

## Workshop F7: Intercultural competences in adult education: assessment criteria and models

Intercultural competences are based on three pillars: cognitive (knowledge related to intercultural issues), affective (emotional effects of intercultural encounters) and action-related aspects (behaviour in real intercultural situations). While the cognitive type are rather easily measurable and testable, it is significantly more difficult to assess affective and action-related intercultural competences, notwithstanding their particular importance in real life. This workshop will therefore deal with diverse methods for strengthening and assessing intercultural competences.

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### Minutes

The workshop started with a warm-up activity in which the 10 participants were split in groups based on their answers to some questions – who lived/worked in a foreign country, who trained/taught in diverse cultures, how one overcame a critical incident etc. This is how we smoothly stepped in our personal experience on the seminar topic. Then, the moderator sat down on the “hot chair” and answered the participants’ questions by illustrating how a broad experience turns a person into a real world citizen. A short theoretical input followed – the three levels of learning (cognition, emotion and action/behaviour) generated a rich discussion because of our different perceptions (experience-reflection-action seemed a more suitable approach in adult learning).

The painting we were asked to observe then proved very clearly how meta-viewing can alter our specific/concrete/objective-oriented observation. Most of the participants saw *peace, harmony, balance, genuine nature* instead of *men, women, an animal, a lake* etc. Then the trainer explained the context in which Paul Gauguin authored and exhibited his shocking paintings.

A new theoretical moment came in order to analyse why and how the group could not see with eyes, but with brain: we discussed the three steps of processing an experienced/observed situation (selection – interpretation – evaluation) using several personal experiences.

Some quotations (e.g. “Postpone interpretation until you know enough about the other culture!”) gave us the leading thread for the next task: a case study of a critical incident (a Hispanic woman working in an American company and not willing to develop herself in spite of her boss’s support). We worked in three groups on different tasks: - identifying the behaviours, standards, etc. that clash in the situation,

- retelling the story from the woman’s point of view
- finding a constructive solution.

The participants came up with numerous solutions and agreed upon the idea that lack of communication was the fundamental cause of the incident. This exercise drove us through the three steps of learning and gave us a rich sense of the cultural awareness we demonstrated by outlining the solutions.

The final task depicted once more the power of questions as assessment tools. We were asked to stand in a line according to our position related to the author of a car accident (who happened to be our friend) and wanted to escape.

The whole workshop was a living stage for cultural understanding, critical thinking, valuing human dignity and openness offered by a very professional trainer who showed us a really inspiring dimension of intercultural learning.

*Minutes taken by Corina Leca, The Friendship Ambassadors Association, Romania*