

AN EXAMPLE OF THE PROJECT WORK

Basic work method in the PLYA programme is project work, where interests, wishes and capabilities of the youngsters are considered. Youngsters choose the theme of the project, learning sources, methods and process of work. Mentors guide them, give them advice, encourage them and organise all the help needed in order to complete the project.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE LEARNING PROJECT entitled “The Snow-white and the seven dwarfs” (puppet show for youngsters and adults)

Youngsters present themselves with one bigger project. They decided to prepare a puppet show for youth and adults.

Short summary of the scenario

The story about Snow-white and seven dwarfs is not the same as the original Grimm fairy-tale about Snow-white, dwarfs, magic wood and poisoned apple. It is about fairy-tale characters that are reflecting today's society, full of stereotype point of views. The modern version of the Snow-white presents a story about the main heroin who has big boobies so the evil stepmother drives her away from home so she could be the most beautiful, with the biggest boobies in the country. The unhappy Snow-white is looking for shelter by the mountain Slovenian man, goes on to Bosnia and Kosovo, but the way of life there doesn't suite her so she goes on to Russia where she gets a warm traditional Russian welcome. Feeling very cold, she goes on to USA where exciting things happen to her. Daydreaming, she staples a sombrero and ends in the hands of a Mexican charmer. When she tries to run away through the Trump wall she wanders off to a ghetto to Jamaica, where she gets to know the wonderful world of being high on cannabis. During her trip, many adventures happen to her and in the end; she faces the evil stepmother who finally realises that the Snow-white has a big heart.

The purpose of the puppet show was to tell to the wider public a little bit about the culture of chosen nations and to raise awareness and make people think about the stereotypes and current issues in the world.

The purpose of the learning project was for the youngsters to start working on the positive self-image, to build self-respect and learn to cope with stressful situations. It is important that youngsters gain recognition, positive conformations for their work. The project is a good source of conformations. Some of them get positive feedback that they are O.K., that they are important and that they are doing important work after a long time after being excluded from school and other social environment.

Through project work, we try to empower youngsters and influence their emotional component so they can open up and leave behind whatever happened to them in order to move forward from the point in their life where they were stuck. We want to teach them to look at their life from a different perspective, to feel joy in learning, to gain competences to be more employable, socially included, developing creativity and presenting themselves as whole people. During the process of making the project, the youngsters had to learn about puppet and other cultural-art expression. They expanded their social network, developed their literacy, gained knowledge about other cultures, prejudices and stereotypes, learning tolerance towards different groups of people.

They were learning how to cooperate and co-exist with each other in certain situations. They gained the knowledge about organising cultural events, improved communicational skills and performed in public. They also had to do calculating for the catering (how much ingredients, drink and food to buy). They communicated in Slovenian and other chosen languages. They were developing digital, social, and civil competences. In the evaluation process, they were thinking about their learning progress, about taking responsibility and facing consequences for their actions. Most important was their personal growth.

Why the puppet project?

The puppets can be used for therapeutic and educational purposes. The youngsters can express their feelings and emotions through the puppets, trigger their verbal and non-verbal communication, present the story; they can express their values through the puppets and moral posture.

In the project work, the youngsters are constantly invited to cooperate individually and in the group, make compromises gaining basic functional knowledges, basic skills that can help them in the educational process or professional career further on in their lives.

PLAN OF ACTIVITIES FOR FORMING THE GROUP

Since most of the youngsters did not want to expose in public, we agreed to prepare a puppet show. We set the goals of the project (informing people about the culture of chosen countries, raising awareness about the stereotypes that we have about these countries). While the project was forming, the role of the youngsters and mentors changed a bit. The youngsters got an assignment to become the main actors and take responsibility for the final version of the project. The role of the mentor as an authentic, fully formed personality changed from the planner and coordinator of the learning process into a planner, observer,

director and advisor. This means that the youngsters are the one who are leading the process and therefore their motivation for cooperation and result gets much bigger.

SETTING THE GOALS

In every learning project the group makes a plan of activities in which they set specific goals, content, learning sources and expected results, first on a group level, in the next step on the level of the individual youngsters (individual learning plan). The goals have to be concrete, reachable, adjustable, time scheduled, inserted into activities and measurable.

LEARNING GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Through operational goals (in the puppet project), the youngsters have reached and developed the following goals and achievements:

The youngsters stepped into new social interactions despite not knowing all the circumstances. They recognised this situation as a challenge or the opportunity to learn and realize their life goals. With the help of the mentors they chose the learning sources and set the timetable of the learning process. They considered and predicted forms of learning help that they needed in order to complete the project. They were also thinking about learning outcomes, following and evaluating them.

They respected diversity of other people, coping the conflicts that derive from the prejudices or social inequality. They learned about basic learning process, memorising, motivation, concentration, etc. They learned about social differences that come from ethnic, national, religious or other ethnicity. They were following current events in the world and were actually interested in happening on a local and global level.

They presented the results of their work to the others, rethink and evaluate the knowledge they gained in non-formal learning and they documented it in their personal learning folders.

Basic competences

- Cultural conscience and expressing,
- Communicating in mother tongue,
- Communicating in foreign languages,
- Personal growth
- Informing about different professions,

- Getting to know different materials,
- Cooperative and experiential learning,
- General knowledge,
- General and digital literacy,
- Self-initiative and entrepreneurship,
- Social competences,
- Calculating, using the numbers,
- Organisation of work,
- Lifelong learning.

LEARNING METHODS AND LEARNING SOURCES

For the dynamic process and motivation of the youngsters, we need to use and combine different learning forms, methods and techniques. In the phases of the puppet project, we used the following methods (described with several cases):

- + Method of project work and experiential learning (through all the phases of the project),
- + Method of conversation (through the whole process, workshops, visits, communication with professionals etc.),
- + Method of practical work (framing the canvases, arranging the space, setting the stage scene, organisation of catering, technical chores, choosing the materials, sewing the puppets, cutting sewing patterns).
- + Method of explanation (workshop on stereotypes and prejudices),
- + Method of observation , learning from each other (observing the mentors, dressmakers, puppeteer, painter, carpenter... working),
- + Counselling (individual work, solving problems, motivating),
- + Method of demonstration (seeing the puppet show, visiting the puppeteer workshop, photographer, painter),
- + Method of drawing (drawing stage scenes, drawing dwarfs and Snow-white.),
- + Method of collecting data and looking for information (in the beginning phase),
- + Method of reading and writing and work with dramatic text (making the script, reading out loud, practicing, writing invitations),
- + Method of fieldwork (making photos in the forest, outside, marketing in the local community; distributing leaflets and invitations).
- + Method of using ICT (working with computer, soundboard, microphone, camera),
- + Method of active theatre education (pantomime, art and language expression).
- + Exploring with the help of web tools.
- + Learning by predicting.
- + Brainstorm technique for gathering first ideas for the project.

- ✚ The use of social games and workshops.

We used the following learning forms

- Team work,
- Work in smaller groups,
- Work in pairs,
- Individual work.
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EVALUATON

Regularly we performed evaluation verbally and in writing on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. In the end of every working day, we sat in a circle and did analysis of the workshops and other activities. Once a week we analysed weekly progress. This way we could solve problems that occurred and suggested proposals that were improving things. We made sure that every group member felt good and could share their opinion about the progress of the project; what can we improve and how to work forward.

Mentor group also took care of the self-evaluation. We discussed the course of the activities on the team meetings, about group dynamic. We were also monitoring the competences that youngsters were developing during the project.

We made final evaluation after the puppet show in the local community. Every youngster received a formal certificate about attending programme PLYA, where also goals and competences that every youngster achieved, are written down.

WORK ORGANISATION

Project lasted for 18 weeks.

It contained the following project phases:

- **Preparing the project** (brainstorming, developing the idea, social games, gaining information, reading fairy tales, workshop on stereotypes and prejudices),
- **Planning the project** (from the basis to the performance, the instructions of the puppeteer, dividing into smaller groups, gaining learning sources, setting the goals, deadlines, seeing the puppet show “And after that – Red riding hood”-
- **Making the project** (work in project groups according to the interest of youth, workshop on racism, the puppeteer profession, photographer, theatre technician, visit of the puppeteer, presenting project work to Polish, Hungarian and Portuguese

- youth workers, seeing a short play with pantomime and gospel performed by young evangelists from an international school from Germany.
- **Final product** (cultural event – puppet show).
- **Final evaluation** (evaluation of work, reflexion).

Documenting project work took place throughout the whole process.

The goal of youngsters was to prepare a puppet show that is going to base on tolerance and braking the prejudices. The group divided into several groups that were active until the final performance (the puppet show).

WORK IN GROUPS

Group for writing scenario for the puppet show

The youngsters wrote the script with the help of the mentors. They determined the content frame and the course of the story. The scenario was improving day by day. There was a lot of readings and suggestions to improve the scenario. They started with practicing with puppets. We also invited the professional puppeteer to make even better improvements and to present the profession of the puppeteer to the youngsters. The youngsters gained quite a few skills from the real puppet business. They did the last couple of rehearses in the theatre, especially rented for them so they could get the real feeling of getting on stage.

Groups for sewing and making the puppets

Sewing of fabric product was running under the leadership of women, participants of intergenerational centre, volunteers in PLYA programme. They teach the youngsters sewing skills and spend free time with them. From social point of view, the retired women are a great addition to the programme. They many times take the role of grandmothers, which is for youngsters who survived traumatic experiences and are socially weak, very important. Youngsters draw sketches of Snow-white and dwarfs of different nationalities. They were learning how to draw sketches, sewing patterns and also how to use the sewing machine. They made the puppets for the performance and clothes for the puppets.

Group for stage scene

They designed stage scene together with a professional painter. They made a plan how the scene is going to look like standing on the stage and how they will technically conduct the show. They painted the big canvas and several smaller ones that were presenting different countries through which the puppets were traveling.

Group for photography and marketing

The group took care of the promotion of the show. They made the invitations and ads for digital marketing. They invited the majors, people from the ministry, and counsellors from schools, different organisations, associations, employment service, teachers, principals, friend, and parents. The youngsters prepared a photo exhibition, which was staged in the lobby of the theatre and equipped each photo with a quote from the script.

MEDIA TOOLS

- ✓ Invitation to the puppet show,
- ✓ leaflets,
- ✓ theatre programme or the visitors of the show,
- ✓ theatre programme for the puppet show in the magazine Young people in Radovljica and in the local newspaper
- ✓ news announcement on a website of organization
- ✓ news announcement on a Facebook profile of PLYA Radovljica,
- ✓ news announcement on a website of Youth Centre and FB page of Youth Centre
- ✓ Foto Exhibition in Linhart Theater hall in Radovljica
- ✓ Journalist article entitled »With a fairy tale against prejudices«
- ✓ Published article in the regional newspaper
- ✓ Published article in the national newspaper
- ✓ Video of the puppet show.

The youngsters played the puppet show five times:

- in local environment: in the local theatre and at the event of celebrating 18.th birthday of PLYA programme,
- two times in the capital city Ljubljana: on a European youth week and youth festival
- another city in Slovenia.