

Workshop: “BARNGA – A Simulation Game on Cultural Differences

Trainer: Barbara Helm, Interkulturelles Zentrum

Workshop Aims

The aim of this activity is to develop intercultural competence through experiencing cultural differences in a game-like, secure setting and through reflecting upon the experience.

Method(s)/Approach

Barnga is a simulation game and a learning exercise on intercultural communication.

Participants learn and play a simple card game in small groups. During the game, when moving to other groups, intercultural encounter happens. Participants experience cultural differences and get the chance to understand why cultural differences can lead to conflict and misunderstanding. They get an idea of what can be done to function effectively in a cross-cultural group.

After finishing the card game, participants share their experiences, analyse what has happened and discuss how our findings can contribute to their everyday-life, work and project situation.

This activity can be used with groups of different sizes:

a minimum of participants are 16 persons, and up to 100 people could play this simulation game. It can be used in classrooms as well as during seminars. It is suitable for young adults and adults.

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

Barnga: A Simulation Game on Cultural Clashes (25th Anniversary Edition) (Paperback) by [Sivasailam Thiagarajan](#) (Author), [Raja Thiagarajan](#) (Author) is available eg. on www.amazon.com

Impressions, Outcomes

Participants enjoyed playing the card game. During the playing phase and during the debriefing phase some participants realised the parallels of the Barnga Card game and “culture”: Culture, like the card game, is something that people learn. After some time of practicing everybody more or less knows the rules “of the game” (i.e. culture of a group of people/country/...). When moving to another table (“i.e. culture”) intercultural encounter happens, because the rules at the other table are slightly different to one’s home-table.

People playing the game reacted differently to this situation: some got frustrated, some angry, some did not know how to deal with the situation. Some did not realise there was “another culture”. Some thought other players do not know how to play properly. All this was reflected in the debriefing phase, and participants were able to draw conclusions for their own life and practice.