

Workshop F5: Reshaping Intercultural Learning

Intercultural learning, as a broad set of approaches and assumptions, has been a central aspect of non-formal education in Europe for decades. Nevertheless it has come under attack from a range of positions in recent years. In a Europe united by a resurgent political rhetoric of integration and the need for social cohesion through common values, intercultural education is associated with the supposed relativism of a rejected multicultural era. From another perspective the central focus on culture and individual self-knowledge limits the political possibilities of intercultural education. This session outlines these different criticisms, issues in an initial input, and suggests some ways in which intercultural learning may be reshaped for the current moment. A subsequent discussion group will focus on reshaping intercultural learning in the context of citizenship education. (Simultaneous translation into French language)

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This workshop aimed to guide participants through a critical discussion of intercultural learning theories and approaches and their relevance in contemporary European societies. The basis of the workshop was an argument that dominant intercultural learning practices are inadequate and that reshaping intercultural learning requires rethinking it conceptually, politically and educationally.

The workshop proceeded through alternating inputs and discussions on key questions emerging from those situating inputs. As a group orientation, as well as in recognition of the diversity of practices and understandings encompassed by the term intercultural learning, the group individually reflected on the question: What is your involvement in intercultural learning/education, and what do you aim to achieve with that involvement? There was a group discussion of the second aspect of the question which allowed the group to open out the different kinds of educational and political projects and ends for which intercultural learning approaches are mobilised. The thematic inputs and discussions then proceeded through three deliberately provocative questions:

- **Conceptual:** Is intercultural education racist? this discussion explored the ways in which dominant approaches to intercultural learning focus on bounded and essential ways of thinking about groups, and that this may often be to the exclusion of exploring people's positionality, power, social context and identity.
- **Political:** Is intercultural education anti-political? This discussion explored the ways in which cultural recognition can often be separated from social, political and economic contexts, positions and implications
- **Educational:** Is intercultural learning fundamentalist? This discussion examined how the modular approaches and decontextualised theories used in dominant intercultural learning may promote forms of learning which marginalise experience and other explanatory frameworks and approaches.