Nordplus Intensive course: *Innovative and sustainable aesthetic methods for citizenship education: Nordic and Baltic perspectives (ISAMCE)*

**Part 1: Freedom**


Location: University College UCC, Department of Teacher Education in Copenhagen, Denmark

**Overall objectives**

TEN, Teacher Education Network is a network with special focus on the aesthetic subjects in the teacher education. In this project, also lecturers of citizenship participated to collaborate on the question of citizenship education in addition to teachers in music, drama and arts/crafts.

The overall objective of the project is to develop skills and competencies related to citizenship: the capacity for communication and dialogue, the capacity to live with others, to recognize and accept differences, sharing narratives in an aesthetical collaborative learning approach.

The particular innovative approach of this project explores the current topic of citizenship through aesthetic processes and expressions in innovative transdisciplinary and multimodal ways.

**Overall learning objectives of the project are**

* New approaches in aesthetic education and citizenship education

* Knowledge about and experience with theme based and aesthetical collaborative learning approaches

* Experience the particular potential of aesthetic processes and expressions in dealing with the particular issue of citizenship education

* Sustainable outcomes: critical transferability of learned experience to local contexts
21st century skills as: Knowledge construction, relevant use of IT in learning environments, self-evaluation and competent communication.

Collaboration

A project committee formed by representatives from different partner institutions was responsible for the planning of the course.

The project committee met twice prior to the course in Copenhagen in April 2017: At the first meeting in autumn 2015, the project committee elaborated the concept of the project and wrote the application for Nordplus funding. At the second meeting in December 2016, we planned the intensive week in details. The committee discussed objectives, content of every single activity in the course, and sent detailed material about the course to each partner in the network (Attachments 1, 2). Partners could then choose activities and responsibilities that they would take part in during the course. Activities were for examples warming up activities, lectures and workshops. Responsibilities were for example daily evaluation and documenting the course.

During the course, participating lecturers from the different countries facilitated the group work of the students.

Activities

The work of the course was planned to be transdisciplinary and intercultural. For inspiration, we looked to the contemporary art scene, where especially the visual artists simultaneously draw on many different disciplines as videos and musical genres combined in performance projects. All participating countries worked on a pre-task (3), which they presented during the first two days of the course: All countries introduced artists, dealing with the question of freedom.

Lecturers of citizenship introduced the overarching theme of citizenship and the specific focus of this intensive course on freedom through a lecture at the beginning of the course. As lecturers on citizenship, they opened the central questions on different interpretations of freedom and the question: ‘How to learn to live together?’ in relation to factors such as the global and European economic, cultural, and political integration process, the ongoing migration process and the dilemmas in connection to freedom.
During the first days of the course, lecturers organized workshops and lectures in order to qualify the theme of the course and inspire students, how they could work with the theme. On the ground of these introductory activities, the students then worked in transnational groups and prepared five presentation for the last day of the course. In these presentations, the students expressed their own understanding of the notion of freedom.

The project committee had decided not to organize one big performance at the end of the course, but to ask the students to work in five groups with minor presentations. This should facilitate a manageable work process, which enabled students to combine thoughts from different disciplines and cultures. In this way, we entered an innovative process without a fixed result.

This work process was supported by criteria and categories, which all groups should work with. In this sense, we worked with explicit criteria, visual documentation and evaluation of the process and the aesthetic products (4).

In preparatory drama plays and exercises, students and lecturers worked with these criteria and gained an understanding of their meaning. On the ground of these experiences, the students worked in five transnational groups and created innovative pieces, which they performed at the last day of the course to an audience. The performance took place at the study center at UCC, which is a public place where many students come to study or to seek assistance.

Pupils from 8th grade from a Danish ‘Folkeskole’ and students were invited for the performance. After the performances, lecturers gave feedback according to the mentioned criteria (5).

Visual documentation: a way of reporting the highlights of the week

The visual documentation of the week was both an internal evaluation tool and a way of communicating and telling about the project on the outside. Students were in charge of the course diary. Each country was responsible for documentation of the workflow of one day during the course. The course diary contained photo portraits of the participating students, video interviews, documentation of highlights of the day and Instagram takeover where the groups were introducing themselves and their home country. The visual documentation is available on a public blog: http://uccblog.dk/isamce/. During the week, participants posted pictures from the course on Instagram with hashtags #ISAMCE #ucccph #NORDPLUS #freedom.

Results and Outcomes
In order to describe the results and outcomes of the week, we include evaluations of the project. During the project, we used a variety of formative and summative evaluation methods.

**Example: Word cloud**
At the beginning of the week, we asked students to describe their expectations for the week. We were interested to hear, which expectations they had to the ISAMCE course in relation to:
- Networking – meeting new people and building bridges across countries
- The theme of the course and the work with the notions of freedom and citizenship and
- Expectations concerning experiences within different aesthetic ways of expression.
Then, each student should choose three words, which expressed his or hers expectations for the weeks. These words were inserted in a word cloud document. The document visualized the most clear and prominent words. At the end of the week, we asked the students again to answer the above-mentioned questions, choosing three words that we once again put into a word cloud document. Then we compared the two results. The differences between these two results documented the learning process of the students. In the first word cloud, terms as ‘diversity, freedom, inspiration and sharing’ were the most dominant. In the second word cloud, students had chosen terms as creativity, intense, fun, amazing and joyful’ (6).
This showed the effect of having worked bodily and aesthetically with the themes freedom and citizenship. The students’ choice of words demonstrated a development from an intellectual and distanced understanding at the beginning of the course to an experienced and integrated understanding at the end of the week.

**Example: Bodily expression and sound**
During the course, we also used an aesthetic approach to evaluation. Students were for example asked to characterize today’s workflow through shape, bodily expression and sound should (7).
This evaluation method encouraged the students to reflect on their group work and hereby to make them aware of their group process. It also gave us lecturers the opportunity to talk about these group processed in plenary with the students. This helped lecturers to keep track on the progression of the work process in the groups.

**Delphi Evaluation**
At the end of the week, an evaluation with the Delphi method was applied for summative evaluation (8-11). In this evaluation, we asked participating students and teachers individually to write down six statements about the week: Thee statements about aspects of the week, which they liked and three aspects, which they disliked. Students could then read and agree or disagree on the statements of other students. The written evaluation was then summed up by an oral conversation. The evaluation
indicated that students valued the cooperation and group work with students from other countries. They liked the freedom they had in the group process and some student would have liked to have more time for that. They liked to work interdisciplinary.

Asked, what students would like us to improve in the next course, most students agreed that they would like more student driven activities and better technical assistance of performances. Furthermore, they would value shorter working days and more activities outside of the campus. Since many students and teachers were involved, students suggest using more time to get to know each other’s academic background and expertise.

Lecturers liked the dedication and engagement of the students. Some lecturers found it challenging to work in such a big group and suggest pointing out responsibilities more clearly and e.g. pointing out a daily leader of the project.

Impact

The intensive course in Copenhagen managed to open new perspectives on citizenship and to engage students and teachers in creative interpretations of the concept of freedom.

The combination of theoretical introductions and aesthetic methodology has proven to be a very dynamic and inspirational approach for students as well as teachers. In the final project presentations, we witnessed creative and innovative expressions of a thought provoking character.

These matters managed to make it very clear how creative interpretations of the concept of freedom, had a positive impact on the students understanding of the theme. They gained knowledge about how aesthetic processes and collaborative learning can develop a qualified understanding in dealing with the issue of citizenship education. Through theoretical input and aesthetic methodology, the intensive course has enhanced a number of skills and competencies related to citizenship: the capacity for communication and dialogue, the capacity to live with others, to recognize and accept differences, and a very intensive sharing of narratives and open questions in an aesthetical collaborative learning approach. The students have embarked on a journey of exploring different aspects of freedom in relation to citizenship and together they have developed new approaches to cross-curricular didactics. Therefore, it is our impression that they will be able to transfer these learning processes to their local contexts.
Transcript All students received a Transcript of records with three ECTS credits. Lecturers received a certificate for participation (12, 13).

Dissemination

UCC has made a course website and a blog, where material from the project is available. The possible multiplying effects or spin-offs from this course:

- A strengthening of the connections between Nordic and Baltic countries, institutions, teachers and students. Both students and teachers have the opportunity to get new colleagues and friends across borders and thereby initiate new professional networks.
- Most students are future teachers in primary and lower secondary schools, and their experiences at the course can therefore be very valuable in their future work as teachers in schools of the Baltic and Nordic countries.
- The performances, evaluations, reports, films as well as articles and presentations from the intensive courses might provide inspiration and knowledge also to other students and teachers in the Baltic and Nordic countries.

Article

During the project, a journalist from a Danish magazine for schoolteachers: ‘Folkeskolen’, interviewed lecturers and students for an article about the project ISAMCE and our work with the concept of freedom through aesthetic expressions in folkeskolen.dk

https://www.folkeskolen.dk/607183/baltiske-og-danske-laererstuderende-laver-kunst-af-samfundsfag