

Workshop: „We don't learn only from teachers – Peer Education for Diversity”

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Workshop content/theme

- Peer Education
- Diversity / Anti-Discrimination Education

Aims

- Raise the awareness of young people's potential in social change
- Encourage youth participation and activism
- To introduce the concept of peer education
- To explore how peer education may contribute to social cohesion and fight against discrimination

Method(s)/Approach

1. “Clapping Presentation” – Series of activities using clapping rhythms to introduce and learn each other's names
2. “Identity Molecule” – EPTO activity that allows self-exploration of one's own identity and which social descriptors one may use to define it followed by an explanation of the concept of “peer” as the recognition of shared characteristics in another individual.
3. “Dominos” – ADL activity that allows the group to discover what characteristics are shared among the member and therefore, some sort of peering.
4. “The 10 Buddhists” – Energizing physical activity to dynamize the group and recover focus.
5. Small group discussion about the influence of peers and what are the things we have learned, both positive and negative, from peers.
6. Presentation of the “ladder of young people's participation” and discussion about participation of young people and the value of peer education.
7. “Concentric Circles” – EPTO activity as an example of what kind of activities peer trainers would lead in the context of a school class to introduce topics of discrimination and prejudice. Group forms two concentric circles that turn in different directions and have the change to answer and pose questions to most of the group members about issues of identity, culture and discrimination.

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

ORGANISATIONS:

European Peer Training Organisation (EPTO) – www.epto.org

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute - http://www.adl.org/awod_new/awod_peer_descr.asp

Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER) - www.youthpeer.org

Scottish Peer Education Network (SPEN) - <http://www.fastforward.org.uk/peernetwork.html>

WEBSITES:

The Freechild project : Ladder of Participation - <http://www.freechild.org/ladder.htm>

BOOKS:

Y-PEER Publications - <http://www.youthpeer.org/web/guest/16>

Questions for workshop reflection

Students:

- Do we learn something from friends? Positive or negative things?
- Can we influence our friends to change?
- What can young people do to help everyone live together in peace?

Teachers:

- How can young people support you in your work?

All:

- When was the last time you felt you were completely involved?
- How are decisions taken in your class/school?
- Did you learn something new about someone you thought you knew well
- Who are your "peers"? Have you ever reflected on the influence your peers can have on you?
- Were you surprised at the things you have learnt from your peers?
- What are the positive things that you have learnt from your peers?
- Was anything you heard surprising or new to you?
- Some questions may have been more difficult to answer than others. Which questions were particularly hard for you to respond to? Why do you think that was so? Which questions did you particularly enjoy answering?

Impressions, outcomes of the workshop

The workshop started off rather "cold" with some resistance from the group to "play game". It seemed like there was preference for the "safest" way of doing things, meaning the way everyone was used to but after some scepticism, most people were engaged.

There was a great majority of teachers in the workshop which was surprising given the title the fact that it was focusing primarily on how young people can learn from each other and use it for the best. This can only be a positive thing, with the assumption teachers are interested in supporting such process and would like to know more.

There were some surprises and satisfaction around the discovery of each other's identities and to which social groups each one considered him/herself in. Someone actually said humorously "we're the same" when realizing how many aspects were shared with another member of the group. But are we the same?

Difficult question came when discussing the experiences of being a teacher and/or a student what that meant in terms of power. Who has the power in schools? Students or teachers? Power where? Power how? And how is one regarded by the other? This was a question that seemed to be the topic for a future workshop or maybe a project in the context of the new ACES theme: Participation!

After small group discussion and the influence of peers, groups mentioned essentially social norms and attitudes were learned from or with peer and most of the times, unconsciously and over a long period of time though modelling and everyday interaction. Yet, these were regarded as some of the most important things to learn in one's life: persistence, courage, humour... There were some questions about whether one learns how to be "young" or how to be a "woman" or a "man".

Last activity, which required everyone to listen attentively and to answer many questions in short amount of time was fun and interesting for some but also difficult, since participants were not used revealing private information to people they barely knew.