

## ***Schools as intercultural communities:***

### ***Towards indicators for successful intercultural education – Think Tank***

#### ***Report***

#### **Context and background:**

##### Organisers

The Think-Tank was organised within the existing partnership between the Pestalozzi Programme (PP) and the European Wergeland Centre (EWC) together with the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC) of the Council of Europe and the European Commission and the Project Intercultural Education and Exchanges (ICEE) of the Council of Europe. The Think-Tank was also supported by the City of Oslo.

##### Dates

4 – 7 October 2011 (18:00 on 4 October to 14:00 on 7 October)

##### Venue

Oslo, Hotel Thon, Slottsparken

##### Working language

English

#### **Focus of the Think Tank:**

The three-day Think Tank sessions focused on discussing and critically reviewing existing practice and work results regarding whole-school policies and action for intercultural education as well as the development of the attitudes, skills and knowledge necessary for mutual understanding in diversity as a core element of the mainstream curriculum.

#### **Participants:**

A total of 25 participants: 1 school head and/or 1 teacher from each of 13 cities among the 20 cities members of the Intercultural Cities Network: Berlin Neukölln (Germany), Botrkyrka and Stockholm (Sweden), Dublin (Ireland), Izhevsk (Russian Federation), Limassol (Cyprus), Lisbon (Portugal), Melitopol (Ukraine), Oslo (Norway), Patras (Greece), Pécs (Hungary), Reggio Emilia (Italy), Subotica (Serbia), and from Nottingham (UK).

#### **Facilitators:**

Ildikó Lázár (coordinator)  
Olena Styslavska  
Hugo Verkest

#### **Process (collaborative knowledge building, cooperative techniques):**

Day 1 – Getting to know each other and familiarizing participants with the aims, processes and expected outcomes of the Think Tank;

Day 2 – Getting to know each other’s professional background and defining key terms in the field of intercultural education (culture, identity, intercultural communication, multiperspectivity, respect). Familiarizing participants with some of the theoretical and practical background readings of the field, including extracts from

1. The dimensions of intercultural education by Gerd Neuner, Council of Europe
2. Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters, Council of Europe, Language Policy Division
3. White paper on Intercultural Dialogue, Council of Europe
4. Intercultural cities project: Practical examples in education
5. Guidelines for Intercultural Education in Ireland (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment)

Day 3 – Identifying the components of intercultural competence (attitudes, skills and knowledge), defining indicators as observable behaviour, and drafting and revising the list of indicators described as observable behaviour in three steps by the participants and the team;

Day 4 – Finalizing the indicators, discussing possible teacher and school head action points conducive to the development of intercultural competence, agreeing on follow-up testing of indicators.

**Outcomes:**

The participants focused on the elaboration of a list of indicators for successful intercultural education covering a variety of aspects of teaching and learning of intercultural competence across the curriculum as well as appropriate whole-school policies.

**Follow-up:**

A compendium of successful initiatives as well as guidelines based on the feedback from the participants and their colleagues will be elaborated after testing the list of indicators in November and December 2011 (Phase 2).

Aims of Phase Two: testing the instrument to find out if the list of indicators/observable behaviors seems useful to practitioners who have not been involved in its development

Steps:

- ⤴ Each participant finds five colleagues who are ready to undertake the testing of the list of indicators by filling in an online questionnaire. (They can have a paper copy of the list of indicators and they can be informed about the process the participants of the Think Tank went through to produce the list but they should give their feedback only in the online questionnaire.)
- ⤴ The email addresses of these 5 colleagues of each of our 25 participants are sent to Claudia Lenz/EWC by November 1<sup>st</sup> 2011
- ⤴ Claudia Lenz drafts questionnaire to be sent out to the group of practitioners, reviewed by Ildikó, Lena, Hugo, Josef -> Ildikó also pilots it with some colleagues between November 15-22
- ⤴ Questionnaire launched on December 1<sup>st</sup>
- ⤴ Deadline for filling in questionnaire December 15<sup>th</sup>
- ⤴ Questionnaire sent to Think Tank participants via NING, offering them the

opportunity to give feedback after applying (parts of) the indicators (-> these data are **not** mixed with the data from the online survey!)

- ✦ If possible, hold a meeting in Strasbourg to revise the list of indicators and discuss further steps in Phase 3 for disseminating the final product (3<sup>rd</sup> week of January)

### **Participants' evaluation:**

The concept and the practical implementation of the Think Tank were highly appreciated by the participants. During the final evaluation session they called it "a great form of learning". According to them, direct involvement and working together to produce concrete outcomes was the best way of getting to know colleagues, learning about practices in the other countries, the others' points of view, experiences and examples of good practice. They were pleased with the results of their work and feel motivated to test and use indicators (15 people) which they find very useful (9 people). Furthermore, they stressed that they had acquired a lot of knowledge, thoughts, ideas and perspectives (24 people) which are valuable for their professional development. The participants said that the Think Tank helped them to understand the importance of soft skills in intercultural education and the difference between multicultural and intercultural education. New questions arose, some people felt more confident in what they were doing, while the others claimed that they understood their mistakes. Good timeline, friendly and respectful atmosphere were also among the strong points of the seminar. Some people expressed their need to have more time for exchange of information and sharing best practice. There was also some tension in the group at the end of the day 2, after the jigsaw activity. There was not enough time for some of the participants to cover the whole reading material proposed by the facilitators. However, for the majority this was a good resource to empower their vocabulary about intercultural education and an occasion to read some 'official' and theoretical documents in relation to intercultural education e.g. 'White Paper' of Intercultural Education of CoE. Josef's input about the visualization of intercultural education was also a revelation for the audience.

The diversity in approaches, techniques and tasks gave the participants some food for thought for their own practice. And the flexibility and the solidarity between the facilitators made the think tank a dynamic event.

All in all, the participants underlined that they had enjoyed the seminar a lot and "witnessing ICE in a professional form" helped them to understand, that "ICE is a never ending story", while the methodology that was proposed "made us [them] ready to eat it [a new understanding]". Tatyana Anisimova, a head teacher from Izhevsk said that after the Think Tank she got a completely new image of the Council of Europe and its activities. "...it is not a distant and vague institution anymore. Now that I participated in the seminar and experienced the working methods, I see that it works with us and for us. I am proud to have my personal input to the work. I feel a part of a real community".

### **Facilitators' evaluation:**

#### Strong points:

- ✦ cooperative group of participants, always active and on task,
- ✦ enriching variety of experiences and backgrounds among participants,
- ✦ timeframe could be kept despite the intensive and strenuous work that had been

planned

- ⤴ expected outcomes have been achieved,
- ⤴ atmosphere was good,
- ⤴ flexibility of the participants and facilitators,
- ⤴ the native speakers of English supported the other participants as much as possible in the activities and group discussions,
- ⤴ a holistic approach,
- ⤴ keeping the aims of the think tank in mind during the 3 days,
- ⤴ the different constellations of group work improved the exchanges and the outcomes,
- ⤴ the integration of the materials coming from the delegates (including the Nottingham GARP project),
- ⤴ variation in relevant working methods including cooperative techniques for “learning by doing” in true collaboration,
- ⤴ logical sequence of the sessions,
- ⤴ participants seemed committed to do the follow-up work,
- ⤴ introduction to the use of the platform was very useful,
- ⤴ venue was good,
- ⤴ organization was excellent,
- ⤴ hosts were very helpful and hospitable ,
- ⤴ good cooperation among facilitators.

Weaknesses, difficulties:

- ⤴ with many last minute withdrawals and replacements, facilitators did not have the chance to learn about all the participants and their backgrounds in advance
- ⤴ one participant dropped out on Day 2 as he had different expectations
- ⤴ one of the sessions was too work intensive for some of the participants (Session 4: jigsaw background reading)
- ⤴ the 3 days and nights were extremely work intensive for the whole team despite all the help we received from the organizers (and from Josef Huber)

Possible threats (and suggestions how to reduce them):

- ⤴ participants will have to be kept informed about the tasks through the platform so we don't lose their enthusiasm and commitment (facilitators suggested that each of them would become a “shepherd” or mentor for a third of the participants to keep up personalized online support but this has not been organized yet)
- ⤴ not all the participants are on the ning platform despite the fact that we have sent and resent invitations, which means that an occasional e-mail summary/reminder may be necessary
- ⤴ for some of the participants it may not be easy to find five colleagues who are willing to fill in the questionnaire and give feedback in English, so we should accept it if they only find 1 or 2 respondents.