

Empathy in dialogue

Author: Jakub Niewiński

THEME

Stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination; contemporary social issues; human rights; refugees and migration.
Age group: 12 – 18 years old

CONTEXT

Discussions about migrants, immigrants and refugees in the current society can be very challenging. On one hand, we are witnessing the suffering of people who are fleeing the war and trying to find a shelter for themselves and for their children, on the other hand there is a fear of the Other. This fear is very often connected to the stereotypical way of seeing refugees for example as terrorists. In the Polish media there is a lack of a transparent debate about the situation of refugees. Moreover, certain groups and institutions are spreading the hate speech. For instance, the metaphors used to describe the arrival of refugees such as the one of war (invasion, expansion) further stigmatizes this group of people. Very often, politicians in Poland are concerned with the question if refugees should be accepted, rather than how could they be integrated to a local community. Despite some improvements, there is still a number of barriers which make it difficult or even impossible for foreigners to find a job in Poland.

During this lesson students/participants will have a chance to reflect on the hate speech in Europe, nationalism, and extreme movements by which hatred is spread. In this lesson the emphasis will be on social inclusion. In particular, students/participants will have a chance to reflect on their own identity and the teachers/educators role is to create a safe space for discussion in order for as many ideas as possible to get shared.

GOALS

- Raise awareness about the danger of prejudice and discrimination, hate speech, xenophobia and racism;
- Sensitize students for the problems of discrimination against minority groups and encourage them to engage in the activities which aim at preventing discrimination;
- Raise an interest about human rights and the need of every person for their rights to be protected;
- Increase an attitude of openness and respect of colleagues with different worldviews.

METHODOLOGY

- Analysis of the resources
- Brainstorming
- Individual and small group work
- Psychogeography – students/participants sit in a circle in order to create a spatial equality and pay attention to interpersonal relationships.

MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- projector
- laptops
- printed Breivik's speech
- colored markers/pens
- paper sheets

PREPARATION BEFORE THE LESSON AT HOME:

Before the lesson students/participants should watch the movie "Utøya: July 22" - a 2018 Norwegian drama directed by Erik Poppe and written by Anna Bache-Wiig and Rajendram Eliassen (in case there is a possibility the movie can be watched together in the school or students/participants can go to the cinema together). After watching the movie students/participants should reflect on the following questions:

- What has happened?
- How did people behave?
- Which words/sentences were important to you?
- Who is responsible for the crime/tragedy?
- How to protect people in the society?
- How to prevent crime against humanity?
- Who is the victim, perpetrator, and bystander?

Overview of activities (process)

Duration: 90 minutes

Introduction to the workshop: aims and participants' expectations: 10 minutes

The teacher/educator describes the context, structure and goals of this lesson. He/she/they invites the students/participants to share their expectations and needs.

"Paper identity" - awareness exercises part 1: 15 minutes

Students/participants and the teacher/educator sit together in a circle. The teacher/educator gives them a clean sheet of paper on which they write their name or nickname, depending on how like to be called. Additionally, they should write three things that they like to do the most. Students/participants are invited to share what they wrote on their paper. As a student/participants is reading what he/she/they likes to do, he/she/they makes a very short break after each thing so that other students/participants who like to do the same can show it by simply getting up from their chair. After everyone is done with reading out their notes, the teacher/educator asks students/participants to crumple their piece of paper and then bring it back to the original state. The teacher/educator invites students/participants to share their feelings at the moment when they were crumpling their paper and restoring it to the original shape. Students/participants should reflect on how did they feel when they were symbolically deforming and destroying themselves, their names and identities.

Comment on this exercise: Despite the effort to make the paper look like it was in the initial state, creases and marks remain, and neither the time will make them disappear. The same happens with a man who experiences discrimination, various forms of violence (ridiculing, spreading a gossip, beating...), isolation and exclusion from the community etc. These forms of behaviour can affect everyone regardless of their appearance, gender, abilities because sometimes people have difficulties with accepting differences and diversity. Keep the paper for exercise part 2.

Breivik's speech in the court: 30 minutes

Students/participants get divided into small groups of 4-5 members. Depending on the group dynamics students/participants can choose whom they want to work in the group with or they get randomly divided. The students/participants are given a transcript of Breivik's closing statement on the final day in the court. One part of the groups should read the first half of Breivik's speech and the other one the second half of the speech. While reading Breivik's speech in the court students/participants should note down sentences/words which they consider as an example of hate speech and/or a manifestation of discrimination.

After reading Breivik's speech, each group should try to recognize in their noted words/sentences different types of discrimination (e.g. sexism, racism...) and discuss what kind of concrete actions one can take in order to prevent and stop this form of discrimination. Finally, each group report the outcomes of their work. Students/participants can connect the speech with what they watched in the movie as a preparation for this workshop. In case students/participants don't find any examples of hate speech or discrimination, the teacher/educator can use the following.

Anders Behring Breivik closing statements to the court

<https://counter-currents.com/2012/07/anders-breiviks-closing-statement-final-day-june-22-2012/>

"multicultural experiment in Norway"

"cultural conservative NGOs and youth organization receive no funding"

"In Norway today, ideals are upheld that are extremely harmful and will be detrimental to our future"

"Instead of focusing on the nuclear family, the focus is on dissolving it, and all the problems which that entails"

"The ideal being upheld is to have sex with as many strangers as possible"

"So people neglect their duty to family and nation."

"women should begin having children in their 20s"

"A good example is Norway's contributions to the Eurovision Song Contest over the past four years.

We let a White Russian asylum seeker, probably with a Tartar background (. . .) It is indeed good that we very occasionally allow an asylum seeker to represent us. But what is going on? A few years later we let Stella Mwangi [a black, Nairobi-born "Norwegian-Kenyan" singer] win with a bongo song. What is Norway doing, sending an asylum seeker as ambassador? Is it lack of Norwegians in Norway, or are they suffering from self-hatred? Then we let an asylum seeker from Iran win. This is an insult to all Norwegians (...)

The answer is simple. A great many Norwegians suffer from cultural delusions and have urgent need for "medication," with immediate implementation of cultural protectionism and the Nordic ideal." (...)

"Bystander effect" - simulation: 15 minutes

There is one person who kneels down on the floor and others are standing in a distance of approx. 2-3 meters from him/her. This activity consists of four parts. During the first part those who are standing cut the hole in one sheet of paper and watch at the person kneeling on the floor only with one eye through the piece of paper. In the second part students/participants are watching the person kneeling on the floor face to face. In the third part students/participants can approach the person kneeling on the floor and put his/her hand on his/her shoulder and continue to watch him/her. During the first three parts of this activity students/participants should not talk to each other but only watch the person kneeling on the floor. In the fourth part, students/participants can come to a person kneeling (together or sequentially) and perform some form of action. After the end of each part students/participants are invited to talk about their feelings, impressions, and experiences. Person kneeling on the floor should always be asked first to share his/her insights. At the end of this activity the teacher/educator invites students/participants to reflect on it by using the following questions: What has happened during this activity? What does minority mean? Do you have some examples of minorities in our society, in your surrounding?

“Paper identity” - awareness exercises, part 2: 15 minutes

This lesson plan should end with an activity which can have an empowering effect on students/participants. The papers from the first part of the paper identity activity are now used again. Students/participants are sitting in the circle, and they send their paper to the person on their right side. All students/participants write something positive about the person whose paper he/she/they has in hands. Papers travel from person to person until everyone had a chance to write something on everyone’s paper and has received his/her paper back. As one’s identity has been destroyed by crumbling the paper, now it is symbolically restored again as each person receives a positive message from others about him/herself.

Evaluation of the workshop: 5 minutes

At the end of the lesson the teacher/educator applies the evaluation activity called „the dynamic dialogue“. Students/participants are standing in a circle and the teacher/educator asks someone to come to the center and share which aspect of the lesson was the most valuable and powerful for them and why. Other students/participants can show their agreement with the person in the middle by coming to stand closer to the person who is speaking or disagreement by moving away from the speaker. Other students/participants can share their reasons why they agree or disagree. Every time after the opinion is shared the rest of the students/participants can change their position in case they changed their mind depending on what the student/participant has shared. If some person doesn’t agree with anything at all he/she/they can at any time step away from the group, find some free space in the room and express his/her own view. Other students/participants can again come closer to the person as a way of showing agreement. Students/participants should be aware that in this activity they can freely change their mind regarding opinions whenever they want and show it by moving closer/away from the person who is speaking at any point.

Another possibility for the evaluation is for participants to sit in a circle and for each of them (or some of them depending on the time, and their will to participate) to finish one or all of the following sentences:

- I have learned... / found out...
- I was surprised.../ I'm starting to wonder ...
- I can do ... not to discriminate against anyone in the future? (This sentence should be used depending on the group dynamic and age).

ONLINE IMPLEMENTATION

Except for part IV (“Bystander effect” – simulation) this lesson plan can be easily transferred to an online educational environment. In this case break out rooms in platforms like zoom etc. will replace physical sub-groups. Emoji/reaction buttons can indicate agreement, disagreement etc. needed in the first part of the exercise “Paper identity” and in the last part of the lesson, the evaluation of the workshop. The second part of the exercise “Paper identity” can be carried out using tools like Jamboard on which messages can be written down instead of papers traveling from person to person.



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