



„Learn and Practice Democracy-Sharing European Experience in Interactive Teaching and Debates”

„Learn and Practice Democracy”

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During the Summer Camp’s participatory theatre training activities, we took advantage of two well-established methodologies of Participatory Theatre, adapted to the needs, the contexts and age of the group members: Forum Theatre, part of the Theatre of the Oppressed method, established by Augusto Boal and Playback Theatre, founded by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas.

Forum Theatre, and the game-exercises leading to it, together with the methods of Image Theatre, allowed us to create a safe space for sharing problems, issues that are present in our lives. The themes and issues to be explored were not given top-down, they always came from the group. We used participatory and theatrical tools to explore alternatives to problematic issues in our lives, in a collective, critical thinking process, in order to map the most prevalent topics, and to take action to change.

Playback Theatre offered us the space to process emotionally what we explored, sharing, listening and honouring each other’s story and emotions, allowing us also to decompress emotionally what lived during the whole process, as a community.

Participatory exercise, group decision making, listening. After the group expressed the need to have free time to use the swimming pool, we took the opportunity to open a participatory process, to decide altogether the timing and schedule for the next days. The verbal exercise brought to the attention of the group the need to listen to each other’s needs, to speak one per time, to raise hands in order to speak. We took the chance to introduce a participated decision making process, a practical exercise to “practice democracy” and to look for the consensus of the whole group. The process of deciding together a schedule for the day that could include the needs from all the group members, in a participative and democratic process, and not a top-



„Learn and Practice Democracy-Sharing European Experience in Interactive Teaching and Debates” down decision to just be accepted or not, became a metaphor on how to conduct a participated democratic process.

Evening activities involved a creative drawing exercise (the creation of a picture titled “What is meaningful for me”) and short film screenings accompanied by group discussions around topics of the visual materials produced by the children or presented on the screenings.

During the drawing exercise topics that came up included national unity, parts of Georgia being occupied, female empowerment, cultural heritage, the value of the family, protection of the environment, freedom of expression, cosmopolitanism, tolerance, modernism, inequalities and good education. Short films that we watched together were about activism and organising collective action for protecting vulnerable, excluded groups, the origins and dangers of stereotyping and gender based violence.

During the theatre exercises children generally had a bit of a difficulty to stay focused for an extended period of time and they often had trouble listening to each other and paying attention to what others are doing or saying. We solved this issue by making changes in the original schedule, deliberating on the desired organisation of the trainings together with the participants. The facilitated group discussions in the evenings made focusing much easier for them, probably because of its relevance to their experience with the debate format that gives a more structured and disciplined framework for discussion.

During the evening discussions children expressed that acts of solidarity and organising actions for protecting vulnerable groups often seem risky for them and they would maybe lack the motivation for engaging in such activities, however almost all of them expressed their desire for fair and just communities. Stereotyping in general but especially gender stereotypes are present in the children’s life, in some cases internalised, in others appearing as a difficulty for them personally (one of the boys mentioning that the masculine expectations of being good in sports is rather a burden for him, and some girls saying that women are discouraged to take on certain activities or professions such as medicine because of their gender).

These issues that surfaced on the evening discussions were processed and reflected upon during the day work with the above mentioned tools and methods and gave room for children to reflect on them in the creative framework of theatre.