



## WORKING PAPER FOR TALLIN CONFERENCE

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### **AWARENESS OF SOCIAL STATUS AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND A tool for the development of intercultural competencies of teacher trainees and teachers**

#### **The aim of the tool:**

Helping the students to reflect on their own social status and its cultural consequences and on the socio-cultural differences in the society.

The keyword is awareness: it is not enough to try to be tolerant, full of empathy etc. We can discover and change our deeper attitudes, biases, behavioural and interpretational internal settings, only if we become aware of our own (social-cultural) “position”, and if we learn to confront this position with the stories and interpretations of the others.

The other keyword is the social aspect. It is not enough to consider the different cultural backgrounds, there are social matters (status, class, patterns of power, social processes, social interpretations) even when we consider the differences, dialogs or living together of cultures.

#### **The process:**

The tool is a longer process with different session. It can be organized in different ways: in a semester course or in some following training sessions. In the beginning the focus is on the self-reflections and on the discovering of the social and cultural factors in our (initially) taken for granted interpretations. Then the students confront their own re-interpreted stories and experiences with the stories of other people with different social and cultural background. In the end the student would be able to put questions on the social phenomena of differences, to discover and rediscover his/her presuppositions, to analyze different interpretations, and to plan interventions based on a new attitude.

#### **Main methods:**

- personal and common reflections
- telling and sharing stories
- constructing the story of the family (family tree, origin of the names)
- drawing
- role-play
- discussions
- individual reflections and other written tasks at home

#### **The structure of the process:**

##### ***First phase: reflection on the participants' own social status and cultural backgrounds (6-8 hours)***

The members discover their roots through their family's history (symbolic family, family myths, mobility etc.). They learn to consider the past of the family not only as a personal

narrative but also as a story shaped by sociological and cultural factors. Then the participants begin to explore their actual status and identity.

*Methods:*

- conversation, pair work
- drawings (about the family)
- family tree
- telling stories about the family
- role-plays
- personal (written) reflections

***Second phase: first contact with the documentaries  
(7-10 hours)***

The participants see some parts of different documentaries about people in a different social status (and/or from a different cultural background).

*They are chosen around the following aspects:*

- milieu
- memories, stories
- the role of the family
- personal stories, personal identity
- models of success and failure
- roles in the society
- mobility

The participants are helped to reflect on their socio-cultural status with one of the methods of the first phase or simply they are helped to recall a certain experience from the first phase. They received some focus points before the documentary. Then they watch some selected parts of documentaries. They have to look for differences and similarities with their experiences, stories and interpretations. In this way the participants continue the exploration of their identity and status confronting their experiences, stories and interpretations with other people's ones. They become aware of the importance of their backgrounds when they approach other people, especially in another status.

*Methods:*

- conversation
- discussion
- pair work
- personal reflections

***Third phase: analysis of documentaries  
(10-12 hours)***

The participants watch whole documentaries about life stories of people in a different social status and with a different cultural background. They have to find points to analyze on their own. Then in common or in groups we analyze deeply the films according to their focus points taking in consideration the main aim of the course, and the aspects of exploration given in the second phase. This process deepens the members' awareness, and helps the participants to find ways of dialog, intervention, action when they work with people with different socio-cultural backgrounds. The guide of the process helps them to deepen their analysis with role-plays and to go forward to do planning.

*Methods:*

- discussions
- role-plays on the base of the situations presented in the films
- planning

***Forth phase: summary***

With the help of the guide the participants reflect on their development, personal and common “road”, experience lived during the course: discovering, the role of socio-cultural factors in social and educational work. They summarize the main learning outcomes of the sessions, and they do a final (individual or cooperative) task of analysis and of planning.