

Diversity through the Arts course - 6 month evaluation July 2009

Aims and Objectives

The 2008 course aimed to enable participants to explore diversity and intercultural issues with primary aged groups through the use of a variety of art forms. The objectives of the course were to:

- To deepen participants' own awareness and understanding of intercultural, antiracist and global issues and their relevance in an educational context
- To help equip participants with the skills and confidence to address these key issues creatively with their students
- To support participants to develop an inclusive participative, intercultural and globally aware classroom environment
- To increase participants' awareness of the resources that are available, such as books, websites, art groups, ongoing support

Course Outline

Comhlámh's "Diversity through the Arts" course was held in November 2008. It consisted of two full day workshops held on Saturday 15th of November and on Saturday 29th of November the sessions delivered were:

15th November 2008: Introduction to Intercultural Education, delivered by Annette Honan, National Council for Curriculum Assessment; Use of Drama in Intercultural Education, delivered by Triona Stokes, Froebel College of Education; Intercultural Resources, delivered by Alison Leahy, Comhlámh; Use of Music in Intercultural Education, delivered by Rachel Dempsey, Global Harmonies

29th November 2008: Use of Film in Intercultural Education, delivered by Matthias Fielder, Development and Intercultural Education Project; Information about Immigration, delivered by Catherine Joyce, Refugee Information Service; Use of Visual Art in Intercultural Education, delivered by Karen Webster

Training participants

In total 21 people signed up for the 2008 course. 12 people attended both days, while one person did not attend either session. 17 people attended on the first day and 15 people attended on the second day. The reason of ill-health was given by four participants as the reason why they were unable to attend both days, while two others had personal commitments, and one person cancelled their place at late notice. Nine people who applied for the course when it was already full asked to be put on a waiting list and to be contacted when this course was held in the future.

In total twelve participants were formal sector educators. Of these, six were primary school teachers, three of whom worked in language support roles, and one of whom was a student teacher. Five participants worked as primary teacher trainers and one of the formal sector educators was a post-primary teacher. The other eight participants were community workers focusing on integration and community art projects. One of these was a community worker trainer.

Evaluation

This evaluation was carried out using the surveymonkey website (www.surveymonkey.com). The 20 course participants were emailed the survey link three times and they were sent a letter about the evaluation. The response rate was 25% since five participants completed the evaluation form.

Most useful learning

When asked what learning was most useful and effective two participants identified the use of visual art, commenting that it was "very practical and effective" and "I thought it would be so easy to apply the techniques Karen used in my place of work (a junior school). The ideas were great and could be used in a whole-class setting or in the language support room, or as part of an intercultural day."

Two commented that all aspects of the course was useful and informative in their own way, with one focusing on “the use of films, pictures and music are unique because they say more than what we see or hear.” The other had “used some of the music ideas since because of the nature of my work.”

Finally one participant “found the drama workshop very useful. As a visual artist working with groups, it was interesting for me to see different ways that groups can engage with each other.”

Least useful learning

When asked what learning they found least effective three participants responded that all of the learning was useful. One participant commented that although the film strand was interesting for her she felt that “the children I teach are too young to look at the films discussed on the day.” However she did highlight a resource from that session as one that she would love to get, “I did like the 'Memory Box' film though and would love to get that for school.” Another had not used the Refugee Information Service input but felt that it still might be useful in the future.

Use of skills, knowledge and materials

When asked how they had used the skills, knowledge or materials from the course, and whether they had developed or adapted them participants had:

- ‘Passed on the Drama Art and Music ideas to my team. I have put two of the songs in staff notation and taught them to my Arts team and they report that they have used them in schools’
- ‘Applied some of the drama element into my own work with early years’ groups, encouraging the children to look at fairy tales and engage in role play. I am experimenting more with combining text, drama and visual art.’
- ‘Used Karen's idea of the little folded book with my second class group. The two girls I take in this group are very thoughtful and loved the idea of making their own book. Using the watercolour paper and paints made the whole activity more of an event for them and they couldn't wait to take them home!’
- ‘Listened to music from different cultures, children have responded to it by drawing pictures or making up stories. Have also used some of the ideas from the visual arts to make painted profiles and crests for the children.’

Another participant had made use of the skills she gained during the course in her work in a childcare centre to create a space that was inclusive for all children.

One respondent had developed a project on the rainforest with her class, while another highlighted two stories as lovely stories to explore the idea of diversity and belonging with younger children - ‘What if?’ and ‘Elmer and the Hippos’.

Impact on values attitudes, and knowledge

When asked if they had identified any impact on values, attitudes, and knowledge of those they work with, such as awareness and understanding of intercultural, antiracist and global issues, and their relevance in an educational context, two participants had identified an impact on those they worked with. One mentioned an impact on the “understanding of intercultural diversity”. She found that “the children learnt to respect each others’ culture and they are more friendly now than before.” Another said “We had an intercultural day in our school this year and I know that all the children loved it, particularly the EAL learners. One of my quietest students told me that she was so happy that we had her favourite food in school that day, which showed how important it was to her!”

Final comments

Finally participants were asked to mention any other comments about how they found the course or how the course could be improved. Responses were very positive with comments including “Generally found the course to be of a very high standard and presenters were highly professional”, “I thought it was great- so wide-ranging, and it was lovely to meet so many people, interested in the area, and to get to talk to them also. At times you can feel a little cut off from the

outside world (!) in school, with teachers and parents looking to you for answers so wide-ranging, and it's good to know what services there are out there for our parents and children." One participant highlighted the mix of backgrounds of participants as a positive attribute of the course "Loved the fact that there were so many diverse backgrounds." The one shortcoming identified was the lack of time, "the time frame is always short, an extension would be good."

Survey Questions:

1. What learning from the course have you found the most useful and why?
2. What learning from the course have you found the least useful and why?
3. Please give examples of how you have used the skills, knowledge or materials from the course. If you have developed or adapted them, please mention how:
4. Have you developed any other materials or activities that you would be interested to share with future participants?
5. Have you identified any impact on values, attitudes, and knowledge of those you work with? (e.g. awareness and understanding of intercultural, antiracist and global issues, and their relevance in an educational context)
6. We plan to introduce a greater global dimension to the course. Do you have any suggestions or advice for us, such as topics or skills to include?
7. Please mention any other comments about how you found the course or how we could improve the course: