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Book of the Leader

Interactive Methods and Group Work

as a part of Intercultural Education

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The essence of intercultural education

Intercultural education is a structured process which aims at developing of understanding, accepting and constructive relations between people from different cultures. In the ideal case it gives the participants a chance to look at different cultures as a source of knowledge and to accept and respect the existing differences. It stresses on cultural, ethnic and racial in addition to linguistic differences. Quite often, intercultural education is understood more broadly and includes socioeconomic differences (town-village, young-old, workers-clerks), professional differences (teacher-parent, doctor-nurse), sexual, religious differences.

In the first place, intercultural education aims at forming of awareness and attitude towards our cultural heritage and also understanding that there is not a culture which is intrinsically better than the others. In the second place, its purpose is to acquire skills for analysis and communication which help the participant to function well in multicultural environment. It stresses not only on the learning itself but also on experiencing of intercultural differences in different personal and public situations.

Intercultural education is based on the assumption that we all experience different cultural influences and are multicultural in general.

Monoculture, biculture and multicultural are terms which characterize continuum which people can use in order to expand their cultural identity. When working with Roma parents we help them to form ideas about educational multicultural environment and to go beyond the circle of educational understanding typical for Roma society.

Another key term in intercultural education is **cultural relativism**, which suggests that cultures cannot be judged or appreciated by one and only, absolute or moral perspective. Every evaluation is relative in regards to the environment where it emerges. Value, ethics and moral of each culture cannot be evaluated as superior or inferior compared to other cultures.

Intercultural education aims at **cultural pluralism** - members of pluralist society acknowledge the contribution of every group to the civilization and support the development of different lifestyles, languages and beliefs. Essential for cultural pluralism is to convince the members of society of the **importance of cooperation and dealing with problems and challenges together**. Education in such a pluralist society aims to provide conditions for cooperation, harmony and respect when it comes to accepting cultural differences as well as to develop skills for intercultural communication and for seeing the world from a different perspective.

At the heart of intercultural education lies **intercultural communication**. It defines the process of communication between people and groups from different cultural backgrounds and includes non-verbal, verbal communication, the use of different linguistic and nonlinguistic codes.

This type of communication develops intercultural awareness, which means that our behaviour, way of thinking and perception are determined by culture and are not universal aspects of human nature and in every single moment we should be aware of our own cultural identity as well as the cultural identity of the people different from us.

Several problems are essential for intercultural communication:

- when our experiences do not fit in the categories we use for accepting people and events, we try to put them in a category which leads to **stereotypes**, i.e. we make big distinctions as far as our culture is concerned but **simplify other cultures** and fill them with negative or destructive emotions;
- main source for intercultural incomprehension and conflict is the clash between **deeply rooted and culturally determined perception of reality**;
- **our awareness is emotional and comes from our experiences rather than our intellectual development**, although we usually think that mind is the main source of learning. We are all susceptible to influence even if we consider ourselves as autonomous, not dependent on our cultural heritage.

In this sense, intercultural education aims to make us realize how narrow minded we are, to help us overcome the limitations we put on our perception, views, attitude towards people and the world, those who are different from us. That is why as teaching intercultural education **we should explore our own ways of perceiving, models of communication, experience and sharing**. Only then we will be able to overcome our inner protection and then really liberated will direct the processes within a group.

This is important because it is believed that members of minority groups (in our case - Roma people) have intercultural skills because they have survived in the hostile environment of the culture of the majority.

As leaders we should be multicultural, not in the sense of being competent in more than two cultures but in the sense of **mastering the processes of intercultural studies, communication and human relations**. Multiculture is achieved when the person has mastered the frame of intercultural communication and relations between people and applies them effectively when meeting other cultures. Multiculture is a state in which we acquire knowledge and develop skills we need in order to feel comfortable (without tension, stress, worry, protectiveness, anxiety and losing direction, which accompany the initial intercultural meeting.)

Our main goal is to get the idea of multicultural across to people from minorities. It is difficult for them to **go beyond egocentrism, their cultural and social recognition in democratic society**. With our educational programs and efforts it is a not an easy task because Roma parents face a new cultural environment (the school and the educational system in the broad sense) without having enough support from their group or formed roles and relations which can help them in the process. The lack of signs, keys to understanding education, knowledge about the way the system functions and its rules for behaviour make a big number of Roma people reject the educational system due to the threat of leaving in uncertainty and rejection of their own values and sometimes even to feel a cultural shock.

It is obvious that all these activities can happen only in the conditions determined by new forms of interaction, interactive methods - relations of partnership, equality, dialogue, based not so much on formal knowledge but on experience, sharing, discovering of educational reality and its functional conditions and the forming of action models in it.

Interactive methods and their use when working in intercultural environment

Interactive are methods based on simultaneously acquiring knowledge, forming of skills and disposition trough putting young people in situations when they can interact and afterwards discuss what they have experienced.

Interactive methods aim at more and better interactions between trainer and trainees, educator and those who are being educated, among the young people themselves.

They support personal development of the participants based on mutual experience, dialogue, solving problems together (analysis, searching for alternatives, decision-taking). Interactive methods mean constant interaction and feedback, constant involvement of participants and looking for decisions.

Interactive methods provide opportunities for joint construction of the object of education, pedagogic reality so that everybody can share the responsibility for the educational process.

Interactive methods suggest a **common educational language**, which is easily internalized by the participants because it is based on their experience and involvement in the process of exploring reality.

In this sense interactive methods give the shape of contemporary educational process and also reflect its essence - forming a new educational reality based on joint searching, dialogue, discussing and decision-taking.

In the broad sense of the term, interactive methods are not concrete techniques and algorithms, **but the whole process of interaction between educational actors**, where education from static and hierarchic turns into a process, interaction, constant braking of forms. They lead to joint activity and set the limits of this activity, define the possibilities for action and freedom of educational actors.

Participation in the group requires special approach connected with motivating the participants to work together, involve them in different group activities like problems solving, discussions and analysis, developing action plans, talking about personal experience within the group.

All this is a logical result from the contemporary educational situation which can be defined by four factors:

- Individual "I" of the participant, including motivation, interests, personal experience and level of involvement of individual participants
- "We" or the group with its relations, dynamic and types of cooperation
- "It" or the theme, which is the object and contents of education

- "The globe" - metaphoric definition for the educational environment from the immediate environment of the society to the global environment of modern world.

Interactive methods place the participants in a situation of permanent discussion, give the opportunity for expressing of personal opinion and involve the availability and use of constant feedback.

After all, interactive methods by involving participants in discussing concrete problems, experience and with the possibility for feedback allow them to devise behaviour strategies.

Group work in the model of intercultural education

Group work is main democratic dimension in education. If modern understanding of democracy means not only giving power to political actors for implementing public policy and development, but the ambition to give power to every citizen in order to participate in the political process, this should begin from education.

In this sense intercultural education sets the model of democratic socialization - joint preparation of the participants for life in democratic values and truths.

Intercultural group is an ideal democratic society, democratic environment where people share, look for causes and reasons, social support, compare how extraordinary their social experience is with the other participants. There is a possibility to try out strategies for democratic behaviour in safe conditions and among participants they know, who understand and have the same problems.

Group work creates conditions for:

- involvement of the participants during the whole period of education ;
- mastering the mechanisms of cooperation, getting used to the normal for society division of labour;

- developing high level of communication skills in the participants;
- stressing on cooperation and not on the competitive character of human relations;
- mutual assistance and also mutual stimulation for creating a much bigger number of possibilities for studying and education ;
- teaching the participants to express and stand for they rights, and also to share responsibilities in a group;
- much more effective and well-timed feedback for more natural exploration of the effectiveness of used methods of education ;
- helping participants together to look for roads to the opening world, towards civic society, economics, local society;
- building a model of social awareness and involvement;

Participation in the group model for studying creates norms, rules of interactions, leads to organized knowledge about democratic society and of different social communities and at the same time is a safe place for the participants where they can express themselves and share their values.

The group is a place where participants will learn truths about life and themselves. Consequently, in this model the group as a teaching institution is a source for socialization and integration.

For this reason it is quite natural that the main rules of group work are based on the universal norms for effective communication and on the main human rights:

Sincerity - Creation of conditions for free expression of feelings and problems concerning the participant as well as facing the feelings, and problems of the other participants and people close to them;

Non-assessing atmosphere in regard to the interaction in the group, based on expressing feelings and not on giving marks and attaching labels.

Concreteness and genuineness - The group works on concrete problems, people give specific feedback and share concrete experiences which not only bring the participants

together but also help them build a practice attitude towards social reality and in a broader aspect gives the possibility to become more resistant to ideological influence.

Activeness and initiative - In order to receive information about how he/she is accepted and seen by the others, a participant should do the most natural - participate in team work, be active e.g. share experience, look for explanations for events, be part of a dialogue. This way, through cooperation, is formed an active attitude to events, people and people take more responsibility for their behaviour.

Emphasising the young person's strengths, which creates an atmosphere of friendliness really important for the participants' performance and forming of an adequate self-assessment ability.

Group norms and personal responsibility - Participants become more responsible for their actions by interacting, perceiving others, looking for and receiving information for themselves.

Sanctity of the individual - Nothing in the group happens at the expense of a participant's feelings or experience. This way the necessary atmosphere of security is provided and participants can look for self-expression and recognition.

Freedom of expression - While working, the group participants constantly look for a balance between freedom of expression and sanctity of the individual, which contributes for modifying an assertive but not aggressive behaviour and does not allow the sanctity of the individual to be violated.

Support - in the group participants need and receive support: purely human (they understand that others also have the same problems and that problems of society are everybody's problems), support which help them solve problems and also assist their future development.

This way group work and joint activity define the character of intercultural education.

Rights of people from minorities

In 1960, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) adopted **The Convention against discrimination in education**, which acknowledges the right of minorities to carry out their own educational activities. This includes having their schools and teaching in their own language. This right depends on "the educational policy of each country" and the general right to education of minorities has to help different minority groups to "understand the culture and language of the society as a whole and to participate in its activities"

Declaration on the Rights of persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and linguistic Minorities was finally finished and adopted by the National Assembly of UN in 1992. Among the more significant articles of this relatively short declaration are the following:

States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

Persons belonging to minorities have the right to take active part in religious, community, economical and public life.

Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.

States shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law and contrary to international standards.

The most widely quoted definition of "minority" is probably the one offered by Francesco Kapotorti. "Minority is a group, smaller than the rest of the population of the state, in a non-dominant position, whose members - as citizens of the state - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics, which are different from those, belonging

to the rests of the population and which possess even implicit feeling of solidarity, aimed at preserving their culture, tradition, religion and language."

The phrase "national minority" applies to a group of people in a country who:

- a) live on the territory of the country and are its citizens;
- b) maintain long-term, stable and lasting relations with this country;
- c) possess different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics;
- d) are a big enough number, despite being outnumbered by the rest of the population of the country or a region of the same country.
- e) are motivated by concern to preserve together what they consider their identity, including their culture, traditions, religion and languages.

States are obliged to "provide conditions for supporting this [ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious] identity [of national minorities...] and to take the necessary measures for the purpose after certain consultations, including contracts with organizations or associations of such minorities, according to procedures for taking decisions in every state."

Principles of **equality in the eyes of law and non-discrimination** are equally fundamental in all bulletins about rights of minorities and have already got to status of common international law, compulsory for all states. The widespread support of the Convention for destroying all forms of racial discrimination also supports the view that discrimination on the basis of "national or ethnic origin" is forbidden by international law.

Another thing connected with the principle of equality is the idea that members of minorities should be equal to members of majorities *de jure* and *de facto*.

In article 27 of the International pact of civil and political rights is mentioned the **right of minorities to "profess and practice their own religion"** which is probably included for practical purposes, connected with guarantees for freedom of religious creed,

formulated in the Pact and in other tools for human rights. The right to use **their own culture** also seems well accepted, although its meaning is more unclear. Declaration of minorities for example puts states under the obligation to "provide favourable conditions" for developing cultures of minorities "apart in the cases when certain practices breach national legislations and contradict international standards".

Using the language is one of the issues which causes a lot of disagreement in minority-majority relationships although the right to use own language "in society and when alone" is probably the most defended in international law. Restrictions on using a language are definitely unfounded as would be the case with any discriminating prohibition on using a minority language in a printed edition, radio, television or another source of information.

Education is main concern not only of minority societies but also of majority ones and modern formulations of minority rights are trying to achieve balance between legal interests of both groups. Minorities at least have the right to create their own private educational institutions although article 13 from Framework convention says that this does not oblige the state to support these institutions financially. In the regions where considerable part of the population speaks the language of the minority the children should be given the chance to be educated in their mother tongue or at least to learn their native language. None of these rights, though, restricts the power of the state to insist on learning the official language or covering of certain minimal educational requirements. States should also guarantee that state educational system encourages learning of history, customs and culture of minorities.

It is important to know that in our democratic society exists a special **Law for protection against discrimination**, an act which provides us with equality in the face of law, similar opportunities for taking part in the life of the society and effective protection against discrimination.

Discrimination is every unfavourable attitude towards a person because of his / her sex, race, nationality, ethnic background, citizenship, beliefs, political affiliations, age, marital status or financial status.

Discrimination is direct when people treat us - due to one of the factors mentioned - in a different way from other people (e.g. they do not serve me in a restaurant or they do not want to employ me because I am a Roma person)

Harassment due to the mentioned factors, inciting discrimination or racial segregation (e.g. dividing children from different ethnic groups in different schools) are also considered as discriminatory actions.

In Bulgaria exists a ban on discrimination and it concerns all people so that our rights and freedoms are protected.

This ban on discrimination goes for school relations as well. Racial segregation the issuing of a document, any action or lack of action which leads to forced separation of people on ground of their race, ethnic background or skin colour.

According to the law the Minister of Education and Science and the local self-governing authorities take measures so that not to allow racial segregation at educational institutions.

The head teacher of the school is obliged to take effective measures in order to prevent any form of discrimination coming from staff (teachers and other members) or pupils. If the head teacher receives a complaint from a pupil who claims to have been harassed by a staff member or a pupil, he/she has to investigate and take the necessary steps in order to stop the harassment as well as to take disciplinary actions.

Educational institutions take measures in order to provide disabled people with equal opportunities to exercise their right to education effectively, unless in cases when the expenses are too high and will put the institution in a difficult situation.

If a child thinks that his/her rights have been violated the head teacher is obliged to inform him/her what is done in order to stop this happening.

Teachers are also responsible for not allowing actions of discrimination among students and therefore should not by any means discriminate any of the pupils themselves.

Citizens have the right to insist that the school of your child provides special programmes for fighting discrimination, teaching children in the spirit of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect of others rights and differences.

Preparation for work

Complexity of the task

It is important to mention that interactive methods are not a set of techniques. They reflect the nature of contemporary education, the connection between educational actors; they are not for decoration but lay in the base of the learning process.

Intercultural education is joint searching and problem solving, dialogue and partnership with the rest of the participants. It is an area where you can not only gain knowledge but also give a meaning of the world, prepare for an active social life.

Intercultural education is an area where a purpose is the building of active civic and moral position and of a clearly displayed value system.

Intercultural education is also a complex area, a crossing point of very different sciences and spheres which require awareness of the happening social processes and constant increase of knowledge in the field of politics, social development, economics and psychology.

This area also requires forming of its own infrastructure.

And, most importantly, the participants are actually a group which develops, solves problems and undergoes changes.

Interactive methods and group work from this point of view present a way of establishing of relationships, organizing the environment, leading the participants in it and putting them into interactive situations.

This can be done through cooperative methods, dialogue, ways of solving problems, sharing and mutual support.

Generally, **the learning model based on group work and interactive methods** can be defined by the following steps:

- **experiencing** - participants are involved in some kind of activity and the experience gained out of it is essential for the whole process.
- **announcing** - the participant shares or expresses his/her reactions and observations in front of the rest of other participant who have experienced or observed the same type of activity.
- **group process** - all dynamic actions which occur during the activity are studied, discussed and evaluated by all participants.
- **summarizing** - it helps participants to define, change or develop the things they have learnt as a result of participation and discussion of a problem situation.
- **application** - planning how to apply the things learnt from the activities and the gained experience.

This way **the six levels of knowledge** are connected in the process:

- realization - to recollect, admit and realize the existence of a certain process or problem;
- understanding - to transfer the information received from one to another form of knowledge;
- application - to apply and use the information in a new situation;
- analysis - to explore the situation by dividing it into constituent parts;
- synthesis - arranging the information in a new way

- evaluation - to make an evaluation based on explicit criteria

The learning model is a set of consequent steps beginning in the participant with the occurrence of a problem, piece of information or experience, which do not match his/her expectations and causes change in attitude, emotions and personal orientation. Change of attitude is a cause for new behaviour, which is a source of information for the rest of the participants and this way it changes their consciousness. These changes in their consciousness cause changes in their attitudes and so on. When this process is performed in a group, everybody can participate in consequent stages of the following one another cycles.

In intercultural groups people mould social reality, interethnic relations; elements of politics, democracy, public processes in local society, in the state, in global society.

On the basis of structural experience of discussing and sharing, of problem situations every participant has the chance to build their own model and understanding, to give their meaning to the discussed processes and problem situations, to prepare in their own way for the role of a citizen. In a given problematic socio-psychological situation two or more participants can choose different personal models, to internalize in their own ways the main democratic principals of communication, interaction and behaviour and democratic values and attitudes.

Main psycholo-pedagogic tasks in a certain problem situation are:

- self-awareness of the person who is being educated;
- becoming aware of the wholeness of the one's socio-psychological nature; the emotional knowledge of group-dynamic occurrences in the situation;
- correction and forming of socio-psychological skills and habits; using the problem situation as a source for learning how to communicate.
- In this learning model the participants
- encounter problems occurring in an actual situation in which they take part with the leader;

- undertake various actions in order to solve the problems through experimenting, searching, guesses, inventing;
- giving mutual feedback about the consequences of concrete types of behaviour and attitude which allows them to evaluate the way they behave and the reactions from the others;
- together with the leader they try to summarize the thing they have gone through and the gained experience, formulate hypotheses, check by concrete actions in the group and this way move forward and face new social challenges and explore and solve new problems;

Main source of motivation and energy for studying in the group are the occurring problems as well as the intensive experience among the participants in the group and the intensive relations between them and the leader or other educational and public actors.

The Group. Processes. Roles. Motivation.

Roma parents group is a special type of group and in order to understand it we have to clarify some notions.

Above all they are an ethnic group - a group of people who identify with racial, national or cultural characteristics. They are its members by birth. Usually ethnic groups are treated as mutually dependent parts of bigger cultural or political communities. The term "ethnic groups" goes for groups who have the status of minorities in a bigger society.

They possess their own culture - a summary of their lifestyle: including values, beliefs, ethnic standards, linguistic expression, ways of thinking, behaviour norms, and styles of communication which are developed by the group of people in order to guarantee their survival in a certain physical or human environment. Culture and people, who are part of it, interact with each other so culture is not static. It is an answer of the group of people to the valid and special needs of its members.

In most of the cases they can represent **subculture** - group of people in the bigger socio-political structure, who share (often linguistic or dialectic characteristics), who are distinguishable enough in order to tell it apart from other groups in society or local society.

This group usually represents **a group of identity** for its members - a group of people who share enough characteristics, interests, attitudes and behaviour in order to make communication easier and to build a satisfying feeling of connection, as in our case identity is based mostly on the parents' role.

In this group exactly we are trying to accomplish **a kind of socialization of Roma people, to incorporate them in the educational system** and its rules, values, norms of behaviour. Using the definition for socialization is even more justifiable because its purpose is to "guarantee the survival of the individual and the group". We have all the reasons to believe that the survival of Roma People in modern multicultural society without education is becoming less and less possible.

Intercultural studying means to help Roma parents to acquire main characteristics of education or culture of democratic society through the educational system.

This type of learning is mainly based on the participants' experience, on the provision of intercultural perspective - the possibility to discuss processes and occurrences in education from the point of view of the democratic society and try to abandon their often rejecting education perspective.

In this respect **intercultural training has the following goals:**

- * broadening of cultural awareness towards educational problems and young people's problems in democratic society;
- * increasing tolerance and acceptance of different values, attitudes and behaviour;
- * understanding and acceptance of norms of educational culture of democratic society and values connected with education and upbringing of children.
- * developing intercultural skills for communication in the context of education and educational activities;

* integration of cognitive and affective aspects of learning based on the educational system;

* effective personal adjustment to the requirements of the educational democratic environment and paths to growth and development of the participants in the context of their educational activities.

The group goes through the following **stages of intercultural education**:

1. **Ethnocentrism**. It comes as a reaction to the gained experience for survival. In this case Roma people identify themselves by birth with the things that make them feel secure - parents, family, groups within the community. This group identification protects them from the world, but over-identification in the democratic society brings a lot of dangers. Ethnocentrism divides the world into two - "we and they" - and our efforts as leaders are to take out the group of their feeling of uniqueness (or isolation), to direct them towards relations with other cultures, lifestyles and ways of thinking, which is relatively easier when we are parts of a universal sphere of educational models and values.

2. The second step of development is **forming awareness towards other cultures** and in our Bulgarian reality towards the majority culture, which is reflected in the idea for education (sanctioned in juridical norms and the whole history of the educational system).

3. The third phase is **understanding**. In the process of exploration and increasing awareness and understanding of education Roma people also develop their attitude towards Bulgarian majority and towards the other ethnic groups within the common democratic context. The attitudes towards education in Bulgarian family are explored because they represent a model and give the frame of educational activities and attitudes.

4. The next stage of intercultural learning is **accepting**. Participants admit the validity of cultural differences, which are explored in the context of education. It

is possible to accept the common educational culture and to respect it although at emotional level they can provoke negative reactions.

5. Next comes **evaluation**, when the group explores in perspective the strengths and weaknesses of a culture and when participants are involved in the process of approving and evaluating of its specific aspects.

6. The last phase is selective acceptance of new attitudes and behaviour, when participants consciously or not consciously meet characteristics of the culture of majority which seem useful or desired.

It can take the form of **assimilation of the person or group in the predominating culture**, something we do not rally expect as a result of studying because it is a rather long process, connected more with generations than individuals. More likely, group development will have as a goal some form of **cultivation** - accepting norms, culture, attitude of the majority in the field of education and rejection of some educational norms, typical for Roma community.

Adaptation is a well-thought-out answer - participants adjust to challenges and experiences of the educational system and adapt their behaviour in order to feel better and function more effectively in it. To a great extent adaptation is a role play - sometimes behaviour is insincere but new types of behaviour can replace the old ones. The participant is in a psychologically delicate position between cultures and mixing identities is a constant threat.

Of course, described like that, these stages of group intercultural development are segmented for the purposes of analysis, and actually they often overlap.

The offered model for intercultural development applies only to a group of people who have been together for a long time and are included in the process of education and learning.

Establishing similar communication is possible within an effective group (in our case consisting mainly of Roma people), the kind we are aiming to create in the process of intercultural education.

Its main characteristics are:

- its members understand and share its goals and mission;
- an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect is built;
- the participants feel satisfied because they belong to the group;
- communication is open and everybody is encouraged to take part in discussions and whenever possible in the process of decision-taking;
- a sense of group pride exists;
- there are few conflicts in the group and when one arises techniques are used for its constructive solution;
- members are encouraged to cooperate with each other;
- group decision taking and problem solving is common practice;
- the group is learning to work together in a free, liberating way;
- group recognition for good work is given freely to everybody.

With leaders as well as participants in the group the main motivating orientations or ways for achieving the aim or ways of feeling important within the organization are four: **altruistic-nurturing; assertive - directive; analytical - autonomising; flexible-uniting (a harbour)"**

With group work we have to become familiar with the fact that group and psychological regularities apply to everybody including ourselves. We are members of this group, we are not above it as judges or objective observers.

Every participant who takes active part in the activities of the group represents a blend of four motivations. Their inclination to express one or another motivation in different moments shows how often they prefer to use certain motivation.

A participant has a strong presence in the group of intercultural education when showing behaviour in a way which supports and develops his/her own importance and the importance of the other participants.

From this point of view, very often what defines his/her weakness is the desire to overuse a certain motivation - e.g. the person is so willing to make the group well-organized so they start restricting members' initiative and creativity.

That is why it is really important to discuss the behaviour of the members within the group, everybody should get feedback about the way the others perceive them - these are natural possibilities we create for changing behaviour.

Here comes a short description of different motivation styles which can help us diagnose better the participants' behaviour and directing the group at unproductive behaviour.

Altruistic-nurturing style

Participants using this style cherish values like openness and responsibility for the needs of others. They look for helping them and making their lives easier. They also try not to be a burden for others and constantly make sure that other participants show their potential and skills as well as make them understand they are respected and can always expect their rights to be protected.

Such participants receive in return an atmosphere characterized with openness, friendship, help, trust, social awareness, sincerity, loyalty, sympathy, respect.

They feel depressed when surrounded by criticism, sarcasm, disloyalty, underestimation, egoism, dominance, unawareness, neglect.

Assertive - directive style

Members of the group with similar style believe in values like competing for power, responsibility and leadership positions. They are usually quite persuasive, take opportunities for presentation, insist on their right to receive prizes, perceive risks and challenges as necessary and desired, demonstrate their competitive nature all the time.

A rewarding environment for them is one filled with novelties, changes, stimuli, opportunities for development, potential for winning prizes as well as potential for personal development.

The type of environment which stops their developments is one without challenges, with apathy, resignation, passivity, reactivity, small possibility for controlling the things happening within the organization and for competition, with small chances for personal development or exercising positive influence, environment where loyalty is not appreciated enough.

Analytical - autonomising style

Participants with similar style characterize with values like objectivity and frankness, adherence to principles, emotions' control, practicality, honesty, firmness, seriousness, careful thinking before acting, self-evaluation of participants' actions.

Good environment for them is characterized with clarity, logic, exactness, possibilities for making economy, utility, stability, effective use of resources, possibilities for individual decision -taking as well as clear authentic criteria for these decisions, reliability, good organization and time to study the possibilities.

They find it difficult in a group where things are unclear, participants have to be pushed all the time, where the chances of failure when performing actions are high due to not enough organization familiarity, negligence, dependence and constant need to report to the others due to bureaucratic procedures.

Flexible-uniting style

This style is typical for participants who are interested in the thoughts and feelings of others, with an open mind and ability to adapt easily, people who experiment with different kinds of behaviour. They are proud to be members of the group, like knowing a lot of people and are famous for their flexibility.

For them the atmosphere in a good organization is friendly and involves all members, supports interactions, is democratic, people listen to each other and express their empathy to the feelings of others.

They do not feel well in an environment where there is no flexibility and adaptability, where they face disloyalty, harsh procedures, ineffective leadership and management of resources, coldness, lack of emotions and social unawareness.

In the intercultural education group we are all equal but at the same time within group action and development people perform different roles. Understanding of these roles will give us the possibility not only to get into the function and development mechanisms of the group but to form relationships with the participants.

This is a classification of group roles which can help us understand better internal relations and dynamics of their development.

Applying - turns concepts and plans into practically working procedures and executes accepted plans systematically and efficiently.

Typical features - conservative, predictable, performing one's duties.

Strengths - organizing abilities, practical common sense, self-discipline, hard-working.

Acceptable weaknesses - lack of flexibility, not open to new ideas.

Coordinating - controls the way the groups moves towards achieving the group goals by using the available resources in the best way: recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of the participants and uses their potential in the most successful way.

Typical features - calm, self-confident, self-controlling, dominating, extrovert.

Strengths - the ability to accept every potential contribution on the basis of its value and without prejudice. Highly developed sense for purpose.

Acceptable weaknesses - no intellectual and creative abilities above average.

Forming - forms the ways used by the group: directs their attention usually towards laying goals and developing priorities; tries to impose some rules or restrictions on group discussions and the results of group work.

Typical features - dynamic, dominant, anxious.

Strengths - motivates people, ready to oppose inertia, inefficiency, self-content or self-delusion.

Acceptable weaknesses - reacts to provocations, impatient and irritable.

Bringing-up - gives new ideas and strategies with special attention to key problems, tries to initiate progress in approaches of the group towards the problems they encounter.

Typical features - individualist, serious, unorthodox, dominant, intelligent, introvert.

Acceptable weaknesses - sometimes have their heads in the clouds, tends not to pay attention practical details or protocol requirements.

Looking for resources - studies and reports on ideas, developments and resources outside the group; makes external contacts which can be useful; conducts the ensuing negotiations.

Typical features - extrovert, curious, sociable, enthusiastic, stable, dominant.

Strengths - ability for contacts with people and studying of everything new. Good at reacting to challenges.

Acceptable weaknesses - tends to lose interest when the initial attraction wares off.

Observing-evaluating - analyses problems and evaluates ideas and guesses in such a way that the group can take more balanced decisions.

Typical features - intelligent, stable, introvert, sober, unemotional, sensible.

Strengths - gives points, discretion, hard-headed.

Acceptable weaknesses - lack inspiration to motivate others.

Working in a team - supports the strengths of the group members (develops their suggestions), helps them when they are wrong and improves the communication within the group by raising the team spirit.

Typical features - stable, extrovert, non-dominant, socially directed, sensitive and mild.

Strengths - ability to answer people and react well in situations as well as to keep the team spirit.

Acceptable weaknesses - indecision in moments of crisis

Rounding-off - does one's best so that the group does not make mistakes (which can be done while doing or missing something); actively looks for aspects of the work which need special attention; keeps the alertness of the group.

Typical features - introvert, apprehensive, tidy, conscientious.

Strengths - capacity for realizing follow-ups of the task, perfectionist.

Acceptable weaknesses - tendency to worry about insignificant details, unwillingness to let things just happen.

Several things come from this list.

Every person from the group performs different roles and can be useful in its own way. For the intercultural group is important to be aware of the existence of such roles and their significance for its development: it needs people who give ideas as well as others who express doubt and criticize them. People who try not to lose the direction of action are important as well as people who insist on following the adopted rules.

Each role has its strengths but its restrictions as well. There is another important thing - we all do not identify with one single role, in one moment or another we perform different roles and we can contribute to the group in different ways in order to achieve its goals.

And finally, we apply these roles so that in a certain moment they can be used as a starting point for analysis not only for role relations in the group but the relations among participants in general - the group needs such analysis and apart from that, sharing role divisions within a scheme improves participants' analytical skills in terms of distinguishing, identifying and evaluating certain behaviour

Within the group participants take roles which usually stop the development of the group - hesitating, monopolizing discussions, constantly putting stress on their experience, arguing all the time (often without reason), ignoring the ideas of others, not-paying attention, complaining, refuting the ideas of the others, opinionated, hostile, not accepting, angry, striving to stand out, making the group laugh (participant-clown).

We should not forget that in most cases these are situation roles but some participants have become really good in a one or another role. Our role as leaders is, using the potential of the group, to encourage or to oppose constructively to certain roles' displays and developments by using feedback, group discussions, an atmosphere of openness, sharing, good will and stability.

Stages of group development

The intercultural education group is alike any other group - not only with its roles, aims, division of responsibilities and activities but also with the stages of its development.

That is why we should know the stages which a the development of a group goes through in order to understand the development of our group and take the necessary measures.

The first stage from the existence of every group is the **stage of forming**: The aims of the group are still not very clear to all participants, the work roles are ready but have not been internalized by the group yet.

At this stage participants demonstrate conformist behaviour - they do not know the aims, they do not understand completely the meaning of action and know little about mechanisms of participation in similar kinds of group activity.

We should not forget that working in an intercultural education group is something rather different from the knowledge in other subjects - with the standing in a circle, freedom of sharing, equality of participants, group discussion and solving of problems, with showing emotions.

We should take into consideration that in this period common lack of knowledge and uncertainty make participants worried and behave less freely. Most of them join participants they know better, make pairs - something quite natural when seeking support in this environment of insecurity and lack of confidence.

At this stage we often encounter with a tendency from some participants for biding their time, lack of initiative as well as their opposites - great enthusiasm, desire for work. That is way it is really important to organize the activity of the group, to clarify and specify the goals and at the same time to give the participants the chance to get to know each other and overcome the feeling of insecurity.

Our behaviour should mould the desired behaviour, set the pace of group discussions, follow the principles of equality and encourage participants.

It is a good idea to structure discussions and to supply written models for doing the same with the answers.

It is necessary to show clearly that we are going to follow the rules in terms of time, participation and reminding the group about their existence.

Participants have to receive the necessary feedback, get used to it and as leaders we should ask them to also give back feedback all the time. For this reason after a certain activity we should ask every body in the circle to give their opinion.

Depending on the length of the educational sessions this period can continue for a couple of weeks.

The second period from organization development is often defined as **storm**.

The first moments of enthusiasm, new experience, of fascination with the unknown are over.

At this period begin the first doubts in group work, seriousness of discussions and the accepted model of sharing.

The unusual way of running the sessions is still difficult to understand for some of the participants - some take it as a source of entertainment, not as serious as examining. Participants with more authority start giving opinions, forming groups around themselves and opposing it.

The routine work also starts - session after session and for most of them the leader as well as the participants have to do some preparation work in advance. The work model within the group repeats - action, sharing, discussion and the time is not always enough.

We as leaders begin to identify single participants, see the difference in their motivation and desire to work.

This is a period of re-evaluation and even confusion for some participants. Having in mind all these facts we should not jump to conclusions at this stage. When sometimes things are not working we tend to blame ourselves when actually this is a normal group reaction.

We need more patience, to turn to the rules more often, to try out various ways of running the sessions, constructive opposition of leaders within the rules. If necessary we could give the participants some time to discuss their doubts (if such have been formulated).

We should know that sometimes "storm" period is not clearly expressed. Generally the group works together and only some participants have doubts and problems or oppose the

others. We should try to help them - mainly through traditional mechanisms of group work like setting tasks, paying more attention by asking more questions, appointing them for leaders in certain activities, supplying feedback from the rests of the participants about their actions.

It is important that the group do not lose their action rhythm and we should not spend too much time on problem situations. Participants should have the feeling that they are moving forward, cover topics, discuss problems successfully, get to know each other better and can expect help and support from the other in the work process.

If manage to overcome these problems, the civil group will unnoticeably reach the building stage of its development - the **stage of norming**.

This is the stage when participants start to understand the structure of the group and the way it functions.

Norms of group work become leading and our interference when the group is working is becoming less and less. There are people in each group who start to watch the rules and appeal to the others to abide by them.

Role divisions in the group are more and more obvious for the participants and it is necessary to spare some time discussing them.

On this basis we can talk about the participants' personal responsibility, performance of duties, relationships in the group, risk problems can be shared or discussed, e.g. the existence of divisions within the group, rivalry, displays of leadership in the group.

It is important to discuss group problems calmly and in a constructive manner, to answer questions as well as participants' needs, to reinforce group rules.

After we have found a suitable way for group development and have achieved agreement on the ways we discuss and solve arising problems, we can continue this way over the years.

Giving feedback becomes something natural as well as expressing feelings.

As the development of mechanisms for problem solving, giving feedback and expressing emotions takes time and the group wants to follow them, normal sessions are usually not

enough. At this stage we should choose activities very carefully - not to rush the group and also to look for possible activities outside school where the time factor will not bother the students.

In any case we will reach the moment of **second forming** of the group. It is not a question of fundamental change of our activity. On the contrary - with our actions during the first three stages we have provided conditions so that the organization can function relatively smoothly.

Despite that, sooner or later comes the moment (starting activity in the community, arrival of new participants, presenting the achievements of the group to other people) when we have to rethink and reformulate the main principles which our activity is based on.

Even if everything is all right, it is a good idea after some time to go back to the aims, to the main principles of work organization and to discuss them in terms of gained experience, to explain them to the new members.

It is also important to discuss our activity, point out our strengths of the group and of single members, to explore how successfully we perform our roles in the group.

All these actions lead to development of the group as a team of people sharing the same views, predetermine the success of its actions. We have to say again **the period of norming** is not an extraordinary thing in the group's life. It is just a period of balance and re-evaluation based on the gained experience. If we have acted as a real intercultural group from the very beginning we have already implemented the evaluation of our actions and the period of second forming will be a part of our everyday work.

The next "higher" stage of the group development is **performance**.

In a nutshell, this is the period of a well-acting group. The aims are clear, the responsibilities have already been taken, participation and sharing responsibilities are typical qualities of the group participants.

Everybody knows their place in the group when executing one task or another.

Knowing each other well allows the forming of different teams with different leaders for the performance of various tasks.

This is the period of a **successful group** - not only in terms of accomplishing goals and performing important activities but also in terms of good relations within the group for achieving an atmosphere of openness, trust and stability, of mutual support and shared responsibility.

In an effective group we can find a good balance between individual needs and aims from one side and those of the group from another. At this stage the participants are proud to belong to the group, feel motivated, ready to study and achieve more in order to strengthen their positions as members of the group.

Let's mention the main principles which serve as the basis of interactive methods in group work:

- Group work is a natural process for undergoing personality changes. It represents the democratic nature of society, developing processes of cooperation, mutual dependence and assistance. The group is the natural social environment for intercultural education.
- Group work is for socialization and integration and more precisely, the main socializing model which reflects democratic culture of society and education.
- Group members are the key factor for its success. There are two main goals - individual growth of each participant and the development of the group as a whole. This means that the group we lead should have clearly formulated and understandable aims accepted by the participants and that in every moment of group development the participants should be clear about group actions, tasks, the state of the group as well as their own place and position in the group. In other words, every participant has the right to be in the centre of group

attention without breaking the principles of equality and respecting the rights of young people.

- Participants in group work contribute to its success. Their values and actions become part of the group mission.
- That is why it is important to evaluate and discuss individual actions and group development; this is the reason why group reflectivity is an essential.
- Group work actually represents alternation between actions and reflexes and this way the participant learn practical skills and develop their awareness when it comes to analyzing social reality and their own actions as part of it.
- Of utmost importance for group work is our attitude as leaders, our opinion about the participants, the nature of the group process, the aims of individual and group development. As in group work the participants and the leader are involved as whole personalities, as leaders we cannot isolate parts our personality like in the traditional process of lecture-education. That is why our genuineness and positive approach can be easily sensed, and have great influence on the participants. In this sense as leaders we are the strongest role-models in the group and constantly in the focus of attention and subjected to critical evaluation by the participants.
- The group is led by structured rules which impose on everybody (including the leaders) certain norms of behaviour. The faster these rules are internalized, the better the group works. They are based on the main human rights and represent forms of effective communication. This is the learning potential of the group - rules and norms of the group outline the frame of human relations where participants develop their personality and gain experience.
- Group work provides the opportunity for creating an atmosphere of cooperation, stability and learning based on the strengths and abilities of the participants.

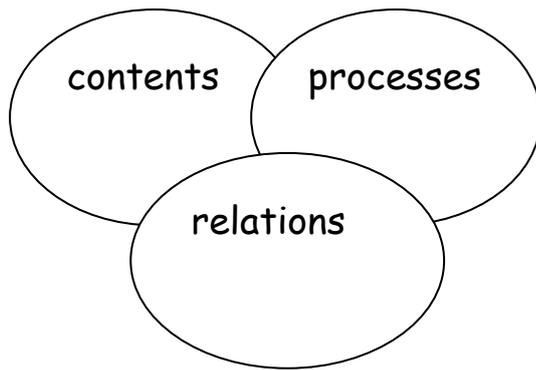
- There is not only one "correct way" of group work, everything depends to a great extent on our personality, the way we communicate, our knowledge in different areas, the environment where we perform our activities, the length of the group meetings, on the time perspective as well as on the perspective of the participants.
- By no means, leading factors in the group work process are positive attitude towards the participants, the acceptance of main principles of group work, following certain work rules; the atmosphere of cooperation, trust and mutual support; democratization of the relations within the group and the exploration of democratic dimensions of the world around the group.
- The realization of effective group work involves taking a number of decisions every moment - in terms of work conditions, aims, participants and our personal role.
- Leading group work is a conscious process of making choices in constantly situations - it requires good reflexes, constant involvement and assessment, looking for feedback, self-education.
- Group work is a process of solving one problem after another. This means that a key skill of the leader is leading the group towards solving problems and knowing the process in detail. Group work teaches the participants to accept challenges as problem situations and to look for suitable ways for solving them within certain relations of cooperation and support as well as to feel interdependent.
- Group work is based on joined actions as well as on joined solutions. Consensus decisions are built on a number of agreements reached on every step of the process of problem-solving. Joined decisions are a prerequisite for future actions.
- Group work gives the chance to:

- define problems which the group and the participant are facing, as leaders to perform our diagnostic activity;
- solve problems and make decisions;
- improve communication and to increase the cooperation among participants;
- increase the involvement of the participants, their responsibilities in connection with the taken decisions;
- solve occurring conflicts and reduce pressure;
- plan actions and set goals;
- share information and teach the group;
- improve the productivity and effectiveness of the group.

Group work is an interaction among all participants who share the responsibility about the way it is run.

Essential for the success of a group work session is the participation of all members at every stage.

Group work is unity of content, relations or ways of performing these relations and a process. Very important for the success is also constantly to maintain the harmony among these three sides - offering of important contents, watching the processes, resulting from the contents and interactions among the participants and between them and the leader.



This requires:

- both sides of the group process of education to be active;
- open relations among participants involved in the educational process;
- the topics covered should be treated like problems. Participants should explore them, look for concrete solutions and try them out in conditions as similar to the real ones as possible;
- participants' evaluation should be based on clear criteria and good feedback;
- different methods are applied in order to achieve these results. The choice of methodology and the way it is established depends on the group we work with.

Intercultural groups are small - the interactions there are direct, face to face.

This type of group:

- provides simple and relatively easy inclusion in the work;
- allows high participation and low risk;
- provides the opportunity the participant to learn from each other as well as to try out their ideas and behaviour strategies in a relatively safe atmosphere;
- is flexible and allows constant re-arrangement and forming of new, smaller groups;
- helps to take into consideration the individual needs and differences among participants;

- provides the chance to express different views which is important when solving problems;
- develops the sense of support and provides great possibilities for getting to know each other and understanding of motives and behaviour.

I start work

Group work is something very complex in several aspects:

- it is difficult to work with 15 - 20 representatives from a different culture;
- it is difficult to provide the necessary conditions;
- it is difficult to sustain such a different form of education for a long period of time;
- It is difficult to foresee all the things which could happen during group work because it is open towards society and its problems;

When we prepare ourselves to start leading an intercultural education group we always face a dilemma.

On one hand our aim is to present a certain quantity of knowledge through structured situations, to achieve certain attitude and behaviour, to facilitate group development. As the situation in the group changes constantly we should do our own planning, to evaluate the situation, to divide the time according to the participants' needs.

On the other hand we have a firmly fixed programme, the schedule of topics we have to cover in the usually not enough number of sessions.

The process of preparation for group work actually helps us to solve this dilemma to a certain extent, to design a programme which meets the requirements of educational plans and the needs of the group.

Despite all preliminary requirements, we have to perform **an evaluation of the group needs** which includes:

- organizational analysis of the **study background** where we are going to work with the group - analysis of the direct background of the group and every participant, of their previous social experience and interactions;
- **analysis of the participants and their needs of education.** This analysis usually shows the situation in the group which we are going to work with in intercultural education, what the expectations and interests of its participants are, what they need (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude) in order to satisfied;
- **analysis of tasks**, which should be completed so that the group accomplishes its goals. Exactly here we will give a concrete form of our programme and the big number of topics by formulating concrete tasks and the ways which will help us to perform them or the learning situations we have to create in order to perform these tasks.

Nowadays we usually have sessions with one or to groups so we can approach them seriously and create our own way of collecting information which will be useful when working with several times more groups.

We are interested in the participants themselves as well in the environment they live in their relationships there and that is why we should turn to the community.

The key preliminary meeting is the one with the **participants**

Main aims are familiarizing them with the type of work, presenting us as leaders, receiving the first information about them. It is important that on this meeting we mould the future work, give them an idea of its character. This means to structure carefully the meeting, to rethink its elements, and at the same time to have a natural conversation which creates a sense of freedom in the students. It is important to put emphasis on the things they will get within the education as gaining experience, engaging joined activity, also to stress on the different type of work, finding out new things and people.

We should clarify that participation in an intercultural education group requires extra effort and time as well as different relations - of equality, participation of everybody, different ways of evaluation. Another important thing is the role of the leader which is different from the traditional role of the teacher they only know.

Despite all the things we are going to say we should remember that the intercultural education work is so unusual and different that it is rather difficult to describe it in detail without making the future participants feel bored.

This proves the need of a condition which goes for all preliminary meetings: we can present it only in brief and to leave more time for questions, sharing expectations, clarifying, discussing the conditions.

The main things we are interested in are in individual plan and can be obtained in conversations with social workers, teachers, etc. are in terms of roles played by the participants, but also their development within the frame of civil categories as awareness, involvement, reliability, reflectivity, responsibility, cooperation, accepting differences.

For this purpose we can use the so called "**ice breakers**".

With them we initiate activities, demonstrate what they are going to be like, appoint those who are going to be responsible for the things happening, direct them towards the connection with future topics. As we will see, there are a big number of all kinds of exercises and our choice speaks about the type of leader we are - open-minded, dynamic, flexible, with a sense of humour.

These exercises have several uses:

- for introducing participants and giving them the chance to get to know each other. Although they probably have met before we provide the possibility to become interested and learn different things about the others, to go beyond the normal borders, to take a role.

- for breaking the ice; for stirring with quick results, unexpected information and self-revelation; for seeing familiar people in a new light for trust, creating a positive atmosphere and building a team.
- set the model of cooperation in an informal atmosphere;
- even the funny gestures, jokes and spontaneous creativity used in these exercises set models and develop new communicative skills. Many participants will share something personal in front of other people for the first time, they will talk about the way they feel and how they see the others in the group;
- last but not least they motivate participants to work on the topic not only by the positive atmosphere but also by the directing towards some issues connected with future problems.

Leading in, stirring exercises are spontaneous but also relaxing, they give inertia to the group before the real programme begins, make the group more energetic through movements, amusing elements, laughter, new things and stimulate them to participate.

These exercises can activate everybody instantly and in this form represent the magic of group work. However, we should be careful with this amusing style and quick change of activities and make sure they do not dominate the other important topics.

We as leaders and to a greater extent the participants learn an amazing quantity of information about the group resources - from introductions, interviews, sharing. The group profile changes and the participants look different even because they decide how to be called within the group, what to share from the things they consider important.

Generally, in these first exercises jokes and importance interweave and this gives them charm, but also shows that from the very beginning the leader is in charge.

Introducing activities help the group to start building trust towards us, lessen the anxieties about the way the group is going to accept us, about overcoming barriers.

Something more, these activities help us to understand the participants much better and to get an idea how they can contribute to the development of the group.

When choosing the icebreakers we should take into consideration the members of the group, their expectations, the nature of the programme and time available. With a several days training, it is a good idea to prepare at least two hours of ice breakers, in a case of a year-long group work we can have a couple of sessions.

Getting to know each other exercises-

They are the most natural in the beginning and are usually problematic neither for the group nor for the leader. People today are more interested in getting new information, ready for something unexpected and at the same time they want to find out more about the other people close to them. In the last few years, thanks to different TV programmes they have got used to most of the things - working in a group, free expression, unexpected activities and the role of the leader.

When doing these exercises we have to precise carefully the dose of self-revelation and do not allow the discussion of information the participants do not want to share (such models are typical for TV programmes) and also to make sure that everybody has time to introduce themselves. We should not spend too much time for these activities apart from some which require longer involvement of the participants (e.g. interviews in pairs and presentations in front of the group).

Name

Every participant shares with the group (or in a pair) what they know about their name - its meaning, who were they named after, how they want to be called, what other names they have in the family, what other names they like, funny stories connected with the name...

Draw and act your name

Every participant has to draw and then act their name

Name and gesture

In a circle, everybody tells their names and makes a gesture. The next participant repeats the name and gesture of the previous one and adds their own name and gesture.

Remember the name

Everybody tells their name and what they like, the next repeats the information about the previous and so on till the circle is closed.

Name and participle

Everybody chooses three participles together with their name and presents themselves to the group.

Acronym name

Everybody writes their name and every letter is the first of an adjective which describes their character.

Coat of arms

Every participant prepares a coat of arms - draws or makes a collage from magazines trying to present the most important about themselves. Under the coat of arms they can write their motto.

Favourite object, animal, plant, colour...

Participants write their favourite object, animal, plant, colour (quality, singer...) on a sheet of paper, attach it to their chest, walk around the room and introduce themselves to other participants.

Three things I like / dislike

This exercise is a variation of the previous one. We can change it by asking the participant to find somebody similar to them.

BINGO

On a sheet of paper divided into boxes we have written different qualities typical for participants of this age. Everybody in the room tries to complete all the boxes with a participant's name. They can make BINGO horizontally or vertically. We can make more competitive by see who will be the first one to complete all boxes.

Business card

Everybody should prepare a business card about themselves with a free text. If we want we can set some parameters - e.g. a business card with civil characteristics.

Interview

Participants interview each other in pairs and then present the other person in front of the group. The group is given the chance to ask question the person who is being presented.

Introduction with star signs

Participants line up according to the month and day of birth without any talking. When everybody has found their place they divide into groups according to their star sign. Within these small groups everybody introduces themselves to the others and then a volunteer presents the star sign to the whole group. Every group (star sign) can think of a slogan, to find the similarities among the participants.

I am more... than...

Participants complete this sentence ten times. Afterwards everyone presents their sentences to the group. This is a more personality revealing exercise so it is better to be done after some trust has been built within the group.

Introduction with ten nouns

Everyone introduces themselves with ten nouns. Each noun should present the participant's personality more deeply than the previous one.

Let's find a place on the line

We tell the participants that an imaginary line crosses the room and enumerate different pairs of opposite qualities and ask the participants to find their places on the line. At one end of the line is the full possession of certain quality, at the other end - of the opposite quality. Participants decide themselves where to stand. It is better to start with more neutral qualities (get up early - have a lie-in, like folk - dislike folk music) and to continue with more personal ones (talkative - quiet, focused - unfocused) The participants also can suggest ideas for qualities.

Look at me carefully

Participants move freely in the circle. At first they watch only the shoes the others, afterwards up to the waist, then to the chest and eventually they look each other in their faces and say "Hello".

"It is obvious that ..."

A participant sits in a chair in front of the group and everyone finishes the sentence "It's obvious that ...". Usually the exercise starts with exterior definitions and continues with more important characteristics of the participant. By participant's request we stop the activity and another member of the group sits on the "hot" chair.

Good hands

Participants are standing in a circle with their eyes closed and on the leader's signal everyone starts moving forward slowly with a stretched hand trying to choose another hand. This way we divide participants in pair for some of the introducing activities.

Icebreakers and stirring exercises

These exercises are necessary at the beginning for energizing the participants, helping them to enter the group space and to feel at ease there, to interact with a big number of participants and become part of the group. These at first sight harmless, funny activities prepare participants for accomplishing more complex tasks because they serve as warm-ups.

We suggest a certain number of activities but they do not exhaust even a small part of all available exercises. We should always start with some movement, even if it is only for a minute - such activities help participant to forget about difficult previous classes, to enter the world of the group and prepare themselves to work on the problems.

Expectations, misgivings, questions

First meetings give participants and the leader the chance to share their expectations, possible misgivings, to clarify the way of work in civil education group.

Expectations are usually connected with the participants' social experience which is not very big but still exists. That is why we can suggest that participants share their

experience and expectations in small groups. We divide them in several groups - family, friends, our town, country, the world. Within their group participants share ideas about what they expect to learn by formulating questions. One of them writes the questions down and the names of the people who have asked them and then presents them to the whole group.

Commenting the expectations is our main task as leaders and involves their clarification, structuring, combining and connecting them with the wide topic of intercultural education. At the same time work on expectations is also our first activity on the topic with the group - from get acquainted and stirring activities we move to the issues we are going to work on.

Our aim is to presents briefly, graphically and concretely the thing we are going to do during the intercultural education meetings as well as the things which are different from the school activities they know.

Introducing motivating exercises

Generally every successful exercise is also motivating but at the beginning and while working we use special activities directed at developing participants' interest, improving group solidarity, self-revelation, joined participation.

In the very beginning these activities should be more general, not too personal, should involve all participants, be entertaining and at the same time should lead to visible results. This way we set the group going, develop relations of cooperation and trust, create a nice working climate, attract participants' attention.

Methods for collecting information

All these introducing activities are the first direct source for collecting information about the participants - we see them in action for the first time, learn new things, watch their reactions, the way they are accepted in the group. On this basis we can do the first assessment of each participant - strengths, place in the group, ways of expression, communicative skills, thing which can contribute to group's development and better cooperation.

Work on individual profiles of participants will give us the chance to create an initial image of the group (from the good group questionnaire) and to plan our leading strategies. Keeping a group diary (or group file) from the very beginning will be really helpful. It will have separate pages not only for each participant but also for the whole group - important events, reactions in key situations, group development, climate, ways of communication, sociograms, group roles, conflicts, pressure.

Development of communicative skills

With these initial introducing activities we also mould the ways for communication in the group.

Our role is extremely important at this stage - the way we lead the activities and address participants, ask questions, find out information, help for sharing experience and giving summaries.

These initial activities are mainly games, stirring but because they share too much personal information it is a good chance for us to introduce the feedback model and start teaching the group that the time after the activity is the most important and conversations, sharing and feedback are something natural. We should try to develop this process to a stage when the group considers an activity as incomplete if the information and experiences have not been processed.

In these activities we should mould I-messages and introduce them little by little, use the asking questions technique, start forming the group memory by giving as an example how they should note down the group experiences and activities on posters.

Ways of evaluation the group needs

Values

Each participant receives a hand-out containing a list of ten values: friends, love, happiness, success, entertainment, study, good work, health, well-being of Bulgaria. We

set the task - everybody should choose seven of them (take out three) and then try to achieve agreement about these seven common values within the group.

This exercise can be done in a different way - everybody arranges a pyramid of these values (the most important is on the top), the least important in the bottom. Afterwards participants try to work out common value pyramids first in pairs, then in groups of four.

Values can be reduced to nine and we can use the diamond shape - a rhombus with the point up (we put the most important value there), next two below, in the middle - three, another two below them and on the other point - the least important.

Value auction

We write the value from the previous exercise on a card (each value is written on six cards) and we ask each participant to pick up four cards (or more if we have a smaller number of participants). Afterwards they have the chance to exchange their values with those of the others - in order to do that they have to check what values the others possess and to negotiate. As a rule somebody can offer two values for one or to exchange several values at the same time (barter of values).

The group mood scale

The moods of the group can be identified in different ways.

- **Through senator voting:** I feel really good - both hands up; quite good - one hand up; cannot say - one hand thumb down; I feel really bad - both hands thumbs down.
- **Through lining up an imaginary line** - at one end we have "I feel really good", at the other - "I feel really bad".
- **Through a mark from 1 to 10.** (1 - very good; 10 - very bad)

Participants not only should get used to sharing their feelings but also to express their needs. It is necessary to put blank poster on the wall or provide a box where they can write their needs. It is our aim to try and direct the expression of needs so that it is connected with our civil education work. That is why when the needs are evaluated by the

whole group the criterion should be whether the need is in this field. This will make participants get used to discuss their needs and formulate them in a more social aspect.

Scale of relations

Everybody draws a circle and divides it in as many sections as the number of participants in the group. In each section they write down a name of a participant and define a percentage which represents the development of their relation with this person (0% - no relation whatsoever in the work process; 100% - excellent relation).

Establishing work rules

This is necessary activity which brings participants together and is also the first norming activity of the group. Establishing rules directs participants towards the work model, towards exploration and discussion of work relations; it gives them a frame within which they will interact. That is why this activity should be given special attention. It has to be accompanied by a big group of exercise which will lead to the idea of the necessity of rules when working together.

Another way of doing this is to ask participants to suggest some rules which they consider important so that the group works successfully and the relations are good.

Participants can work individually, in pairs or in groups of three. We can identify rules through brainstorming, interviewing and discussions of previous activities.

It is important for us that participants not only give more suggestions but also try to suggest more rules in two main areas - relationship rules and rules for accomplishing tasks.

Exemplary relationship rules:

- * Listening to each other
- * Mutual respect
- * Everybody's ideas are important (everybody is important)
- * Not to talk at the same time

Exemplary task accomplishing rules:

- * Everybody works actively
- * Ask for help when having problems
- * Ask our parents and relatives for support
- * Work as a group
- * Help each other

Once they are written down on a poster, all suggestions should be carefully discussed and clarified. We aim to involve all participants in this process so that they are familiar with the meaning of every rule.

These rules not only give the work frame but they are also our future assistant - when somebody behaves in an inappropriate or ineffective way we turn to the rules we all have accepted.

We should reconsider the rules periodically, look for examples for their following or braking and if necessary to change them.

The rules accepted by the group make our work as leaders easier, but they are above all group constitution, they regulate its life and interactions and have to be written on a poster and be in front of the eyes of participants during the intercultural education work.

The group works

Henry Ford once said "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

In group work we always have three key points (they can be presented as the three points of a triangle): the people who take part; the result they are trying to achieve; the procedures and ways they use in order to achieve it.

It is obvious that as leader we should not concentrate on only one of these sides although the nature of group work can sometimes lead us in only one of these directions.

The group is a real **fortune as an environment for participant's development**, for expanding and making sense of its interactions. As leaders we are often so engrossed in the things happening among participants, so overwhelmed by their obvious involvement and desire to communicate, share, express themselves, that we leave the final result in the background and forget about the necessary procedures.

The intercultural cultural group is not a group without structure for sharing experiences (there are groups like that) because we are trying to achieve a certain aim - participants (most of all Roma people) to internalize the necessary civil skills and knowledge and to develop understanding and self-evaluation of their personality which will help them live more comfortably and be more responsible members of democratic society.

Group work is structured - different topics are presented in the form of scripts for a certain period of time. Very often planned activities and time restrictions make us leave sharing, personal development or the result we are looking for in the background. We follow the programme exercise after exercise hoping that the aims we have set will be fulfilled somehow.

The building of a team within the organizational psychology means an organized effort to improve its effectiveness. This way we try to make a special team from the group of classmates, one with a more special task. Sometimes they can develop projects, take part in socially useful activities, make lessons more interesting. As a whole this team is important because they should work together on the given topic - to discuss, share, look for solutions, put single people in the centre of attention. The group is a model of society, a stage where the participant can perform, a point for comparison, a structure providing support.

The team and team work are a fact when the group defines and clarifies its goals, develops rules and work procedures, looks for different ways for creativity and getting more information, improves communication processes, decision-taking, delegating, planning activities, assists the development of relations among participants and their connections with the environment.

It is a long process where our role as group leaders is essential.

That is why, from the very beginning we should define group development, look for handicaps and overcome them, set goals, go beyond the programme restrictions, to use and channel the participants' energy, to recognize and point out their achievements, to direct them when interacting in the environment.

We should not only remember but also mould principles of successful team work knowing that they should be internalized and followed by everybody:

- The group can work successfully if **every member wants to work;**
- Find time to **discuss main approaches and ideas, to evaluate the work** and to **give feedback to the group;**
- **Everybody** in the group **bears responsibility for the things that happen;**
- We act on the basis of **common principles and values;**
- **I accept myself and the others;**
- **I am responsible for** my actions and behaviour;
- **I believe** in my abilities and **support everybody's actions;**
- **I respect personal dignity and space;**
- **I am ready to take a risk,** do something new, take a challenge;
- **Take mistakes as a chance for learning;**
- Today's problems are tomorrow's solutions;
- Thinking is **directed at the processes within the group:** aims are important but the process is also important. The group develops by exploring its procedures and practices.
- I suggest procedures for analyzing of situations and problem-solving;

- I take **emotions as part of the work process**;
- I look for balance between **effectiveness and quality of interactions** - the group will be successful and discussions will be useful if they are focused, involve the participant and develop civil competence;
- **I am proud of** the group achievements;
- **Group work is also for fun**, if it is not something is wrong.

It is important not to turn relations into a topic for conversation, only in really difficult moments. The leader has to decide when such discussions will be held - sometimes he is forced by the circumstances or by the problems arising in the group. From time to time topics can be the following things - work rules and the way we observe them, roles in the group, achievements, relations among members, interaction with the environment. Every discussed topic is a step forward in group development and a guarantee that the group is making progress.

Please do not forget - **the work quality of the intercultural education group is not measured by the number of passed scripts and exercises**. The quality of discussions of work group and relations is one of the main factors of group development. These discussions show clearly how participants develop, because they grow up and make progress not only through the individually covered material but also through their participation and involvement in the group.

Methods of cooperation

The group works and develops on the basis of interaction and cooperation of its members and it becomes stronger in the process of problem-solving.

Intercultural education group is a group solving the problems which have arisen on the way of personal development and are important for the young people.

This a **problem group**, as logically a literature group should not be a group for studying the works themselves but a group about the feelings and problems which arise when reading them or when entering the world of the authors.

That is why the work problems we offer are not only leading but should also be well chosen.

They should be important, to attract the participant's attention, to involve joined exploration, not to lead to quick unequivocal answers, to provide the opportunity for critical thinking and personal involvement in the process of their solving.

When participants look into problems they see not only themselves but also the community they live in.

Cooperation is essential for problem-solving and we use a lot of different techniques and methods in order to teach cooperation.

We can start with the simplest **joined work (turning to the partner)**- in every moment of group work this technique leads to quick cooperation , feedback, stirs or activates the group.

Another possibility is **the reading group**

During the sessions we often use texts and it is important to involve the whole group and read aloud. Everybody in the circle can read a paragraph or a sentence and this way we increase intention and involve everybody in the process unlike when we treat the text individually.

Cooperative studying provides possibilities for different ways of grouping the participants when working with a certain text. One variation is to divide participants into several groups and each of them to work with a different part of the text. Afterwards we form new groups where there is a member presenting each part of the text. Another variation is everybody to prepare a part of the text and then the analysis can be done in small groups or with the whole group. With this interactive method the main ideas are interdependence, need of cooperation, dividing the text into small bits, putting the participants on more equal terms than when working individually.

A group for tasks

We divide the group into small groups working on different tasks. This way we not only give them a chance to contribute more but also help participants to be together in many

different combinations and to expand their cooperation experience. The division can be done according to indices chosen by us but can also be based on diagnostics aiming to create flexible, competitive or helping within the group teams. We should not forget that in our work the competitive element is subordinate to the idea of cooperation. Even when we offer the group some kind of competition following certain rules, when discussing the event we stress on the experiences, and the results and not so much on the dominance of the other team. That is why it is necessary to constantly change the people in the groups, which helps avoiding the creation of firm group divisions, pressure and competitiveness.

Our constructive role in terms of cooperation is as follows:

- to motivate participants for a responsible and involved participation;
- to notice, write down and validate participants' efforts and ideas;
- checking the level of understanding of what is happening in the group;
- providing a good working atmosphere;
- making sure the rules are observed;
- sticking to the task given to the group.

A Table

Ways of achieving participation in the intercultural education group

- ask your neighbour;
- let participants shares their experience;
- everybody should express their opinion;
- distribute questionnaires for filling in;
- everybody should write a sentence;
- put a chair in the middle and the person sitting on it will be in the center of attention;
- change the members and the number of groups;
- give tasks to different people;
- every time let a different person to present the work within the small groups;

- give the floor at random;
- distribute different roles to different people;
- when necessary ask participants to share their thoughts in written form and anonymously;
- encourage expression of opinion by positive feedback;
- do not question but praise statements;
- do not attack as well as do not allow personal attacks against participants;
- use the power of associations and metaphors;
- give more activating and creative exercises, the group is not only a place for talking;
- use the various types of intelligence of the participants - visual, audio, kinesthetic.

Group work activities

In the basis of work in the intercultural education group is structured are different activities or exercises.

Exercises are the main building material in intercultural education.

Exercises **model reality**, present its important elements, provide a possibility for its exploration and usually includes the participants' experience (implicitly or explicitly).

Exercises **enrich the existing experience** with new things and require sharing and recycling of the received information.

This way we reach the paradox of group work - small structure units (exercises) are in the basis of its dynamics.

Participants' personality, their perceptions, emotions, thoughts are fully involved by the exercises. Through the exercises they connect to the other participants in a meaningful way, in and through them they are equal - gain experience, have mutual basis for communication thanks to the experiences and are also equal in the process of discussion because they have gone through the same thing (although in different ways).

Not less important is the meaning of the **exercise as a possibility to try out skills and behaviour, to check hypothesis** as its structure creates safe conditions for such actions. According to new theories - with elements of sharing, their stimulating character and the relatively safe environment where they are held as well as in many cases the fact that they are new, exercises develop participants' mind and are a basis for personal development.

Exercises can be:

- simple or many-sided;
- short or long, lasting from several minutes to several hours or a whole day.
- connected with the civic education topic or not;
- directed at studying something concrete (exercise for listening to each other) or with a broader learning results;
- suggesting or excluding physical activity;
- with or without observers;
- led by a leader or by the group itself or by a combination between a leader and a group;
- directed at the individual participant or towards the group;
- relying only on participation of members of the group or involving outer contribution (experts, leaders, lecturers)
- prepared by the leader or just chosen from the leaders repertoire;

Despite the numerous existing standardized exercises and their successful use by the leader in all kinds of situations we should always ask ourselves several inevitable questions:

- * Why do I want to use exactly this exercise? Is it the best way to achieve the desired result from studying at this stage of group development?
- * Is it realistic or too theoretical?
- * Are the offered procedures clear to the participants?

- * What is my role as a leader in the exercise and is it clear to everybody?
- * Are the time limits I have set realistic?
- * Are we going to use observers and what exactly is their role going to be?
- * When the exercise is over how will I understand that the participants have learned what I wanted?

Work in small groups

Dividing into small groups is a main technique in group work, providing more possibilities for cooperation, interaction, sharing, brainstorming, pointing out different points of view, making the traditional lecturing activity more interesting as well as the interaction in the group.

The natural difficulty for us is the much bigger necessity for structuring and directing of interactions in the small groups and the fact that we cannot be at several places at the same time. This means that we should always give very clear instructions about the activities of the small groups, to explain the reasons why we do certain divisions, to define exact time limits and the expected product of group work as well as the way we are going to use in order to tell the whole group about the thing that has happened.

It is a good idea to assign the role of person responsible for the interactions in the group to somebody if the group consists of three people and if it is bigger we should try role division - an observer, members, a rule guard.

Starting working in small groups from the very beginning makes this activity quite natural, mostly for Roma people and they internalize the main requirements for effectiveness of interactions within these groups.

Finally, you should remember that, regardless of the number of people in the group, your instructions should be perfectly clear and you should make sure all groups have understood them; set time limit for the task completion taking into account the number of members in the group; keep an eye on the interactions development within the groups,

whether they follow the instructions, perform their roles and follow the task they have been given.

Discussing

Discussing is a main work model in intercultural education. With every topic the main aim is to teach them something new, arouse participants' interest so that they can be stimulated to begin discussing and analyzing the problem.

Moreover, discussing is an important step when solving problems. It the stage where the points of view are clarified, hypothesis are formulated, certain opinions are evaluated and decisions are taken.

Methods of discussion are very different but regardless of the one we choose we should always follow the main rules:

- To explain well the rules and the steps in the process of discussion;
- To think about the way the group is going to be divided or the roles are going to be assigned in the process of discussion.
- To choose the most suitable method of discussion - it can be "field analysis"(exploration of the positive and the negative influences on the problem); "tree of solutions" (suggesting alternative solutions and exploration of positive and negative consequences); "SWOT analysis" (exploration of strengths, weaknesses, threats and alternatives for the development of a certain process); using preliminary expert evaluation as a beginning of a group discussion, as expert could be members who have prepared themselves in advance; preparation of key questions which the experts are going to answer; preparation of elements from the discussed problem by different groups; to conduct a debate on the issue; exploration of the problem from different points of view; dividing the group into people who discuss and observers;
- the way of setting the groups is also important, we should take into consideration the nature of the problem as well as the abilities of the group;

- In the end of each discussion we have to conduct "discussion of the discussion", to share emotions and opinions about the quality and the benefits from joined action.

Asking question

Asking questions is not an interactive method but an essential element of every interactive method.

We can define education as a learning process of asking questions about the nature of human actions, communities, meaning of rules which regulate them, about our position and behaviour in this world.

The ability to ask questions defines to a great extent our attitude towards problems, the possibility to explore these problems, the formation of our attitude towards the world.

Asking questions is also an indicator of our ability to communicate, make contacts with other people, cooperate with them and try to understand them and find our place among them. It shows our active civic and personal position.

The ability to ask questions can be built and that is why we should purposefully help adolescents to master this activity.

The best way to do this is by modeling the asking of questions and if we spend enough time asking and answering different questions.

Participants should get used to **clarifying** questions which are a constant element of every communication- "What happened, tell me something more, where did this happen...".Through these questions the participant has the chance to collect more information about the events as he/she is still not able to deduce it from the small number of facts and tendencies.

Other questions are connected with clarifying reasons and relations, with the discovery of triggers of certain action, the interests - "Why, how did this happen...".Participants should get used to asking this sort of questions when exploring whatever type of human activity, institution or community.

In order to involve them in discussions and make them active participants we should use **the questions for finding out opinion** ("What do you think and how do you feel about this issue?") as well as encouraging questions ("What you say is important and interesting , can you continue?")

It is important to teach participants to ask enough questions about how they feel in a particular situation, because at this age we can show them how to differentiate between feelings and thinking and stress on the role of the emotions in their actions.

Part of the questions should be **summarizing**, taking into account what the participants have said- "So, did you say this and that?"

Other questions are connected with **looking for opinion** or with our desire to summarize everybody's agreement on certain problem. "Do we all agree on...?"

In fact all these open questions "open" reality in front of the members of the group, give them the chance to express their opinion and to participate actively.

Brainstorm

Brainstorming is a method which gives the possibility to generate a big number of ideas for a short period of time in order to solve a problem.

The main idea behind brainstorming is to separate the moment of suggesting and creating ideas from the moment of their evaluation.

Brainstorming has several stages. In the first the leader set the task that should be solved in a clear, brief and attracting the participants' attention way.

Afterwards the **rules** of brainstorming should be clarified:

- we do not comment and criticize suggestions made by the others;
- The important thing is the quality, not the quantity of the suggestions;
- we try to use and further develop the suggestions of other people;
- all suggestions are written down in the way they were initially made;
- we start talking after the leader has told us;

- the time limit for suggestions is strictly defined (usually no more than several minutes)

After all the suggestions are written down begins the stage of their clarification. We go through them one by one and if there is something unclear the person who has made the suggestion explains to the rest of the group.

At the end we analyze the suggestions in terms of the aim we have chosen. Realistic suggestions can be separated from the unrealistic ones; suggestions can be compiled in several groups; the best solutions to the problem are chosen and then the group starts working on them.

In intercultural education work we can use brainstorming all the time and that is why we should know that there are different ways of doing it.

Instead of all participants suggesting together, everybody can write down suggestions on pieces of paper, then all the pieces are put on the wall and into groups. The advantage is that everybody can give more ideas and the participants who prefer giving written suggestions are more active.

Another way is when every participant chooses one of their suggestions and presents it to the group.

We can have **negative brainstorming**. In this case we try to identify factors which hamper the solution of a certain problem or some disadvantages. For example, when exploring discipline we can have brainstorming on 'How to increase the noise in the neighbourhood?'

Another idea for developing brainstorming is every participant to write down their suggestions. Afterwards two people presents their ideas and the others try to combine them into one decision. A third participant reads out his/her idea and the others try to incorporate it into the decision they already have. We go on like that till all ideas are combined.

Role-attack is a variation of brainstorming. We assign different roles to the participants in the situation we want to solve (e.g. - pupil, parent, police officer, teacher, etc.) and they give suggestions from this point of view.

Sometimes we can **interrupt** traditional brainstorming in order to gain energy and then the group starts giving ideas again.

Another possibility is to give a sheet of paper to the circle of participants. The first writes down a suggestion and the next develops the idea of the previous participant.

Sometimes, in order to make the brainstorming more successful we change the work tempo or the physical environment - switch on extra lights, use markers in different colours, air the premises.

Brainstorming is a method for fast generating, sharing and discussing ideas. Very often this way does not provide high quality of the ideas and, as we have seen in most variations, innovation and personal contribution are not recognized. The method is the most effective when the problem is simple, specific or limited.

The important thing about brainstorming is following the rules and its use in certain contexts as a step toward solving a problem, as a stimulus for creative activation of the group.

Exploring a case

Exploring a case can be compared to a written demonstration. You present the participants a description of a real or fictional situation and include enough information so that the group can analyze the problems involved.

The main advantage of case-exploring is that abstract information is presented in a concrete way and a high level of involvement of the participants is achieved; the group energy is directed at exploring the situation given and the possibilities for understanding of the situation and drawing conclusions at a personal level increase.

This is a very personal method: participants become too active; they are put in a group situation, reveal relationships and enrich their social experience.

Exploring cases gives the participants a chance to experience themselves some of the most important social lessons - to feel the differences in social perception; to understand that life situations do not have only one possible answer, to see the diversity of human behaviour, to develop their skills for social comments, to decrease their prejudice.

Exploring a case requires a lot of time - for presenting circumstances, for discussing and taking decisions.

In some variations we prepare the case by outlining possible solutions and the participants have to decide which of them is better in the given situation. We can suggest that participants themselves look for interesting stories on the topics we are going to use.

The group solves problems

Intercultural education group or group work is one with problems. Participants develop and learn in the process of solving different problems from public reality, life of the group, their families, the community, the state.

Problems solving

- open the world in front of the group and helps the participant to become a part of this world;
- represents a learning model;
- lets participants acquire social knowledge in a natural way;
- puts participants in an equal situation;
- develops logical and critical thinking;
- develops the necessary civic competences;
- consolidates the value of joined efforts in the social sphere;
- develops a practically directed value system.

The whole intercultural education programme is built on solving problematic situations so the mastering of problem solving skills is essential for the programme's success.

A possibility for learning the algorithm of problems solving is to present the main rules for problem solving in the process of solving a concrete problem and with every other problem to add new techniques and ways and to practise and consolidate the already studied elements.

The other possibility is in the course of several sessions to practise step by step the whole model for problem solving, to explain and discuss with the group calmly the meaning of each step and technique so that every participant can build their own attitude towards the process and to be able to use it consciously in different situations.

Steps of the problem-solving process

1. The first phase is **defining the problem** - i.e. to describe the state of the problem, to find out how participants see the problem and its dimensions.

Social reality is usually complex, especially for young people, and in cases where we see the problems clearly due to our experience, it is difficult for adolescents to identify them.

That is why the first action when solving problems is their identification.

Phase of perception. Our aim as leaders in this phase is to reach an agreement in the group work on the problem which means: to accept that there is nothing wrong in discussing it (i.e. to make it legitimate); to show different perceptions, connected with the problem's existence; to hear different points of view and to avoid "a perception's war".

It is important to make the problem legitimate - the group should accept its importance, which is a source of work motivation. The second aim when sharing perceptions is to give participants a chance to express their feelings and attitudes towards the problem. Some possible interventions are 'How would you feel if you encountered this problem every day

or if it was so dirty at home?' It is important for us to be able to check how strong and engaged the participants' feelings are, because this will be a serious stimulus for their involvement when working on the problem.

Next comes the defining of the problem. It is important to do this after sharing perceptions using the question 'how'.

Defining the problem means not only to explore and share our perceptions but also try to describe the aim we want to achieve - what the situation will be when the problem is solved.

This way, participants will feel **motivated** to continue looking for solutions of the problem. In a word, sharing, looking into, defining the problem together and getting into depth turn into a democratic process in which everybody takes part, appreciate their own and the opinion of the others, help each other in this joined exploration.

2. The second phase is **an analysis of the problem causes**.

After we have clarified our perceptions, defined the problem and the group is motivated to work on it, it is time for the next phase of analysis.

Our aim is to achieve agreement about why the problem exists, to gather maximum information about the causes, to make a list, evaluate them, put them in order of importance and to decide which of them we are going to work on.

We try to explore the causes of the problem together, to encourage participants to listen and understand each other, to use the experience and knowledge of each of them.

3. **Identifying possible solutions. Generating alternatives.**

Once we have shared the problem and explored its causes we have enough material and ideas in order to continue with the next step - the identification of possible solutions of the problem.

The most important thing, though, is all participants to participate actively in the process of giving suggestions and to be able to note down all of them. This is the only way to make everybody feel that their idea is taken into consideration at this stage of the problem-solving.

The next step is to clarify the suggestions made. One by one we check all of them and the unclear ones are explained by the participant who made them. It is possible to combine some of them into groups. We can ask some participants to group the suggestions in advance if we leave this activity for the next session. We should only be careful not to group them in a way that they become too general. We need concrete ideas in order to solve the problem.

4. Choosing the best suggestions.

After we have clarified the suggestions given and have grouped some of them we should choose the ones which will help us solve the problem. At this stage it is important to reach an agreement about the evaluation criteria. They could be as follows: conformity with the law, economic effectiveness, time, mutual benefit, etc. After we have agreed on this we evaluate each suggested solution. These suggestions which match all criteria will be the basis of our decision.

Another possibility is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of every suggested solution. This way of evaluation gives a better chance to pick the suggestions which the group likes and supports. Similar is the variation when we ask the participants to **share their opinion about what they like and do not like about each suggestion.**

5. Decision taking

The whole work model connected with problem solving requires a consensus in order to take a decision. The group has worked together during the whole time - they have together discussed the problem, looked for and clarified the causes, given suggestions and defined the evaluation criteria.

Reaching an agreement within the group. We all know that we can talk about consensus when everybody supports a decision or practice, when the decision is taken without voting. We should point out that it is not a case of unanimity where everybody likes the decision to the same degree or all participants are equally connected with it. A consensus

agreement is when the group agrees that the best decision for all participants has been taken. In the worst case the consensus is compromise, in the best - a better decision for everybody involved. The strong sides in the process of reaching a consensus are the flexibility when satisfying different interests and needs of the group participants; increasing the information flow and the discussed possibilities; emphasizing on the process of taking decisions which make all participants satisfied; their bigger involvement with the decision taken. In order to achieve consensus, participants work together in various small groups and this way apart from the greater satisfaction the group effectiveness is also increased.

6. Working out an action plan.

The aim of this phase is reducing the decisions to concrete steps, to an action plan. Important points that should be discussed - steps, people in charge, time, expenses.

Working out an action plan for solving the problem is a key moment whose underestimation can turn all the efforts made so far into something pointless. That is why we need enough time in order to achieve this aim. If necessary, it is a good idea the plan to be worked out by volunteers and to be presented for approval on the next session. If there is more time, it would be useful for everybody to take part in the plan development.

The plan should be **realistic** (to take into consideration our abilities for solving the problem), to be **concrete** (to offer time limits, steps, people in charge), to be **flexible** enough, so that it can react if conditions change suddenly.

7. Applying the decision and evaluation of the things achieved.

The application of the plan has to be discussed if the group continues with the accomplishment of a project. Then it is important to evaluate the plan from time to time within the whole group. As all participants have worked on its development and are connected to the solving of the problem, all of them are interested in watching how it is

performed. That is why a special programme for evaluating the solution of the problem should be prepared, which will provide information when and how the evaluation will be performed, who the person in charge will be and under what circumstances the plan will have to be changed.

Summarized key moments for the solution of the problem are:

- The problem solving is a process which gives the group members the chance to work together and look for creating new possibilities. The consensus at the end is a proof that effective group work can be looked at as a multitude of agreements achieved in the process.
- The problems which have more than one possible solution are solved most effectively in a heuristic way - i.e. using flexible, constructive, linear methodology. However, we should remember the main principle - to constantly involve all the members.
- The idea that problem-solving is a process and the development of a set of strategies and instruments make the group members more confident, flexible and productive.
- In order to solve a problem successfully we should make sure that the group works on one and the same problem, in the same phase, using the same methods at the same time.

The group discusses values

Intercultural education is one of values, or more precisely for making value choices. That is why the work on clarifying, discussing and choosing values is essential for the group - there is no problem, activity or exercise where one of the aims is not looking for and discussing their moral dimensions.

In many cases values are not declared or specially looked into, they are acquired by following the rules of group work, democratic norms in relations within the group and with other people, through group analysis and sharing, through exploration and

consolidation of member's rights. Work and processing of the experience within the group increases the affective component, which is the foundation of building values.

The intercultural is actually built on solving moral problems and dilemmas, or on looking for moral dimension of the participant's actions in a social context.

Solving of moral dilemmas (values clarification)

The method of **values clarification** consists of six steps. The first four steps are connected with making choices:

1. Preferences.

What do I really like?

2. Influences.

What influenced me to take this decision?

Am I free enough to make my choice?

3. Alternatives.

What are the possible alternatives of this choice?

Do I pay enough attention to these alternatives?

4. Consequences.

What are the probable and possible consequences of my choice?

Are these consequences socially harmful or useful?

The other two steps are connected with the performance of certain actions.

5. Action.

Am I capable of taking actions connected with this choice?

Do my actions reflect the choice I have made?

6. Framing.

Is my choice a long-term commitment?

How can I change my lifestyle so that my choice is constantly reflected in my actions?

Techniques used in the process of values clarification.

Voting for values (we ask questions, directed at the participants and everyone expresses their opinion by voting)

- * everybody votes with two raised hands - 'strongly agree'
- * with one raised hand - 'rather yes than no'
- * one hand pointing down - 'rather no than yes'
- * two hands pointing down - 'strongly disagree'
- * with folded hands - 'no opinion'

Ranging - in the situations given, it is difficult to put in order the behaviour of the characters in terms of the chosen criteria. Ranging gives the young person the chance to experience the difficulty of moral choice, to practice their skills for critical evaluation and thoughts, to compare their logic and vies to those of the other participants to try out their persuasive skills. In the process, the active and responsible participation and giving reasons for a certain moral position are really important. These processes, rather than the final ranging are the main group value.

Games forced choice. We ask the participants to make their choice (e.g. choose a person from the group; choose object to take on a desert island; who would you choose to fly to Mars with; who would you invite to dinner tonight; etc.)

Value "whips". We point out a participant and this person has to share something on a certain topic (e.g. - which civic value they appreciate most)

The group 'experiences" and shares

With traditional studying a big part of the main activities in fact distract from the learning process: sitting and listening; taking notes; the high level of formalization of pedagogical interaction; the abundance of theoretical knowledge.

From this angle, intercultural methods are actually a part of the new paradigm of learning based on participants' experience, educational dialogue and group work.

Table:

Traditional learning model and studying based on experience

<i>Elements</i>	<i>Traditional learning</i>	<i>Learning based on experience</i>
learning unit	an individual person	a group and an individual person
learning focus	content	content and process
character of the involvement of the learning person	cognitive	cognitive and affective
participant's role	listening remembering exams passive	involvement participation active interaction
leader's role	teacher (lecturer) presenting / assessing	source of resources facilitator / coach
leader's responsibilities	to provide one-sided communication through lectures	to create conditions for sharing of learning
learning climate	formal with bans stressing on status	informal, stimulating relaxing, diminishing status differences

main problem of the leader	to ask the class better questions	to find a way to stimulate the members to think and ask deeper questions in order to get closer to the answers
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responsibility for the results	if the student has not learned, the teacher has not taught	participants are responsible for their own studying and behaviour
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which needs are satisfied above all	of the person presenting the information	of the participant
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a chance to transfer the things learned	usually small and uncertain	middle or high for most of the participants
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In the new learning paradigm studying is a process in which activities give participants the chance to experience it and not only to be taught what to learn.

The aims of learning based on experience are:

- **affective:** creating a chance for change in feelings, attitudes, values as a result of an intensive situation or learning event (experience);
- **emphatic:** learning about how people feel in the place of somebody else;
- **interactive:** learning cannot be on a cognitive level when interactive skills are mastered, e.g. interviewing, listening, advising. Through a special structuring done by the leader, participants can experience and accept interaction from the point of view of the both sides - listening-speaking, teacher - student, parent-child, executive-subordinate;

- development of **cognitive skills** at a high level: the ability for analysis, evaluation and synthesis; the constant feedback towards the learner guarantees that the skill will be effective in real world.

Learning based on real experiences is learning based on personal experience but also learning in situations structured or prepared by the leader.

It characterizes with the following steps:

Go through - participants take part in one or several structured experiences;

Share - participants share their perceptions, feelings and reactions;

Discuss - participants discuss models and dynamics of the experience;

Summarize - on the basis of experience participants summarize principle valid in the real world;

Apply - participants plan more effective behaviour in real life situations at school, family, community.

For example, the exploration of feedback goes through the following activities:

Ask the participants about what they appreciate when receiving feedback;

Divide participants in small groups in which they can discuss a material containing the characteristics of a good feedback;

Ask participants to evaluate themselves as people giving feedback;

Prepare exercises for developing skills for each of the characteristics of good feedback;

Do a role-play where each participant practices giving feedback to a classmate with whom they do not have a friendly relationship and then the rest of the group give them feedback for the performance.

Plan with participants who they are going to give feedback to in the future.

The **main principle** we should follow when developing programmes for this type of learning are:

- **involvement** - participants should be involved all the time;
- **consistency** - learning should be based on previous activities;
- **content** - learning should be connected with the activities of the group;

- processing of experience - it is important not to 'produce' more facts than the participants can actually process;
- speed and rhythm - we should look for suitable speed and rhythm for group work, appropriate for the participants' needs and the dynamics of group development;
- **voluntary participation** - experience requires self-revelation and sharing. In school conditions this means voluntary participation in the activities as well as in the process of sharing;
- **data** - group work always provides enough data, things happen all the time and there is always a considerable amount of things which are not fully expressed. For this reason it is not necessary to offer new activities and experiences, but to concentrate and help participants to work better on things which have already happened.
- **flexibility** - despite the steps mentioned when processing experience, studying in this context requires flexibility, taking circumstances into consideration and even a change of the conditions if necessary.

Things we must do when processing experience:

- to know exactly what we are going to work on, what our aims are with certain activity, to develop a "map" of the exercise procedure;
- to learn well the character of the offered activity so that we can present it to the group with clear instructions, to allay misgivings occurring and in the work process to make changes only with the group's consent;
- to assign clearly the roles among participants so that there is effective processing of experience - participants, observers, presenters of the small group's activity;
- to prepare an emergency plan, which means to have experience with the activity offered, to be familiar with possible difficulties when performing it as well as possible misgivings and questions of the participants;

- while working to give the participants a chance to share their concern, and building up pressure which also means to provide enough time for certain activities.
- to support participants' active participation - to express freely our feelings and emotions; if they have played a role to give them enough time to get out of it; to express their impressions before drawing conclusions; to be able to form hypotheses about the things which have happened.
- as activities have special purposes we should stress on their practical results. For the participants each activity is a road to themselves and to the world.
- before offering certain activity we should have a clear idea about our role in its accomplishment, how involved we are going to be in the work of the group.

We should not:

- leave participants to plan activities if they do not have enough experience,
- to present too many details in certain activity - they only confuse participants and do not help for a high-grade performance and a learning effect;
- offer more activities and exercises than the participants are able to absorb;
- be at a big distance from the group;
- use too often the same activities and exercises;
- include activities we do not like for some reason or we do not find very useful;
- deprive participants of enough time for discussion.

Role-plays

Role-plays are an essential interactive method through which we involve participants in dramatization of a problem from the reality we are studying, as they perform different roles within the learning situation.

Role-plays provide participants with information concerning the problems discussed.

They help for the mastering of certain ways and principles for solving problems and conflicts, giving support, certain types of behaviour typical for social actors and to enrich and develop their communicative skills.

At the same time role-plays reveals participants' attitudes towards other people and help to change certain attitudes - e.g. prejudice.

Role-play resembles a mirror - participants can look themselves in the things others do. In role-playing participants teach the other how to think and feel and have the chance to identify with them when playing a role.

We use role-play in order to prepare participants for performing different social roles and at the same time this type of game is a specific reality test, which shows how participants would manage with various social roles in different situations.

Role-plays can be planned in advance but can also appear spontaneously as a result of group work.

As leaders we should distribute different roles, to structure activities in time, to lead the game and the discussions afterwards, to summarize the things learned.

For a successful role-play we have to observe the following rules:

- * Identifying the learning aims - why we suggest the use of a certain game;
- * Setting roles and the way they are going to be distributed;
- * Setting signals which give the start and the end of the role-play;
- * Preparation of a special script with a more specific or more general description of the roles;
- * Prepare materials which will make easier the successful participation in the role-play.

The form of the role-play also can be different:

- * It can spring from a group discussion;
- * part of the participants play in front of the rest;
- * the same game is played simultaneously by different participants in small groups;
- * the role-play can be repeated;
- * the same role-play is played by different participants one after another.

The problem we have when performing a role-play, especially at the beginning of our work is **the existing anxiety among some participants**. In order to deal with it:

- present these activities later in the programme;
- use volunteers for the main roles;
- Remind the group the ways of giving feedback;
- try to involve all participants - even with small roles or as observers;
- if necessary we demonstrate the performance of certain roles;
- choose potentially threat-free situations;
- choose role-plays where they can be successful easily;
- let participants suggest their own cases;
- remind them that it is only a game after all in the safe group atmosphere and mistakes are not something serious.

The role-play performance can be **set in time in the following way** (example):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| - instructions given by the leader | - 3 minutes; |
| - participants preparation | - 7 min.; |
| - performing the game | - 15 min.; |
| - re-play of a concrete moment | - 5 min.; |
| - discussion | - 15 min. |

When writing the **role-play script** we should emphasize on the **civic element**:

- * there should be overcoming of difficulties;
- * civic values should be tested;
- * there should be chances for demonstrating and asserting civic behaviour;
- * there should also be chances for expressing unconstructive or anti-social behaviour;

When defining a key topic (topics) it is important to think from the point of the participants' reaction and to decide what is necessary in order to attract their interest.

In general it is better when the game deals with one or maximum two problems. It is important that the situation suggested has a conflict moment, clash of behavior, positions

and values. Once we have defined it, it is easier to describe the characters taking part and to give them names.

Good role-plays are short, understandable, realistic, general to a certain extent, so that participants have the freedom to enrich and develop their roles.

As different role-plays will be used all the time during the work of the intercultural education group, it is a good idea to use some activities for practicing skills for getting into and performing a role.

First of all, participants have the chance to practice in groups of three as they participate in typical pairs "teacher-student", "parent-child", "adult-adolescent", "police officer-criminal" (one of the participants is an observer and the activity is repeated three times so that everybody can go through all the roles).

Another technique is the so called '**empty chair**', when a participant playing a certain role talks to an imaginary person sitting on the chair. The group has the role of observer and gives feedback.

Talking independently is another preparatory activity where the participants present their role in front of the whole group and receive feedback.

for individual preparation is recommended to work in front of a mirror or using a video recorder.

In the initial sessions with role-plays we have to talk to the group about the **observer's role**, concrete types of behaviour, writing down observations, developing criteria for sharing impressions and giving effective feedback.

I and the participants evaluate the activities of the group

It is quite natural that evaluation is one of the problems of intercultural education, of this kind of studying based on experience and constant involvement in different activities.

Evaluation is the feedback process in the group, of institutionalize but also spontaneous feedback. This is the transmission among participant during the learning

process of information necessary for the group existence and development in this aspect **evaluation is formalized and measurable feedback.**

That is why evaluation as a process is **implemented in group activity** and is an integral part of it. It is a group property, part of each activity and at the same time a process which has an observing character.

In the new learning paradigm evaluation as well as group work is a joined activity and the participants above all are responsible for it.

A good group **institutionalizes and makes the evaluation a natural process** and the role of a skillful leader is to collect these marks, to direct them sometimes, to summarize them in the categories of learning, knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

Paradoxically, unlike the traditional method of evaluation, when evaluating within a group, the **competitive element is not that important** but the value of the achieved result and changes is not easy to be explained with the usual categories of classical standards for knowledge.

In the group and the activities of single participants there are turning points, top achievements, failures, but also outgrowing of the narrow world and all this remains undetectable for the standard ways of evaluation.

Evaluation in a group is also collective, it means well, but as a part of group experience it is **always subjective** and we should take this into consideration. Evaluation expresses support, encouragement of good, subjective view about the group and individual contribution when solving a problem, opposing injustice and reacting to challenges. Intercultural education work is a group activity and **that is why to a certain extent the individual evaluation is something ambiguous.**

The participants is strong and good, motivated and confident because he/she is part of a group, because he/she is under its influence - outside the group participants are subjected to different influences, they re-create models of behaviour typical for the environment - that is why it is not methodologically easy to evaluate them outside the group.

As the evaluation is so complex, the challenges we face as leaders are great - in our desire to materialize something similar in the group without causing disappointment and spoiling the group magic, without breaking the things the group is trying to achieve.

From this aspect, every attempt for formal evaluation is impoverishment, schematization, "robbing" of group experience.

That is why our evaluation strategy should be based on several principles:

- the learning process itself should be one of the priorities of evaluation;
- to point out the progress of every participant even if it is insignificant;
- to point out the efforts and achievements in the process of cooperation and to show them our support;
- constantly to make processes of giving feedback in the group easier by giving them regularly the chance to observe the group's actions or to get familiar with the results of its work;
- to collect feedback proof - discussion recordings, posters, presentations of participants' diaries. other types of group production, documentation accompanying the development and accomplishment of projects;
- to involve the group in this process so that it can perform self-evaluation all the time, to realize its progress, when it makes something positive and when it steps back;
- to encourage participants to perform self-evaluation which will help them to learn more about themselves and their own abilities and the areas requiring improvement (a feeling for self-value based on a real understanding of one's personality);
- to set an example (to model) and to show participants our personal involvement in public activities;
- to formulate tasks and possibilities for action corresponding students' abilities
 - during the sessions and also when self-government and extracurricular, project activities;

- to turn local society into a object of interest for the students and to give them tasks which will 6their relationship to go deeper.

It is a good idea to use forms for a structured evaluation - formulation of concrete questions or division of the work in groups.

We should help participants increase their self - reflexes by evaluating their own behaviour, progress, in the light of other people's actions - e.g. to use as much as possible the richness of group differences.

As leaders we should model the feedback process, teach them to describe the changes in their perception and skills, to notice new attitudes and values.

Sometimes we have to go "rewind the tape" of the exercise or the day, to list the important things and help participants concentrate on the events.

We should direct and support them during the evaluation - to separate, focus attention, paraphrase, summarize, re-formulate.

This way daily discussions and evaluation can turn into a key part of the group work - it is expected from the group and the members learn how to evaluate confrontations and challenges, their essential relations with other people their own development in all these processes.

Another important duty of ours is to **suggest and consolidate a common frame which will serve for evaluating participants** - these are group rules, rules of good communication in which foundation are human rights; this is the moral system of the member of democratic society which teaches them to distinguish good from bad and effective from ineffective in social space.

With development of the group and work participants master different elements - good communication, feedback, roles, democratic principles, sharing of authority, leadership and can evaluate these elements when evaluating their own behaviour and intentions as well when evaluating the group.

In the process of constant evaluation we **emphasize on the positive, on possibilities for improvement and concentrate on failures.**

When evaluating we proceed from the educational requirements and the developed on their basis aims of the civic education programme and standards for learning, skills and attitudes.

We perform evaluation on **several levels**:

Participants reaction is watched directly - their involvement, the intensity of the experience, power of sharing, the expressed satisfaction from the activities, their wish to continue working with the group.

With good feedback as leaders we constantly watch participants' reactions. In cases we have reasons for doubts or misunderstanding, the most powerful way is questions - asking, discussing behaviour and activities in progress.

Learning is more difficult to achieve within evaluation. A big part of the desirable results are in the area of mastering new values, changing attitudes, expressing feelings. Concrete changes in knowledge can be measured in classical ways, but we should not forget that tests and exams of any kind have to be offered very carefully and the group should be prepared for the. Otherwise they contradict the principles of group work. Our main task as leaders is to prepare the group for this periodic assessment of knowledge by planning together the time and the way it is going to be done.

Learning shows mainly in the participant's behaviour in the group and that is why it is necessary to **keep personal files for every participant**, where to write down our impressions and the main facts from the feedback received from the other participants about this member.

Expressing feelings, spontaneity, motivation and involvement also have to be main elements in our files concerning every student.

In terms of behaviour we try to notice whether participants change it because of the things they have learned in the process of group work. Mastering feedback by all participants means that they are able to describe, distinguish and evaluate different types of behaviour.

For us the **results** achieved are also important, showing in changes, behaviour in the context of the group and the local community.

The evaluation of the **work process** is something we constantly have to take care of. Again the filtration of the feedback from the participants is the most valuable source of information. The best idea is to keep personal diaries which are a way of reflection, self-understanding, self-evaluation and an evaluation of the thing happening in the group, specific recording of the feedback the participant gives and receives. Self-evaluation should find its place because this way we also teach participants how to increase the level of self-understanding and self-regulation of their behaviour.

Traditionally we expect the culmination of the evaluation to be **at the end of the group work**. The group is happy and excited, the participants are satisfied with the 'result' of their work although it is difficult to explain this from outside.

Above all, the things achieved are their own, they have done this with joined effort, through discussions, sharing and listening in the group, everybody had the chance to express their opinion.

The thing achieved is more than single efforts, more than what the participants feel. In the end with successful groups you can see the togetherness (unity), group spirit, the energy they radiate.

This result is something which belongs only to the group and it often treats it as a group secret. This is not surprising because in the process the young people have revealed things about themselves. The space is full of their interactions, memories and achievements.

It is difficult to explain all these things to people outside the group who often rather naïvely ask "What was so interesting about your work?" and question its achievements. That is why the group living for itself is self-sufficient to some extent reacts in a hostile way when people discuss their actions and doubt their value.

As leaders, it is very important to create conditions which will give them the chance to express their happiness, to celebrate, to share this joy as much as they want.