

Case study: KinderKulturKarawane

NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION

Buro fur Kultur- und Medieprojekte, Hamburg, DE

<http://www.kinderkulturkarawane.de>

Mission/objectives of organisation

To encourage and create conditions for the fostering of cultural exchanges and peer learning initiatives.

Cultural exchange and peer learning are creative pedagogic methods addressed particularly to young people; children and teenagers are those most affected by poverty.

Child labour and the growing number of street kids are also consequences of poverty, as is insufficient education, the risk of HIV/AIDS, exploitation of children as soldiers, migration and exile. Partners from the South are socio-cultural organizations who support young people living in challenging situations to find their way out of misery and social disintegration by means of cultural activities.

These young people perform theatre, music, dance and circus – all kinds of performing arts - embracing relevant topics of campaigns concerning global issues. Workshops in common with young Europeans deepen insight and facilitate peer learning activities.

Moreover, ***Cultural approaches and peer-learning are becoming more and more accepted by pedagogical methods especially in informal education. The nature of the training approach to be used in V.I.S.I.ON relies on theatre as a cultural expression, within the context of an informal educational setting.***

“Cultural education means education in cultural participation. Cultural participation, in particular, means participation in the artistic cultural events of a society, and in the ability to act these out in general. Cultural education is one of the prerequisites for a happy life both in a personal, as well as, societal context. Cultural education is a constitutive element of general education.” - (Federal Centre for Political Education)³

“The true meaning of art lies not in the production of beautiful objects. It is much more a method, used, to understand. A way to comprehend the world, and to find one's own place in it.” – (Paul Auster)⁴

Description of your work: *What is its purpose, who do you normally work with, how many people do you work with, what type of activities are you normally involved in?*

Every year the KiKuKa invites 5 to 7 children's and youth culture groups from Africa, Asia and Latin America to Germany, Austria, Denmark and Switzerland and since 3 years ago, also in Bulgaria and Slovenia. These groups present their artistic productions in schools, youth and cultural centers, theatres, at festivals or at other cultural events, and also give workshops, which pass on the message about their lives, their fears, desires, and hopes for the future.

KiKuKa aims at high artistic quality

All the groups that come to Europe have two things in common: the productions they perform in Europe have a high level of artistic quality. Secondly, all the young artists involved come from marginal backgrounds (street children, child workers, war and AIDS orphans, refugees, lives of poverty, violence and drug abuse). Through the individual projects and related cultural work, they have managed to rediscover their dignity and self-confidence, thereby developing new perspectives for themselves.

Through a process of exchange, the children and young people of Europe are able to meet those of a similar age from other cultures, and to see them as talented artists and as equal partners, and with whom they can discover the many things that they have in common.

We promote dialogue between young people based on equality, and lasting partnerships organised by projects and schools.

Stimulating creativity and activity

The groups of the Kinderkulturkarawane bring a wide variety of cultural forms of expression, and the diversity of different cultures into schools. They thereby, not only broaden the cultural horizons of the young people in Europe, but also confront the audience indirectly with the question of how creativity and cultural diversity exists in their own country.

In the workshops of the Kinderkulturkarawane, the children and youth get to learn first hand, different forms of artistic expression. African dance, acrobatics, physical awareness, forms of theatre, dance choreography and the most diverse rhythmic forms, are so well rehearsed that they are able to perform them themselves.

Of most importance, however, is that the contact with the groups of the Kinderkulturkarawane clearly shows how closely education and culture are interlinked, and, additionally, what role culture can play in both personal and societal development.

Passing on of skills

Contact with the groups of the KinderkulturKarawane requires the participants to consider how the world is interconnected and the challenges that exist on a global scale, such as climate change or justice. It also requires an analysis of the complex economic, ecological and social causes of these problems, as a dialogue on equal terms is otherwise not possible.

The passing on of intercultural and social skills, and above all, the ability to take action, through the groups of the KinderkulturKarawane is successful and lasting, chiefly because in the company of young people of the same age, 'peer-to-peer learning' and most importantly, 'authentic learning', is made possible.

The participation in decision making processes in society through the young people of the Kinderkulturkarawane seems to young people as being as obvious as taking action autonomously. Both of these are fundamental aspects of the skills necessary to take action; based on interdisciplinary knowledge and forward thinking.

PROJECTS NAMES:

1. Kinder Kultur Karawane
2. "Cultural and peer-learning approaches to integrate socio-economically disadvantaged youth and young adults with an immigrant background"
3. "Strengthen Creative Cooperation" (SCC)

PARTICIPANTS: *(Who took part? What age? How many? What ages? Gender? Description of participants - children/ elderly/ special needs/ particular ethnicity/ deprived etc?)*

The variety of participants and end users Buro fur Kultur- und Medieprojekte has reached cultural groups from the Southern continents - Africa, Latin America & Asia – such as "Theatre of the oppressed" (Palestine), Baobab culture troupe (South Africa), Teatro Trono (Bolivia), Golden Youth Club & M.U.K.A. Project (South Africa), NAFSI Africa Acrobats (Kenya) and many others – who had the chance to go to European countries and implement peer-learning by means of cultural expressions including theatre and other performing arts. A common initiative – Strengthen Creative Cooperation – with FDCBPCS made it possible for Bulgarians to encounter Kenyan acrobats, South African actors and Brazilian capoeira dancers.

The groups from the South met and collaborated with children and young people from the visited countries. There have been no limitations regarding the background of the children involved, from both sides – European and non-European.

The age of the participants varies, but most often the groups that meet in Europe include kids at the age of 12-17.

The visiting cultural groups usually consist of 8 to 12 members and when in workshop, they work with groups of 10 – 30 European young people. The groups include both boys and girls – from both sides.

The visiting groups are young people that have decided to address their issues through the performing arts – they are ex-gang group members, orphans, and children of the street, children endangered by misusing drugs or being abused.

The welcoming groups in Europe are often from mixed ethnic backgrounds, with varying religions, or sometimes homogenous. Groups with physical and learning disabilities have never been excluded from the initiative.

AIMS: *(What were the aims of the projects?)*

The main aims reside in the implementation of peer-learning by means of cultural expressions. The young adults we involved had been working for years as ambassadors in their cultures, addressing the issues faced by young people in their countries and the solutions, which the different types of art (theatre, circus, dance, acrobatics, music) could offer them for the purpose of their development as strong, independent, confident, skilled and caring human beings.

Stimulating creativity and activity, as well as an education for sustainable development are also at the core of our concept that is automatically applied within the implementation of all projects: “Education for sustainable development imparts to children, youth and adults, sustainable thinking and ways of acting. It puts people in a position whereby they are able to make decisions for the future that make allowances for the effect these decisions may have on future generations, or on other parts of the world. The individual, experiences through education for sustainable development: my personal actions have consequences, not only for me and my immediate environment, but also for others. I can do something to make the world a little better. Such thinking is urgently needed to create a climate for change to address global problems such as the plunder of the natural world or the inequality in the distribution of wealth.’ (UN-Decade 'Education for sustainable development').

The passing on of intercultural and social skills, and above all, the ability to take action in the groups of our team is successful and lasting, chiefly because in the company of young people of the same age, 'peer-to-peer learning' and most importantly, 'authentic learning' is made possible. These are fundamental aspects of the skills necessary to take action based on interdisciplinary knowledge and forward thinking.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *(Describe the activity that took place: What did you do? Where did the project take place, location, organization etc.? When did you meet? How often did you meet? What was the length of the project?)*

Groups visit Europe in spring and autumn for a total of 4-5 months a year. They have performances and workshops almost every single day of their visit. They usually stay in one location for three days to one week, but sometimes, when there are more intense common actions – for example a group performance – to be carried out between visiting groups and host groups, the visitors stay longer in one location.

The locations are schools in various cities throughout Europe – mainly Germany, all the way from Hamburg to Cologne – small towns and big cities. The region in Denmark is around Kalundborg municipality, not far from Copenhagen. The region in Bulgaria is around the municipality of Plovdiv. In Austria – Vienna and Langenlois and in Slovenia – Ljubljana and Sejana. The workshops with school children in Europe last up to 3 hours and there is usually more than 1 session in order for effective passing of skills to take place.

The initiative started 15 years ago and is still going strong.

FACILITATORS AND BIOGRAPHIES: *(Who ran the project? What roles did they have? Provide names and short biographies)*

Ralf Klassen, Bettina Kocher and Teresa Majeovski

RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS: *(How were the participants selected?)*

The hosting schools in Europe are all those who express desire and interest to invite a group from the South.

The groups from the South are selected in accordance with the experiences of their members, the strength of the NGO, which is organising the activity, the background of the community where the cultural group and the NGO are situated, the issues, which the group is fighting and

the scope of the work – number of children involved, number of trainers available, structure and message of the performance and the workshops they can bring to Europe.

PARTNERS/FUNDERS: *(Did you work with any other organizations? Tell us about them. Were you funded by any organization?)*

The founders of the Kinder Kultur Karawane approach were two German organizations:

- Buero fuer Kultur- und Medienprojekte, Hamburg, DE - www.kultur-und-medien.com
- Institut equalita, Cologne, DE - <http://equalita.de/>

Funders: European Commission through EuropeAid programme, UNESCO & UNICEF as well as other national funds provided on federal level.

OUTCOMES: *(What were the outcomes? What changed as a result of the project?)*

- ***For the participants***
- ***For the facilitators***
- ***For the organization***

Working “with” these groups, sharing our experiences for a further emotional life, enabled us to better comprehend the difficulties and the resources of the end-users involved, getting together educators, young adults, parents, experts and novices, adults and children, to bridge the different cultures and different perspectives and express them together into the world that we see, that we hear, that we touch, that we feel with all our body and that brings us to knowledge and emotions.

The solid and enduring emotional involvement between the members of the groups (young adults, coordinators, representatives, educators and audience – which is always part of the greater idea of group) brought socialization and sharing that is outstanding from such distant and different cultures.

Even if some beginnings were a little hard or awkward because it is not easy for the participants to be equally prepared at the beginning, the outcomes of the cultural interactions were always fantastic and gave us the happiness to foster our commitments and build a constant meeting and an even deeper thread with South America, Africa and Asia.

EVALUATION METHODS: *(How did you evaluate the project?)*

Questionnaires for the level of satisfaction of the involved European children were used.

At the same time, questions and interviews were held with the visiting groups in order for us to understand how well we were meeting their requirements and expectations.

Several groups even had filming crews accompanying them in order to capture all moments and impressions. For example the movie "BREAKING BARRIERS - on tour with Teatro Trono" created with representatives of Teatro Trono from Bolivia is a fantastic example of the work we do and the experiences we create for young people across the globe:

Link to Spanish version - <http://vimeo.com/102871689>

Link to English version - <http://vimeo.com/102882588>

Link to Bulgarian version - <http://vimeo.com/102882589>

Link to Slovenian version - <http://vimeo.com/105385279>

Link to German version - <http://vimeo.com/102933024>

Link to French version - <http://vimeo.com/109683749>

Link to Danish version - <http://vimeo.com/98722128>

How did you know you met your aims? How did you measure success? What systems did you use?

Satisfaction has been demonstrated by means of the questionnaires we used and the interviews we undertook with participating children – from visiting groups as well as from host schools. We are observing changes in the attitudes in the visited schools and the satisfaction from the visiting groups is demonstrated by the fact that according to statistics, for the last 15 years on average there has not been a day without a visit from a group from the South to a European school. And this is a considerable success.

EVIDENCE: *(What evidence do you have to show that your aims were met? Statistics, anecdotes, date, photographs, film, etc)*

We have a lot of “smiley” questionnaires, happy videos, films, as well as a long list of comments by participants (quotations), which can be found on <http://www.kinderkulturkarawane.de>.

DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW: *(What did you learn from the project? What impact has this project had on your practice?)*

The initiative is at the core of our running activities and the main purpose of the organisation's existence. Cultural and peer learning between Europe and the southern continents is at the basis of what we have been doing for 15 years.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS: *(What guided what you did and how you worked? What did you think about in order to make this best practice? Theory, policies, approaches, expert advice etc.)*

(1) Institutions working with children and young people

It is also important that those responsible for the target groups are able to assess and balance the dynamics of the groups in an appropriate way. Do the children and young people get on well together (gender, age, different backgrounds)? Does the educational background fit (type of school, grade level, and compatibility with training rhythm)? Does the composition of the group allow for continuous work in the school over a longer time, or are short time offers preferred, e.g. in the form of vacation programs and workshops?

(2) Target group

Important considerations for the composition of the groups are gender, age, type of background, school and grade level. Also, although mixed-age groups are desirable, it is sometimes difficult to manage their implementation in everyday life. Large differences of interests, both in terms of artistic preferences (what kind of music, dance form, the form of theatrical staging), and in terms of issues treated, could arise. Also the coordination with the teaching rhythm in different classes (stages) can often be difficult to balance over a longer period.

Another particular consideration is related to parental background. Barriers can exist, which are set for children and adolescents due to restrictions by parents and family, traditional cultural and religious attitudes and behavior. The latter could be handled in the artistic discourse context, but a less homogeneous group could also lead to failure.

Sometimes it makes sense, to compose groups mixed by age, gender, and artistic orientation etc., only after an introduction period with more homogenous groups.

We need to make clear that these shared considerations are not intended to intimidate, but to update and inform about the potential risks related to this type of initiative in general.

(3) Gender segregation

An important result of practical experiences is that a gender-mixed group can work successfully only under specific conditions.

The issues at this age are not necessarily all that different, but the artistic realization often requires a huge "self-opening" and "come out of one's shell". The inhibition of pubertal age towards to the opposite sex is so high that a presentation is often perceived as an exposure. Saying all this does not mean that the initiators should not experiment with mixed groups, but that they need to keep in mind the particularities.

We should also keep in mind that mixed groups seem possible particularly in a school setting with fixed theatre plays or in cultural institutions where theatre enthusiastic young people participate.

(4) Artistic and educational management

Artistic and educational management plays a central role in the implementation of the concept. Such experts should have both artistic skills, as well as pedagogical competences, in order to be able to inspire children and young people for the activities and to motivate them to take part in long-term activities.

In addition, they should have close contacts and references to children and young people from the targeted group, and if possible have experience in collaborating with them. The specific knowledge of their behavior, attitudes and expectations is an important basis for appropriate design and implementation of workshops and courses.

(5) Design of services and activities

The appropriate design of the offer is also an important factor in the implementation of cultural concepts. Despite the variety, one-time and short-term offers are a first approach and provide incentive. For the sustainable implementation of the concept continuous courses for half of a school-year with fixed weekly schedule are recommended. The regularity and fixed structure usually makes it easier for children and young people to get used to and engage in the offers and setting after an introductory period.

A special appeal lies in the inclusion in the courses of final and interim public presentation events. There is usually a certain shyness and fear of public presentations, but with increasing security in the artistic activities during the course these become normal, and the challenge and interest in the presentation of the newly acquired skills are at the center.

(6) Planning and time horizon

Long-term and detailed planning is a key prerequisite for the success of such projects and activities.

The starting point of planning is to clarify the financial resources and funding. Only when this is secured, can the artistic and educational director be contracted and the contacting of potential participants begin.

(7) Continuation of the activities and cooperation

Culture-related activities for the integration of children and young people are more effective if the youth centers and cooperating schools or organizations consistently offer them, over time. Individual short-term actions and events should only be used for creating an initial incentive.

Another important component of the concept is the artistic and educational coordination. Often it is not easy to find suitable trainers for these offers, covering both the artistic side, and the specific needs of the target group. Cooperation with cultural institutions, such as music schools, dance projects, theatre groups, and circus projects is recommended.

(8) Approaches for development of training programs and training methods

It is advisable to keep a record of the methods a trainer uses, and reflect on his/her own experiences of using them, to help him adapt and improve them. ***It would be best if a trainer could ask colleagues to observe him using different methods in order to get feedback from them not only on his/her actions, but also on the actions/reactions of trainees.*** The participants in the training / workshops can also give feedback on the methods introduced; after all, they are the ones who should be benefiting from the activities directly.

The most appropriate methods for training and developing a training program should be chosen in relation to the content and learning materials needed to bring about the achievement of the learning outcomes. Even if a trainer develops skills in using a wide range of methods, he/she should not be tempted to use all the interesting methods in one session. The participants may enjoy them at first, but too much variety may cause confusion and frustration. Training methods are used to enable learning to take place, not to prove that the trainer is a good performer.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR V.I.S.I.ON: *(How might this project inform your approach to the V.I.S.I.ON project and your work with visually impaired young people?)*

The shared good practice gives a direction of thinking, which calls for the involvement of young performing arts trainers, students in artistic classes for example, young actors, who can

more easily interact with the young VI people and with whom the VI young people can more easily associate themselves and establish peer relations of trust and mutual respect.

Within V.I.S.I.ON we will start with a thorough presentation of our ideas and achievement goals in order for the participants – both children with visual impairment and theatre experts - to become well acquainted with the team, the philosophy behind the actions and the involvement requirements in order for the best results to be achieved. Starting from the inspired team V.I.S.I.ON will spread its notions in order to prepare the participants for the practical joint activities that will follow. Fostering and facilitating social integration, which is key to the project, will start with the building of a large group of friends.

The introduction of a creative theatre may offer an extraordinary resource to our visually impaired children's social learning process:

- Competent integration (distribution of roles)
- Cooperative learning on variable contents
- Enhance the personal sensibility
- Reinforce the interpersonal exchange and the group belonging, but maintaining the individual importance. Individual creativity within the group.
- Foster the creative skills and the sharing of emotions

To make creative theatre with V.I.P. it is necessary to deal with two problematic categories:

- Space and movement: knowing the space implies the ability of the child to mentally decenter and project him/herself within an environment to live it individually (listening spatial perception, exploration, 3D model, materials, embedded tracks on the floor, ...)
- Body scheme and gestures: theatrical contents by hands, arms, body, gestures (common kit of functional actions), and facial expressivity for an active and participative interaction in the relational dynamics.

It is essential that all the members of our consortium and all the involved end-users understand that we need to encourage the students with a visual impairment to become dynamic members of the workshop and future classroom, someone who is active in life and who is out there taking risks, because risk taking is at the basis of what we do. We cannot grow unless we take a risk. And about this matter, there is no difference between people with and people without visual impairment.

Bibliography:

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- Concept for a European Handout on Cultural and Peer-Learning Approaches for social integration, developed under the “Culture and peer-to-peer learning for integration of socio-economically disadvantaged youth” project, number LLP-2009-GRU-LP-14
- Analysis of approaches for development of training programs for disadvantaged youths in Bulgaria and Germany, developed under the project „Innovative approaches for identifying and responding to vocational education and training needs of disadvantaged youth”, contract number BG051PO001-7.0.01-0014-C001, funder by the Human resources development OP of the Republic of Bulgaria - http://www.cubufoundation.com/Inovative%20approaches%20project/Pages/bg/resum_eng.html