

iv) To see difference positively

What are the bases of being able to look at difference from a positive perspective?

Ideas and contents:

Our own culture is a mixture of differences:

- The social and cultural reality we belong to is the result of a conglomeration of differences.
- We do not consider those differences to be an overwhelming obstacle to living together.

The difference among different cultures is a positive fact:

- The connections and relations between different cultures are enriching not only for individuals but also for societies. They can also be the sources of great amusement and pleasure.
- Every society and culture has something to learn from and something to teach to other societies.
- How do we learn to avoid making immediate judgements about facets of other cultures or lifestyles which are “strange” to us?
- How can we learn to live with the feelings of (temporary) insecurity, which these processes awaken in us?
- How do we take advantage of the enormous opportunities such encounters give us to find out new sides to our identities?

v) To favour positive attitudes, values and behaviour

All of these stages are based on the promotion of values: human rights, recognition, acceptance, active tolerance, respect, peaceful conflict resolution and solidarity.

- If we claim the right to solidarity then, as Jean-Marie Bergeret summarises, we also have an obligation to show solidarity. It is this type of conclusion we are working towards in intercultural education. But young people will only change their attitudes and conclusions for themselves, we can only help to facilitate the process by working through a variety of challenges with them over time.
- If we work to favour these sorts of attitudes it will be easier to encourage positive behaviour toward people from other cultures. But we have to take into consideration that these attitudes and behaviours are not possible if they are not developed parallel to qualities like honesty, cooperation, communication, critical thought and organisation.

Pause for Thought

Intercultural education is not a closed program that may be repeated without continuous modifications. On the contrary, not only is the range of possible intercultural activities very wide, but we also have to question continuously what we are doing and why. It is impossible to buy a magic formula that can guarantee us success.

To help us know how and where to place the limits of each informal intercultural education activity we should try to be aware of the following factors:

- **The content and the extent of the activity we are intending to organise.** There is a saying in Spain, which sums it up nicely: “We cannot pretend to hunt an elephant with a fishing-rod”.
- **The context in which we are going to work and the limits it imposes on us.** The motivation of the participants will differ according to the venue and their motivations to attend.
- **The level of acquaintance and relationship we have with the young people with whom we are going to work.** If we know them well and know that we can plan long-term this will have an effect on our objectives. Our planning process changes if we are going to organise a one-off activity with young people we don't know yet.
- **The level of participation in the activity.** If they feel responsible for the outcome of an activity the results will be more positive than if the participants feel they have only a passive role to play.

On the other hand, we have to take into account that:

- **Isolated activities have limited effects.** In intercultural education we are looking at values, attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, it would be desirable for each activity to be developed within a wider process. But this does not mean that we should turn down even limited opportunities to facilitate intercultural processes; it is mainly a question of tailoring our ambitions.
- **The meaning of the activities should start and must be referred to the participants' daily life.** We are aiming to generate positive attitudes in our own environment and to link that environment with the rest of the world.

How we approach each informal intercultural education activity, will depend on our concrete possibilities to act and on the participants... We have used these ideas and principles in designing the activities for Part B, but we realise that it is neither possible nor logical to make hard and fast rules.

To sum up, it may be helpful to remember that:

- Starting from an active and dynamic methodology...
- we work with processes...
- through which and by means of information, analysis and critical reflection of reality...
- the participants in our work will find ways to:
- interact with people from other cultures positively in their daily life
- and will devise strategies to transfer that positive relation with people from other cultures into individual or collective actions

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