflecting upon the practical implications of former analysis.

*Module 5: Educational Policies* – Analyses educational policies trying to go beyond the plain understanding of laws, norms and regulations to identify and recognize the ideological interests underlying models and ideas which give reason and drive all legislation.

*Module 6: Evaluation, Student Assessment and Quality Assurance* – Encourages reflection on what evaluation is and what we think it should be. It goes beyond the testing of students' academic performances and concentrates attention on the teaching and learning process.

*Module 7: School Structure and Organization* – Tries to make explicit our mental images about schools, to reflect about the main dimensions in school organization, and to elaborate on the practical implications in order to build an Intercultural school.

*Module 8: Teaching and Learning Strategies* – Its aims are: to study learners and teacher's roles in depth; to contribute to the improvement of competences that teachers have to attain; to help teachers be aware of and practice different strategies; to make known different experiences which teachers could apply.

The *Glossary*, included at the end of the Guide, gathers what we think are the most important terms regarding Intercultural Education. Sometimes we provide only one definition when we all think it is clear enough and we all agree on it. However, when our agreement was not unanimous we included different definitions in order to offer a richer perspective and also an example of inclusive diversity!



The complete text of the Guide can be found on line (in Spanish, English, Latvian and Portuguese) in the following website: <http://www.uned.es/centrointer>. It has been published in the Spanish version by the Spanish Ministry of Education (Aguado, 2006b) and in English by Navreme (INTER Group, 2006).

Besides these eight Modules and the Glossary which constitute the text of the Guide itself, two other resources complete our vision of the INTER Guide:

– A VIDEO: *Kaleidoschool: an intercultural approach*. It includes a set of video-clips showing interviews and different images of children and teachers engaged in different activities in real schools. It is offered with the Guide to raise the same questions from a different perspective and to provide real examples of school practices close to the Intercultural approach. Each video-clip includes an index explaining: 1) what is going to be shown (i.e. an interview, an example of a school practice), 2) the socio-political context and background, 3) why the example has been selected, and 4) suggestions for possible uses. The videoclips are compiled in a DVD which has been designed basically with the same structure of the Guide, but with 5 modules instead of 8, to illustrate what we think are good practices in Intercultural education to be used as given materials for different activities and proposals. The video can be watched on line:

[www.mepsyd.es/documentos/creade-doc//archivos\\_secciones/130/kaleidoschool\\_01.html](http://www.mepsyd.es/documentos/creade-doc//archivos_secciones/130/kaleidoschool_01.html)

– A DIRECTORY OF RESOURCES which collects and structures the resources we have found and think are valuable for teaching and learning from an Intercultural perspective (including essays, articles, fiction and non fiction works, movies, songs, webpages) in paper as well as in electronic format, audiovisuals, etc. to be used in classrooms. It contains more than one hundred resources, which are briefly analysed and organized into descriptors identified with the different modules. You can also to look it up on line: [www.pois-e.com/inter](http://www.pois-e.com/inter)

### **B) Racism: What It Is and How to Deal with It. A Guide to Talking about Racism**

This guide is a teaching material which can be used in different educational contexts: schools and high schools, teacher training centres,

associations, NGOs, training centres for social agents, adult education, or institutions in other contexts interested in tackling racism.

Those of us who make up the group that prepared the Guide have many different opinions and we did not always agree on how to think about and explain so complex a phenomenon as racism, but we did manage to agree on some basic ideas:

- We believe that we are not born racists, but that we all learn to be racists whether we want to or not in this society.
- How? Our society transmits racist assumptions in an almost imperceptible way, and we accept them without questioning them, sometimes because we are not even aware of this process.
- Why? Because these ideas allow us to legitimize the inequalities among people, and because everyone who belongs to the majority group (the group in power) ends up benefiting from this situation, believing that they deserve more than others.
- What can we do to dismantle these kinds of reasoning? It is only through a continuous process of re-education that we can learn to guard against racism and to develop a critical attitude towards it.

The structure of this Guide is articulated around several questions that we consider key issues for understanding and dealing with racism as a social phenomenon:

*Module 1 – What is racism?* – This being a fundamental theme, the module tries to define what we refer to when we talk about racism. In addition, a series of concepts and mechanisms related to racism is presented: stereotype, prejudice and discrimination.

*Module 2 – Racism: Why and what for?* – This module takes on the complexity of racism, with an analysis that emphasizes both the causes and the beneficial consequences that racist behaviour has for the people or groups who practice it. Social classification, hierarchy, power and privilege are the ideas around which a series of arguments are articulated to help explain the reasons and purposes of racist behaviour and its justification.

*Module 3 – How is it produced?* – Starting from the concept of racism as a social phenomenon, this module analyses and invites the reader to join in the analysis of the manifestations of racism from two perspectives: the perspective of the factors (personal and social) that

favour its appearance, and the perspective of the forms and characteristics of its expressions in different contexts.

*Module 4 – How is it reproduced?* – This module shows and analyses the mechanisms that serve to perpetuate racism in society, mechanisms such as mass media or textbooks. It also highlights the importance of becoming aware of how this transmission of racism works in daily life.

*Module 5 – How can we deal with racism?* – Recalling the ideas that have come up in the previous modules, this one considers dealing with racism through three processes: awareness, reflection, and action.

Finally the Guide includes a *glossary* that provides a series of transverse concepts which are mentioned throughout the different modules.

Each module has a similar structure, including some or all of the following sections:

The modules begin with a ***Critical Incident*** which should cause the reader to reflect on the most important ideas that will be dealt with in the rest of the module. This may contain a text on one or more personal experiences, an idea, a quote, a vignette, an image, etc., intended to stimulate thought and review our assumptions about the subjects that will be discussed.

The section dedicated to ***Information*** was designed to offer the information we believe to be relevant to the subject dealt with in the module. The contents are developed here, as well as the data that are considered useful for discussing concepts and carrying out the activities proposed.

The section ***Resources*** offers specific references for obtaining complementary information on the subjects dealt with in each module: books, articles, web pages, videos, films, photographs, music and references for Internet searches.

The section ***Food for Thought*** offers issues and strategies for provoking personal or shared reflection on the ideas presented or suggested in the preceding sections.

The section ***Activities to Share*** proposes some activities that require collaboration with others: colleagues, students, school staff, family members, etc. These activities involve looking for additional information, interviewing different educational agents, using an on-line platform, or debating the main concepts and ideas of each module.

One of our main concerns is to avoid the widespread idea that analysing racism and dealing with it means adding something extraordinary to the curriculum and doing it separately from the customary activities in the different subjects. This is why the section called *Working in the Classroom* proposes activities designed to provoke reflection on the decisions that are made daily in schools and to offer ideas that will allow the reader to work with the ordinary curriculum, including aspects related to the subject of the module in the curriculum. The objective is to link the concepts with the proposals and to integrate these in daily school activities.

### The training experiences

The introduced resources have been used in different training experiences, mostly addressed to teachers given the context where the authors of the materials develop our professional activities. Among these experiences, we can mention the following:

Distance education experiences:

- Master in Intercultural Education, run at UNED (Spain) in cooperation with Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural (Mexico). It is a Master's Degree which includes courses on racism and the intercultural approach in school settings, where the presented resources have been used as training materials.
- Teacher training courses, offered by UNED, about intercultural education and racism.
  - *Intercultural School*. Developed from December 2005 to May 2006 and repeated each year until now. 120 hours. Professors: Teresa Aguado and Inés Gil Jaurena.
  - *Racism: What it is and how to deal with it*. Developed from December 2006 to May 2007 and December 2007 to May 2008. 120 hours. Professors: Patricia Mata and Belén Ballesteros.
  - *Intercultural education: Approaches and practices*. From December 2008 to May 2009. 120 hours. Professors: Teresa Aguado, Inés Gil Jaurena and Patricia Mata.

Non-distance education experiences: Different short courses have been offered in the last years in Spain using the Inter Guide and the Guide to talk about racism. As an example:

- Course: *Guía Inter* (Inter guide), February–March 2005. Institution: Spanish Council of Scientific Research, Madrid. 20 hours. Professors: INTER Group members.
- Workshop: *Inter: implementing intercultural education*, April 2005. Institution: Limerick university, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Limerick, Ireland. 6 hours. Professor: Inés Gil Jaurena.
- Course: *La educación intercultural en la escuela* (intercultural education at school), November 2005. Institution: Spanish Association of Guidance and Psychopedagogy, Madrid. 30 hours. Professor: Inés Gil Jaurena.
- Course: *La educación intercultural en la práctica escolar* (intercultural education in the school practice), January–March 2006. Institution: Teachers and Resources Center in Caspe (Zaragoza). 20 hours. Professors: Inter Group members.
- Course: *Educación intercultural. Una propuesta para la transformación social* (intercultural education. A proposal for social change), March 2006. Institution: UNED regional center at Baleares. 10 hours. Professors: INTER Group members.
- Course: *Estrategias y habilidades para la convivencia en la diversidad cultural* (strategies and abilities for co-living in cultural diversity), May 2006. Institution: Public school of animation and education for children and young free time, Madrid. 32 hours. Professors: Patricia Mata and Inés Gil Jaurena.
- Course: *Educación intercultural como respuesta a la multiculturalidad en la escuela* (intercultural education as an answer to multiculturalism in schools), November–December 2006. Institution: Regional Teacher Training Centre, Madrid. 30 hours. Professors: INTER Group members.
- Course: *La educación intercultural en la práctica escolar* (intercultural education in school practice), October 2006–May 2007. Institution: Regional Teacher Training Centre, Murcia. 32 hours. Professors: INTER Group members.
- Course: *El enfoque intercultural en la práctica escolar. Guía Inter* (the intercultural approach in school practice. Inter Guide), March 2007. Institution: UNED regional center at Baleares. 10 hours. Professors: INTER Group members.

- Course: *Racismo: que es y cómo afrontarlo* (racism: what it is and how to deal with it), April 2008. Institution: UNED regional center at Balears. 10 hours. Professors: INTER Group members.

These courses target are professors and educators who carry out their activity in school centres, in educational programs, in associations, etc. and, in general, any person interested in the subject. So, we recommend starting by asking the audiences about their ideas on the subject, their expectations about the session/seminar, and their concerns with the topic of the course.

We try to balance individual reflection and cooperative activities. Seeking this balance can, at times, become a limitation. Often, some people are prepared to read and write, to look for information on the Internet, but... they feel it is inappropriate to ask others, to interview people, or to get involved in activities that require personal contact. We recommend that you insist on the need to collaborate and participate in a dialogue with others, avoiding work carried out exclusively on one's own, as a way to become aware of, to reflect on, and to improve the school practice against racism. This idea seems particularly important to us because we are talking about education.

We don't believe in 'recipes' or general recommendations. This tends to be a common question in training activities. Sometimes people expect something like an instruction book that will let them know what to do in each case, following a specific recipe. We believe that we should point out right from the beginning that we do not think recipes are at all useful. Each social and educational context is different and requires specific procedures. We propose these courses as a tool to challenge our preconceived ideas about racism and its manifestations. We believe each student to be capable of analysing its contents, of reflecting, and of making decisions to improve the school practice.

Are these courses utopia or reality? 'This is all utopian,' 'It's not possible to apply this in the real world...'. These or other similar arguments may be used with regard to the intercultural approach. A utopia is defined as an ideal that is impossible to put into practice. For us, an "intercultural approach" is possible. If it is a utopia, then it is a utopia that is not only necessary, but possible and achievable. We are betting on inventing, imagining and building this reality.

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## **Training Future Teachers – Current Experience of the Intercultural Education at the Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences of Education of the Silesian University**

Undertaken dissertations are devoted to educating future teachers, and first of all to relations between theory and practice of intercultural education. When referring to three categories within education: regionalism, multiculturalism and interculturality (more strictly: to regional, intercultural and multicultural education) many theoreticians and practitioners treat those area rather freely. The fewest doubts are raised by the way of understanding and carrying out the regional education. There is rather considerable experience connected with carrying out of this education. In common sense matters of intercultural education are not clear and are not put into practice in accordance with leading idea of this education (this issue is raised in: Lewowicki et al. 2000a, b; 2006a, b; 2008; Szczurek-Boruta, 2007a, b, c). But tasks resulting from intercultural education are familiar as they rise from daily life situations and social contacts.

Facing numerous challenges of the present, aside from indispensable adaptation to changes resulting from transformations of professional life, education is a chance to fulfill ideals of peace, freedom, social justice; it plays a significant role in the continuous development of the individual and the society. This fact has been noticed by authors of the report '*Learning the Treasure Within*' who noted that:



‘education should permanently constitute the man, his knowledge, skills, but also his ability to make judgements and to undertake of actions. (...) to contribute to the development of self-consciousness, knowledge about his environment and to encourage to play different social roles in his job and in his settling’ (Delors, 1998:16). The role of intercultural education in this respect seems to be essential. This education assumes that the care about preserving one’s identity should be connected with the development of positive attitudes of openness to other cultures. It postulates learning of the intercultural dialogue, and hence the attitudes to condition the individual to aspire to understanding and respecting other cultures. (Lewowicki, 2008; Nikitorowicz, 1995a, b, 2005).

Both multicultural and intercultural education are in the centre of social problems. It is impossible to overrate their meaning in the course and quality of life of individuals and societies. From the individual perspective it gives a chance to function competently in the contemporary world, to create one’s own life, to have a the chance for an active citizenship perceived from the European perspective and also to enable one to uphold the position on the more demanding labour market.

Multicultural education goes beyond the traditional division into the introductory education and further training. The proper perspective and the sense of such education is included in the transcultural process of mutual learning, whole life experience, both in its cognitive and practical aspects for each human as a person and as a member of the society, and by learning allowing people to achieve tools for proper understanding, to influence their environment, to participate and to cooperate with others in all areas of human activity. Developing the consciousness of possessing one’s own, unique identity, intercultural education means awakening in an individual the sensitivity to individual and other people’s, sensitivity to moral values and their conscious choice. During the process of intercultural education the man learns the responsibility for who he is, who he is becoming and whom he can become, that is the responsibility for his own choices, so this education is aimed at continuous self – improvement.

## Methods of Providing the Multicultural Education

When undertaking complex problems of participation of individuals in educational process and illustrating them with experiences from the scope of intercultural education, there is no way to avoid the choice of particularly important matters – for any reason. I'll do so within this study. I am going to concentrate on problems of training future teachers in the scope of their preparation for life and for work in multicultural conditions and in a multicultural society. I am going to focus on presenting only a few chosen actions undertaken within one of principal subjects realized on the field of study Education, at the Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences of Education in Cieszyn, Silesian University in Katowice and on the activity of Student Scientific Circle of the Intercultural Education, whose activity is a continuation, manifestation and the positive effect of multi- and intercultural education. Referring theoretical sources, short presentation of experience from my own didactical work and results of my own research and studies carried out in the student group from Polish – Czech borderland (actually in south – eastern part of Silesia, in Cieszyn Silesia<sup>1</sup>) may be – as I think – useful for pedagogy, bringing the knowledge on complexity of problems of intercultural training and education in borderland conditions, on many (both beneficial and unfavourable) conditions of different educational practices.

One important area of activity in the scope of intercultural education is teacher training. Teacher's profession belongs to a group of so-called social professions, whose superior goal is an action for the sake of interest of other people.

General Pedagogy Research Unit led by Professor Tadeusz Lewowicki proposed to undertake activities in the scope of practical intercultural education, including: introduction of the course entitled *Multi- and intercultural education* to the syllabus of *Pedagogy* since 2002 together with the block of optional subjects from that field (op-

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<sup>1</sup> I refer here to actions carried out since the 90's of the 20-th century by Social Group for Research of Culture and Education of Borderland, under Professor Tadeusz Lewowicki, and above all I refer to my own didactical and research actions carried on at Polish-Czech borderland, in Cieszyn Silesia region.

tionally: axiological problems, socialization, identity, minority schools, religious issues in multicultural societies) followed by the setting up, in January 2004, Student Scientific Circle of Intercultural Education<sup>2</sup>, whose activity contributes to activation of Cieszyn academic circles.

I have been an instructor of *Introduction to multi- and intercultural education* since its introduction. At the moment full-time Pedagogy students from Integrated early school pedagogy and Protective and Educational Work receive 15 hours of lectures and 15 hours of workshops *Intercultural education with methodology*<sup>3</sup> has been taught to postgraduate students studying Integrated Early School and Pre-school Education since 2007.

Multi- and intercultural education as a main subject<sup>4</sup> covers the introduction to the widely considered problems of understanding of cultural dissimilarities – beginning from subcultures within one's own society to cultures of distant societies. The aim of the course is the preparation for the dialogue with representatives of other cultures. The course goals are as follows:

- cognition of fundamental problems from the scope of multi- and intercultural education, with particular attention to problems of social care and back up and education;
- understanding problems of methodology of intercultural education;
- developing the ability to ask questions about effects of promotion of some educational strategies and about the value of educational practices;
- shaping the thinking about interpersonal care, social back up, education in the context of interrelations between culture and the human being;

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<sup>2</sup> I'm an initiator and scientific tutor, together with dr Barbara Grabowska, of the Student Scientific Circle of Intercultural Education.

<sup>3</sup> As a manager of postgraduate study Integrated Early School and Pre-school Education I have introduced to the syllabus the subject: Intercultural education with methodology. Earlier I included problems of multi- and intercultural education within the subject: Contemporary pedagogical concepts.

<sup>4</sup> Original programs of subjects: *Multi- and intercultural education, Bases of multi- and intercultural education, Intercultural education with methodology* (Alina Szczurek-Bo-ruta 2002–2009).

- developing the need to study and acquire skills to analyse scientific texts, ability to formulate, classify and solve problems within pedagogic and educational situations.

The lecture doesn't form an independent course; it is rather a theoretical introduction to classes of the workshop character. Exercises are of an interactive type and use multimedia in the process of intercultural education. Classes are taught in the form of workshops where group work is encouraged. Students obtain practical educational skills during different, stimulated by the teacher sequences of situations.

The lecture material includes following problems: cultural differentiation of contemporary societies and cultural sensitising; basic conceptual apparatus of the intercultural education; problems of multiculturalism and interculturalism as a chance or threat for education; problems of multilevel and still creative identity as the task for the education; directions of educational policy and strategies of multicultural and intercultural education; historical and methodological context of multicultural and intercultural education; models of multicultural and intercultural education in Poland and in the world; map of protective and educational problems in intercultural education.

Exercises concentrate on the following goals, tasks and notions: multicultural education, intercultural education, regional education; educational content of the path „intercultural education”; working with chosen educational programs from the scope of multi- and intercultural education; planning the educational situations.

During classes students look for examples and manifestations of intercultural education within their own local environment, they plan educational situations: supporting development and shaping of individual identities; counteracting the prejudices and discrimination caused by gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, nationality, age, disabilities or other reasons.

As I mentioned before, the lecture does not constitute an independent course; it is rather a theoretical introduction to workshops during which students engage in problem solving. Film materials and examples from daily life illustrate theoretical problems discussed. Interactive exercises using multimedia techniques are carried out in the form of workshops.

Students work on class projects for different age group. These projects involve among others plays and games familiarizing with otherness and dissimilarity of people.

Theme projects worked out by students can be classified into three groups:

The first group contains topics concerning the family and the country of origin, for example *'My home and my family'*; *'Poland, my homeland'*; *'My neighbours and I'*; *'Poland and its neighbours.'*

The second group concerns questions of differences and culture dissimilarities. Some examples of topics worked out by students are: *'Each of us is different'*; *'Merry Christmas in Poland and in Europe – customs and traditions'*; *'Musical tour around Europe,'* *'Experiencing otherness.'*

The third group concentrates on problems of borrowing and exchange, among others: *'Tolerance for racial differences'*; *'I am tolerant towards others'*; *'Getting to know people from other cultures'*; *'We are learning to live together'*; *'Other, but similar'*; *'Exceptionally other friend – discovering the meaning of friendship in human life.'*

In the scope of the subject regional educational programs are also developed, connected with family, local, regional culture and multicultural problems, concerning religious, linguistic, ethnic dissimilarities etc.

The activity of Student Scientific Circle of Intercultural Education includes broadening the knowledge obtained from subjects of multi- and intercultural education, performing researches; developing their academic writing; organizing scientific conferences and seminars. Students meet local campaigners on open lectures concerning, among others, Cieszyn Silesia folk culture, regional culture of Beskid, Żywiec, Sub-Tatra (Podhale) or Upper Silesia regions (for example *'Cultivating the tradition of highlanders in Istebna, Koniaków and Wisła' – meeting with headteacher Małgorzata Kiereś;* *'Cultivating the tradition of Podhale' – meeting with priest Władysław Zązel*). During the series of scientific lectures students learn about problems of multilevel identity (seminar with professor Jerzy Nikitorowicz), intercultural education (meeting with priest professor dr hab. Marian Nowak); tolerance and multireligiousness in Cieszyn Silesia region, ecumenical actions in borderland (for example meeting with reverend Jan Byrt from Szc-

zyrk). They participate in scientific conferences organized by General Pedagogy Unit, they also organize conferences themselves (17 conferences so far), among others several conferences following a theme 'Get to know the Other' (Czech, Rom, Jew, German, Frenchman, American). They listen and learn songs and dances of highlanders (Silesian Feast), Gypsy dances, Jewish dances. They organize regular excursions to Museum in Wisła. Every year they participate in Żywiec carnival in Milówka, called 'Beggars Holiday'.

Another important activity area of the Circle is educational actions aimed at children and secondary school and university students. Students maintain contacts with educational institutions (nursery schools, primary, secondary and post-secondary schools, day care rooms), they prepare and run educational-protective classes: occasional meetings with children; parties on St Andrew's Eve and St. Nicholas' Day – they present traditions and ceremonies associated with St Andrew's Day and St. Nicholas' Day of various countries; they teach classes and organise workshops for young people on tolerance and human rights or organise art competitions for secondary school children.

The members of Student Circle advertise conferences and events promoting tolerance for the occasion of International Tolerance Day or local culture – 'Silesian Days' among their colleagues. These events include exhibitions of young people's artistic works or works of folk authors (among others works of Jan Śliżewski and Jan Koziół, unprofessional authors from Radlin); photography exhibitions ; performances of artistic groups: Song and Dance Company of Cieszyn Land Song and Dance Company 'Miedarzanie,' University Mining Orchestra (organised specially for the occasion of Silesian Days); student parties: 'Inn of Silesia' or 'Silesian Feast' in student club Panopticum; presentations of films and papers, competitions, e.g. 'Silesian Dictation,' lotteries and awards. The participants have a chance to purchase literature and artistic craftwork.

The activity of Student Circle isn't restricted only to Cieszyn, the land and homeland of its members. As part of their apprenticeship, students working as counsellors disseminate the knowledge about the intercultural education and shape intercultural competence of children participating in summer camps. They are also involved in Eu-

ropean Union Socrates/Erasmus Programmes by familiarizing foreign students and employees with Polish culture, e.g. in Ostrava University in Czech and in Centre de Formation Pédagogique, Cambrai – France. The Circle cooperates with scientific circles from other higher education centres, with associations, educational institutions at home and abroad, among others from Elías Camino College in Torrance California USA (since 2005), with Ostrava University (since 2006), with Pedagogic Centre for the Polish Ethnic Education in the Czech Republic (since 2006).

In view of my own research, experience and observation I can state that social participation of students (members and sympathizers of Student Scientific Circle) manifests itself in the social actions of individuals, groups and communities. Such actions give them a chance to shape their own life course and become active citizens at the European level.

## Conclusion

Students of Education, at the Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences of Education in Cieszyn, Silesian University in Katowice, in accordance with the rule: you are learning through those what you see, hear, experience; what you imagine, what you feel intuitively (Dryden, Vos, 2000:30), prepare themselves to undertake educational activities (among others therapeutical and interventional ones) supporting the individual during identity acquiring. Undertaken actions fit within the model of multilateral education of future teachers (Okoń, 1991; Lewowicki, 2007). Within this model exists the space for preparing teachers not only for regional and multicultural education, for functioning in multicultural societies, but also for intercultural education.

I consider achieving and developing educational competences, in the scope of design, realisation and evaluation both particular topics and the whole path 'Multi- and intercultural education' (operationalisation of goals, tasks, choosing of contents, methods, forms and didactic measures) to be particularly important in training future teachers. The basis of social support and of all support actions undertaken within intercultural education are competences acquired by students in social and educational scope, connected with the ability to recognize the needs of

persons belonging to different ethnic, national, religious and local circles and ability to cooperate within interpersonal relations. Equally important is to develop needs for studying and the ability to analyse academic texts, to formulate, classify and solve pedagogic problems and various educational situations in an independent manner.

The role of education is to emphasize the man inside the man, develop the true humanity within. Training future teachers in the scope of intercultural education gives the true chance to make them versatile professionals. Intercultural education develops predispositions for autonomy within personal responsibility for creation of collective fate; it creates an authentic possibility of the full self-fulfillment, possibility of an existence, not only mere vegetation.

The known pillars of education: learning to know; learning to act; learning to be; learning to live together, require new interpretation and justification. The pillar „to learn to live together” is an imperative, which calls for particular clarification. The contemporary world feels the lack of understanding other people. It calls for a better understanding, the need of coexistence, of peaceful exchange and of unity. Intercultural education as transcultural process of mutual life-long learning is an educational continuum including life of an individual (self cognition, an effort of achieving the identity) and social (we achieve identity in contacts with others, bonds and community are essential for achieving of identity). Education understood in such a way – as it was shown by means of examples of actions undertaken at the Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences of Education in Cieszyn, Silesian University in Katowice is not a distant or utopian idea, but a reality, increasingly more necessary and frequently fulfilled.

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## **The Communicative Strategy of the School Life Museum 'Inspiration Tools for a Smart... Press'**

This article attempts to present the structural elements included in the educational package of the museum (called in Greek 'mouseio-skevi') 'Inspiration Tools for a smart... Press', which has been designed in order to develop the communicative strategy of the School Life Museum<sup>1</sup>, on the occasion of its 2nd periodical exhibition entitled: 'Typos

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<sup>1</sup> School Life Museum was founded by the local authority of Chania region in 2006, (prefecture of Giorgos Katsanevakis), after the initiative proposal of the teachers Dimitris Kartsakis and Maria Drakaki. The museum is accommodated in the building of the old primary school of Nerokourou, in the homonym apartment of Eleftherios Venizelos Municipality, restored by the local authority of Chania and the Chania Prefecture Developmental S.A., with the decisive contribution of Antonis Papaderakis, its president at that time.

Basic aim of the School Life Museum is the search on the educational school past through all periods of the local and Cretan History in general, its scientific analysis, its recording and safeguarding, as well as its connection with the educational reality of today and tomorrow. Its vision is to elevate critical knowledge and for life learning as basic components of modern education. (Daskalaki, 2008)

The association of Friends of School Life Museum Chania region was founded in 2005. It is accommodated in the building of the old Municipal School in the community of Nerokourou Chania that also accommodates the School Life Museum. Main objective of the association is to sensitize for the mission and the work of School life Museum. The museum opened its gates for the public in May 2006 with the first periodical exhibition: 'Come on to relive the wooden desks. Glances to the school life of older eras.' The objective of Friends Association is to strengthen the work of the Museum.

A-typos, School Newspapers and Magazines in Crete' opened on the 31st January 2009. The package of the museum aspires to approach a wide public of different age and different social background.

Depending on its management, it will fully prepare the visits of organized groups to the Museum, or substitute such visits with a memorable experience to those who cannot have access to the Museum. For this reason, it contains multiple materials with original and innovative suggestions of how to develop the new technologies and helps its users to find new fields of communication and expression. The innovative features of this educational package primarily focus on specific components of its content, as well as on the author's proposals of managing these components. It aims to function as a multiple educational material, which will feed the multiple intelligences (linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal) according to Gardner's theory. The comparative advantage is that it combines entertainment and education and treats the teaching-learning process as a dynamic area of interaction.

The specific package is not clearly linked to teaching subjects. It does not merely contain a group of attractive items, but mostly tools for critical thinking and creative learning. It suggests concrete and proven teaching methods, as long as the teacher can go beyond them and adjust them to the needs and interests of the group. The faster he/she can do that, the more successful its use will be.

It is not the variety of components (from simple items to advanced technology devices) that matters in this case. Most important are the possibility of open options by the interpreter and the negation of manipulation of the teaching procedure by an inviolate frame of pre-designed routes. The actions, the items, the devices are organized in such a way so as to feed students' thinking and reveal various ways of expression and communication.

## **Introduction**

The communicative strategy of a museum includes activities that are realized inside and also beyond its natural space. In the first category belong: exhibitions, educational programs, lectures and con-

ducted tours, dramatization, organization of various cultural events, laboratories that allow participants to touch and use the objects of the museum's collections, or encourage the growth of dexterities related with the subject and the objects of the museum, tour the collections with the help of modern technology (virtual reality, multimedia etc), visit in the inner spaces of the museum (deposits, laboratories of maintenance etc). Equally important and diversified are the activities that a museum can develop beyond its natural space, so that it attracts and communicates with persons that usually do not visit museums, because of natural or social restrictions (individuals of third age, minorities etc). In this category are included the organization of exhibitions and laboratories of educative programs, in alternative non-museum spaces (commercial centers, schools, hospitals, prisons etc) 'mouseioskeves,' museum buses (moyseioleoforeia), the contact with local and national media and the collaboration with various social groups for the organization of original cultural actions. (Mouliou, Mpounia, 1999:42)

The significance of communication however, is not limited to the activities that can be organized by the museum. It should be the ideological base of the museum and consequently it will influence all decisions that are taken at all stages and levels of management and administration of the cultural unit.

### **The significance of 'Mouseioskevi': definition-history-operation**

'With the term educational 'mouseioskevi' we name a 'suitcase' that contains a collection of various materials, which have been selected, planned and manufactured around a certain subject. In 'mouseioskevi' the subject is approached with the help of different materials, objects, sounds, pictures; in general with activities that are created by the combination and the animation of all their contents. The objectives of educational 'mouseioskevi' are various. Through the constructive entertainment some 'mouseioskeves' aim at the development of creativity, while other at immediate knowledge. These objectives often are not unmixed. Usually, there are combinations of

various elements whose composition leads to the general education of user.' (Chatziaslani, 2002:48). In any case, 'mouseioskeves' mainly aim to become substantially the selected subjects of knowledge and at the same time, attractive for the public to which they are addressed. Each educational 'mouseioskevi' is self-existent. It is addressed to students of specific age or it is adapted proportionally in order to correspond to students of various ages. The teacher can explore the subject as long as he wants. The planning of each 'mouseioskevi' has its own main idea. Each unit supports its own philosophy, a different way of selecting the elements that compose it. It is the teacher's role to activate the varied material, to produce a line of successive interconnected activities and experiences for the particular subject. The teacher has the experience of the cognitive object and the team with which he/she collaborates. Therefore, according to the specialty, the interests, the class he/she is teaching and the particular objectives, will be developed the potential of each 'mouseioskevi.' Thus the approach of each subject, the composition and the activation of material will always have the personal seal of each teacher, who can work with it for one hour, one week, or one month. 'Mouseioskeves' facilitate the collaboration and contact between the museum that provides them and schools and institutes, since they are available on rental for a certain period of time. Their material is multifaceted, and it is developed as concise, functional, creative, pleasant and flexible means supporting a certain subject.

The museum that first placed 'mouseioskeves' among its educational policy is the Benaki Museum (on line <http://www.benaki.gr> last visit on 4/06/09), which claims the first-lead in the planning and application of educational programs in Greece (1978) (YPP0 2002: 2008). Then the Museum of Cycladic Art (<http://www.cycladic.gr> last visit on 4/06/09) in 1986 created the department of educational programs from the beginning of its operation including regular and extraordinary programs as well as educational 'mouseioskeves.' (Plati, 2002:233–238) In 1991 the Centre for the Acropolis Studies (<http://odysseus.culture.gr> last visit on 4/06/09) was distinguished for its big mobility in 'mouseioskeves' concentrating on Acropolis, the orders of the classic architecture, the frieze of Parthenon, the twelve gods,

the ancient Greek musical instruments, the ancient Greek costume and the marble-working, which are reproduced in thousands of copies (Acropolis) and in hundreds (architecture) in order to cover sufficiently the big demand. 'Mouseioskeves have traveled from 1991 to about 1.800 schools all over Greece and have been used, according to the statistics of the Center, by about 110.000 students.' (Chatziaslani, 2002:225–231).

Today, many Museums are adopting 'mouseioskeves' with various content and target setting. A search in the Internet reveals 'mouseioskeves' traveling from the Greek Children's Museum to schools that do not have access or to teachers interested in extending the experience of visiting the Museum. Educative 'mouseioskeves' that reach not only schools but also camps and municipalities, from the Historical Museum of Crete (<http://historicalmuseum.gr> last visit on 04/06/09), the Goulandris Natural History Museum.

(<http://www.gnhm.gr> last visit on 4/06/09), the Macedonia Museum of Contemporary Art (<http://www.mmca.org.gr> last visit on 4/06/09), the Natural History Museum of the Petrified Forest in Lesvos (<http://www.petrifiedforest.gr> last visit on 4/06/09) but also from the Local Museum of Milies, Pilion ([http://www.e-pelion.gr/laografiko\\_mous\\_mil.php](http://www.e-pelion.gr/laografiko_mous_mil.php) last visit on 4/06/09).

According to the terminology that is used for their description, 'mouseioskeves' are 'portable educational parcels,' 'pedagogic proposals that go everywhere,' 'suitcases that travel,' 'thematic boxes,' 'portable educational units,' 'educational innovations,' 'selected material moving as a single entity.' In all cases, however, their target setting is pointing out the educational operation with a view to prepare, extend, recap, enrich, but also to substitute the visit in a place of cultural report.

'Mouseioskeves' are henceforth planned not only as means of the communicative strategy of a museum, but also as an original product which contains mainly supervisory material that can strengthen the instructive repertory of the teacher with proposals and ideas (e.g. 'A parcel full of water' ed. 'Kaleidoscopio') giving to the users the possibility to develop all types of intelligence (Kokkinakis, 2008:5).

## The structural characteristics of ‘Mouseioskevi’: ‘Inspiration tools for an intelligent... press’

The specific ‘mouseioskevi’ was named ‘**Inspiration tools for a smart... Press**’ because it was created on the occasion of the second periodical report of the School Life Museum, which had as subject the School Press. The exhibition is mainly focused on the process and the generative reasons of the school-Press and not drawing the course of specific school editions (as for example, a conventional exhibition approach would make). It aims, firstly, at giving a picture for the breadth of school editions published in Crete from the beginning of 20th century until today and, at the same time, via these, to speak of what school-edition in general means. The exhibition focuses on printed magazines, but there are also references to albums and school-blogs (Gazi, 2008:5).

The aims of the specific ‘mouseioskevi’ will be analyzed below in connection with the presentation of its innovative characteristics. However its title was deliberately selected to imply the subject of the exhibition (Press), but it is also referred in creative processes (tools of inspiration) since the production of a school edition, conventional or digital, formal or informal, always presupposes inspiration, imagination and, without fail, certain means – tools.

The ‘mouseioskevi’ of the School Life Museum ‘Tools of inspiration for an intelligent... Press’ includes:

- Printed matter about the Museum’s identity that provides the ‘mouseioskevi,’
- Printed matter about all the educational actions of School Life Museum,
- Printed matter about the Typography Museum’s identity,
- Printed matter about the exhibition ‘School Press – formal and informal’ – Informative ‘polyptych,’
- Portable computer (pocket size),
- USB memory 10 GB,
- Appliance for wireless Internet,
- Digital camera,
- Digital sound recorder,
- Magnifying lens,

- A4-sized plasticized card collection, with internal pages of the exhibits (magazines and newspapers),
- Hourglass,
- Dominos play with pictures selected from the covers of the exhibits (magazines and newspapers),
- Language Software for the primary school (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade), entitled ‘The spark, the lightning and the revelation of truth,’
- DVD of the film ‘The Flea’ by Dimitris Spyrou<sup>2</sup>, awarded at the Olympia Festival  
(more info online [www.olympiafestival.gr](http://www.olympiafestival.gr) last visit on 4/06/09),
- Collection of typesetting,
- Duplicator pen,
- Tracing paper,
- Various stamps, pad in colors,
- Recycled paper for the production of ecological printings,
- The album ‘The glossary of Press,’
- Directions on the work plan that was successfully realized by many students in elementary schools (2003–04) along with its result (a school newspaper awarded for the best appearance) presented as an exhibit with particular characteristics. The theme of the project: ‘SMALL JOURNALISTS – SMALL PLANETS’
- Directions and addresses in the Internet about facebook and blog-creation,
- Evaluation feedback for the users,
- Form for the animator of ‘mouseioskevi’ with indicative proposals of activities.

### **Innovative elements of ‘Mouseioskevi’**

The innovative characteristics of the specific ‘mouseioskevi’ are focused initially around certain components of its content, but also in the proposals of the author for their management<sup>3</sup>. Specifically,

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<sup>2</sup> It’s a sociable colorful film which lasts 90 minutes. The flea is the title of a handmade newspaper which was created by a twelve years old child.

<sup>3</sup> The individual objectives of ‘mouseioskevi’ activities are fixed in the annex of the analytic proposals presentation for the animator of ‘mouseioskevi.’



the use of information and communication technologies via portable computer, digital camera, digital sound recorder, the possibility of Internet connection, the proposal of specific interactive educational software compose its first innovative characteristic. For the first time in Greece a 'mouseioskevi' will contain tangible possibilities of ICT. Given that the School Life Museum is a new one, it is supposed to develop immediately tactics of marketing and to offer programs that would correspond to the needs of as much as possible bigger breadth of target-groups. The disposal of this 'mouseioskevi' is included in these tactics and the effort to bring innovative elements aims at placing the Museum in the 'market' and to create a powerful 'commercial' name. Therefore, to draw the attention of visitors it should be differentiated from competitors, offering a special value. (Kotler, 2008:21-32).

The second innovative element involves evaluation questionnaire – feedback for the users, which is differentiated for those that visited the Museum and for them who did not have the possibility. The objective of the questionnaire is to investigate and to comprehend the identity and the needs of groups that will use 'mouseioskevi' in order that the Museum function will be ameliorated in the future or even during the exhibition by upgrading the provided services.

Another innovative element is the possibility to use selected parts of 'mouseioskevi' depending on the needs, the interests and the age of users. That is, through a variety of proposals that develop the converging intellect and function as starting lines of expression and communication in personal and collective sphere.

The aim of 'mouseioskevi' is to function as an educational parcel with multiple uses that will supply the multiple 'intelligences' (linguistic, rational-mathematic, musical, territorial, and kinetic-esthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal) according to Gardner's proposal as it is presented in Kakourou-Chroni (2002). However, it gives the possibility to approach knowledge through entertainment by arousing the interest of each user. (Pikopoulou-Tsolaki, 2002:84) The awakening of interest of course is mainly achieved via the mediator- animator of 'mouseioskevi' which will decisively contribute in order that the interpretation of 'mouseioskevi' meets the personal reading of the public which includes experiences, preexisting knowledge and convictions.

The aim of ‘mouseioskevi’ is the process of learning that it will instigate, to be an energetic process, according to the **structural theory**. According G. E. Hein, knowledge does not constitute something neutral that comes in the individual from outside, but a **structure** of the individual. In practice, the training situations supported by **structuralism** and realized at schools, museums or elsewhere, give trainees the possibility to use their hands but also their brain, in order to interact with the world: to elaborate, to experiment, to conclude, to see through the phenomena they come in contact. (Kakourou-Chroni, 2002:173–174).

### The recipients and their needs

‘Mouseioskevi’ was planned and is addressed in precedence to groups that have difficulty in accessing the Museum because of the distance and/or other difficulties. It is addressed also to student groups of the First, Second and Third degree of Education, without excluding their families. The essential condition is that the lending is held and being overseen according to ensure the good conditions and only via official representatives of schools and institutes (directors, chairmen of Parents Associations, social workers of the Center for Elderly Citizens, heads of Libraries, Universities, etc). The foremost objective of ‘mouseioskevi’ is to attract all the three general categories in which the public of culture places is usually distinguished; that is the frequent visitors, the casual ones, but also those who never visit such places. (Athanasopoulou, 2003:119)

From the moment of its birth the School Life Museum’s educative and communicative policy concern has been to consider the age but also the personal, social and cultural particularities of individuals and groups where it is addressed, however without resorting in one-dimensional, unsophisticated and digestible narrations. On the contrary, it seeks to boost the creative imagination and thought of the subjects, the retraction, the development, but also the control of previous knowledge or perceptions as well as to provoke intense sentiments, query, surprise, mood for further searches through critical dialogue, essential entertainment and aesthetic enjoyment. Thus its functioning might entail multiple levels of reading and comprehension and satisfy at the

same time, even if at different levels, various groups. This condition complies moreover with modern educational and museum-pedagogic views that support the joint investigation of reality by individuals and groups of different age, different faculties and dexterities, educational, social and cultural origin. (Nakou, 2006:109).

The objective – challenge of ‘mouseioskevi’ is to be also trafficked in ‘structures’ of immigrants, e.g. ‘Hangout of Immigrants,’ Chania) where, with selective use of its content it would function as a means to satisfy their need for communication and expression of demands and needs, e.g. through a multicultural magazine (even a digital one) where they could express themselves.<sup>4</sup> The following principles that characterize the education of adults are taken into account in the process of collaboration with the group of immigrants (Rogers, 1998:158–161).

The material of the program is relative to the needs of the trainees. Their learning intentions are used with a view to encourage them to set objectives themselves. They determine what they want to learn through the process of print production. Learning takes place through the direct implementation of work, e.g. they try themselves to put their texts in the computer, do the word processing, select the suitable tools of ‘mouseioskevi,’ participate in the print production process experientially selecting from the spectrum of activities offered by the instructor what suits their own way of learning, bearing in mind their previous knowledge and their experience. They explore the process of digital print production concerning their knowledge. The investigation of alternative solutions, different from those that the instructor presents is encouraged. Trainees are active, not passive recipients of directions and information. Practice and support are necessary and there is a regular feedback in the program where the course of the action is evaluated. The process is based on comprehension not memorization, which is an inadequate strategy for adults and children alike. The objective of the

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<sup>4</sup> The School Life Museum materializes through its Association of Friends since 2007, in the frame of European program Grundtvig funded by the Greek State Scholarships Foundation ( on line <http://www.iky.gr> last visit on 4/06/09), a project on the subject “Learning and teaching in different cultures” aiming at the exchange of know-how and experiences between organizations of non-formal education in the appointment of alternative ways of learning and growth of dexterities in defavoured social groups. One of the target-groups are foreigners – immigrants.

action is that the participating immigrants will connect their training experience acquired during the program with further learning when the program expires. That is to say they will support the existence of the magazine after the completion of the program with their own dexterities. The main aim of the instructor is to help the participants to become more self-educated.

### **The comparative advantage and its contribution in the viability of the School Life Museum**

The comparative advantage of ‘mouseioskevi’ is that it is both entertaining and educative and at the same time treats teaching as a dynamic field of interaction. The specific ‘mouseioskevi’ is not a subject itself linked directly to the subjects taught. It does not simply encompass a total of attractive contents but it offers tools of thought and critical faculty, all cases for creative learning. It proposes concrete and test-tried applications of instructive methodology, with the prospect of exceeding them and adapting them according to the instructor’s repertory in view of the needs and the interests of his group. Of course, the faster and more creatively this initial material will be exceeded, according to the instructive principles invested in this with alternative ways, the more successful its use will be considered. (Theodoridis, 2004, online in [www.prmelina.gr](http://www.prmelina.gr)).

The comparative advantage does not lie so much in the variety of components (from simple objects to advanced appliances of ICT), as in the possibility of free choices for the interpreter and in the revocation of guidance in the instructive process by an inviolable frame of concrete and prefabricated ways. The action, the use of objects and appliances are organized and they are proposed through the ‘mouseioskevi’ with a view to supply the thought and to elect various ways of expression and communication.

‘Mouseioskevi’ will contribute to the viability of the Museum, since for its distribution via collective structures, as mentioned, there is a symbolic compensation. It will be used as a means for approaching a larger breadth of public, which is expected to be led effortlessly to the Museum in the future, which seeks to experience similar experimentations in its

space. Accordingly, the particular cultural product will potentially increase the number of visitors to the Museum. Moreover, the users will participate in the configuration and the collection of interesting primary material, analogue and digital, that will enhance the collection of the Museum and the possibility to start a new department. (e.g. Department of Communication with a network of friends – users).

## Conclusions-Proposals-Prospects

Building essential knowledge is associated with critical thought. Critical thinking and knowledge can be developed in parallel, when individuals are provided with the possibility of original speech production, original approach and interpretation of reality, in the frame of alternative interpretations as well as in the fundamental principle of each scientific undertaking that the base of knowledge is a new question and that new knowledge is open to control, modification, even recantation in the light of new questions or new data. (Nakou, 2006:108). With this reasoning the objective of the creator of ‘mouseioskevi,’ is to emphasize the quality of knowledge that can be structured, based more on the elaboration of questions instead of supplying ready answers, with the production of original thinking and dialogue, based in the creative mind of the subjects, which feeds and feeds back by the imagination and every bodily, aesthetic, sentimental, mental or social skills.

If each group, each user discovers in the package interesting elements that would be possible to activate with their own scenarios, apart from those proposed, then ‘mouseioskevi’ has absolutely fulfilled its purpose.

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## **Pedagogical Posters in Nurse Education – Developing *Best Practise* in Teaching Health Promotion**

Experiences from teaching nursing students at bachelor level with respect to prevention and health promotion have resulted in the introduction of poster presentations as a pedagogical tool. Poster presentations were introduced as a result of Bologna recommendations shifting the goal of nurse education away from focusing upon formal qualifications towards the concept of developing nurse competences. These recommendations have resulted in challenges to traditional pedagogical approaches away from the teacher's role as the disseminator of knowledge towards the role of facilitator of learning. This is in tact with professional demands highlighting the necessity of life-long learning. Poster presentations have successfully been employed in developing students' intellectual, professional and academic competences as well as being useful in developing competences with relevance to health promotion practice. Working with posters forces students to organize, evaluate and reflect upon information and develops their abilities to communicate health knowledge. Students have learned to present their ideas in an A4 poster format that resembles the types of posters one normally sees at professional conferences. The posters are produced on computers and as such the students learn to employ the computer as a creative tool. Students evaluate the use of posters as a concrete and useful tool of value to their forthcoming professional work as purveyors of health promotion knowledge.



The poster as a pedagogical tool was integrated in a Nordic network's intensive course held in the autumn of 2008. The network received funding for a research project with the goal of making recommendations with respect to best practice curriculum guidelines in prevention and health promotion education for students of nursing in the Nordic countries. The intensive course served as starting point for the gathering of data concerning student evaluations of the Nordic curriculum in prevention and health promotion. Students' reflections with respect to the development of their competences in this area were collected using a combination of group interviews and questionnaires. The students' evaluations of poster based presentations were extremely positive.

### **Pedagogical practice in response to Bologna Recommendations**

As nurse educators we are interested in how we can meet the pedagogical and professional demands that can ensure the development of students' professional competences as stipulated in the Bologna declaration<sup>1</sup>. We aim at developing the competences that are necessary for nurses so that they can work in diverse settings and solve complex problems and take part in international cooperation.

We are the coordinators of the 5th semester in the nursing education at our institution. The focus of this semester is the family and its youngest and oldest members with respect to health promotion, prevention, rehabilitation and habilitation. The main subjects in the semester are from the humanistic and social sciences. As educators we are interested in questions such as: *When do students/nurses have sufficient knowledge in a specific area? How can we develop the students' motivation with respect to their education so that they active take responsibility for their learning? How can we develop the students' connection between theory and practice?*

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<sup>1</sup> The Bologna process focuses upon the need for the professional workforce to be both flexible and mobile with respect to the solution of job market demands (<http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/BolognaSeminars/>).

Our choice of pedagogical method during the course of the semester is based upon Problem Based Learning (PBL). PBL as a pedagogical method is recognized as being appropriate in health care educational programs for meeting today's educational and professional challenges.

PBL represents a radical shift in educational thinking from a teacher-centered approach towards a student-centered approach to learning. PBL shifts the educational focus away from that of students being actively taught towards students actively learning. This student-centered learning approach is supported by the learning theory known as 'constructivist learning'. In this theory 'learning' is seen as an individual process of constructing knowledge and meaning based upon an active transformation of experiences and the processing of information<sup>2</sup>. The core principals of PBL when seen in a constructivist approach to learning theory are according to Graff and Kolmos (2003) among others:

- problem orientated
- project based
- democratic dialogue
- team work
- connection between theory and practice
- critical enquiry
- analytical thinking

The semester is organized in two modules; the first module has its focus upon the family and its youngest members while the second module has its focus upon the family and its oldest members. This organization has been chosen so that the theoretical and clinical foci match and thus support the connection between theory and practice. The syllabus work load is modified so that the amount of literature that the students have to read passes with the periods' allocated ECTS<sup>3</sup>. The contents of the modules are thematically structured and literature that is regarded as being fundamental in order to gain an understanding of the course themes is made clearly visible in the syllabus.

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<sup>2</sup> Learning is understood as a process where learners actively construct their own knowledge. Knowledge is thus a construction (Rasmussen, 1997)

<sup>3</sup> ECTS. European Credit Transfer System. In University College Sealand 1 week is equivalent with 1" ECTS and a week's workload is considered to be 120-150 pages dependent upon level of difficulty.

Generally we have attempted to reduce the semester's complexity<sup>4</sup> and workload. The inspiration for the students' PBL work in each module is a professionally relevant case. All the students analyze the same case in their PBL work but they work with different themes and thus they use different theories in their analysis. That all the students work with the same case has resulted in students' appreciation of the myriad of theoretical approaches that can be used to understand a single situation. It is both our hope and our hypothesis that this approach can help to develop a more nuanced understanding of practice. The development of professional knowledge is always in focus and the PBL method is seen as an appropriate tool with which to develop the students' professional competences.

Only a single day is used to introduce the students to the PBL method. We hold a brief introduction to the 7 steps in the PBL process<sup>5</sup>. We illustrate how the steps can be used with respect to a short newspaper article and how it is possible to generate various hypotheses that can form the background for the theoretical work. Afterwards we show a film clip and the students work in groups with the steps. The day ends with a presentation of one group's work with the steps and the other groups come with supplementary comments and questions. The further training in and achievement of confidence with respect to the application of the steps is achieved when the students work with the modules' cases. Despite the fact that the introduction to the PBL method is so short, it is our experience that the students obtain a good understanding of the method's steps.

### **Posters as a pedagogical tool**

As educators we must frequently evaluate our didactic practice and remain critical to the organization of our teaching. Do our students

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<sup>4</sup> Complexity. This concept is inspired by the German sociologist and systems theoretician, Niclas Luhmann. Luhmann operates with systems and society. Society will always be more complex than the system and it is thus necessary for the system to reduce the complexity in order to reduce stress (Rasmussen, 1997)

<sup>5</sup> PBL method's 7 steps. For further information see Roar Pettersen's work concerning Problem based learning. (Pettersen,1999).

achieve the competences that are deemed important with respect to prevention and health promotion? After a thorough review of the semester we asked ourselves the following questions: *Do the students have the optimal conditions in which to learn if they have to write long papers in accordance with very specific criteria? Could they perhaps learn more if they focused more upon the semester's theoretical content rather than using time upon producing written papers?*

As a result of these didactical questions with respect to our practice we made a decision to make a fundamental change in the semester which has influenced it radically. The majority of the written papers have now been replaced with poster based presentations. We define a pedagogical poster as *a tool which is used to convey information in a condensed format. The layout usually contains both text and graphics that can appropriately support an oral presentation* (Bagger, Kelly, 2008a).

The purpose of using pedagogical posters is to strengthen the students' abilities to analyze, discuss and put into perspective complex clinical nursing problems and dilemmas.

The formal demands with respect to the poster's contents are inspired by traditional project guidelines (Petersen, Bitch 2006), and match well with the PBL method. The precise way in which the students' present their work is though relatively flexible as long as the poster represents the learning and the competences that they have developed while working with their themes. Thus only a few mandatory points are required in the poster format.

They are as follows:

- Introduction/ presentation of problem area,
- Specific problem question,
- Methodology,
- Theoretical perspectives,
- Conclusion,
- Perspectives.

The students are also required to supplement their work with a commented literature list where they critically evaluate their references and account for why they chose the literature as a source. The list

includes information about the authors' backgrounds and which parts of the authors' theories they deem relevant and why, as well as a critical analysis of any research projects which they use in connection with their project.

### **Making a poster**

The students in the course of their PBL work isolate a problem area with relevance to the case and then formulate a specific problem question from which the further group work takes its starting point. The students consider the methodological approach which is appropriate for answering/illuminating their specific problem. They must decide if the study is to be based solely on a review of relevant literature and/or they will collect data in the clinical field.

Inspired by classical rhetoric we encourage the groups to employ 5 different phases with respect to the preparation of their presentations.

They have to:

- Find the material by searching in relevant data bases,
- Prioritize and organize their material,
- Formulate the written text,
- Rehearse and prepare the oral presentation,
- Make the presentation.

It is a challenge for the students to find relevant literature. In order to reduce the complexity

for the students we first and foremost ask the students to start with the syllabus, where they can find references to literature of relevance both with respect to subject material as well as with respect to the level of the literature. We also plan time for the students to work with the librarian and receive help with respect to the choice of data bases as well as their selection of key search words.

When the students have found enough relevant literature they have to sort their material and their ideas. In order to facilitate this process we recommend that the students make a mind map or an outline and that they continually reflect upon what is needed in order to understand their problem. They have to decide what their main points

are and what is relevant with respect to their specific problem. Every group member has to present the material that they personally deem appropriate with respect to the problem to the other members in their group.

The material that they present is then discussed in the group forum. The group has to agree upon what material they will use both with respect to the poster as well as in their presentation for the class.

## Oral presentation

Based upon the group work and the poster that they produce the students make an oral presentation where they convey the essence of what they have learned in the course of their PBL work. Each group is allocated 45 minutes for their presentation followed up by 15 minutes of questions, discussion and evaluation by the audience. Every group member is responsible for at least 5 minutes of the group presentation.

When deciding upon what is necessary to present the students are asked to reflect upon: *What is most important with respect to their specific problem? What does the audience need to obtain from the presentation?* Based upon these considerations: *What then should be presented?*

The contents of the presentation have to be arranged in point format so that the audience can quickly form an overall impression of the problem in question, the methodology and the conclusions with respect to the group's work. Furthermore the students have to decide which and how many visual effects they will use as a supplement to their poster presentation. Sometimes groups use power point presentations, the blackboard, video clips, transparencies etc. They also have to consider their personal approach to the presentation. Should they rely on a written manuscript, should they standup during the presentation, should they actively involve the audience etc. All of these considerations make them aware of how essential it is to closely consider how one conveys a message to a specific audience in order to achieve the best possible presentation of one's point.

## **Evaluation**

We consider the above competences to be essential in the development of professionals that can work effectively with respect to the conveyance of health promotion and prevention messages in clinical practice. The students' evaluations of the 5<sup>th</sup> semester support our assumptions with respect to the positive attributes of PBL group work coupled with poster presentations in the development of these competences. The students report that they have had good opportunities to grow and develop during the course. They say that it is an interesting semester where they learn a lot and they register how knowledgeable and well prepared their fellow students are when they make their oral presentations. Some students are aware of their own development intellectually, socially and professionally. Generally speaking the students express how glad they are for the structure of the semester as it helps them to focus upon the central aspects of what and how they should learn. Even though the semester is considered difficult, it is a semester where the students feel that they grow and one which they find meaningful. It appears that reducing the complexity of the semester has proved positive to the promotion of the students' learning. The use of posters as a pedagogical tool is evaluated positively by the majority of the students as it is a help in increasing and supporting their motivation and group cooperation and learning. The students point out that the use of posters can also be appropriate in other situations, for example when presenting their bachelor projects.

Our colleagues also express their enthusiasm with respect to the use of pedagogical posters as they suit well the busy and complex work reality where it can be difficult to cope with reading and marking long written papers. Posters make it easy for teachers to form an impression of the areas that the students have worked with and can aid teachers' preparation with respect to teaching and exam situations.

## **Conclusion**

Poster presentations have successfully been employed in developing students' intellectual, professional and academic competences as well as being useful in the development of competences relevant to

health promotion practice. Working with posters forces students to organize, evaluate and reflect upon information and develops their abilities to communicate health knowledge.

The poster form is in harmony with the Bologna declaration's focus upon balancing the student workload with respect to ECTS points. One cannot expect students during the course of a few weeks to work in depth with complex problems at a reasonable theoretical level if they at the same time have to present their learning in long written papers. One of the nurse education's main objectives is to ensure that students are able to analyze, discuss and put into perspective professional problems. They must also be able to work flexibly and accept change.

We have asked ourselves if we effectively develop the competences that the students will need in their future professional work lives by insisting that they write many long papers. *Can we better support the development of professional competences if we shift our focus towards the improvement of critical thinking skills and the ability to search for, select and purvey pertinent knowledge? Are not these the very skills that they will need in their future professional careers?*

Combining PBL with poster presentations seems to be in harmony with young peoples' democratic ideals<sup>6</sup>. Working in groups becomes less problematical, more tolerable and more 'democratic' because the students have a common sense of responsibility with respect to the production of the poster while at the same time students who do not live up to their scholastic responsibilities become very visible. The use of posters frees time and energy for professional discussions rather than discussions revolving around where to place the next comma or full stop. As an extra bonus with respect to the making of the pedagogical posters the students develop their IT competences. It is a fact that students' competences with respect to the use of IT varies and therefore the sharing of knowledge concerning word processing programs useful in the making of posters is a side benefit for the students as well as for us as educators.

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<sup>6</sup> Ulriksen, Simonsen (1999) point out that students' sense of democracy has changed. Young people no longer think that it is necessarily reasonable that they should follow the majority. This can be seen as a consequence of individualism.



The poster as a pedagogical tool was in 2008 used in a Nordic course in health promotion and prevention (Bagger, Kelly 2008b). The course was part of a project financed by Nordplus. The aim of the project is to develop and qualify the nursing education with respect to health promotion and prevention and aims at developing best practice guidelines with respect to the Nordic curriculum. Twenty nursing students and educators from 8 different institutions compared and discussed the role of the nurse in health promotion and prevention with respect to the themes of sexual exploitation, the use of stimulants, over weight and suicide among young people in Scandinavia. At the end of the course the students presented the results of their group work with the help of pedagogical posters and this was positively evaluated by both the students and the educators. As one student expressed it: *A big A+ goes to the use of poster presentations!* We are aware of the fact that several of our Nordic colleagues have now adopted the poster as a pedagogical tool in their educational practice.

*The following example shows a poster created by 5<sup>th</sup> semester students at University College Sealand. It is representative of the typical type of layout that pedagogical posters often have. The text is set up in a clear and structured manner and the message is supported by the graphics. The students have based their work upon the theories of Niclas Luhmann, Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck Pierre Bourdieu and Myra Lewinter as well as documents from the Danish Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization. The literature research has been supplemented by an interview with an informant from the clinical felt.*

### Introduction

Health promotion is a broad concept. Health promotion activities are relevant for citizens in all age groups. Health promotion and prevention are concepts that are often used interchangeably and imprecisely. Health promotion and prevention as concepts are used complementarily by those that fully comprehend the concepts but interchangeably by those who do not.

### Hypotheses

- Health promotion activities must include older peoples' lifestyles.
- The Danish welfare system positively influences older citizens' health promotion.
- Living conditions influence older citizens' abilities to integrate health promotion activities in their daily life.

### Methodology:

Philosophy of science  
Search strategy  
Literature  
Interview

<http://ucsyd.dk/typo3temp/pics/fbbabe16f3.jpg>



### Theoretical fundament:

Health promotion (WHO & Danish Ministry of Health)

#### Luhmann systems theoretician

- A system limits itself from society where there is great complexity and chaos
- Inside a system there is reduced complexity
- Observation-the ability to discern between the system and society
- The formation of systems and observation are conditional upon each other

#### Giddens structuralist

- Distinction between structure and society
- Activities produce & reproduce
- 3 levels of consciousness
- Ontological uncertainty

### Beck critical theory

- Risk society
- Biographies
- New risks- visible/invisible
- Denial/repression/ minimalism
- Scapegoat society

### Bourdieu constructivist

- Social room
- Capital
- Habitus
- Field

### Lewinter

- Age distinction- rules based on age
- Activity perspective – positive aging is synonymous w/integration in society
- An old body is an identity threat
- Meaning for the individual

### Conclusion

Lifestyle is influenced by historical, social & societal factors opinions of self & body & influences health promotion

The welfare society as a risk society - older citizens refuse community nurses' health promotion visits & this can have negative consequences for health

Conscious health promotion discourse

Reduction of complexity through counseling & advice & increased consciousness

Living conditions & milieu influence norms, values & language. Habitus influences potential & perspectives & integration of health promotion activities

### Perspectives

Better information to older citizens about health promotion

Reduce health promotion budget cuts

Community legislation regarding health promotion

Greater focus on salutogenesis

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## Polish Language Course as a Place to Meet Different Cultures: Integration of Language Skills Development with Intercultural Learning<sup>1</sup>

More and more people both in Poland and abroad take interest in learning the Polish language even though they do not have Polish origins. Majority of them are adult learners<sup>2</sup>; highly motivated individuals whose decision to master the language is conscious and purposeful (Miodunka, 2006:305). A considerable group of people learning Polish as a foreign language are **foreign students** studying at Polish universities for the time being as a part of an exchange programme or action scheme for the mobility of university students such as the popular European Union's **Erasmus programme**.<sup>3</sup> This group of students learns Polish at courses provided by their target universities and they also follow studies in their field of studies.<sup>4</sup>

Researchers conducted among these students reveal that they feel isolated from Polish students during their stay in Poland. It often happens that they fail to make friends with any Polish people even during

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<sup>1</sup> Scientific work financed by educational funds between year 2008 and 2010 as a research project (MNiSzW grant).

<sup>2</sup> When referring to an 'adult learner' in this article, we consider the learner's mental and social maturity and age (Cf. Knowles et al., 2005:64).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.erasmus.org.pl>.

<sup>4</sup> Lectures are usually in English.

a one-year stay in Poland. In a way they themselves contribute to this separation by sticking only to their international colleagues both during studies and in their free time (see Krupnik, Krzaklewska, 2005). Foreign students share a number of similar problems and experiences but living in a multicultural and multi-language group of people creates a number of conflicts. During a **Polish language course** they should not only learn the language but also they should have a possibility to find help adapting to the cultural environment that is often much different from where they came. Such a course develops a space where various cultures can meet. It creates a convenient basis for starting an intercultural education. However, such conditions are not exploited by language teachers. Conducting classes in a multi-national group, especially at higher levels of language proficiency, naturally introduces elements of intercultural learning. However, in the case of the before mentioned courses of the Polish language, this aspect is not really planned and it does not have clearly defined objectives.

**Polish glottodidactics** (didactics of Polish as a foreign language) is a relatively new science and it derives a lot from great achievements of linguistics. This field develops in a sort of isolation from achievements of other foreign languages didactics and the intercultural education, which is also reflected in European Commission recommendations.<sup>5</sup> Communicative approach to language teaching still dominates in Polish glottodidactics with the strive to achieve a native speaker's level of proficiency<sup>6</sup> by the students (e.g. Lipińska, Seretny, 2005). So far there have not been many publications that would stress the intercultural dimension of teaching Polish as a foreign language and that would consider the intercultural competence development as one of the education objectives (see as an exception Zarzycka, 2009). Current publications focus on theoretical descriptions rather than practi-

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<sup>5</sup> Overcoming communication and culture barriers in the spirit of mutual understanding and cultural enrichment is one of the objectives of the European Commission language education which is set out in *The Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> In the intercultural approach to a foreign language education we can talk of a new norm of 'intercultural speaker' / 'intercultural mediator'. See (Byram, 1997:32-33; Kramsch, 1998).

cal suggestions of implementing elements of intercultural education in teaching Polish as a foreign language.<sup>7</sup>

**The purpose of this article** is to present possibilities of integrating elements of intercultural education in a course of Polish as a foreign language, in particular directed to foreign students who study in a multi-cultural environment at Polish universities. We will focus on all aspects of language skills (such as speaking, writing, reading and listening) in the scope of intercultural learning.

We assume that one of the tasks of language teachers is to develop an intercultural competence of their students<sup>8</sup> that is closely related to the language<sup>9</sup> and communicative competence<sup>10</sup>. In this article, we will present some examples of practical exercises that focus on achieving this objective. The exercises and learning games we present can be used during a Polish language course as they facilitate the intercultural competence development and at the same time develop all aspects of standard language skills.

**Intercultural competence** comprises knowledge of other cultures, knowledge of cultural rules, beliefs, customs and social standards, approach to these aspects, the so called ‘intercultural awareness’ (cf. Bennett, 1993; see also Lustig, Koestler, 1999:66–72) as well as communication skills in conflict situations. The purpose of our exercises is to develop all of the above listed components of the intercultural competence.

The didactic example presented below is based on the **andragogical learning model** (e.g. Knowles et al., 2005:64–68; cf. Knowles, 1980: 43–44), which in our opinion facilitates the effective introduction of intercultural education elements in teaching students a foreign language. The suggested exercises have a form of active methods that are common in working with adult learners and they help classroom students participate actively in the learning process; they allow students

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<sup>7</sup> See lesson script with intercultural approach in P. Gębal (2006:238-239).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the term of ‘intercultural communicative competence’ as defined by M. Byram, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> ‘The ability to apply own language knowledge (of grammar, lexis, spelling and phonology) when communication is required’ (Lipińska, Seretny, 2005:16).

<sup>10</sup> ‘Ability to use the language system in specific situations’ (Lipińska, Seretny, 2005:15).

to use their own knowledge and experience by creating an environment of mutual learning (Heron, 1974).

We will focus on fundamental active methods: methods that are used to create a learning situation by **role play** (simulations, role playing, drama elements), **acting** (a project method) and **taking part in a discussion** (a range of discussions, debates, interview) (cf. Matlakiewicz, Solarczyk-Szwec, 2005:96). We also use elements of **biographical learning** (e.g. Dominicé, 2000) giving students the opportunity to think over their life story and education way with reference to their cultural experiences.

Please note that a **language teacher** as a native speaker during a language course often takes the **position of an expert**, or at least this is how such a teacher is perceived by the students. A one-way knowledge transfer in the case of language education could not to be passed over. However, it often results in using a **closed teaching style** (Gołębiak, 2004:161–163) that makes students behave typically for a traditional **transmission model of education** (cf. Knowles et al., 2005:62–68).

Implementation of intercultural learning at a language course forces a change of the teacher's role who now has to stop being an expert and a sole guide who transfers knowledge; instead the teacher becomes a **facilitator, a moderator and a discussion partner** (Gregory, 2002); he/she takes part in discussions at the same level as the students: this time as a representative of Polish culture. This role is a natural response to the specifics of an adult learner and its approach to learning as described in andragogy.

According to Malcolm S. Knowles, adult learners have a **self concept of independent and self motivated individuals**, which needs to be recognised by people responsible for education process mainly by shifting from the transmission teaching model and by leaving students a relative **liberty to select contents and objectives of their own education** (cf. Knowles et al., 2005:64–68).

Students who come to Poland have made their decision to learn Polish consciously and independently driven by various **motivations**. The most common motivation here is an inner one; striving for knowledge, interest in a foreign language and culture, perspective of future studies or work (e.g. Miodunka, 2006). This motivation is strength-

ened by being in the foreign country. This situation gives rise not only to the necessity to learn the language but also to find oneself in the new cultural context and to get to know Polish culture whereas being in a multi-cultural group motivates students to learn other cultures. It may facilitate everyday interpersonal contacts as well as help solve conflicts that may rise from cultural differences. Strong inner motivation is the fundamental element of educational success and needs to be supported by the educator.

One needs to bear in mind the fact that education process in the case of adult learners is not so **concentrated** on the subject as it is **on the particular task and problem situation** that they may face in their professional or everyday life (cf. Knowles et al., 2005:67–68). Consequently, foreign students want to learn Polish on a practical problem-solving basis, which is nowadays supported and applied by language teachers in form of a communicative approach to a foreign language education. Knowing the language is a means for the students to find their own place in Polish reality, to function efficiently in the university environment and in the everyday life (offices, shops or restaurants). Foreign students in Poland find speaking the language as important as knowing the culture and mentality of the host country. This way they are able to better understand Polish people and Poland, which might be important to them in the future.

It is beyond discussions that adult learners have much **richer experience** than children and young learners. Variety of knowledge and experience of mature students allows to create a **peer learning situation**. The group diversification increases if learners come from many countries and represent different cultural contexts. Naturally, they become experts in the scope of their home country culture, which can be used in the process of intercultural learning and make it possible to develop a cognitive aspect of the intercultural competence by other learners. Sharing one's knowledge and experience enables other course participants to build their own cultural identity by asking themselves questions such as: Who am I? Where am I from? What are my cultural roots? etc. (cf. Lustig, Koester 1999:165).

All the above described features of adult learners and their consequences for the education process were taken into consideration when



preparing this didactic proposal, which – as indicated in the beginning – is to be used to develop language, communicative and intercultural competence of students who learn Polish as a foreign language. We believe that integration of all language skills is possible and recommended by intercultural learning which takes place on the language course.

For the purpose of this publication **we selected a few learning games** from a large collection of exercises that we use in our didactic work with foreign students that best present the intercultural character and illustrate the above listed active methods. There are more and less known games and exercises and some are our ideas that we developed for our courses. They are arranged by three basic for intercultural learning topics: **customs, stereotypes and identity**. By the subject ‘customs’ students should acquire knowledge about different cultures, whereas the second topic enables to develop their intercultural awareness. By the term ‘identity’ we mean methods of biographical learning which gives learners the possibility to think over their cultural background and experiences.

Please note that the three topics chosen by us are recommended by the examination requirements standards for **Polish language certification** (see *Standardy wymagań egzaminacyjnych*, 2004) and are obligatory for people taking examinations for a recognised certificate of proficiency in the Polish language (see Table 1) thus they should always be a part of a Polish language course curriculum. Moreover, they are key elements of the intercultural education and they allow developing all aspects of intercultural competence including knowledge of the culture, attitudes and types of behaviour.

**The games and exercises are dedicated to** those who can communicate in Polish at **an upper intermediate** (B2) and **advanced levels** (C1, C2).<sup>11</sup> Each of the topics has two games assigned. The description includes the intercultural aim, the number of participants, the amount of time allowed and resources needed for a game as well as a brief description of the game itself. At the end of each exercise there are discussion topics provided. The sources and references are given under each of the games. The following table gives some detailed information

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<sup>11</sup> In the terms of Council of Europe upper intermediate level means Independent User (B2 – Vantage Level), advanced levels – Competent User (C1 – Effective Operational Proficiency) and Good User (C2 – Mastery Level). See CEFR, 2001.

on the teaching methods, language functions<sup>12</sup> and skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing)<sup>13</sup>, topics and the level of fluency in Polish language required for each of the games.

**Table 1. The list of proposed exercises with the aim of integrating all linguistic skills within a frame of an intercultural learning**

Topic	Method	Game example	Language s skills	Additional exercises <sup>14</sup>
CUSTOMS	project	<i>When in Rome do as the Romans do</i>	language function: description of objects, culture norms, customs and rituals	<i>Shake hands</i> <i>The Derdians</i>
			speaking: +	
			listening: +	
			reading: +	
	symulation	<i>Moonies meet Sunnies</i>	writing: argumentative text	
			language functions: expressing opinions, comparison making	
			speaking: +	
			listening: +	
			reading: +	
			writing: comparing the customs of two countries	

<sup>12</sup> Language functions focus on standard phrases, structure and vocabulary used in each situation. What we say is for a purpose: greeting, saying farewell, expressing gratitude, asking for information, expressing a wish, apologizing, asking for help, etc.

<sup>13</sup> Each exercise stimulate development of those four skills what we mark as a plus.

<sup>14</sup> *Shake hands* in (Ulrich, 2006:229-230); *The Derdians* in *Intercultural Learning* (2000: 62-65); *Ball of nations [as Völkerball]* in (Losche, 2003:200); *Euro-rail a la carte* in (Brander at al., 1995:78-80); *Facing identity* in *Intercultural Learning*, (2000:49); *Tree of life* in (Brander at al., 1995:173–175).

STEREOTYPES	role playing	<i>In somebody's shoes</i>	<b>language function:</b> explanation, discussion	<i>Ball of nations Euro-rail a la carte</i>
			speaking: +	
			listening: +	
			reading: +	
	group work	<i>A typical Pole</i>	writing: biography	
			<b>language function:</b> a characteristics of a person, expressing an opinion	
			speaking: +	
			listening: +	
IDENTITY	interview	<i>My story</i>	reading: +	<i>Facing identity Tree of life</i>
			writing: an interview	
			<b>language function:</b> asking for information, giving information	
			speaking: +	
	pair work	<i>Who am I? Who are you?</i>	listening: +	
			writing: a description of a person	
			speaking: +	
			listening: -	
			reading: +	
			writing: writing about a family	

## Description of the games

### 1. *When in Rome do as the Romans do*

Intercultural aims:	to get acquainted with various culture's customs; a development of cultural and national identity of the participants <sup>15</sup>
Group size:	any
Resources needed:	the participants to decide
Time:	30 minutes
Instruction:	The students make one-nation groups and prepare a presentation of some unique cultural types of behaviour, ceremonies and customs. The presentation time is divided between two meetings e.g. every two weeks. Every presentation requires bringing certain national gadgets. The students can present a culturally important and valuable object, prepare a multimedia presentation, a short performance etc.
Discussion questions:	are defined by the participants themselves and concern the culture related presented objects, ceremonies and rituals <sup>16</sup>
Source:	author's idea, inspired by <i>Memory</i> , Losche (2003:148)

### 2. *Moonies meet Sunnies*

Intercultural aims:	to realize the presence of intercultural differences in everyday behaviour and communication, especially nonverbal
Group size:	even number, at least 8 participants for best results

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<sup>15</sup> Introduction of the games on a lower fluency levels depends greatly on whether it is possible for the students to use a common language to discuss the concept of a game.

<sup>16</sup> The presenters act as experts. The discussion is led by the students themselves. They ask questions concerning interesting details of the presented ceremonies and customs.

- Resources needed: descriptions of Moonies' and Sunnies way of behaviour
- Time: 30 minutes
- Instruction: The participants are divided into two teams (Moonies' and Sunnies culture) and get acquainted with the rules of the game.<sup>17</sup> Next, one or two people from both groups pay a visit to the another group. Their task is to observe the foreign culture and find out as many cultural norms and rules of behaviour as possible. The visits will be repeated. The group discusses their observations and presumptions about the other group. It is crucial to remember that the participants do not speak the language of the foreign country so they are unable to communicate verbally.
- Discussion questions: *What are the everyday, customary types of behaviour like in that country?*  
*Which norms/rules were correctly identified?*  
*What did the visitors feel? What did the hosts feel towards the visitors?*  
*Which norms/ rules are difficult to identify in Polish culture?*  
*What kind of misunderstanding can be caused by ignorance of culture norms/ ceremonies of a host country?*
- Source: on the basis of Losche (2003:150)

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<sup>17</sup> Instruction of the game – Moonies: greeting someone, they touch his/her head; talking with somebody, they stand on one leg; being pleased, they touch the right ear; being sad, they turn round twice, saying goodbye, they squat; saying 'yes', they wave goodbye; saying 'no', they beat strongly their breasts. Sunnies: greeting each other they squat in 2m distance from each other; talking to somebody, they do not look in the eyes, but at the neck; being pleased; they touch their belly; being sad, they jump up three times; saying goodbye, they clap hands; saying 'yes', they shake their head; saying 'no', they stick out the tongue.

### 3. *In somebody's shoes*

- Intercultural aims: to introduce the mechanisms of creating stereotypes, to get acquainted with their influence on social group divisions; to experience social isolation
- Group size: from 6
- Resources needed: role-play cards of discriminated people (female and male roles), e.g. unemployed, single mother from Ukraine; young Arab woman, living with her very religious parents in Poland; son of Turkish immigrant, door-keeper working at a Polish university etc.
- Time: 30 minutes
- Instruction: The participants tick a card with the name of the type of a discriminated person (women – female roles, men – male roles). Give students some time to invent some details of their character's life (name and biography). The participants should consider questions such as: *How does his/her everyday life look like? How did his/her childhood look like? What kind of political or social events influenced his/her life? In what situations did he/she experience social isolation?* etc. Next, the participants form pairs and talk to their partners about everyday life, their most important experience and situations when they felt excluded/isolated. As a follow up – have a whole group discussion. For homework – ask students to write a biography of their character.
- Discussion questions: *What do the discriminated people feel? In what ways can they be discriminated against? And why? How can we change this situation? Can stereotypical thinking influence the inclusion or exclusion of certain social groups?*

*What is the difference between discrimination and prejudice?*

Source: on the basis of the game ***Go one step forward***, in Białek et al. (2008:107)

#### **4. A typical Pole**

Intercultural aims: to work with and explore stereotypes; realizing national stereotypes; to explore the stereotypical images we have about Poles; to reflect on stereotypical perception of our country; to understand where stereotypes come from and how they function.

Group size: any

Resources needed: big sheets of paper and markers

Time: 30 minutes

Instruction: Ask participants to form three or four multicultural teams. Teams receive paper, markers and draw the profile of human body on the paper. The students describe together various features of a typical Pole. They can also add other pictures and write some commentaries. Allow sufficient time for groups to think through different elements constituting Poles. At the end all posters are presented by each group.

Discussion questions: *What are the ways of creating stereotypes? What kind of stereotypes are presented on the posters? Why these were selected? What are the functions of stereotypes? Could they help us to communicate with people with a different culture background? What is the difference between stereotypes and prejudice?*

Source: author's idea

## 5. *My story*

- Intercultural aims: realizing oneself his/her own and others identity (individual, social, cultural, national aspects); communicating some events from the history of other nations and their perception from the perspective of the representatives of a given nation.
- Group size: any, even number of participants required
- Resources needed: the list of example questions for the interview
- Time: 30 minutes
- Instructions: Participants work in pairs (from different countries). One person is a journalist, another one gives the interview. The journalist asks questions concerning important political, cultural or social events, which in some way influenced interviewer.
- Discussion questions: *What are the most important things which make up your identity?*  
*What influences you?*  
*What social factors shape the identity?*  
*What historical events are important for you?*  
*And why?*  
*In what way history can influence national identity of a person?*  
*What is our judgment of historical events? In what way different national perspective can influence those judgments?*
- Source: author's idea, inspired by *Facing Identity*, in: *Intercultural Learning*, T-kit 4 (2000:49–50)

## 6. *Who am I? Who are you?*<sup>18</sup>

- Intercultural aims: to define self and others' identity, to explore what elements create it, to compare how people differ in their perceptions of themselves and others, to reflect on intercultural differences.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. task *Drawing a culture star* in Holliday et al., 2004 :163-164.



Group size:	any, even number of participants required
Resources needed:	copy of two identity circles <i>Who am I? Who are you?</i> (see Appendix 1)
Time:	20 minutes
Instructions:	Explain the game to the group. The participants are going to describe different elements constituting their identity (e.g. family, roles, nationality, gender, religion, education etc.). Give prepared materials to all (see Appendix 1). Ask them to work in pairs (if it is possible from different countries). First step: individual work. Everyone has to think what the most important things which make up his or her identity are and fill up the circle <i>Who am I?</i> and second circle of the partner <i>Who are you?</i> In a second step, participants compare their circles and reflect on the relation between what they regard as important.
Discussion questions:	<i>How do you perceive yourself, how do others perceive you?</i> <i>What similarities and differences can you see in defining identity by two people?</i> <i>Are they depended on our cultural background?</i> <i>Where in your identity circle is your nationality?</i>
Source:	author's idea, inspired by Brander et al. (1995: 29–30).

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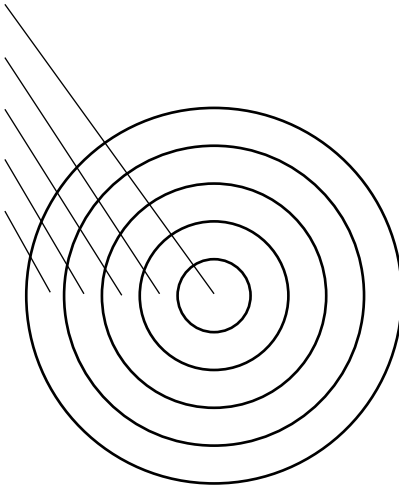
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# Appendix 1

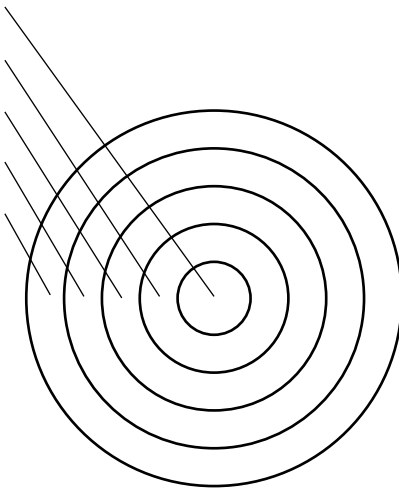
**Who am I?**

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....
- 5 .....



**Who are you?**

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....
- 5 .....



## **Personality Development Through Motion The Arco Method of Lifelong learning**

The ‘Motion Site,’ an old motion concept brought up by Elsa Gindler disciple Elfriede Hengstenberg, is used to describe learning. It recognizes the contingent of motion and uses its significance beyond sports for personality development in everyday life. Afterwards, adaptive methods of this motion concept with astonishing effects for every type of learning will be presented. The means lie between theatre and everyday motions and the gateway to artistry and art.

### **The Motion Site**

The Motion Site is an implement for the training of posture, balance, creativity and health. Motion Sites consist of various interchangeable materials – boards, crates, beams, mats, poles. Explorative and substantial learning mostly has an effect on children, but from a different angle works with adults just as well. Not surprisingly, all preschoolers have adults for parents, which belong to an outer relation group. The staff belongs to an internal relation group – and somewhere in between are contact administrations, district authorities, ministries of education and cultural affairs, scientists, and the surrounding public. All relation groups have one thing in common:

They have their experiences in motion and were formed in their personality development by largely standardised motion occasions.

Today's answer to organised motion occasions mostly is 'sport.' (At arco we prefer 'motion culture as basis for human learning.')

As the angle is changed, we examine how sport and motion in general can accompany the personality development. This way, the relation of the motion site to health and learning gets easier to comprehend.

### **Excursus: Sociological foundations of extensive self-restraint**

Sport and motion are widely associated with constitutional effects. 'No sports!' With sports, anything can be achieved:

Excitement, stimulation, relaxation, aggression increase and decrease, injury and distraction. It depends on how it is done and why. When exercise is used for compensation it usually means compensating everyday life.

This leads me to a short digression.

Our civilisation offers safety and provides time-tested answers to formerly delicate questions.

Daily routine keeps us safe and saves time. We do not have to go out of our way to gain experiences our ancestors gained before us. But this safety has a downside:

We are too quick to accept the inability to do something.

We do not learn it –

We have never learned it –

We will never learn it for the rest of our lives!

Institutionalised habits can be imprisoning, constricting the space for motion:

In our civilisation everyday life demands formulas for success: If a method is successful, it is kept. Other methods are avoided in order to avoid failing, getting thrown off track – to be safe, to hide weaknesses. Our lives follow a trodden path, we become immobile and stiff and never get to know the versatility which sets us apart. We are not really free of decisions – that is only someone, who can choose between different options – someone who can leave the trodden path behind with peace of mind.

We attribute ourselves to certain characteristics: Unathletic, settled, unmusical, tired, clumsy, ill or having two left feet. We apologize, find excuses and go the extra mile not to do something.

We believe we have to be perfect, have to hide our weaknesses.

So we only do what we know how to do. We leave many exciting and interesting activities to those with the know-how.

Today, professionals sing, dance, paint and play for us – the spectators.

The important aspects of the human experience have moved away from us in everyday life. There is a system behind our inactivity. It is a process, which makes us older than the actual ageing. Is it really about the lack of exercise or is it a rigid attitude obstructing the willingness to learn?

### **Posture – the attitude of being**

Why are we doing this to ourselves? A persons biography is mirrored in their posture. At school, two to three hours of sport are to provide the necessary exercise. Sport monopolises the contingent of motions, whereas the other subjects cover mostly intellectual exercises. At a closer look, there are more than thirty hours of stage directions, which, although called German or Math, dictate a specific repertoire of motions: Remaining seated for hours – sitting still – listening, concentrating – not running, not dancing, not jumping, not trying something out – being present, but mostly sitting. That is not what the human body is made for.

The back muscles become overstrained and get tense and knotted. Attention deficit and malposition are the consequences. The human body has a number of signals and pain thresholds available to alert to an unhealthy posture. But even a schoolchild knows to ignore those signals for a reason. Even bigger pain has to be avoided:

The loss of approval by classmates, parents and teachers is imminent.

Any aberration from the course of instruction is punished.

Overburdened teachers punish anything, that could discredit them and reward that, what makes the situation more comfortable: Being

quiet, sitting still, concentrating – Showing no weaknesses, because they will be punished.

A chance is missed.

To recognize a mistake as a chance, to learn more about oneself. When I know that I can show my weaknesses, only then can I learn about them. Then, I learn about myself. I learn to learn.

## Attitude and atmosphere

As mentioned above, learning has a lot to do with posture. Posture, in turn, is motion, a constant muscle regulation:

*Experiment:* You can experience this, when you stand straight on your feet with the insides of your feet touching. Look at a point on the wall until you are sure to stand still. Now close your eyes.

It will take only a moment, but you will begin to stagger. As soon as the visual information fades away, the otherwise sensitive muscle regulation suddenly seems not as subtle anymore. We feel that posture is a protracted learning process and most of the time not even consciously available. The oldest nerves supply the muscles needed for posture. Our frame is constantly repositioned in order to keep from straining. A complicated interplay of tension and relaxation prevents the muscles from fatigue. This way, the ideal measure of effort to hold the basic tension level becomes an economical guideline for the whole body system.

This fascinating coordination goes on independently without us being concerned about it. But if the economy required for posture is in disorder, it results in extensive consequences for the inner balance and health.

Artificially dictated pain thresholds in education, school and work interfere with the economy of posture regulation. When tense muscles announce ‘I need to get up to stretch my legs,’ general life experience tells us that it is easier to just keep sitting still. This is an understandable process, not worth mentioning. But the small signals of discomfort are not gone, not vanished in thin air. No – a tense musculature expands to headaches and hardening muscles, which can become chronic and some day is not felt anymore. The body becomes numb. At the same



time impulses to move are constantly sent through the body. This excess energy is transformed into tension and leads to hardened, reduced and strained muscles, which would be unnecessary for posture. This results in a modified posture with high tension level and an overexertion of the supporting muscles and spine. The normal strain on the spine multiplying by twenty up to fifty times is no rarity. This new posture even seems comfortable and becomes a habit.

### **The sensitive fine regulation as chance for learning standards**

The sensitive fine regulation via the soles of the feet, ankle joint, knee joint and hip joint go on as a so called kinematic chain to the sacral bone and spine up to the upper body segments. When this fine regulation of the energy budget and posture management fails, the enormous stress influences the prevailing mood of the person. A new balance is reached, wherein the constant muscle tension moves the pain threshold up, which makes us insensitive to our body's signals. Therefore it is not surprising when a lot of ailments seem to appear out of thin air, although every illness is preceded by a often long lasting history of signals and stop signs.

With our health system we abandoned the knowledge of self regulation and personal responsibility and rely on professionals for that. But they will never be able to grasp our life story and can only work with a fraction of a human, which they are to heal now. This can only work to a certain degree.

A person surrenders his or her responsibility for his or her health to someone else and disconnects the illness' history from his or her own life story. Pharmaceuticals intervene with the hormone levels and life's circumstances regardless of context.

Health care becomes expensive and ineffective.

Sport is overburdened with the task of compensating the lack of understanding for an active and independent health programme.

All too often sport just copies the less than pleasant work conditions and limits the number of possibilities, suggesting only this and that exercise will bring results – the body needs to be conquered. The

developing awareness of the sensitive fine regulation which the human body is capable of alone could create a lot of joy at learning.

### **Approach to an alternative concept**

Culture of motion can also mean to learn a multitude of exercises, to expand and choose more freely within the scope of motions, to be more alert to the body's signals and to retain high flexibility up to an old age.

### **Imagination: a culturally developed physical ability**

The human body possesses an amazing instrument of self-healing, the power of imagination. In our civilisation the power of imagination often is projected onto the physician and does not appear anywhere else in our lives. It is not cultivated as a cultural technique and consequently wastes away.

In our opinion the power of imagination is an important pillar of human development, therefore we try to integrate it into our work. We use simple means, as suggested by terms such as 'material and explorative learning.' The Motion Site favours learning in the sense of developing the personality through a high degree of stimulative nature. Children may have a head start here, because their thoughts are not as 'institutionalised' yet. This means, they do not concern themselves with names, abbreviations and attributions, but they describe things as a process, 'what you put on there' for a board or 'what you sit on' for a chair (see Hugo Kükelhaus). Attributions make us passive and divide us from parts of our identity.

### **Concept of counter pressure by mead and mirror neuron**

People actually learn materially, which means they use perception and resistance to pressure or counter pressure as means of learning. Fine sensomotor processes help to work out minimal differences. These established experiences enrich the body memory and cause the sensitive impressions of an action to be saved. Those impressions are

readily available and function as a reference system for future actions, to some extent if we want to or not.

Mead speaks of the 'constitution of permanent objects.'

The 'constitution of permanent objects' is not only the basis for the ability to take on roles and therefore for any kind of social interaction and action. It is also an organismic process, in which abstraction and motion have a common ground. One can tell an object' weight, hardness and warmth by just looking at it. This means, even the senses of distance (seeing, hearing) generate resistance signals in the body, as if the object is touched (Joas according to Mead). When working with adults we often try to counter old, hidden traumatic experiences with new ones. Children are led to allow for multiple distinguishable experiences. When children's curiosity is unaffected, they differentiate learning on their own. Their action concept comes alive, integrates motion, action and intellectual perception.

### **There are different means at our disposal**

- A Free Play: Means here – Children take their materials and decide for themselves what they do and how.
- B Limited  
Free Play: The materials are handed out limitedly.
- C Limited  
Theme  
Play: A theme is given, materials are handed out freely or limitedly.
- D Guided  
Play: Rules are established personally. The children follow the suggestion by the adults

From A to D the personal active involvement of the supervising tutor increases. In case A a certain distance can be maintained and the children feel protected. In regard to the children's experience the person in charge intervenes barely, if at all. Potential dangers have to be recognised and prevented! From B over C to D the distance shrinks to a situation, in which the children would claim the tutor plays with them.

An old secret of our work is ‘Let the children lead you when you lead them,’ which means ‘be sensitive, be aware of what you see, hear and feel and react to that.’

### **The motion site as role play**

The connection between body learning, emotional experience and intellectual development was also employed by Stanislavski, a Russian theatre director, early in the last century. He influenced all following acting methods to a large extent and founded his roles in physical action to arrive at the emotional experience.

Children also know Stanislavski, at least a few logs, boards and boxes initiate a little role play pretty fast. Sometimes all it needed was a little momentum, some materials, a certain setup or a theme and suddenly an epic was born, lasting for hours, with reprises, casting, role change, directing agreements (child-like conditional, e.g. ‘You would be the princess’). Bruno Bettelheim’s thesis, after which children play their stories as they need them and even repeatedly, can only be confirmed. Our observations, the children and Bruno Bettelheim give us a very good idea how to use the Motion Site effectively.

‘Be part of it, be aware of what is happening and you will learn a lot about children’s wishes and what they deal with.’

The Motion Site is no therapy, but it works therapeutically. The children’s relationships are reflected in play. The relationships to the parents, siblings and staff can also become the focus of the observer. Terms borrowed from ‘Gestaltwork,’ like closeness and distance, contact, being powerful and powerless, fear, joy etc. give a pretty good description and put what we see in order.

### **Motion as basis for any kind of learning**

Very often it is assumed the Motion Site were a piece of equipment. This may partly be true, but that’s not everything. The Motion Site is a psychomotor occasion for motion. It is part of a motion concept and an overall concept with therapeutic impact, but without it being a therapy. It uses and ignites the joy of motion to develop a person through balance, attitude and increased confidence. The fact, that the Motion

Site was used in Holland for experiments with clinically supervised felons and for family reunions, illustrates the range of a sensible conceptual integration of the Motion Site. We use its elements effectively in conflict resolution training and thematic seminars and supervisions for employees of (pedagogical) institutions. We would be content if every child facility ran a Motion Site as a conceptual theme at an elementary level. At best, elementary schools should feature Motion Sites and allow the children to visit the Kindergarten, where they could, in a sense, relive their past. We would gladly assist with such experiments.

In the course of Talic's we conducted a number of experiments:

Experiment 1: Staves as instructors reflect balance into the own concept of attitude.

Experiment 2: Balance and energy transfer to another domain – Canoeing at beginner's level. 'Reading the water.'

Experiment III: Sensitive and emotional memory at the Image Theatre – Learning languages – 'Psychodramatic linguistics.'

### ***1. Staves as instructors reflect balance into the concept of attitude and resonate there.***

Materials: Simple bamboo sticks in different sizes (arco standard materials)

After inspection of the materials, which has a typical stimulative nature, simple exercises are tried out. A stick is put on the hand or finger and shall be balanced

#### ***The Physiological Goodbye – Hand-Eye Coordination***

Success in balancing is only possible if the 'Physiological Goodbye' is achieved. The eyes do not fixate the hand and the contact point of the stick, as normally done at the beginning, but break away from this reflexive, cramped position, in which the neck muscles are blocked (This crooked position causes a reaction – increase of muscle intensity when hastily corrected with reduced sensibility (minimal requirement). Uncertainty and discomfort dominate further actions and learning process.)

The loosening of the gaze from the hand and the fixing on the end of the stick has several consequences: The lever rule allow for more time to react. The neck straightens and reduces the basic tension of the

muscles. The execution becomes more precise and therefore decreases the need for action.

### ***Association: Sensorimotor Tension Cycle***

Excessive use and ineffective need for regulation cause diminished perception and increased tension and lead to the cycle of uncertainty. This cycle may be familiar from other life situations, in which a similar cycle is present. The inability to let go in favour of alleged control causes increasing numbness in a sensorimotor tension. This, in turn, leads to loss of orientation, failure with all of its emotional experiences, reliving failures of the past and the confirmation of a pessimistic attitude. An action is prematurely blocked. In juggling, a lot of people are not able to let go of in fear of throwing wrong, or they toss it to the side to catch the third ball. Consequently, the rhythm is off, a ball lost. In juggling, we know to take the risk of letting go. Only then will I get the necessary information, what happens when I see where the ball goes. To break the blockade, we let the people throw the balls without catching them in order to see where they will land. Juggling is about throwing, not catching. That happens automatically outside of the field of vision (Physiological Goodbye).

### ***Counter Experience***

The provocation of balance with small improvements enables a counter experience, which can be emphasised and maybe transferred to other areas of life and learning.

Next, the balancing experience is emphasised by similar exercises with a stick and by gradually increasing the level of difficulty.

### ***The exercise 'Mobile' provokes sensomotor resonance***

The exercise 'Mobile' allows the delving into the balancing experience with all its side effects. Staves are balanced horizontally and brought into motion. The emerging inertia caused by turning and shifting has to be integrated into the balance. This entails a lower centre of mass and alert sensorimotor functions – Sensitive resonance through balancing of an object in ideal posture. Transfer of smallest impulses to the sensorimotor system of posture through minimal counter pressure even in ro-

tation, not unimportant for the sensitive nervous system along the spine. 'Minimal Resonance Therapy' entails: the minimal resonance allows for an increasing fine regulation of the muscle nerves through minimal motion differences. The muscles around the supporting spine reduce the basic tension to the simplest necessary level. Spasms and sprains, mostly caused by overstraining, get noticed via the minimal requirement concept and are transformed by the sensorimotor process, a form of self-healing typical for the human body occurs.

### **Atmosphere of transfer**

By the next exercise, 'Christmas Tree,' an atmosphere of relaxed, concentrated attention is created. This atmosphere is emotionally supportive, effectively enhances learning and stays as an impressive experience in the body's memory.

Atmosphere becomes a key word. Similar key moments applied at other exercises create similarly beneficial parameters for learning.

### ***II Reading the water***

Example: The participants of the Lifelong Learning Project Talic are invited to a transfer experiment entailing canoeing after a limited balancing hour with staves. Easy moves are learned in weak currents. The J-stroke used with Canadian canoes is suitable for this. The main objective is to transform the navigation of the boat without much exertion into a simple gliding experience. The boat should glide easily straight ahead, although powered only on one side. The slight exertion provokes more sensitive posture and motor functions, resulting in an economic motion behaviour, which feels comfortable and creates a relaxed, concentrative attention to the motion, the body and the boat. It is notable, that the participants find themselves in another balancing situation, balancing the boat and themselves by sensitively applying counter pressure on the paddle. Analogies of the stick's resonance behaviour are formed with a rule chain based on minimal requirement for the paddle (in a direct motion analogy) and the boat as resonance factors in relation to the paddle pressure and handling course, the water's currents and other factors, such as wind.

### ***Blind Testing And Impulse drive***

Blind testing and Impulse drive are further tests to set methodical-effective limits and to amplify the experience of motion resonance. I see what I do, I feel it and constructively experience myself at the resolution of new problems.

(With blind testing, the eyes are closed to channel the perception into other senses. According to minimal requirement, the sensitivity is increased, whereas the necessary effort is decreased. The motion becomes easy, the gliding is perceived as flying. This 'gliding flight' is later reconstructed to a holistic motion experience (for example: During gliding, the forward motion is turned into a backward motion through turning with minimal loss of momentum. Therefore, a stroke's momentum can be channelled into a different direction through minimal passive correction). The sensorimotor fine regulation of the kinematic chain is expanded to objects and surrounding materials, such as a paddle, a boat, the water's surface and current.

In this balanced motion sequence, posture clearly reflects the attitude towards action. The more sensibly an action is performed, the more impressively and expressively the action affects the person. The connection to effects of Tai Chi and meditative motions becomes obvious. The learning process creates its own beneficial atmosphere. Learning to learn is possible through minimizing impulses and increasing resonance of the object's motion and the body. The attending educator, who experiences the exercises himself, begins to study the learning read. This also applies to further forms of expressions, such as mime, theatre and speech development. With mime, for example, the combination of balanced motion and intention is called „Premise“ and is one of the most effective elements of theatre.

### ***III The Empathic Effect of Counter Pressure Experience In Image Theatre***

It is an explicitly physical ability to recall impressions and sensorial experiences in the so-called sensory memory by merely mimicking postures physically. Not only sensorial sensations can be reconstructed by a sculpture in theatrical play. Also, emotional facettes and nuances of a conflict scene can be expressed with the help of this emotional



memory. Situations from a scene or conflict are exposed to 'the inner and outer view' and help to create a new communication structure. The actor, experiencing the inner view, as well as the audience, experiencing the multifaceted outer view, profits from an ideomotor, sensorimotor act. Through counter pressure (Mirror Neuron) they can experience the respective processes physically and sensorially as if it were their own, although the scene is staged. An important part of series is the naming of sensory perceptions and the expression of emotions. Speech is excluded to be controllably reintroduced by the group in mutual acceptance after a motorical process. The awareness building of the previous experiments is a readying foundation. The transfer of physical learning sequences to intellectual ones are based on the fact, that learning processes are always both physical and intellectual. A physically theatrical utilisation working with sensorial and emotional memory is also found with the special speech education system of Psychodramatic Linguistics. The body memory gets used and charged. The spectators experience sensorially the on-going lively and emotional atmosphere. Learning happens playfully through role play leaves impressions in the sensorial and emotional memory. Thereby, it becomes obvious, that the meaning of the words are grasped not only rationally, but emotionally as well.

Transfer learning cannot be expected to work by the book, but with clever arrangements and a clear view of the situation of integral, physical and intellectual learning, the interested educator can learn to read learning.

## Contributors:

**Aurin Peter** – is co-founder of Arco (registered association) and works as a mime, director and applied theatre educator. He holds seminars and reflection courses for pedagogical institutions. For years he has roamed the hospitals of the Frankfurt Rhine Main Region as Dr. X, Clown M.D. He also supports Conceptual Learning in transition from organisations to comprehensive areas of learning. He is a coach and process tutor and combines his knowledge of physical identity with the support of personality development.

E-mail: [kita@fortbildung.de](mailto:kita@fortbildung.de)

Website: [www.arco-erlebnisaedagogik.de](http://www.arco-erlebnisaedagogik.de)

**Bagger Bettan** is a registered nurse and has a MA in education from Denmark's Pedagogical University. She is employed as lecturer of nursing at University College Zealand and have published articles in Danish professional journals concerning the use of posters in nursing education.

**Ballesteros Belén** – PhD in Education. She works as a professor at the Faculty of Education of the Spanish Distance Education University in Madrid (UNED), in the Department of Research Methods and Diagnosis in Education. She is a member of the INTER Research Group, focused on research about intercultural education. Her scientific interests relate to intercultural education and qualitative research.

[bballesteros@edu.uned.es](mailto:bballesteros@edu.uned.es)

**Becker Dirk F.** was born in Mainz, Germany in 1969. From 1996 to 2005 he studied philosophy, social sciences, literature and dramatics at Hildesheim University. In the year 2005 he began his freelance job as a biographer and philosopher. At present he heads the Erlebnisakademie (freely translated: ex-

perimental academy), with goals of boosting an ecological and cultural sensitization, works as a freelancer for arco e.V. Wiesbaden and is employed by the Kulturherberge e.V. as cultural manager.

frigula@web.de

**Bertram Sabine**, born in 1981, does a doctorate at the University of Hamburg and works as a lecturer at the Leibniz University of Hannover.

sabine.bertram@htp-tel.de

**Bertram Thomas**, born in 1965, works as research assistant in the Occasional Students and Senior Citizens Office and in the project “LernZeitAlter” at the Leibniz University of Hannover.

**Czerka Eliza** – PhD in Education Sciences. Lecturer at Faculty of Pedagogy in Gdańsk Higher School of Humanities. Her interests focus on developmental processes of adolescence and early adulthood, adult education and methodology of higher education. She also works as a trainer of cognitive skills.

elizaczerka@gmail.com

**Czerniejewska Izabela** – PhD in ethnology and a Master in Philosophy. She teaches regional and intercultural education at University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań (Poland). She also actively acts in non-governmental organisations – leads international volunteers’ projects, workshops and trainings for youth and teachers. Her scientific interests focus on intercultural education.

iza@czerniejewscy.poznan.pl

**Drakaki Maria** is a primary school teacher and a kindergarten teacher. She has been working as a head teacher in primary schools of Chania (Crete) since 2002. She has been a founding member of the School Life Museum (which operates under the responsibility of the Prefecture of Chania since 2006), a member of the Administration Committee and President of its friends club.

mariadrakaki1@yahoo.com

**Gil-Jaurena Inés** – PhD in Education and a Master in Educational Psychology. Since 2005 she has developed her professional career as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Education of the Spanish Distance Education University in Madrid (UNED), in the Department of Educational Theory and Social Pedagogy. She is a member of the INTER Research Group, focused on

research on intercultural education. Her scientific interests relate to teacher training and school practice, considered from an intercultural approach, and to social education and community action.

inesgj@edu.uned.es

**Kelly Hélène** is a registered nurse and has a BA in anthropology from the University of Rhode Island and a MSc in Health from the University of Greenwich. She is employed as lecturer of nursing at University College Zealand and have published articles in Danish professional journals concerning the use of posters in nursing education.

hke@ucsj.dk

**Malik Beatriz** holds a PhD in Educational Guidance and is a lecturer in the School of Education at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Madrid, Spain. Her main interests include educational and career guidance from a critical social justice perspective and intercultural education. She is a member of the INTER Research Group on Intercultural Education.

bmalik@edu.uned.es

www.uned.es/grupointer

**Mata Patricia** – lecturer in the Faculty of Education of the National Distance University (UNED) in Spain and member of the INTER Research Group on Intercultural Education. Her main research interests are Intercultural Education, Diversity and Equity at school, Racism and Social Learning of Citizenship.

pmata@edu.uned.es

www.uned.es/grupointer

**Matlakiewicz Alina** – PhD in Education Sciences. In her scientific work she concentrates on psychological aspects of adult development and lifelong learning in intercultural (especially British) perspective.

amatlak@ped.uni.torun.pl

**Mechlińska-Pauli Monika** – MA in Applied Linguistics, currently is working on a doctorate in Education Sciences. Works as an English teacher at Gdańsk Higher School of Humanities and lecturer at Gdańsk University. Her professional interests include adult education, language learning, methodology and higher education in Poland and abroad.

monikamechlińska@gmail.com

**Olejarz Małgorzata** – PhD in Education Sciences. A lecturer at Faculty of Pedagogy, Sociology and Health Sciences in University of Zielona Góra (Poland). Her interests focus on formal and non-formal adult education, culture animation and processes of learning in higher education field.

m.olejarz@ips.uz.zgora.pl

**Solarczyk Hanna** – PhD in Education Sciences. She works at Faculty of Pedagogy of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland). Her scientific interests concerns lifelong learning in Poland and abroad.

hanna.solarczyk@umk.pl

**Stankiewicz Katarzyna** – PhD in Education Sciences. Educator, intercultural trainer, teacher of Polish as foreign and second language. Cooperates with the Centre of Polish language and Culture for Foreigners at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (Poland); runs a training company EduCare. Scientific interests: intercultural education, cultural aspects of foreign language education, sociology of education.

stankip@gmail.com

**Suárez Ortega Magdalena** holds a PhD in Education, and is a professor in the School of Education at the University of Seville, Spain. Among her main interests are narrative techniques in guidance, gender equity issues and intercultural education. She is a member of the INTER Research Group on Intercultural Education.

msuarez@us.es

**Szczurek-Boruta Alina** – Doctor (Ph.D.) Postdoctoral degree (D.Sc.) in the field of humanities in the scope of the pedagogy – social pedagogy; an academic teacher at the Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences of Education in Cieszyn, Silesian University in Katowice. Areas of scientific research: a model of school in a multi-cultural society, the problem of multi and inter-cultural education, problems of teacher-pupil interaction; studies on problems of Polish-Czech borderland.

alina.szczurek-boruta@us.edu.pl

**Vasilomanolakis Kiriakos** – B.Sc. (Hon)-Psychology-Child development, Master of Education – Life Long Learning. Trains students of all ages in cognitive skills at the Institute of Learning – Hania, Crete, Greece and he is the principal of the Polygnosis schools of English.

polygnosi@otenet.gr

**Żurek Anna** – PhD in Human Sciences (Linguistics). She works in the Applied linguistics Department at the Faculty of Philology (University of Wrocław). Polish language teacher at The School of Polish Language and Culture for Foreigners. Scientific interests focus on language politeness in different cultures, interlanguage pragmatics, second language acquisition and intercultural communication.

anna.zurek@uni.wroc.pl