

# POLITICAL & INTERCULTURAL LITERACY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THIRD LEARNING, TEACHING AND TRAINING ACTIVITY

27-31 MARCH 2017

VARDE, DENMARK



## SUMMARY

We came together with 31 students and 12 teachers to participate in the third learning, teaching and training activity to understand better what political and intercultural literacy truly meant. During the five days we focused on the following topics:

1. General concepts of political and intercultural literacy
2. Critical thinking and problem solving
3. Taking part in a debate on immigration and refugees
4. Making a good speech to a specific audience
5. Cooperative learning
6. Citizenship and democracy
7. Critical thinking and innovation
8. The ideal country of C.L.I.C.K.
9. E-book
10. Second mid-term evaluation

The students broadened their knowledge of democracy, citizenship, human rights, political standards, immigration and refugees, as well as cultural differences. Everyone improved their foreign language and intercultural communication skills. Also, the students learned how to discuss delicate questions effectively and debate efficiently. They practised negotiating the meaning among those who do not necessarily agree.

There were plenty of homework tasks prior to the activity. First, the students were asked to prepare a short video of themselves to introduce their life to the host families in Denmark. They also had to familiarize themselves with a set of online materials on democracy and human rights, public speaking and building one's dream country. Their third task was to prepare a creative presentation "My country in a Bag", a progressive-minded speech, and an outline on their "Hopes and Fears".

Once again, a wonderful atmosphere was created thanks to the synergy between our cordial host team and the participants. The students made long-lasting friendships through informal and non-formal learning experience where the methods suggested by the 21st Century Learning Design were applied: collaboration, knowledge construction, self-regulation, real-world problem solving and innovation, along with use of ICT for learning and skilled communication.

In general, the students were quite fond of the LTTA in Denmark. They stated that they were proud of being a part of this project. Almost everyone had become better and more confident in speaking English. More specifically, they appreciated the fact that gaining new knowledge was made fun and varied. Yet meeting the local refugees was an eye-opening event for many. Also, the youth realised that democracy was not as straightforward as they had thought. “Every human being deserves respect and equality”, was still another lesson the participants learned.

In the end, everyone won. The shy became braver, the confident became more thoughtful, the talkative became better listeners and the apprehensive - more effective public speakers. They also took a few first steps towards an intercultural speaker that according to [Kirsten Jæger \(2001\)](#) can “mediate between different cultures by virtue of foreign-language competence in combination with knowledge about, and an understanding of, the other person’s cultural, social and societal universe”

The teachers considered the LTTA 3 very well planned, with an appropriate content, relevant mixture of activities, excellent cultural programme, careful monitoring, effective evaluation and thought-through feedback sessions.

In conclusion, the participants once again agreed that the topics of this project are relevant, and we truly do the right things in a right way.

## *GENERAL CONCEPTS OF POLITICAL AND INTERCULTURAL LITERACY*

### **Political Literacy**

Political literacy is commonly defined as the ability to read issues and events politically: using the ideas, language, forms of thought, and argument to deal with a public issue. A politically literate person understand social issues adequately, and can foster respect for differences of opinion, values and beliefs. They know how to generate social and moral thinking and effectively address and discuss the issues of welfare, education, equality, rights and responsibilities, public accountability and the like.

### **Political education**

Henry Maitles (1997) talks about political literacy as a combination of content and skills. He argues that political skills seem to be more relevant in order to spot bias and exaggeration, analyse critically different pieces of evidence, weigh up sources and come to conclusions. Still, the content and the skills should not be separated as responsible citizens need to have positive caring values such as tolerance and empathy to live peacefully in a multi-cultural society.

Maitles suggests that political education should involve history and social issues, introduction to legal issues, critical reasoning, ethics and moral instruction, community based learning, understanding the global and multicultural dimension. Students should learn at school how to debate, articulate and discuss political issues though active learning, role play, group discussion and dialogue.

What is the role of teachers? As Maitles puts it, they should know that teaching democracy will not be a panacea where governments 'let down' the aspirations of their populations. Still, there is clearly value in citizens being politically literate, so teachers should develop political literacy in their students while making sure they keep some kind of realistic perspective.

## Intercultural Literacy

Intercultural literacy is widely defined as the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. An interculturally literate person understands the feelings and needs of other people, knows about other cultures and can ‘read’ other people’s behaviours. They are also well aware of their own culture, so they can negotiate the meaning from a neutral position.

## The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMSI)

The American Intercultural Communication expert Milton Bennett has developed the DMSI to measure the readiness of the learner to acquire new knowledge and skills in intercultural communication. It conveys the idea that one’s experience of cultural difference becomes more sophisticated as one’s competence in intercultural relations increases. (Bennett & Bennett 2004)

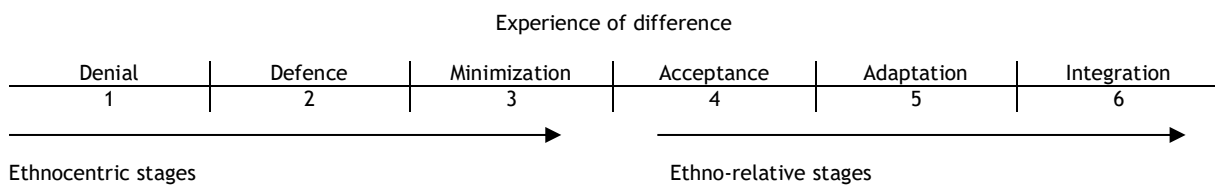


Exhibit 1. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity from Bennett & Bennett 2004:153

## Cultural Dimensions

The Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede (2001) suggests using a framework of cultural dimensions to describe a specific culture psychologically. *Power Distance* relates to the different solutions to the basic problem of human inequality; *Uncertainty Avoidance* relates to the level of stress in a society in the face of an unknown future; *Individualism versus Collectivism* relates to integration of individuals into primary groups; *Masculinity versus Femininity* relates to the division of emotional roles between men and women; and *Long-term versus Short-term Orientation* relates to the choice of focus for people’s efforts: the future or the present.

## The Cultural ‘Onion’

Geert Hofstede (2001) defines culture as the “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” and illustrates the essence of culture through the metaphor of ‘an onion’. He says that the inner layers of the onion refer to values, and the outer layers are related to rituals, heroes, and symbols.

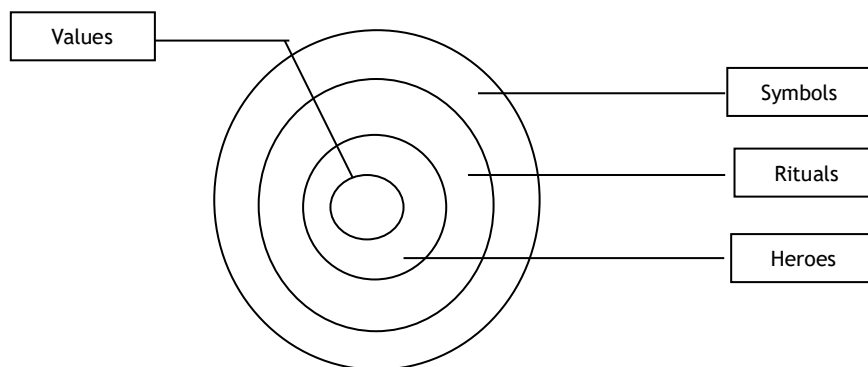


Exhibit 2. The Onion Diagram: Manifestations of Culture at Different Level of Depth from Hofstede, 2001: 11

## Intercultural Communication at the European level

The Council of Europe promotes intercultural communication in a variety of ways. Linguistic diversity of European nations, ‘plurilingual’ competence and intercultural awareness of all people living in Europe, and domestic diversity to support the disadvantaged and marginalised are some of its initiatives.

The European Union both protects high culture of each member state and promotes a common, unifying European identity. Numerous educational initiatives and programmes have been launched by the European Commission to promote understanding among foreign-language educators, to give greater emphasis to intercultural competence of student teachers, and to support the development and provision of teaching and learning resources for language teachers.

## SOLVING PROBLEMS AND THINKING CRITICALLY

### *Debating immigration and refugees* (Activity 1)

#### Objectives:

- To define the terms immigration and refugees
- To identify and to describe a European problem (e.g. immigration, integration, democracy, economy, political standards)
- To find a way to make people understand the importance of human rights
- To take part in a debate using a given glossary
- To learn about a non-governmental organization (NGO)

#### Skills Required

- Team work, creative thinking, communication skills, English as a foreign language

#### Outputs

- Glossaries of the words relating to immigration
- Group posters

#### Outcomes

- Students can define and discuss intercultural awareness by giving examples from the introductory presentation.
- Students can present their group work results in public
- Students have developed their critical thinking and problem solving skills

This activity was a combination of pre-, in- and post-stage instructional sequence. The students first familiarized themselves with necessary vocab and listened to a guest speaker. They then actively worked on the input materials by using their critical thinking and problem solving skills. Finally, they created their presentations in transnational teams and shared them with other participants. By doing so, the participants raised their intercultural awareness and became more conscious of their responsibilities as citizens of their own country, Europe, but also the world at large.

Good job!

The Activities Plan available at

<http://clickerasmusplus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ACTIVITY-PLAN-DENMARK.pdf>

## MAKING A GOOD SPEECH

### *Speaker's corner* (Activity 2)

#### Objectives:

- To read and learn from an instruction about making a speech
- To be able to adjust a speech to a specific audience
- To perform a speech
- To learn about Hyde Park Corner
- To be a part of a good audience

#### Skills Required

- to write a speech and memorize it, to perform the speech and then participate in a role play, to be an alert and supportive audience

#### Outputs

- The speeches per country that convince, provoke and engage (displayed on the project website at <http://clickerasmusplus.eu/students-corner/>)

#### Outcomes

- Students can follow their fellow students' performances intently
- Students can speak their mind with passion
- Students can react adequately and ask thought-provoking questions
- Students have improved their public speaking and English skills

This activity enabled our students to experience a feeling of excitement when one has something important to say and has a chance to share their ideas with other people. Also, they learned more about an area people call 'A Speakers' Corner', where open-air public speaking, debate and discussion are allowed. Not less importantly, they learned that being provoked or being sad is a part of real life. So evaluation is very important.

The Activities Plan available at

<http://clickerasmusplus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ACTIVITY-PLAN-DENMARK.pdf>



## LEARNING COOPERATIVELY

### *Citizenship and democracy* (Activity 3)

#### Objectives:

- To learn about citizenship and democracy
- To identify the importance of different political opinions
- To understand how to be a responsible citizen in a globalized world
- To broaden a specific vocabulary concerning politics
- To improve the academic and social skills

#### Skills Required

- Listening skills, intercepting and collecting information, drawing conclusions, respecting different opinions, debating, making compromises

#### Outputs

- Notes taken, outlines designed

#### Outcomes

- Students understand better what lies behind various political issues.
- Students can analyse the responsibilities of a good citizen
- Students know how to participate in a group discussion without insulting those who have different opinion.
- Students have broadened their English vocab for political issues.

Through cooperative learning the participants became more aware of what is at stake when it comes to citizenship and politics. Furthermore, they realised that democracy has both benefits and drawbacks and is never straightforward. All in all, the students noticeably improved their understanding of political literacy.

*The Activities Plan* available at

<http://clickerasmusplus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ACTIVITY-PLAN-DENMARK.pdf>

## THINKING CRITICALLY AND INNOVATIVELY

### *The ideal country of C.L.I.C.K.* (Activity 4)

#### Objectives:

- To watch and learn from an instruction about designing your own country
- To develop the creativity and use it in a political context
- To improve the academic and social skills
- To use the skills of the new political knowledge and glossary

#### Skills Required

- English (spoken and written), teamwork, creative thinking

#### Outputs

- A glossary of words related to political literacy
- Posters of the ideal country of C.L.I.C.K.

#### Outcomes

- Students have developed their functional reading skills
- Students know how to negotiate the meaning
- Students can create posters by applying their artistic skills
- Students have learned to defend their ideal countries and answer questions effectively.

This activity made the students evaluate their own ideas against those of their peers. Also, they learned how to think outside their own comfort zone. The students' new communication skills were applied in a broader perspective, and by creating a new country from scratch, they had to use every piece of knowledge they had gained during the five days in Denmark. Well done!

*The Activities Plan* available at

<http://clickerasmusplus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ACTIVITY-PLAN-DENMARK.pdf>

## E-BOOK

We evaluated the general design and structure of the book. We also discussed the way we were going to present our classroom activities in it. We agreed that the number of pages per activity can be more than three, but the structure should remain the same at all times.

The partners approved of the design of the book, which takes into consideration our logo, the drawings of our students and its reference to Erasmus+ Programme. The book should be given a Creative Commons licence, but it should also clearly state that it only reflects the views of the authors, so the European Commission could not be held responsible for its contents.

The contents of the book would include:

Instead of foreword	Political and intercultural literacy
Preface	Good to know
Acknowledgements	Working together
Introduction	Practical classroom activities
Digital and technology literacy	Appendices
Good to know	Bibliography
Working together	Endnotes
Practical classroom activities	
Information and media literacy	
Good to know	
Working together	
Practical classroom activities	

Finally, the 12 practical classroom activities included along with the six blog posts from the partner schools' teachers would indicate our intention to implement the outcomes of the project and guarantee their sustainability after the project is over.

## THIRD MID-TERM EVALUATION

Among others, we asked the following questions:

- Have we met all original objectives of the project so far?
- How have these objectives been reached?
- In what way has our project been innovative and/or complementary to other projects already carried out?
- Have we fully covered the first two topics of our project?
- Which qualitative objectives has our project achieved so far?
- Which quantitative objectives has our project achieved so far?
- How have we monitored the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of our project?
- Have we encountered any difficulties in implementing the outcomes of the project?
- How has each partner school contributed to the project?
- How well have we been cooperating and communicating?
- Has your school involved participants with fewer opportunities in project activities?
- Have the two Transnational Project Meetings been helpful to our purpose?
- Have the two LTTAs been successful in contributing to the project's objectives?
- To whom have we been disseminating at local/regional/national/EU /international level?
- How have we ensured that the project's results will remain available and/or will be used by others?

We concluded that we had been doing rather well. We also admitted that running a project like ours is quite demanding, so not everyone may want to work as hard as we do. The partners agreed that they needed some more time to update their information. This information would then be applied when writing the final application.

## LIST OF ACTIVITIES

### SESSIONS

1	Pre-test	yes
2	School presentations “My country in a bag” (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
3	Hopes and fears (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
4	Activity 1 (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
5	Activity 2 (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
6	Activity 3 (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
7	Activity 4 (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
8	Feedback session (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
9	Post-test	yes

### CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

1	Field trip in Varde (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
2	Field trip to Ribbe (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes
3	Field trip to Esbjerg (31 students and 12 teachers)	yes

### ROUND-TABLES

#### Teachers (the core team)

1	Project Management	yes
2	Second mid-term evaluation	yes
3	The e-book	yes
4	Nest steps (The last project meeting in Valencia)	yes

#### Students (31)

1	Workshops	yes
2	Student round-tables	yes

## References

- Bennett, J.M., Bennett, M.J. 2004. Developing Intercultural Sensitivity: An Integrative Approach to Global and Domestic Diversity. In Landis, Bennett & Bennett (eds) *Handbook of Intercultural Training*: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G. 2001. *Cultures' Consequences*.t Second Edition, USA, Sage Publications Inc