



BEHIND THE STEREOTYPES

BE AWARE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Carina den Otter - INEX Messenger Workshop - 2018 Outcome



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Creating this INEX Messenger workshop ‘Behind the stereotype – Be aware of cultural diversity’ was part of my European Voluntary Service Project ‘Don’t dream it, be it’, supported by the following organizations:



INTRODUCTION

“It’s not wrong or weird, it’s just different.” This sentence is good to keep in mind when you interact with people from different cultures. I learned this sentence during an international student exchange project about cultural diversity and I will never forget it. It’s the underlying idea of this workshop ‘Behind the stereotype’.

Interacting with people from other cultures is fun and it will teach you a lot. But sometimes we are easily judging each other, because we interpret things in a different way. To avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, it’s good to be aware of the influence of our different backgrounds. ‘Behind the stereotype – Be aware of Cultural Diversity’ is a workshop to let people realize that there is more behind people and cultures than we in first place see and to encourage people to postpone their judgments.

I created this workshop to give on the INEX workcamps, where people from different countries are living and volunteering together for two weeks. It’s an additional value to give this workshop to a group of people with different cultural backgrounds, but it can be given in every situation where you want to make people aware of cultural diversity and encourage them to have respect.

Carina den Otter
EVS Volunteer at INEX Slovakia

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

NEEDED MATERIALS

Small group

- Pen and paper for everyone. ¼ A4 per person.
- Pictures and quotes as find in the attachment, printed in big size and laminated.
- Quotes in the attachment printed on small colored papers, as give away.

Big group

- Pen and paper for everyone. ¼ A4 per person.
- PowerPoint presentation with the pictures and quotes as find in the attachment.
- Quotes in the attachment printed on small colored papers, as give away.

INTRODUCTION – 2 MINUTES

Introduce yourself, why you are here, why you give this workshop and what the workshop is about.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS – 6 MINUTES

International group

- Where are you from?
- What is a stereotype about your country?
- Is this stereotype in your opinion correct or not?

Group with people from the same country

- Which stereotypes do you know about ... [name of the country of the participants]?
- Are they true or not?
- Eventually: Which stereotypes do you know about other countries?

THEORY – 6 MINUTES

Theory 1 as find on page 8-9. About cultures, stereotypes and the cultural iceberg.

PICTURE ACTIVITY – 20 MINUTES

Every participant needs a pen and small paper. Show 3 or 4 small pictures (see attachment) to the group. The small pictures are a cut of a bigger picture, but the participants don't know this. Every participant has to work on his own and write down:

- What do you see on the picture?
- What is the story behind this picture? (What is happening, why, who is this person, thoughts of the person, etc.)

Then show the big pictures, in the same order as you showed the small ones and discuss in the group:

- What do you see on the picture now?
- What is the story behind the picture?

And at the end:

- What did you think when you saw the whole pictures?

THEORY – 8 MINUTES

Theory 2 as find on page 10. About that we often see just a part of a picture, without knowing it, that news events are exceptions of our daily life and about the TEDTalk 'Danger of a single story'.

Optional: Show shortcut of TEDTalk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODzwb90b5qE&t=17s>

WRAP UP – 2 MINUTES

Give a summarize of what they learned in the workshop.

- We learned: That people from different cultures have different ideas about what is normal, good, polite, et cetera.
- That we base our opinion on an incomplete picture, which is formed by media, upbringing, friends, stories, et cetera.
- What to do with this knowledge? Be aware of it. Realize that you maybe just see a part of the picture. Try to search for the story behind. Don't judge.
- One lesson I learned and want to share: "How another person behaves or thinks is not wrong or weird, it's just different."

End with giving everyone a nice coloured paper with printed quotes from the workshop, which they can take home.



THEORY

THEORY 1

Culture is: Characteristic, knowledge and behaviour of a particular group of people.¹

We all grew up in a specific country and learned a culture. It brought us habits, a way of thinking and it made us value things as normal, good, weird, polite, incorrect, et cetera. As long as we live together with people from the same culture, those things help us to live easily together. But

when we are in situations with people from different cultures, it gets interesting. We all have different ideas about what is normal, polite, good, et cetera and what not. Sometimes we are aware of these differences, sometimes not.



Stereotypes & Prejudices: “Stereotypes are generalizations about other groups of people which may or may not contain judgement.” “A prejudice is a generalisation containing a judgement which is usually negative about other people or social groups.”²

We shared stereotypes with each other. Stereotypes are examples of cultural characteristics where we are aware of. We know that it is something typical for our cultures and we know that other cultures will do that in another way.

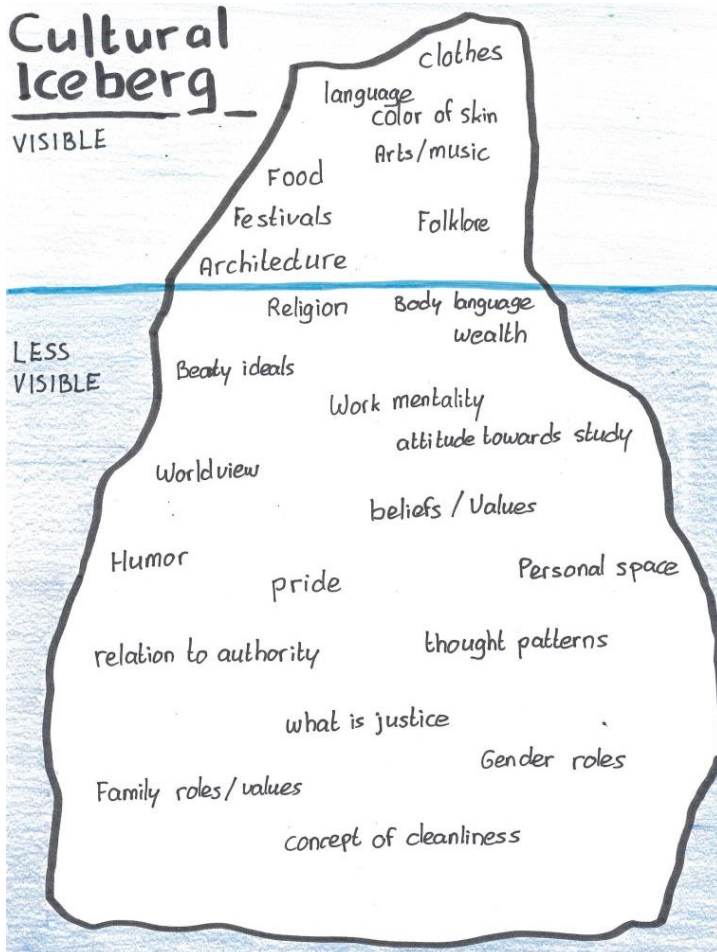
But there are many aspects of culture that are hidden. When you interact with someone from a particular culture, you don’t recognize this directly. It can take

¹ Zimmermann, K.A. (2017, July 12). What is Culture? Definition of Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html>.

² Keen, E. & Georgescu, M. (2016). *Bookmarks; a manual for combating hate speech online through human rights education* (pp. 166-167). Ukraine: Council of Europe.

weeks, months or even many years before you understand that these aspects are aspect of the culture. Also the people who live in this culture might not even realize that it's part of their culture.

Cultural Iceberg



If we are not aware of cultural differences in thinking and acting, it can work out in misunderstanding. We have a lot in common, we don't have to focus on the differences, but it's good to be aware of it to understand each other better.

THEORY 2

I showed you a set of pictures and asked you to say what is the story behind the picture. That's not fair, because you missed information. It was not the whole picture. But in daily life the same happens. We hear stories every day: from our parents, through our cultures, from friends and in the media. We base our opinions on that what we know. And our knowledge is based on our culture, upbringing and the stories we hear. But these stories don't always show the whole picture.

The problem with news is that news events are always the exception of daily life. For news about your own country, that's not a big problem. Because you see the normal situation of daily life every day, you understand that the news event is just an exception and you are able to interpret the news in the right way. But with news about other countries, we don't have this ability. If the only thing you hear about a country is shootings, extremists, sexual abuse, poor people or what more, you start to think that the whole country is like that. And that doesn't have to be true.

There is a Ted-Talk from a lady from Nigeria. Her name is Chimamanda Adichie, she grew up in a middle class family and she experienced a lot of stereotypes about people from Africa, when she went to study in the US. Her American roommate asked her where she learned to speak English so well and was surprised when Adichie told her that it was her mother tongue. She asked her to share the tribal music and was disappointed when Adichie started a tape of Maria Carey. Two quotes of Adichie:

"The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

"Show a [group of] people as one thing, only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become."

REFLECTION WORKSHOPS 2018

It took me some time to find a subject for my messenger workshop. There are many relevant topics in this society, but what is the one where I'm really into? Until I realized that I really enjoyed what I learned about cultural diversity during youth exchanges in Bulgaria. And during my study for journalism I learned about objectivity and the danger of knowing only one side of a story, which is related to this. I found my subject.

Next struggle: Find a point of view. How to put these different topics that are somehow connected with each other in a workshop? What is my focus?

I decided to prepare a game with pictures, to make people aware that if you don't know the whole story, you can easily misinterpret it. The picture game was a good game: it made the point of the workshop visible.

Structuring the theory around the game was more difficult. I finally succeeded somehow, but I wasn't really confident.



FIRST TRY IN THE OFFICE - BRATISLAVA

The moment came I had to give this workshop for the first time. It was a try out for my colleagues. Nothing important, but I blocked. Because I wasn't confident about the structure, I didn't succeed in talking at all. After I tried again, it went actually well. And even if I had the feeling that there was no line in my story, I got the feedback that it was really clear. After this try I added a bit more visible elements and I made sure that next time the story was clear for me. But furthermore I didn't change a lot.

SECOND TRY DEMOCAMP – BANSKÁ ŠTIAVNICA



My workshop was invented for an international group, but this time I had only Slovak participants. The first part of the workshop – talking about stereotypes – is a little bit less nice, but it still works.

The participants really liked the workshop. One girl liked the part about the TEDtalk of Chimamanda Adichie. She advised me to show the video during the workshop. In a small group I prefer to work without digital devices, but if I'll give this workshop to a big group I think it's a good idea. Another girl realized for the first time that news events are exceptions of daily life and that it's important to not base your opinion about other countries only on the news.

FIRST WORKCAMP – ZLATNÁ NA OSTROVE



This group was already quite aware of the topic cultural diversity. During the camp, we already talked a lot about it. They were interested and the workshop ended with deep discussions, which was cool.

I felt like the theory of the workshop was for this group not deep enough. But it's hard to go deeper than this in only 45 minutes, and for other groups it is good like it is. I still felt a bit insecure in giving the workshop, but my co-leader said it was really nice and the participants took part actively.

SECOND WORKCAMP – ECO SLATINKA

My participants were tired and not into the workshop at that moment. But finally they participated quite active and we had cool discussions, especially about stereotypes. There was one girl from Taiwan and others were asking her many questions about Taiwanese, Chinese and Asian culture. Unfortunately we had to go further, since I promised that the workshop would not take more than an hour. It was difficult to read on their tired faces what they thought about the workshop, but I hope they took something from it.

GYMNASIUM - BRATISLAVA

I will probably give the workshop one more time, in a gymnasium class in Bratislava. It will be a group with people from the same country. Because it will be a bigger group, I decided to make a PowerPoint, so everyone can see the pictures well. And since I am using the projector anyways I will also show a shortcut from Adichies' TEDTalk, if there is time enough.

LOOKING BACK

Once I finally found my topic, I was excited. I think that if people respect each other, we are closer to a better world. But when I started to prepare the workshop, I was not so excited anymore. I was struggling. Struggling with finding a good way to let people think in a short amount of time.

When I gave the workshops I found it hard to read in the faces of the people if that what I tried to communicate with the activities and theory, really reached them. But the feedback that I received was positive. I will rely on that.

Even when I was sometimes insecure during the messenger process, I'm looking back satisfied. I know that at least some of the participants realized something that they didn't realize before. I even decided to write a clear instruction, so I have everything ready in case I will have another chance in the future to give a workshop about cultural diversity.

ATTACHMENT

PICTURES FOR PICTURE GAME

Search on the internet or in newspapers and magazines for pictures that tell a story. Find pictures that you can cut in such a way that if you would see only one part of the picture, you'll interpret the story in a way which is different than if you would see the whole picture.

Examples:

- A handsome young man who lives on the street. If you see only his face, you cannot see he is actually homeless.
- Someone smiling on a dumpsite. If you don't see the dumpsite, it looks like someone enjoying a sunny holiday.
- A crying bride. If you see only her face, you would think she's sad.

Make sure you have two copies of these pictures. One should be the cut of the picture. The other copy should be the full picture.

QUOTES FOR THEORY 2

“The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”

Chimamanda Adichie – TedTalk ‘The Danger of a single story’

“Show a [group of] people as one thing, only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.”

Chimamanda Adichie – TedTalk ‘The Danger of a single story’

Communication with people from other cultures

It's not wrong or weird, it's just different.

