



‘Plastic, Political and Contingent’: Culture and Intercultural Learning in DYS Activities

**Discussion document
based on the evaluation of the LTTC Intercultural Learning
and recent research activities**

Dr. Gavan Titley

Executive Summary

Intercultural learning has become a key work area in European youth training during the last fifteen years, and the work of the DYS has been highly influential in this development. Various publications and training courses have supported youth leaders and workers in developing awareness of cultural issues and the dynamics of cultural identities and in developing competences for planning and implementing youth activities with an intercultural dimension.

Nevertheless, approaches that have been consolidated and widely reproduced during this period are no longer adequate to the realities in which young people live and practice youth work. This discussion contends that widely-utilised notions of culture, and the methodologies that propagate them, are both analytically and politically inadequate. A central emphasis on culture as a focus of education and potential change runs the risk of essentialising and freezing identities and hegemonising ideas of culture that are limited and overly prescriptive. Similarly, dominant approaches to intercultural learning may ignore the intersection of cultural identities with ethnicity, gender, class and individuated factors, and most seriously, may appear naïve in relation to the politicisation of culture in European political debates. Indeed, there is growing criticism that focusing on intercultural learning contributes to the dilution of the political nature of youth work, particularly in a context where anti-racism needs clear and unambiguous support.

This analysis builds on the evaluation of the Long Term Training Course on Intercultural Learning 2003-4. As this document will discuss, this course suggests a need for a critical reappraisal of the blanket category *intercultural learning*, and perhaps even a significant break with the dominant concepts and approaches that have become institutionalised and routine. A key realisation of this course was that it is vital to conduct a needs analysis with regard to the kinds of socio-cultural issues youth activists are working with, and how best the DYS training service can respond to them.

In instigating a consideration of this shift, this discussion document builds on a broad-ranging discussion of sociological and cultural theory in relation to the LTTC and the wider practice of intercultural learning in European youth training. It is aimed at facilitating debate rather than providing a fully coherent overview of theories, practices and approaches. In conclusion, it suggests issues and areas for future research, training and policy agendas. The recommendations included for discussion are united by the need to evaluate the relevance of different approaches to intercultural learning, and how these approaches relate to such work areas as citizenship, conflict transformation, anti-racism, and inter-religious dialogue.

Introduction

How adequate is ‘intercultural learning’ to the realities of youth workers in Europe today? It is the contention of this discussion document that many prevalent theories, methodologies and practices of intercultural learning are inadequate, and that this inadequacy poses a range of challenges for trainers and training. Of course, this is, and should be, an entirely predictable occurrence. Jean-Francois Richard, in his keynote speech at the Europe, Youth and Globalisation Event, drew attention to the widening gap between *dog years* – the intensified pace of techno-economic change – and *institutional time*, the relatively decreasing speed at which large structures can assimilate visions and analyses of change and translate them into policy-based practice.¹ This sense of increasing disjuncture is also felt broadly at the level of research; as Arjun Appadurai notes in a discussion of research in an era of globalisation, there is an “[...] inherent temporal lag between processes...and our efforts to contain them conceptually”.²

If there is an inherent lag between processes and their conceptual mapping, it should come as no surprise if a significant gap appears between the core assumptions and approaches of educational work, and the new conceptual mapping emerging from a constant struggle with the complexities of social and cultural life. The aim of this discussion document, then, is to suggest that dominant approaches to intercultural learning have become irredeemably weakened. They lag behind in terms of both *conceptual* and *political* adequacy, and jar with the ways in which young people are increasingly articulating their experiences in DYS activities. However, dominant approaches to intercultural learning are not just victims of the tension between dog years and institutional time, they are also victims of their own ubiquity. This document argues that many well-known approaches to intercultural learning may actually consolidate counter-productive and reductionist perspectives, and in some cases, compound the kinds of integralist, populist politics they explicitly aim to oppose.

This discussion contends that ‘culture talk’ in European youth work has become debilitating, that culture as it is often discussed obscures more than it clarifies, and that trusted approaches to intercultural learning promote simplistic analyses and solutions for change that are at odds with the fine-grained knowledge many youth workers have of their context. It argues that intercultural learning has become a self-fulfilling prophecy in youth work with little purchase in realities beyond the international training scene. This is not to deny the value of many approaches or the obvious salience of thinking about and analysing cultural processes. Discussing the world and people’s experiences through terms and concepts they value, and facilitating educational approaches informed by years of expertise in cultural education, remain important to informal European youth work. Nevertheless, intercultural learning is weakened by its own overt success, and this over-extension and inflation is responsible for the gap between what many are experiencing and the frameworks and concepts intercultural education offers for engaging around that experience with others in an educational process. Intercultural learning is weakened by a dependence on static ideas of culture; by the ways in which it has colonised such areas as anti-racism and conflict transformation; by the ways in which it has been depoliticised; and by the ways it has come to stand in for evidence-based analysis of young people’s environments and realities.

¹ Richard, Jean-Francois (2003) *High Noon: Twenty Global Problems, Twenty Years to Solve Them*

² Appadurai, Arjun: Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination, in Appadurai (ed.) (2003) *Globalization*.

This document takes as its starting point the Long Term Training Course on Intercultural Learning 2003-4, and was initially conceived as an alternative form of course documentation. While the experience of working with intercultural learning over the duration of that course is central to this document, the arguments here are not wildly generalised from this one experience. They are a synthesis of ideas the LTTC team has gathered in working with intercultural learning in European-level youth work, and also draws on accumulative discussions with many practitioners over time that suggest that a fundamental reconsideration of intercultural learning would be of benefit.³ Nevertheless, it is important to be clear that this text is not based on any form of planned or structured research, even if it draws deeply from the mass of evaluation and impressions collected by the team during one year of intense analysis and planning. It does not claim to be a legitimate evaluation of ‘intercultural learning’ in European youth work. It is written with the assumption that these debates about educational concepts and practice will look very different from the vantage point of different practitioners, training experiences, priorities, contexts and programmes, but that nevertheless these debates need to take place within something called the European training community. It is fundamentally an invitation to reflect on these broad questions from where you are standing and practising.

This discussion sets out to link ongoing issues in socio-cultural research with the experience of one particular course. It is a conviction that underlies this analysis that many courses and seminars are developing responses to the holes that appear during the application of well-known methodologies and approaches, but that this spontaneous innovation is not captured and translated institutionally into wider discussions and resources. How do we capture what different practitioners are undoubtedly doing to address the weaknesses of intercultural learning in specific contexts? This document aims to make a contribution by relating issues and discussions that were prevalent during this very particular Long Term Training Course to wider considerations of the practice and importance of intercultural learning, and to move from this dialogue to a set of questions and suggestions for wider conversation between the research and policy arms of the institution, training professionals, and youth organisations. We have become accustomed to the idea of triangulation between policy, research and training, while in practice finding that this is a difficult practice both structurally and discursively. This discussion document sets out to partially ‘square the triangle’ by relating a particular training experience to questions raised by recent research sanctioned by the DYS - most notably the work collected in *Resituating Culture* (2004) – and by attempting to translate some of this reflection into questions that policy-making can engage with.

In this author’s experience of the DYS educational offer during the last ten years, the value of its achievements and successes in consolidating and innovating intercultural education are not in doubt. Intercultural learning has become a key work area in European youth training during the last fifteen years, and the work of the DYS has been highly influential in this development. Various publications and numerous training courses have supported youth leaders and workers in developing awareness of cultural issues and the dynamics of cultural identities, and in developing competences for planning and implementing youth activities with an intercultural dimension. Nevertheless, there must come a moment where the widespread relevance of the corpus of approaches and methodologies which have accrued

³ Such discussions including considering this course with other trainers, discussions held at the Trainers’ Pool Consultative Meeting in January 2004, discussing the assumed relationship between intercultural learning and conflict transformation at the relevant training courses in 2002 and 2003. Some of the conversations can also be related to subsequent publications; *Resituating Culture* (2004) is the clearest example.

are questioned in relation to a complex youth sociology and what people have begun to call the ‘diverse modernities of the Council of Europe’.⁴

This document argues that approaches which have been consolidated and widely reproduced during this period of growth and influence are no longer adequate to the realities in which young people live and practice youth work. A central emphasis on culture as a focus of education and potential change runs the risk of essentialising and freezing identities and hegemonising ideas of culture that are limited and overly prescriptive. Similarly, dominant approaches to intercultural learning may ignore the intersection of cultural identities with ethnicity, gender, class and individuated factors, and most seriously, may appear naïve in relation to the politicisation of culture in European political debates. Indeed, there is growing criticism that focusing on intercultural learning contributes to the dilution of the political nature of youth work, partially undoing the successes of earlier campaigns and programmes, and particularly in a context where anti-racism needs clear and unambiguous support.

This discussion initially proceeds by offering a broad-ranging discussion of sociological and cultural theory in relation to the wider practice of intercultural learning in European youth training. In doing so, it is worth recalling a point made by this author in a discussion of the relationship between youth researchers and youth workers in *Coyote*: “ [...] research (and theory) are not corrective, or higher form(s) of knowledge [...] (to present it as such) would be to replicate the persistent and annoying division in training of the theoretical and the concrete, an artificial division that ignores the conditions by which social research is produced, and the ways in which ‘theories’ lurk, perhaps subsumed and undeclared, within the principles and methods of practice”.⁵ In other words there is always the trace of some theory, yet many approaches to intercultural learning present themselves as ‘the theory of culture’ as opposed to ‘a theory of culture’. The contention of the first chapter is that these approaches to intercultural learning are weakened precisely by subsuming their theoretical status and intellectual history, and that much of the assumed theory that informs them is simply inadequate and counter-productive. This is not to suggest a constant search for ‘better’ theory, but instead to argue for a constant reflection on adequacy and relevance. It is important to make transparent the inclusions and exclusions at work in the process of methodological selection, to encourage critical approaches to the relevance of methodologies and theories in diverse contexts, and to develop training approaches that present a discursive overview and reflection on how certain forms of education invite us to frame and respond to the world.

Chapter two reviews the approach to intercultural learning taken during the LTTC Intercultural Learning, and relates the choices made by the preparatory team to the discussions outlined in chapter one. On the basis of the team evaluation, it sketches out some of the critical educational and political weaknesses that stem from the over-burdening of intercultural learning, and suggests specific challenges that may be relevant beyond this particular course. These challenges relate to the challenges identified by participants in making intercultural learning relevant to their target groups and projects.

⁴ Before this phrase gains further currency, it might be worth reflecting on the ways in which ‘diverse modernities’ suggests parallel development and plurality rather than the more accurate senses of overlap and divergence. This point is well made by Göran Therborn among others, in his discussion of what he calls ‘Entangled Modernities’ *European Journal of Social Theory* 6 (3).

⁵ Hoskins and Kloosterman, Titley and Holder: Youth Researchers and Youth Workers. *Coyote* Issue 8, 2004. *Coyote* is the magazine of the Council of Europe/European Commission Partnership addressing issues relating to youth training in Europe.

Chapter three maps the questions raised by the analysis for future trajectories in intercultural learning, its relevance to other discrete work areas, and the wider issues it raises for institutional images of and knowledge about training needs and realities. As a part of this, it attempts to formulate specific questions for discussion on the future practice of intercultural learning, training needs suggested by this future practice, and the implications of these issues for the work priorities of the institution.

Chapter One

Intercultural Learning: A Changing Educational Landscape?

Introduction

Intercultural learning is to European youth work what ‘world peace’ is to the Miss World Competition; everybody is in favour of it and says nice things about it. Unlike world peace, it seems like everybody practices it too; in a topic search on the SALTO⁶ Trainers online for youth database, a search reveals that 152 of 165 registered trainers describe themselves as offering ‘intercultural learning’. Of course, intercultural learning is popular and widely practised for good reasons. It is now common to see interculturalism widely incorporated as an educational philosophy and approach, guiding choices that are made in the planning and implementation of activities. As a latent, guiding pedagogical approach, high quality intercultural education invites us to develop as reflexive agents in our interaction with people of different experiences, backgrounds, beliefs, languages and values. It facilitates working and living in interaction that often takes place in differential power relations – of gender, sexuality, social status, linguistic and socio-educational capital - and aids us in capturing what has been learnt in an organised educational context for our interaction in everyday contexts, as well as subsequent activities as a multiplier and young activist.

That said, the label *intercultural learning* encompasses everything people decide to include in it. Despite the confident brand of knowledge apparently signified by the prevalent acronym ‘ICL’, the range of approaches denoted by ‘intercultural learning’ constitutes a wide spectrum, including often deeply contradictory approaches to this form of youth work. These different practices involve theories of culture drawn from different disciplines and research traditions, theories that are not easily abstracted from their conceptual and contextual histories. These theories are inherently part of methodologies drawn and adapted from highly diverse applications of intercultural education; from language learning to volunteer acclimatisation to military conditioning and everything in between. To return to the straw pole of SALTO solutions, it is probably safe to assume that 152 people are not doing exactly or sometimes even remotely the same thing when they offer ‘intercultural learning’.

This diversity and contradiction is obviously not inherently problematic. What it does, however, is place a responsibility on practitioners to (a) make the nature of their intercultural educational practice transparent; and (b) suggests the need for trainees and users to evaluate the relevance of different approaches and theories to the context in which they engage in youth work. *While the idea of culture is almost universally received, it does not follow from this that education about culture is universally transferable, and indeed, the transferability of methods and theoretical frameworks is becoming increasingly limited.* Similarly, the ubiquity of a concept does not guarantee its relevance. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the broad sweep of approaches fluidly categorised as ‘intercultural learning’ is another key site of the critical skills and approaches discussed by Hendrik Otten in a recent discussion paper on training attitudes, skills and competences.⁷ As Otten puts it:

⁶ SALTO-YOUTH stands for Support and Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities within the European YOUTH programme. The website of the Trainers Online for Youth database is <http://www.salto-youth.net/toy/>. This search was carried out 20.12.04

⁷ Otten, Hendrik (2002) “Study on trainers’ competencies necessary for developing and implementing European level training activities in the youth field at high quality, and possible approaches for the assessment of these training competencies”.

[...] it can be said that in view of the increasing complexity of European societies, the requirements for education and training are growing, and the knowledge and skill needs demanded of those who are responsible for education and training are accordingly complex. (2002: 11)

Put in this way, Otten proposes an abstract yet clear relationship between the complexity of societies, and the concomitant complexity of training skills. He highlights two inter-related aspects of trainer competence - *personal aspects*, including cognitive-intellectual, moral-ethical, emotional; and action-oriented dimensions and *activity-related aspects*, including the didactic structure of training, methodologies, specific contents, and its political aims and objectives. Otten summarises the implications of this for training and trainers thus:

[...] Training (should be) more subject, object and situation-adequate – a kind of paradigm shift, in order to get an intellectual hold on a changed youth sociology setting and the complex requirements of training and education as elements of life-long learning... Trainers in this European level high quality training are also knowledge managers – they have to know many things; mainly however in view of the complexity of European societies [...] they have to be knowledge brokers. (P.12-13)

Approaching intercultural learning in this light involves a series of adaptive challenges; a broad canon of differentiated approaches must be adjudicated in relation to meaningful knowledge of the context of training. According to the *Intercultural Learning T-Kit* this is no less than the mission of this type of education; it strives for empowerment in the face of complex realities.⁸ Intercultural learning, then, should be what Otten terms subject, object and situation adequate. These indicators are made all the more complex by the realisation, as Ulf Hannerz puts it, that “culture is everywhere”;⁹ not only in the sense that everybody is encultured, but that culture in contemporary societies is a site of controversy and struggle over identity, belonging, legitimacy and entitlement. Intercultural education, therefore, cannot be simplistically seen as education about culture, cultural process and enculturation, but instead has to be regarded as a fluid area of approaches that activates different ideas of culture and its significances based on an intimate knowledge of the context in which education takes place.

In my experience, ideas of culture that inform a significant proportion of common intercultural approaches are inadequate according to the minimal criteria Otten proposes. They are *analytically inadequate*, depending on static and homogenising ideas of culture as a binding marker of identity in social contexts where socio-cultural experience and the relations between preferred and ascribed identities have become increasingly complex. Compounding this is their *political inadequacy*, as by normalising culture as the prime marker of human identity and belonging dominant intercultural approaches compound the logic of cultural nationalism and culturalised racism, and relegate the importance of gender, class, multiple senses of belonging and identity, sexuality, age and many other individuated aspects of identity and experience.

Working to any great extent through the prism of culture rarely recognises the ways in which our cultural environments are becoming more diffuse, and there is room for more awareness of how dominant interpretations of culture are becoming re-romanticised and heavily politicised. These terminal inadequacies are worsened by the ways in which activities,

⁸ Gillert, Arne et al (2000) *Intercultural Learning T-Kit*, p. 14.

⁹ Hannerz, Ulf (1996) *Transnational Connections*, p. 31.

theories and methodologies that deal with ‘culture’ are often seen as interchangeable and widely applicable, instead of as products of particular discourses and histories of development and usage. This results in a potentially ironic situation; as more people turn to training for ways of reflecting on and acting in complex realities, there is a wider potential distribution of methods and approaches fixated on models and ideas incommensurable with the realities faced by young people and youth organisations across Europe.

This chapter develops this critique by examining reasons for the evolution of culture as an overwhelmingly powerful concept, and some of the more contemporary arguments for transcending it. It continues by applying the implications of this analysis to dominant practices of intercultural learning, and concludes by condensing these discussions into key areas of weakness in intercultural education.

The necessary inflation and deflation of culture

Before elaborating on the charge sheet hinted at in the introduction, it is important to note that culture was not plucked from thin air and randomly elected to the office of chief global concept. Its complex history of usage, and its current ubiquity, are products of what is and has been at stake in arguing for the salience of culture and different cultures. From its first recorded usage in the English language circa 1420 culture has been a subject of constant interest and critique, not to mention political and social struggle. It is inherent in the nature of this struggle for conceptual and often political supremacy that the contention that culture is best approached as a site of contesting discourses is often ignored.¹⁰ As Chris Barker summarises: “The concept of culture does not represent a fixed entity in an independent object world but is best thought of as a mobile signifier that denotes different ways of talking about human activity with divergent uses and purposes [...] the concept of culture is plastic, political and contingent.”¹¹ Barker’s insight is an important one, yet in current dominant intercultural learning approaches, there are plenty of reasons to suggest that the concept of culture is understood as being wooden, apolitical and universally fixed.

Prior to presenting key developments in the inflation of culture, it may be necessary to anticipate some objections. This suspicion of the uses of culture in youth work is not provoked by a desire for theoretical sophistication in youth work, nor is it to suggest that discussing culture is not a central aspect of youth work with a European dimension. All too often, reflective discussions of the concepts promoted and normalised by youth work are met with self-serving and patronising objections about preserving the openness of non-formal education. Contrary to this, *my critique is that non-formal education has become too closed*, and paradoxically, this has occurred by cherry-picking intercultural approaches that have been developed in radically different contexts and practices. *Culture* is a particularly alluring and powerful framework; like the nation and nationality – which culture is now often used as a code for – it gifts a relationship of particularity and universalism. In other words, everybody is automatically different together.

When handled in particular ways, this universalising aspect of culture can easily be stretched to encompass and explain far more than is useful or beneficial. As Wolfgang Welsch has observed, culture is simultaneously a descriptive and prescriptive notion, and political

¹⁰ See for example Raymond Williams’ discussion of the social conceptual history of culture in *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1972), and Terry Eagleton’s examination of culture’s entangled senses of ‘making’ and ‘being made’ in *The Idea of Culture* (2000).

¹¹ Barker, Chris (2002) *Making Sense of Cultural Studies: Central Problems and Critical Debates*, p. 84.

responsibility comes with propagandising one notion over another.¹² In other words, our cultural realities are always intimately related to our conceptual understandings of culture, and this is a realisation that much intercultural learning practice has yet to take seriously. We will return to this line of argument in the following sections. The general reasons for what I am now characterising as over-burdening and inadequacy are many and involved, and this discussion can do no more than hint at several trajectories that have elevated culture to the status of a globally unifying concept. For the sake of coherence and organisation these trajectories are organised as bullet points below, however this should not suggest that these represent discrete and separate areas. Most if not all of the points outlined are highly interdependent.

(a) Perhaps the most significant discussion of culture – at least for the purposes of intercultural learning – has been the post-war shift towards culture as an antidote to the virulent hierarchies of ‘race’. As Alana Lentin has detailed,¹³ UNESCO played a key role in centring culture by aiming to undermine racism’s supposed reliance on the pseudo-science of race while providing an alternative explanation for human difference and diversity. To quote:

The main proposal made by UNESCO, and most forcefully by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his short book *Race and History* (1961), was that human groups could be divided according to cultures which were relative to each other. The idea that each culture contributed ‘in its own way’ to humanity as a whole sought to counter the widely accepted belief that a hierarchy of ‘race’ divided Europeans and non-Europeans. Lévi-Strauss celebrated the diversity of humanity, demonstrated by what he called, the ‘distinctive contributions’ of each cultural group. He stressed his belief that different levels of progress between such groups could not be attributed to any innate differences. Rather, progress comes about as a result of interaction between groups. The historical chance that led to the onset of modernity taking place in the West meant that the other cultures that rubbed shoulders with it experienced more rapid progress. Those that remained isolated did not. The UNESCO Tradition in anti-racism, to which Lévi-Strauss’s work was central, was translated into a specific approach to opposing racism based on the belief that racism could be overcome by recognising that the real problem was one of ethnocentrism; by promoting the benefits of cultural diversity as enriching society and by encouraging greater knowledge of other cultures among western societies.

The final sentences detail assumptions in intercultural learning – and its relationship to anti-racism – that are still widely recognisable. This passage also notes the centrality of cultural relativism, a problematic that will be discussed in subsequent sections.

(b) A slightly later development has been the necessity of asserting cultural difference and particularity in relation to the universalising theories of modernisation that guided ‘development’ from the 1950s through to at least the 1970s (and which have perhaps made an unwelcome if latent reappearance during the ‘war on terror’). Primarily North American modernisation theorists – who, unlike the vast majority of theorists, had the willing ear of government – constructed the world as a series of nodes on a linear progress towards developed modernity, and primarily imagined non-Western and colonial/post-colonial contexts as ‘traditional societies’ in need of accelerated modernisation. As Vincent Tucker

¹² Welsch, Wolfgang, *Transculturality: the Puzzling Forms of Culture Today* in Featherstone & Lash (ed.) (1999) *Spaces of Culture*.

¹³ See Lentin, Alana: *The Problem of Culture and Human Rights in the Response to Racism* in Titley (ed.) (2004) *Resituating Culture* pp. 97-99, and *Racism and Anti-racism in Europe* (2004).

expresses it; “Modernization theorists were concerned with understanding the culture of other societies so as to manipulate them and adapt them to the exigencies of development [...] other cultural formations were viewed primarily as forms of resistance to modernisation which had to be overcome”.¹⁴ Anti-imperialist movements and critics have, as a result, both critiqued the cultural assumptions that informed ideas of progress and development, and asserted the resilience and alternative world-views of cultures that had been slated for ‘inevitable modernisation’.

(c) Related to the last point above has been the critique offered by postmodern philosophers of what they term grand-narratives; meta-ideas for the organisation of stories of human life, including Christianity, Marxism, Enlightenment Humanism, nationalism, and so forth. Postmodernism, although it is something of a generalisation, has been both lauded and criticised for sanctioning widespread cultural relativism through its suspicion of universalism and trans-historical claims to validity and truth. In the same vein, postmodern approaches refused to accept the idea of Culture as ‘the best that has been thought and said in the world’ and instead approached culture as the practice of everyday life, where cultural products – such as television shows, youth styles and popular music – were discussed for their subjective and affective significance, rather than being dismissed for their supposedly objective aesthetic and moral inadequacy. In short, postmodernism sanctioned pluralism and relativism on all cultural registers.

(d) Sociology and social analysis have, over roughly the last 25 years, been engaged in what has been termed a ‘cultural turn’, influenced not only by postmodernism but also by anthropology, cultural linguistics and cultural studies. Again, while this is something of a generalisation, it is generally taken to mean a dawning focus on subjective, interpretative/hermeneutic and affective aspects of social life that could not be captured in theories of society that favoured notions of instrumental rationality, or that conceptualised the individual in society within shifting relations of structure and agency. Instead, cultural analysis examines the ways in which people imagine, negotiate and construct the world they exist within.

(e) Perhaps most importantly, the development of multicultural philosophies and policies in many countries has centred culture as the prime marker of difference and belonging. As Colm O’Cinneide argues in his contribution to *Resituating Culture*, multiculturalism is often regarded as a response to the problems posed by liberal and republican ideas of the individual citizen inhabiting a neutral and difference-blind state.¹⁵ What such universalist notions of the citizen ignored (and continue to ignore) is that equality may be formal, but it does not follow that it will be in any way substantive without reference to the impediments created by social differentiation and without regard to the ways in which barriers to access and participation must be removed. Various theories and practices of multicultural citizenship¹⁶ have advocated a *recognition of cultural difference* and its consequences, and agitated for countervailing representation in politics, socio-economic life and the public sphere. These debates have been closely associated with the position and rights of ‘national minorities’, and often unevenly and controversially extended to migrant ethnic groups. The serious problems with hegemonic multiculturalism are discussed below.

¹⁴ Tucker, Vincent. The Myth of Development: A Critique of Eurocentric Discourse in Munck and O’Hearn (ed.) (1999) *Critical Development Theory*, p. 3.

¹⁵ O’Cinneide, Colm: Citizenship and Multiculturalism: Equality, Rights and Diversity in Contemporary Europe in *Resituating Culture* (2004).

¹⁶ ‘Multicultural Citizenship’ is an idea associated with the Canadian philosopher Will Kymlicka and his book *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (1995). For a global overview of related concepts and programmes see C.W. Watson (2000) *Multiculturalism*.

(f) Recently, widespread debates and anxieties about the cultural impact of globalisation have provoked anxiety about the nature of cultural experience and the erosion of cultural autonomy. Simplistic analyses of globalisation – and there are far too many – tend to regard the mere presence of foreign goods, services and images as evidence of the penetration and denigration of cultural life. This is particularly pronounced in western visions of non-western cultures, where without irony, they claim to speak about the cultural domination of many peoples around the globe by western cultural forms. A more important form of this argument contends that cultural autonomy – the ability to create, circulate and engage with cultural forms that relate meaningfully to people’s experiences and life-worlds – is eroded by the constant expansion of telecommunications and consumer markets and the effects of economies of scale. In general, current thinking on the impacts of cultural globalisation tends to stress the interplay of homogenisation and heterogenization and the importance of situated analyses in examining the ‘power geometry’ of globalisation.

This partial and compressed list of important movements and currents that have centred the idea of culture indicate some of the reasons why culture has come to occupy such a centrally important role in education. Nevertheless, this list needs to be read in combination with an opposing list that argues for its radical decentring. The reasons for this are implicit in the nature of the movements discussed; if a focus on and resort to culture has been crucial and necessary under particular circumstances, it follows that a shift away from it may be necessary for more recent and consequent reasons.

(a) Culture is an idea that is over-accented, yet its usage always involves a range of tangled senses. To quote from *Resituating Culture*: “In contemporary societies and public discourses, the term ‘culture’ has become a powerful and commonly held currency. Long regarded as one of the most complicated concepts in the human and social sciences, it increasingly takes on the appearance of a floating signifier attached to ways of life and life practices, collectivities based on location, nation, history, lifestyle and ethnicity, systems and networks of representation and meaning, and realms of artistic value and heritage” (2004:

10). Thus, very basically, *the more aspects of life culture is deployed to encompass and explain, the more opaque and vague its usages become*. Speaking of culture may seem to refer to something self-evident – a group, a way of life, a national context – yet its history of usage means that it always activates far more than the utterance or reference may suggest or desire.

(b) Despite this over-accenting, discussions of culture tend to prefer and normalise some usages over others. Culture has become a ubiquitous concept as a way of framing human interaction, however it is not widely recognised that *its use is always an evaluative and political act*. It has been widely noted that in contemporary discussions of multiculturalism, migration and ethno-political conflict, culture is predominantly discussed in static and essentialising terms, privileging and standing in for communities of descent over and above other intersecting aspects of identity and self. If, as Terry Eagleton has argued, culture has historically involved intertwined senses of ‘making’ and ‘being made’, contemporary European societies display a distinct tendency to prefer bounded ideas of cultural communities. As *Resituating Culture* contends, “The idea of culture as the essentialised way of life of a people, often implicitly linked to geo-political territory, retains a disturbing degree of orthodoxy in Europe today”.¹⁷ This is because, as many writers have noted, culture is a concept that lends itself easily to a variety of political rhetorics, and has a

¹⁷ See Tittley, Gavan: Introduction to *Resituating Culture* (2004) p. 11.

now unrivalled legitimacy in mobilising group identities. In some guises culture is a warm and cuddly concept, whereas in others it is central to boundary maintenance and politics of exclusion.

(c) In Europe today this is most keenly felt in the politics of cultural nationalism, where citizenship has been increasingly decoupled from the state and reclaimed to a politics of national-ethnic-racialised belonging and legitimacy. The development of citizenship tests based on heritage rather than civic skills, widespread discussions of assimilation and incompatibility, and rhetoric about the ‘threat’ to ‘indigenous European cultures’ are not the sole preserve of the far right in Europe.¹⁸ Indeed, popular cultural nationalisms have thrived by mainstreaming the ‘concerns’ of the far right in amended discourses and policies. Such nationalism builds on simplifying feelings of belonging and community and amplifying threats and insecurities emanating from the decline of the welfare state (in many instances) and the increased ‘global figuration’ of national economics and politics, most notably in job markets. In this context, education through culture is not only about engaging with prevalent ways of understanding the world, but also a question of reflecting on the relationship of education to political motivations and strategies that encompass the educational context.

(d) The overwhelming focus on culture as a marker of identity and community in multiculturalist projects has been criticised from a range of positions. Many criticisms have come from young people – particularly so-called ‘second generation migrants’ who are unwilling to be pigeon-holed as ethnic or cultural – and spoken for by ‘leaders of the community’ who have been sanctioned by outside powers. In the UK, multiculturalism has been criticised as a micro-colonial arrangement, where people are neatly organised into a cultural mosaic, and power is shared between the metropolitan centre and recognised ‘community mandarins’. The tendency to see and valorise people as belonging to cultural groups underplays and simplifies identity and the importance of gender, class, sexuality, disability and political allegiance in practices of identity as well as practices of discrimination. Moreover, a key criticism of multiculturalism has been that it imagines cultural recognition and appreciation to be the key demand of ethnic minorities. This cultural reductionism gives rise to both superficial dynamics and practices of cultural exchange, and compounds the tendency to see discrimination as the product of individual prejudice rather than material and political inequalities. For many, the apparently benign and progressive focus on culture works consciously and unconsciously to weaken anti-racist politics.

(e) A further aspect of the power-based critique of multiculturalism in point (d) is the ways in which the cultural definition of people contributes to their exoticisation and marginalisation. As Mark McGuinness writes, “[...] easily recognisable differences, in skin colour, language, religion, dress, foods [...] such ‘differences’ only actually register as differences if you look at them from the seemingly homogenous and stable platform of ‘mainstream’ white urban culture”.¹⁹ *This implies that the recognition of cultural difference is often not accompanied by a positional sense of how difference is constructed.* In other words, recognition demands a consideration of who is recognised, how, by whom, on what terms, and in what power relationships. Ideas of cultural difference carry complex historical

¹⁸ It is interesting to note the ways in which discussions of European culture in relation to proposed Turkish membership of the European Union have taken on the characteristics of national culture writ large; both Christian heritage and the legacy of Enlightenment secularism have been invoked as cultural fundamentals for the imagined community a Europe that displays little cohesion without this imagined Other.

¹⁹ McGuinness, Mark: Geographies with a Difference? Citizenship and Difference in Post-colonial Urban Spaces, in Blunt & McEwan (ed.) (2000) *Postcolonial Geographies*.

lineages, and shifting from using certain perspectives to appreciate rather than repress does not change the fundamental relationship of power and perspective. As Shalini Sinha writes, for example, what is often common to the experience of women of colour in Ireland is their positioning through residual ideas of racialised sexuality, whereby “our glorified ‘differences’, sometimes presented as ‘curiously attractive’ are still used to undermine us”²⁰ (2001).

(f) Culture’s political chauvinism is compounded by its descriptive inadequacy, and vice versa. Discussions of globalisation – a new, highly complex notion becoming increasingly important to DYS work – emphasise the fluid, hybrid nature of socio-cultural experiences, and challenge the idea that cultural homogeneity was anything more than the product of forms of imagining associated with national romanticism and the congruence of nation states and national (racialised) communities. What John Tomlinson terms connectivity, an ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependencies that characterise social, economic and cultural life in modern societies, is increasingly a banal everyday aspect of the fabric of cultural experience, yet it is not captured by many orthodox notions of culture. Dominant notions of culture that emphasise coherence, homogeneity and boundedness are inadequate both as descriptive possibilities and fail to notice how essentialising cultural politics are a reaction to aspects of globalisation. As the young population of Europe is increasingly characterised by people who have experienced migration and live between cultural contexts, these ideas become more inadequate and potentially exclusionary.

The implications for intercultural learning

The over-inflation and politicisation of culture outlined in the previous section has given rise to a debate in anthropology – the discipline most associated with the concept – as to whether responsible anthropology involves disowning the concept, or working to reshape and calibrate it.²¹ A similar question confronts the practitioners who have done most to promote the importance and benefits of intercultural learning as a core subject and priority of European youth work. I exempt from this discussion the welcome prevalence of intercultural learning as an educational philosophy guiding choices made in the planning of activities – what chapter two will discuss as *backstage* intercultural education. In this section the focus is on the ways in which intercultural learning, or “ICL” as it is cheerfully and mystifyingly branded, has become a near compulsory training aspect of almost all (short-term) international training programmes. If we relate the demand for adequacy amidst societal complexity to the intellectual and political complexity of culture, what are the implications for intercultural learning?

(a) A primary consideration, suggested by the drift of the points made above, is that the constant emphasis on anything called ‘intercultural learning’ compounds the tendency to centre culture as the key resource and problematic in social life and youth work activities. If intercultural learning is omnipresent, it suggests that it is a core pillar of any

²⁰ Sinha, Shalini: Generating Awareness for the Experiences of Women of Colour in Ireland in Lentin & McVeigh (ed.) (2002) *Racism and Ant-racism in Ireland*.

²¹ For example Arjun Appadurai, in keeping with what has been termed critical anthropology, argues that culture should be regarded as adjectival, as a process of culturalism in relation to group identities and politics in particular contexts. As he argues, culture as a noun carries the implication that “[...] culture is some kind of object, thing, or substance, whether physical or metaphysical. This substantialisation seems to bring culture back into the discursive space of race, the very idea it was originally designed to combat” *Modernity at Large: Cultural Consequences of Globalization* (1996: 12).

type of youth work, and this is simply not sustainable. Most trainers will be familiar with the programme planning process whereby a post-it with ICL written on it is stuck to the empty planning grid, just after 'farewell party'. While this is a glib example, it is meant to suggest that intercultural learning has become a staple part of short-term international trainings - and perhaps something of an expectation - yet very often the issues being discussed may be better off discussed under some other heading. Equally often, the reliance on intercultural learning stems from the need to gather a range of social, political and cultural issues into a limited period of time. Whatever the exigencies, there is no doubt to my mind that intercultural learning has sucked the oxygen out of spaces for political education, social analysis, informed and reflective discussions of youth contexts, and so forth.

(b) Following on from this omnipresence, it is obvious that very many different ways of addressing intercultural learning as a topic exist. There is often a sense in training that the main need of trainers is a constant supply of new approaches, whether for novelty or to widen the options available in planning sessions and activities. In intercultural learning I would argue that what is missing is a focus on navigating and evaluating the welter of materials that are merely a toolbox or a *Google* search away. What is also largely absent is the realisation that this methodological and discursive inquiry is also a *political responsibility*. To return to Wolfgang Welsch's analysis of culture as a descriptive and prescriptive notion, Welsch continues by arguing that it is possible to approach culture as open and in process, or as binding and essential. To quote:

If one tells us that culture is to be a homogeneity event, then we practice the required coercions and exclusions [...] The 'reality' of culture, is, in this sense, always a consequence too of our conceptions of culture. One must therefore be aware of the responsibility which one takes on in propagandising concepts of this type²².

It is my impression that too much intercultural learning is either loosely premised on the closed ideas critiqued by Welsch and elsewhere in this paper, or unaware of the implications that different, historically generated ideas of culture have for the educational premises and frameworks offered. Intercultural education is a broad area, and the debates I have outlined here are also played out in conflicting approaches and methodologies. For example, as Iben Jensen outlines in her contribution to *Resituating Culture*, intercultural communication research can be divided into main traditions of functionalist approaches and poststructuralist approaches. Functionalist approaches – including the widely misapplied work of Geerd Hofstede – try “[...] to predict how culture will influence communication, focusing on identifying culture as a barrier against more effective communication”.²³ Poststructuralist approaches, on the other hand, already assume that communication is discursive and dialogical, never exact and closed, and that intercultural communication needs to be seen in terms of power, context, political discourse, activated constructions of the Other²⁴, and so forth. Some form of awareness of these differences is not a theoretical nicety or an optional extra for diligent trainers, it fundamentally impacts on how an educational approach frames a session and the parameters of discussion that are likely to emerge.

²² Welsch op.cit 1999: 200

²³ Jensen, Iben, *The Practice of Intercultural Communication: Reflections for Professionals in Intercultural Encounters in Resituating Culture* (2004) p. 83.

²⁴ 'The Other' refers to general assumptions about other people that constitute identity as an intersubjective relationship and process, and that recognises that knowledge about oneself and others always interpenetrates. In cultural theory, 'The Other' often refers to the way in which different identities are placed in relations of difference and often inferiority to accepted norms, assumptions and practices.

(c) The absence of clear debate about the implications of entangled forms and philosophies of intercultural learning can be exacerbated by the training frameworks within which intercultural learning is delivered. The European youth field has successfully developed a range of materials that are in wide circulation, and some are far more successful at developing a critical approach to the construction of intercultural education than others. However many materials are assimilated from other practices and contexts, and there is undeniably a vogue for organising these assimilated elements as ‘tools’ that can be transferred from situation to situation, if a disclaimer as to the responsibility of the trainer is appended. A contention of this paper has been that limiting, essentialising and politically retrogressive concepts of culture predominate, however it is my impression that this is far less through conviction than a lack of attention to the ways in which different texts, materials and approaches are generated within different traditions of education, and the ways in which they migrate into non-formal education.

In our current training context, intercultural education has become a basic trade for freelance trainers, who often work for short and irregular periods of time with groups and organisations. This form of work economy prefers theories and modules that are transferable and adaptable, which is both generally understandable and dependent on the individual practice of the trainer. Nevertheless, there are grounds for arguing that many of the approaches that have so promiscuously been incorporated into youth practice are radically incommensurable. At this point I will take the liberty of including an extract from a previous article of mine entitled “Culture as Experience, Concept and Public Idea”.²⁵ This extract highlights key ways in which widespread assumptions and practices of intercultural learning display their inadequacy:

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(i) *Culture as a static, bounded entity*

Despite the range of research (see Vertovec & Cohen [eds.] 2002) which details people approaching their identities as complex, shifting interactions of place, ethnicity, nationality, gender, occupation, lifestyle and affiliations, many models of intercultural learning persist in ascribing a primary cultural identity. More often than not, this primary identity co-joins nationality and received ideas of national culture, or in the case of minority communities in dominant models of multiculturalism, ethnic identity with ethnic cultural groups (Watson 2000: 109). Very often cultures are imagined as being internally coherent and homogenous, and as exacting a largely similar influence over and loyalty from group members. As the “Intercultural Learning Model” of The Grove Consultants advises us, it takes time to ‘see the inherent logic of another culture’ (www.grove.com/about/model). This is also the approach of the ‘Iceberg Model of Culture’ still widely employed in youth training (Gillert op.cit: 18).

While these approaches retain a certain value, reliance on them obscures not only the complex nature of identities, but also the processes of cultural change and hybridity touched on previously. Notions of internal homogeneity are historically dubious - usually a creation of the will to power - and to present them as a way of understanding contemporary change is irresponsibly reductive. Culture is here presented as an exact science (the Grove model involves working through cycles; “The more successful intercultural cycles one completes, the more capacity one builds for embracing cultural differences”) yet frozen within its parameters are theories that approach culture as a system, and insist on this despite the fluid and increasingly anti-schematic character of cultural habitats. They contain the fossilised remnants of socio-anthropological ideas formulated long before the kinds of processes we

²⁵ Published in Lauritzen, Peter and Hendrik Otten (ed.) (2004) *Jugendarbeit und Jugendpolitik in Europa*. In this publication the article is translated into German, therefore this English abstract is previously unpublished.

are witnessing today, and which have since been thoroughly critiqued for their unsustainable emphasis on culture as a bounded entity (Cowan et al: 2001).

Ideas of culture neatly summarised and nestling in methodologies are not neutral lenses for observation. These approaches to intercultural education ask participants to imagine themselves in cultural capsules, and anti-intuitively invite them to pass their far more complex cultural existences through static modular prescriptions. In my experience, it is common to witness people dismissing this kind of training as irrelevant to their realities.

(ii) *Culture and incommensurable realities*

In emphasising responsibility to ideas and the propagandising of culture, Welsch (1999) raises two further points that warrant attention. A *Workbook on International Negotiation* (2002), produced by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, replicates a model that promises to provide key insights into culture's consequences. Despite preliminary qualifications concerning the complexity of culture and the possibilities of internal differences within cultures\societies\nations (the text uses these terms interchangeably), the model defines culture as the 'collective mental programming which distinguishes one group or category of people from another'. In an adaptation of Geert Hofstede's model (1991) the chapter scores nations along five value dimensions, and in a parody of participative education, it invites participants to take part in an assignment that requires them to 'score a selected number of countries and discuss this in your group' (ibid: 34).

While it would be myopic to dismiss the complex purchase of national identities, models such as this one continue to imagine culture as congruent only with the borders of nation-states. It could be argued that as a management tool it functions merely as a basic orientation device for a global management class. Yet this management model is included in a NGO handbook that circulates in very different circles, and where the need to engage with culture as an educational subject may be prompted by very different contexts and target groups. In presenting this theory with minimum contextualisation, a resource of this nature offers as widely applicable a model that is likely to be wholly incommensurable with the needs of a range of educators and groups. In terms of the question Welsch posits on responsibility, it seems dubious in the current geo-political context to foreground a model that focuses on cultural difference as the locus of conflict. Not to mention one that encourages managers, trainers or youth workers to analyse their colleagues and employees for indicative mental-cultural software.

(iii) *Culture and the absence of politics*

The accents placed on terms are not innocent gifts of nature; they are gradually inscribed there by social interests for broadly ideological reasons. The idea of culture that we see in the resources discussed previously may seem at best general and at worst banal, but they assume an idea of culture that posits essentialised, bounded ways of life, replete with internally coherent systems of meaning and value, grounded in geo-political locations. To observers of what has been termed 'the culturalisation of politics', this recipe will sound grimly familiar. Jane K. Cowan et al observed that while anthropology has increasingly discredited the idea of culture that we see in these forms of intercultural education, anthropologists have noted the

[..] increasing prevalence of culture as a rhetorical object – often in a highly essentialised form – in contemporary political talk. (2001: 9)

By unproblematically presenting culture in this way, these approaches naturalise an idea that has increasing import as an exclusionary political strategy. By way of illustration, we could consider the charming text on ‘The right to a cultural identity’ produced by the Austrian Freedom Party. Article 2.2 acknowledges openly that the coexistence and cooperation of different cultural groups have produced Austrian identity, and, in article 3.4, that:

The awareness of the special qualities of one’s own people is inseparably linked to the willingness to respect what is special about other people
(www.fpoe.at/fpoe/bundesgst/programm/chapter4.htm) (emphasis in the original).

In terms of the kind of intercultural education under discussion here, what could possibly be controversial about this statement? Both assume that different groups with their inherent differences encounter each other, and appreciation of the other is developed through reflection on one’s own culture. This could even be seen as a complementary policy statement for those that preach ‘diversity appreciation’ as their central aim. Yet these ideas of intercultural learning seem unaware that they promote an idea of culture that is central to the welfare chauvinism of cultural nationalism. As Gerard Delanty illustrates, ethnic-cultural nationalism – often a product of social fragmentation and neo-liberal attack on the welfare state – has reclaimed citizenship to a politics of cultural identity and belonging, and constructs migrants not just as culturally other but as contributing to the erosion of state provision (2000). As the Freedom Party rhetoric suggests, they have no problem with a paradigm of cultural relativism that recognises and even celebrates cultural difference, as long as the culturally different are located where they ‘belong’ and have no material impact.

Intercultural learning developed in the context of antiracism and social activism cannot allow itself to be made vulnerable by such political autism. The grounds of this rhetoric are readily contestable, yet by abstracting culture from the discourses in which culture is actually discussed and accented, this kind of education prepares the individual living and working in a multicultural society to celebrate diversity, not to question the ways in which diversity is constructed and politically instrumentalised. This is what Welsch illustrates in emphasising the responsibility of propagandizing certain ideas of culture, as in this instance it runs the risk of strengthening the foundations of the very politics it claims to oppose.

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(d) It is sometimes argued that criticising the congruency of culture in people’s lives is a form of elite cosmopolitanism; the perspective of those that travel, mingle and professionally engage with these issues. These points maintain the opposite; that the dominance of certain approaches is creating a gap between the framework of education and those that entrust their time and energy to it. *The question is not whether or not culture should be engaged with, but how, in relation to whom, to what extent, in interrelation with what, and with which underlying meanings.* The primacy of culture in many political debates, is, for example, a key challenge for European youth work. As C.W. Watson argues, the contemporary culturalisation of politics and horizons articulates a need for particular dimensions of self-hood: expressive identity and self-respect, a sense of belonging and commitment to place, a sense of history and link to the past, and that these dimensions relate to politics of belonging, legitimacy and entitlement in contemporary nation-states²⁶ These are pressing questions that can be discussed in relation to ideas and practices of culture, or as is often done, reified in approaches that assume that this is what culture is about across contexts. Intercultural education should name, unmask and engage with the desires, politics

²⁶ Watson, C.W. (2000) *Multiculturalism* pp. 107-10.

and assumptions that are *refracted through* culture, rather than unproblematically associate them with education *about* culture.

Chapter two examines some of these questions in relation to the Long Term Training Course Intercultural Learning, and chapter three attempts to unravel some of the implications of these discussions for further consideration. In conclusion to this chapter, the educational implications of inadequacy are assembled.

The challenges of inadequacy

Essentialisation: as has been established, the dominant notions of culture in circulation tend to prefer visions of people living in somewhat bounded, immutable cultural groups, and are ill-equipped to integrate the experience of people with multiple allegiances and identities, and other important aspects of affective and ascribed identities in a Europe where key political debates are crystallising around migration, identity and belonging. As we have seen, a core critique of ‘recognition multiculturalism’ has been the tendency to lock people into mutually reinforcing cultural communities, with often severe repercussions for women and young people, whose identities and needs may not in any way be represented by the community. In training, the reliance on culture may contribute to a weakening of social analysis and reflection, as the answers “it’s cultural” and “it’s their culture” substitute for proper reflection as well as recognition of the limits of what we know (which is in and of itself an intercultural priority). People are undoubtedly socialised within, influenced by, and deeply attached to their communities of whatever kind, but it does not follow from this that cultural groups are internally homogenous, or that people wish to be primarily regarded as ‘members of a culture’. It is worth noting that this criticism of essentialism does not imply that the end goal of intercultural education is the philosophical acceptance of anti-essentialism. Rather, it is to encourage a critical engagement with what these positions entail and how they manifest themselves in actual contexts, as Les Back contends: “The choice is presented pointedly as one between viewing cultures as rooted and fixed and a vision of cultural processes as in a constant state of flux producing creative and promiscuous routeways of identification. What is omitted in the deafening row over ‘essentialism’ versus ‘anti-essentialism’ is the complex interplay between these two impulses at the everyday level”.²⁷ Right now, in my experience, the primary impulse in educational frameworks tends towards a residual essentialism.

Depoliticisation: the simultaneous reduction and elevation of everything to a cultural register is rampantly depoliticising. While practices of tolerance and awareness are crucially important, they are sometimes presented as the endgame of intercultural learning, as if a critical mass of the educated and aware will create a world where, as some cynics might put it, ‘we can just learn to get along’. This form of cultural analysis both assumes that cultural identities are inherently problematic, essentially different and probably conflictual, yet it reduces the many dimensions of conflict to questions of cultural compatibility and understanding. What needs to be recognised here is that constructing peoples’ motivations and behaviour as cultural is an inherently political act; the political conflicts in Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia were often characterised by outside commentators as cultural, ethnic and thus atavistic, and this lazy focus obscured the political issues which were being played out in often highly complex ways.²⁸ Furthermore, as many anti-racist

²⁷ Back, Les (1996) *New Ethnicities and Urban Culture. Racisms and Multiculture in Young Lives*, p. 7.

²⁸ As an example of this, the film analyst Martin McLoone examines the ways in which violence in Northern Ireland is often represented in film as inevitable, ritual, and ‘in the blood and air’. See McLoone (2000) *Irish Film: The Emergence of Contemporary Cinema*.

activists have pointed out, state power is often happily complicit in the illusion of cultural difference as the basis of discrimination, as it is far easier to throw some funds at education and awareness-raising than to admit to the deep foundations of institutional and state racism in modern European societies. This argument has been most notably developed recently by the American cultural critic George Yudice in his discussion of culture as a useful global resource, where he argues that the increase in investment and focus on cultural projects and community involvement in cultural expression is an expedient means to an end; mobilising cultural resources to tackle (and mask) social problems and to ultimately ensure governability in neo-liberal societies.²⁹

Individualisation: closely related to the problem of depoliticisation is the problem of individualisation, which at first sounds like a contradictory result of an emphasis on ‘living in cultures’. However dominant forms of intercultural learning – which rightly stress the individual responsibility of the person and citizen – tend to approach racism as an individual pathology, an aberration that can be addressed by educating the person, and this obscures the institutional and political-economic fundamentals of racism and discrimination. Individual prejudice does exist and can be reflected on and addressed, but it is not the central locus of the problem. As Alana Lentin writes; “Racism is typically described as an individual problem, often in psychological terms, that connects between ‘attitudes’ and ‘prejudices’ based, it is said, on ‘ignorance’. Racism is, therefore, generally described as the problem of those with too little exposure to the positive qualities associated with ‘cultural’ or ‘ethnic’ difference; and too much exposure to the mainly economic disadvantages that such ‘difference’ is said to bring with it”³⁰ (2004). In training terms, this is often present in the assumption that getting people together, or exposing groups to each other, has the inevitable effect of increasing tolerance and the appreciation of cultural difference.³¹

Relativisation: the prevalence of cultural relativism in anti-racism work and multiculturalist models is mirrored by its appearance in intercultural education. Cultural relativism – like all unsettling discourses in their time – was an extremely important way of emphasising that there is no ‘outside’; external positions of validity that are the exclusive property of particular ways of life and knowing. However the radical nature of such critiques of moral knowledge has often resulted in positions of cultural *laissez faire*. There is no doubt that many approaches to intercultural learning do address cultural relativism as a paralysing position, but it has to be recognised that this potential will be limited as long as the educational approach implicitly sanctions ‘billiard ball’ theories of culture.³² Cultural relativism is most evidently in conflict with the tenets of human rights education, but must be distinguished from arguments about human rights and cultural particularity (relativism tends to regard ‘western discourses’ of human rights as a violence towards non-western conceptions of the individual and justice, whereas discussions of particularity examine the ways in which discussions of rights are often different in concrete situations around the globe). Cultural relativism is an understandable reaction to the weight of western reflexivity, yet it often naively assumes a logic of the ‘west and the rest’, and is often unable to see the ways in which dominant elites and power blocks use a rhetoric of cultural relativism and western imperialism to mask their own domestic will to and often monopoly on power. In

²⁹ Yudice, George (2003) *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in a Global Age*.

³⁰ Lentin, Alana: Racial States, Anti-racist Responses: Picking Holes in ‘Culture’ and ‘Human Rights’ in *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol.7 No.4 (2004).

³¹ On this assumption - so beloved for example of exchange and immersion programmes - Anna Bagnoli’s essay *Constructing the Hybrid Identities of Europeans in Resituating Culture* provides some sobering empirical analysis.

³² A ‘billiard ball’ theory of culture is a shorthand way of referring to theories that tend to imagine bounded cultures meeting or encountering each other, often through supposed representatives.

training situations, cultural relativism is often a default position given the complexity of unknown situations, however it is increasingly at odds with current attempts in European training to mainstream gender as an ever-present issue in youth work.³³

Orthodox-ification: This aspect is more fully discussed in chapter two, but it can be understood as a product of the importance attached to intercultural learning and the transferability of approaches that is often assumed. It manifests itself in terms of assumed results and magical solutions - if I do a youth exchange it will make people more tolerant - and in the calcification of a certain form of political correctness in youth work. Intercultural learning lends itself to the circulation of a closed economy of expression, and seasoned seminar-goers learn – for many reasons – to work within it. However this writer has had the impression that this often cements a limited plane of expression, and I have seen many participants labelled as ‘racist’ or unacceptable for expressing their opinions in ways that seem clumsy or dissonant. What this indicates, as will be explored in chapter two, is the ways in which intercultural learning discourses are now actually inadequate for discussing many socio-cultural contexts. A further aspect of the closure of orthodoxies is the ways in which value-based education can easily become no more than the *rehearsal of the values we value*. It has been noted during recent research seminars that – and admittedly the reasons for this are complex – there is a tendency for youth work discussions to progress from an assertion of valuable values to questions of their operationalisation, without lingering in the realms of ideology. Ideology is a dirty word in contemporary discussions, but its importance lies in reminding us that values sound similar until they are activated within inter-subjective dialogue. Everyone agrees with empathy, but not everybody agrees with euthanasia as an expression of empathy.

De-youthification: Leaving aside the clumsy phrase, a telling element of the failures of intercultural learning has been the ways in which it has come to limit fine-grained discussions of young people and the specificities of their experiences. Simply put there is an assumption that if young people are seen as members of cultures, we have grasped the most important aspects of their experience. In the triangle of policy-research-practice, it has always been mystifying that the axis youth research - policy has been so much stronger than the axis youth research - training. This may well in part be due to the assumption promoted by intercultural learning that one’s culture is the key to first order understanding of one’s situation, behaviour, attitudes or opinions.

³³ The Human Rights education programme has placed an increasing emphasis on re-mainstreaming gender as an implicit power dimension of all youth work situations. This has occurred through publications – Ramberg, Ingrid (2001) *Violence Against Young Women in Europe Seminar Report* and Titley, Gavan (2003) *Youth Work with Boys and Young Men as a Means to preventing Violence in Everyday Life* – and in seminars and training courses, most recently “Training course on gender-based violence” (EYCB June 2004). It is worth mentioning here that many of the trainers involved in this activity have become increasingly convinced that the familiar discourse of cultural relativism in intercultural learning has facilitated a widespread dismissal of the importance of gender in social politics, and in some cases in transparently hostile attacks on anything regarded as ‘feminism’.

Chapter Two

The Long Term Training Course Intercultural Learning: Navigating in a Changing Landscape

Introduction

The Long Term Training Course Intercultural Learning that took place in 2003-4 was designed with some of the issues and debates outlined in chapter one in mind. In turn, the course informed the discussion of the issues as they are mapped out here. Any training course - not least a long term one - is always far more than a laboratory for certain issues and objectives. Therefore concentrating on certain core issues in this chapter is not to suggest that the LTTC was primarily an exploration of understandings and practices of intercultural learning. As the team concluded in evaluation, overall the course succeeded in giving participants the chance to assess and deepen their practice and competences as youth workers\activists and project-carriers, either by supporting projects with an intercultural dimension that by the end of the course were developed or developing, or by facilitating focused reflection on why certain projects dissolved or were never assembled.

Nevertheless, the course did suggest many issues – notably the presence of orthodoxies and ‘received wisdom’ in relation to intercultural learning and its results, the simplification and de-politicisation inherent in certain forms of cultural analysis – that have not only informed this discussion, but in many ways proven to be the key impetus for producing it. This chapter proceeds by providing a limited overview of the course – including the objectives, socio-cultural issues addressed, educational approaches used and developed and project work conducted – and a critical appraisal of the aspects of intercultural learning addressed by the course based on the evaluation of the team. It concludes by highlighting questions raised by the course that will be expanded on in chapter three.

Course design

The rationale of the institution

The Long Term Training Course is a format that is widely associated with the DYS, and it has been used to consolidate project development and intensive training in relation to a range of target groups and work areas. Nevertheless, widespread recognition of the acronym ‘LTTC’ - as well as the expertise that key individuals have accrued over time with this format - should not disguise the obvious fact that the course changes significantly in relation to the team that implements it and the area of work the course focuses on. This is particularly relevant to the LTTC Intercultural Learning, as a central question for evaluation at the end of the course was to assess whether or not this format related meaningfully to the target group and to their work areas. This LTTC was developed in relation to expectations of the course format, its place in the key work area “Youth Building Peace and Intercultural Dialogue”, and the ideas of the team concerning how a trusted methodology of project development could be related to intercultural learning.

In institutional terms, the course was presented as bringing together two of the key training needs expressed by partners of the DYS – project development and intercultural learning. The circulated course description presented the following rationale:

“Since 1990, the LTTC has effectively provided project development training using intercultural approaches for youth workers and leaders who carry out youth projects which have an international, intercultural or European dimension. The construction of a social Europe, and the challenges European societies face in managing cultural diversity, demand concrete action in favour of social cohesion and intercultural understanding. Therefore, this course is particularly relevant for youth workers or leaders who work with young people in a multi-cultural context, who have to deal with issues of diversity in the daily practice of their youth work and who wish to more competently undertake the challenge of working in or with multi-cultural groups of young people. The course is also designed for those youth workers or leaders who wish to undertake projects with young people on an international level, or which take place within the context of multi-cultural environments”.

From this description, it is clear that the course was conceived institutionally as a ‘flagship activity’ of the “Youth Building Peace and Intercultural Dialogue” programme running from 2003-5. The aims of this programme are:

- To increase awareness of the importance of intercultural dialogue and education for the development of a “culture of peace”;
- To support youth organisations and multipliers in the youth field in developing activities aimed at peace building and intercultural dialogue;
- To provide practitioners in the fields of peace education and intercultural education with materials and training relevant to their work.

Within this framework the preparatory team of the course was invited to develop an approach to intercultural learning that addressed core competences, evolving needs and that focused on the development of projects with an intercultural dimension.

The rationale of the team

Within the framework provided by the course format and the institutional priorities, the preparatory team worked to design a course that addressed intercultural learning in a range of ways. In preparation, the team constantly attempted to weave the priorities of the DYS with their own senses of why this course was needed and what it could hope to achieve. In general, intercultural learning in DYS activities has involved what we could simplistically term ‘backstage’ and ‘frontstage’ elements. *Backstage* intercultural learning encompasses the ways in which the programme is designed and implemented in relation to factors such as language, knowledge of the participants’ contexts, learning styles and needs, appropriate approaches to issues and debates, methodological choices, and it is secured through ongoing reflection and evaluation by the team. Most if not all courses offered by the DYS, by this measure, are constructed with a strong backstage logic. *Frontstage* intercultural learning involves explicitly addressing issues within the rubric of intercultural learning, using methodologies understood to promote intercultural learning, and training participants to incorporate intercultural learning approaches in their youth work. The substance of frontstage intercultural learning clearly varies from course to course, but tends to appear as an explicit issue in many training courses offered in the context of DYS and wider European youth work training provision.

The team of this LTTC decided that the course should constantly relate frontstage and backstage approaches. In other words, while the course would explicitly address approaches to intercultural learning and their relevance to the work of the participants, the course should also be designed transparently and allow the participants to relate the course flow to the intercultural learning approaches discussed. In many ways this has become common training

practice; courses that involve training elements are often keen to display their constructed nature to participants, to explain the choices made, and to relate subsequent adaptations to this open commentary on the course flow. This approach was further shaped in this instance by emphasising the range of approaches and philosophies that qualify as intercultural learning, and by building the entire process of project development on the participants' commitment to particularising and adapting material and approaches to their own context.

The focus on intercultural learning was developed not only through the concerted reflection of the participants, but by channelling it into the preparation, implementation and evaluation of their projects. Therefore a key challenge for the participants was to explore the ways and extents to which intercultural learning frameworks enriched their projects, and to clearly identify and ground for themselves the 'intercultural dimension' of their projects. The team also explicitly discussed what they felt to be the challenges of training on intercultural learning as an area that has become a central tenet of European youth work. While we will come to an in-depth discussion of the team's ideas, it is worth mentioning here that a usual commitment to encouraging self-reflection and particularisation by participants was heightened by a feeling that intercultural learning has become over-burdened, and that participants should engage in questioning the assumptions they make about what intercultural learning is and what it can achieve. Seen in this way, *the conscious adaptation of intercultural learning approaches to their own situation became an integral part of the classic project development cycle of preparation and evaluation.*

In summary, the team decided that intercultural learning would be pursued through the following aspects:

- Self and others – exploring aspects of interaction. What do different theories of culture *explain* about me and others? About communication, interpretation and interaction? What is the relation of culture to identity?
- Theoretical approaches to intercultural learning – overview of the key approaches and discourses encountered in international / intercultural youth work, the history of their development and implementation, ways of evaluating their relevance to the context and development of participants' projects.
- The politics of culture – culture as a descriptive and prescriptive idea. What is gained and lost by analysing in cultural terms? Culture and current political debates in Europe and beyond.
- Pedagogical and strategic approaches to intercultural learning – evaluating the relevance of different approaches and ICL as a social mission / value or ICL as pragmatic approach to avoiding conflict, where is ICL not relevant?

The approach to intercultural learning, therefore, placed heavy emphasis on participants evaluating the relevance of adopting an intercultural learning framework for their project, and constant reflection on the ways in which they deemed intercultural learning approaches necessary, relevant and productive. The course was designed to guide participants past assumptions about 'ICL' to self-practice that did not take the magical properties of intercultural learning for granted. In this way, the approach to intercultural learning was coherent with the ways in which the team approached the participants as project carriers. The course defined a project as social action, an intervention made in relation to a need. It is an

intervention in a social context that is known intimately by the project-carrier, and where this intimacy shapes the approaches implemented. It is carried out by a social actor in partnership with others, and with the aim of having an impact that, however imperfectly, can be known and built on. Projects involve power, and in common with other LTTC teams this team emphasised that participants have responsibility for what they instigate and those they involve in that process.

This responsibility is intensified by the nature of the issues and needs that may be addressed within the framework of an ‘intercultural project’: ‘seeing’ people, issues and processes as cultural involves a distinct layer of responsibility. The team was anxious to promote intercultural learning as a set of perspectives and approaches that need to be constantly related to socio-political contexts and analysis, and to deeply committed analyses of situations and how they might change. As chapter one argued, intercultural learning has, in some contexts, slipped into being considered a panacea for everything – conflict resolution, anti-racism, and so forth. By embedding intercultural learning in the reflection and long-term project development of the participants, the team hoped to overcome this. Bearing these discussions in mind, the criteria for projects were developed as follows:

- *Address the multi-cultural realities of young people, needs for intercultural dialogue and learning and/or situations of tension and conflict that have a cultural or religious dimension.* While this description draws heavily on the language of the programme area, in the use of ‘realities’ it stresses the importance of how young people understand and articulate their issues and concerns. The projects should address situations that young people face in their “multi-cultural” environments, and the needs of young people for approaches, competences, skills and networks for dealing with issues that are expressed in cultural or religious terms or with a comparable dimension.
- *Be concrete and relevant, reflecting the situations and challenges faced by the young people that it addresses.* Of importance here was the need to address a particular community and/or target group of young people, on local, national, or European level. In order to be based on the real needs and aspirations of the target group(s), and to represent an added value to the community or to the organisation, the project needed to be based on meaningful social needs analysis and involvement with the young people implicated.
- *Aim at empowering young people and fostering their participation.* Empowerment and participation should be understood in a broad sense as strategies to overcome or counter barriers of many kinds, including dimensions of social exclusion, oppression, discrimination or isolation that can be encountered by young people. This objective can be pursued through, for example, the development of projects that involve education and training, or the development of pathways for different kinds of participation. What is important, however, is that the projects are realistic in what they assume they can achieve and that they are not seduced by rhetoric that creates misleading impressions.
- *Be based on an intercultural approach.* Given the in-depth discussion above, the substance of this criterion needed to be developed by the participants themselves.

- *Have clear aims and objectives.* For a project to be a project it must have a beginning and an end - even if a follow-up is foreseen - so as to allow an evaluation and assessment of the results achieved. An emphasis on the clarity of objectives also allowed the participants to properly question how they understood an 'intercultural dimension' to their projects and what they wanted to pursue in relation to it.
- *Run by and for young people.* The project carriers were expected to be in a position to engage deeply with the young people whose needs they hoped to address, and to be aware that a project must also be grounded in the ways that people understand their own needs. Particularly given the associations of intercultural learning with conflict resolution, anti-racism and so forth, the team was keen to avoid 'evangelical' projects superimposed on a target group and context. Thus a condition of development was that young people be involved in the definition of the project, its implementation and evaluation, and involved as partners and not just "recipients". Projects should also be run by a team, of which the project carrier that participates in the LTTC is a member.
- *Carried out in the framework of an organisation or association.* A criterion that became a source of important evaluation was the insistence that projects be carried out in an associative context, and that as far as possible possible, the projects should correspond to the priorities of the organisation or association. Relatedly, the scope of the project needed to relate to the capacity (in human and financial terms) of the organisation promoting it.
- *Initiated during the course.* Each project was simultaneously a real social intervention and a learning process for the project carrier. Therefore the project needed to be open enough to be shaped during the course, and also implemented to some degree during the duration of the course.

Aims, participant profile and course format

Based on this discussion of the integration of different aspects of intercultural learning into an LTTC format, the following aim and objectives were formulated:

Aim: To train youth leaders and workers to develop projects and associative strategies with an intercultural dimension and based in the values promoted by the youth sector of the Council of Europe (democracy, active citizenship, youth participation, intercultural education and peace).

Supported by the following objectives:

1. To enable participants to prepare, run and evaluate a project with an intercultural dimension in all its aspects. Central to these aspects will be a consideration of the participant as intercultural actor, the importance of intercultural educational philosophies and methodologies and a wider consideration of intercultural issues in organisations and society;

2. To develop participants' skills in the areas of:
 - Overall project and specific programme development;
 - Project management
 - Evaluation
 - in the context of their organisation;
3. To facilitate and support relevant innovation in project form and content in relation to established approaches in the participants' organisations and experiences;
4. To provide information about European institutions, structures and programmes for youth work with an intercultural dimension;
5. To motivate and enable participants to share their acquired knowledge and experience and to act as multipliers;
6. To analyse and engage with the language and concepts used to approach national, political, religious, linguistic, lifestyle and gender diversity in youth work;
7. To develop and support youth projects that can have a social impact embedded in the needs and realities of the young people they address.

The long-term training course format is demanding of all concerned, and it places particular demands on participants to both develop projects as meaningful interventions and to learn and adapt during that process of development. The profile of participants is therefore crucial for attracting people who will both benefit from the training in a context that can support them, and who in turn can contribute to the course, their organisation and target group. Once again, this general consideration was heightened by the nature of the projects likely to take place under the rubric of intercultural learning. Therefore the team devised a participant profile that emphasised the need for a coherent project idea embedded in a community and a supporting organisation, initiative or network, and a demonstrable level of activity on the part of the youth worker or youth leader. Furthermore, prospective participants needed to 'own' their projects to a significant extent – in other words, have enough control, freedom and support to change and adapt the original idea during the progress of the course. The exact participant profile can be found in the appendices.

The Course Format

Given that the LTTC is organised around two residential seminars, it is important to emphasise that it is actually comprised of three phases; an introductory seminar, a project phase and an evaluation seminar. This format requests a commitment over time and intense involvement with a project, and the course was designed as both an intensive training and an open learning process based on participant experience and exchange. Group interaction and mutual engagement was important during all phases, and needed to be sustained while the nature of the group shifted between and during those stages. This particular LTTC also benefited by convening regional meetings of participants in the latter half of the project phase, with the aim of assessing progress to date and capturing issues for the evaluation seminar.

The chart below outlines the course format.

Phase	Dates	Place	Function
Introduction seminar	November 2003	European Youth Centre Strasbourg, France	Exploring the key issues and institutional framework of the course. Development of the projects with the assistance of the trainers and the other participants. Basic information on European youth work, work on the course themes. Project planning and management skills. Additional skills training.
Project phase	November 2003 – May 2004	Participants' country and organisation	Participants implement their projects in their country. Networking with other participants and projects. Visits by team members to participants' projects/ regional meetings of participants to discuss project progress.
Evaluation seminar	June 2004	European Youth Centre Budapest, Hungary	Evaluation of the projects and the training. Completion of skills training. Contributions for the development of networks amongst participants and their organisations. Reviewing the key educational approaches and preparing for the course follow-up.

Approaches to intercultural learning during the LTTC

As one would expect, the course as a whole and its interlocking elements were designed and modified to take account of knowledge of the participants' learning styles and needs, preferred and unsettling modes of interaction, the shifting group dynamics over time, the relationship of issues to methodologies, and so forth. This section, however, is limited to commenting on the 'frontstage' ways in which intercultural learning and the intercultural dimension of participants' projects were approached. Overall, the course attempted to draw participants' attention to the broad, discursive nature of intercultural learning, the different and often conflicting ways in which culture is understood and deployed, and to sharpen their critical skills in applying and adapting ideas, perspectives, methodologies and approaches to the needs of their target group and project. The course shied away from privileging particular approaches. Instead, its distinct preference was for participants to engage in what could be termed emic reflection; constituting their intercultural practice from an open consideration of relevance, rather than assuming the relevance of materials and ideas simply because they can be linked to something called intercultural learning. The course sought to do this in a number of ways:

Introduction seminar

- Through personal and group reflection on previous experiences of intercultural learning, and from this aiming to unpick the relationships between the context in which it took place, the issues addressed, the questions raised, what they felt they learnt, and so forth.
- An interactive presentation and subsequent discussions that introduced different approaches to intercultural learning, and that attempted to emphasise their historical and social nature rather than the 'objective-scientific' veneer that is so often used to over-extend the relevance of particular methodologies. The session aimed to map main senses of culture and intercultural learning often encountered in youth work; to present some reasons for the elevation of culture to such a central importance in

contemporary politics and education; to compare different *ideas of culture* as ways that have been developed to conceptualise interaction with others (specifically national-romantic ideas, changing anthropological approaches, UNESCO-influenced approaches, contemporary critical evaluations); to examine the tensions in discussions of culture between living culturally (process) and living in cultures (belonging); further to this, to examine the tension between culture as a descriptive and prescriptive concept; and to examine different ideas of multiculturalism and interculturalism the participants may be familiar with.

- The project development process – that in some form is common to nearly all Long Term Training Courses – was adapted to include a specific step examining ‘the intercultural dimension’ of the project, and this step was used to consolidate the social needs analysis conducted at the beginning, and to ground the objectives and proposed activities of the project. The entire process stressed the need for ethical, conceptual, political and practical ownership of the project by the project carrier, and this overall stress was focused on the ways in which the project was designated ‘intercultural’. In particular, facilitation in project groups aimed to develop the reflexivity of participants about the reality of their project, the connections they had with their target group, the ways in which they knew about needs and experiences in that context, and how they felt they were perceived and related to by their target group.
- An input on ‘intercultural trainer competences’ – derived from the *Education Pack* and the *Community Training Module*³⁴ – was included in a session on skills and competences of project carriers. However it is important to note that these competences were not presented as states of being that a youth worker should attain, but rather as responses to particular challenges that participants could use to reflect on the demands of their own context and agency within it.

Project phase

- There was no specific programme on any aspect of the course during this phase other than to offer support, feedback and advice either through the e-group, bilaterally or during the regional meetings. In many instances discussions took place during the regional meetings where the ideas and assumptions participants had made about various aspects – centrally including the intercultural – were reflected upon. It is fair to say that for a significant number of projects, the ways in which they had been conceptualised, most evidently in the social analysis conducted and the needs identified, had shifted, and this called into question the ways in which many participants had approached the intercultural dimension of their project.

Evaluation phase

- The evaluation phase linked intercultural learning to the social analysis, and the ways in which the participants had initially conceptualised and planned their projects. An interactive input on social analysis that guided the group through a reflection on their own process of analysis emphasised the ways in which projects are based on planned, conscious inquiries that (a) give reason and meaning to a project; (b) by identifying particular and important questions; (c) by pursuing relevant ways of investigating those questions; (d) and by analysing the implications of the information gathered impact on the design and implementation of the project. It examined the ways in which project carriers always already stand within their contexts, and how they can

³⁴ See Otten et al (1994) *Community Project for Developing Training Modules for Youth Workers*. Developed within the framework of Action IV of Priority Actions in the Youth Field. Service National de la Jeunesse, Luxembourg.

reflect on how they know what they know about themselves in relation to their target group and their vision of the target groups' needs. It also concentrated on how 'issues' or 'problems' are framed and investigated in grounding the project. To quote from this session: "Social problems – exclusion, violence, poverty, racism – are multi-dimensional, which means that they have many aspects that must be analysed and considered, and many actors that are important to take account of. Social analysis asks us to move beyond the labels and obvious categories and to identify the dimensions of a problem, and the ways in which those dimensions influence the planning and implementation of the project. According to our experience and knowledge, it may often be the case that *we see what we know*; how do we move beyond that to examine the dimensions of a social issue? A good metaphor may be to think of using different lenses (glasses, binoculars, telescopes) at and different angles to look at an issue".

- Following on from the social analysis, a group session on the intercultural dimension of the projects linked the development of intercultural learning strategies to the viability of the social analysis. It stressed the necessarily contextual nature of intercultural learning, the need to embed such strategies in questions of difference and power, and attempted to facilitate a space for participants to openly question the relevance of intercultural learning to their project experience. The 'pyramid of discrimination'³⁵ was used to consider the levels and ways in which intercultural youth education can make an intervention, to analyse the limits of such interventions, and to examine how intercultural youth work is inter-related with different forms of social, educational, political and legal intervention. It was noted by the team that this moment in the course was crucial; it emphasised the need for a functioning associative context and for a proper consideration of what a project aims to achieve and how it proposes to sustain than intervention.
- An objective of the evaluation seminar was to provide targeted training on emergent issues or skills identified by the team and suggested by the participants during the project phase. As a part of this several workshops were offered that addressed aspects of the broad area intercultural learning. One group acted as an open discussion on issues that the participants had encountered and wished to discuss, or questions they wished to raise; a second considered the selection and adaptation of intercultural educational methodologies; a third examined 'identities and diversity in youth work' by discussing the contemporary importance attached to certain aspects of identity and the implications of visible and invisible diversity for youth work practice.
- The evaluation groups charged with analysing the project phase evaluated the ways in which the intercultural dimension of projects had developed, and the relationship between the initial map devised by participants and the ways in which they saw their project's interculturality nine months later.

Reflection on intercultural learning during the LTTC

The in-depth course evaluation provides ample evidence that the course proved to be a valuable and many-dimensional learning experience for the group, and that their personal intercultural learning was enhanced by many aspects of the programme and the group interaction. As with previous sections, this section is restricted to examining the 'frontstage'

³⁵ This pyramid presents a logic of increasing hatred and violence building on integral levels of escalation. So, for example, physical violence is high-up the pyramid, but is sustained by processes further down such as 'denial of inequality' and 'social stereotyping'. A version of it can be sourced from [//www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/393.html](http://www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/393.html) I have encountered it as it has been adapted and used by the European Peer Training Organisation (EPTO) in their Trainer's Manual.

issues of the course, and to discussing the preparatory team's impressions of the issues raised. It must be emphasised here that the following points are based on observation, recollection and discussion. The team did not conduct research in any structured or semi-structured form, but given their awareness of the meta-issues contained in this document, were constantly alert to aspects present during the course. Summarising and organising points in this way inevitably diminishes nuance, yet the points that follow can, in the team's opinion, be extracted from this course to an extent worthy of further discussion in a wider European youth work community. Many of these points are united by a critique of the orthodoxy of intercultural learning, and the ways in which that now obscures specific youth work experiences and challenges.

1. Intercultural learning as a superficial discourse

Every network organised around particular work areas develops what appears to be a language of its own, where concepts and terms are accented in relation to a fluid yet shared range of expectations and discursive commonalities. That said, the team had the constant impression that the language of intercultural learning used by participants was in many ways a mantra lacking in substance and ungrounded in youth work contexts that could eventually inject it with substance. It is possible that current youth formats and programmes encourage 'application form-ese', and some participants seemed hampered by the practice of assembling recognised phrases about the value and importance of interculturalism without necessarily linking it to their own practice and experience or to that of a community affected by the issues or problems being addressed. It should be noted that there are undoubtedly a host of reasons for this. For a start, the almost total hegemony of English as the language of European training inevitably involves the circulation of a particular vocabulary in training situations, and it is also probable that this gives many participants a language that is more immediately intersubjective and inclusive. Nevertheless, it is also something of an inevitability that this kind of limited discourse prescribes the responses of many participants, and prevents them from reaching for new and dissonant ways of describing their motivation, context and work. In short, a shared, over-burdened language of intercultural learning may to an important extent shape what participants articulate, rather than provide them with the possibility to articulate what they know and experience. In this way, intercultural learning can be related to orthodoxy of *expression*, where complex realities are milled through accepted formulations.

2. Intercultural learning as a magic formula

It was strongly felt by the team that the importance laid at the feet of intercultural learning in the rhetoric, programmes and priorities of many influential bodies has had a debilitating effect on some participants' ability to critically shape their own priorities and opinions. It seemed as if participants, initially at least, felt little freedom to question what they considered to be received wisdom about what intercultural learning can achieve, even if this ran contrary to their own experiences. A salutary example is the belief that a youth exchange results in increased tolerance and cultural pluralism, as if such conditions were an inevitable consequence of the form rather than a self-serving form of programmatic justification. Thus several participants – whose exchange experience had patently not resulted in happy days and good things – individualised this as personal failure rather than as the result of accepting a faulty equation. Bluntly, if the YOUTH programme insists that exchanges create intercultural understanding, some of our group did not feel free to question the plethora of assumptions that such institutional marketing involves. Thus at this level, the orthodoxy is one of *determinism*; an algebra where failure is always in the application, and never in the fundamentally flawed nature of the equations.

3. *Intercultural learning as a general panacea*

A further aspect of the ubiquity and over-extension of intercultural learning was the prevalent assertion during the course that intercultural learning – and its axiomatic conditions of tolerance and understanding – was of central importance to conflicts (regardless of scale and intensity) and that its inevitable result, if properly deployed, was progress towards various forms of harmony. Implicit in this over-extension and inflation of the scope and properties of intercultural learning is the first order over-extension and inflation of culture as an orienting concept. In other words, when culture is empowered as the meta-frame within which human life is to be explained, and stubborn cultural differences are constantly understood as the static ‘cause’ of a range of social problems, approaches which promise analytical control and some form of intervention are understandably seductive. The paradox of culture – where the recognition of particularity sanctions universalising approaches – is constantly activated when complex realities are reduced to cultural logics that can be presented as mutually recognisable in a training context. It was the feeling of the team that the general difficulty with social analysis – intensified by the sometimes fleeting or limited relationships that some participants had with their target groups - was to some degree a product of a dependence on intercultural learning as a transferable feast. To give an example, in some project developments, an implicit assumption was that intercultural learning – in the shape of a youth exchange for example – would combat social exclusion. This set of assumptions resulted in an orthodoxy of *interpretation*; if everybody is primarily framed as cultural, then similar cultural strategies may well apply to everybody with broadly similar results.

4. *Intercultural learning as reductionist depoliticisation*

Closely related to the observations concerning the paucity of social analysis and the over-extension of intercultural learning, is the team’s sense that intercultural learning is an arena that has become thoroughly depoliticised. This manifested itself in analysis and assumed solutions to socio-political issues. The prevalence of ‘billiard ball’ theories of cultural contact and management undoubtedly contribute to the evacuation of power and forms of capital from the analyses of situations developed during the course. While it is a simplification, it sometimes appeared as if minority-majority relations – an area of key political education in the DYS – were approached as a challenge for managerial partnership, rather than as multi-dimensional situations involving weighty and dynamic historical and geo-political legacies of inequality. Central to this depoliticisation is the individualisation of problems and solutions alluded to in chapter one. To a surprising extent, the discussion of different issues was often reduced to the need for more awareness and more tolerance, and insufficiently related to contexts of interpretation and action. A recurring manifestations of this included the common construction of racism as an individual pathology and aberration necessitating re-education. Another was the conviction that social problems can be overcome through youth work as a form of evangelism; participation is only about enthusiasm and motivation, not about competences, power relations, resources, and so forth. With regard to this, the team tentatively considered whether the educational project of self-responsibility and awareness central to training has diluted the commitment to evidence-based youth work and social analysis. This was especially prevalent in discussions of motivation and empowerment. This may be summarised as an orthodoxy of *reductionism*; where people, issues and educational processes are simplified and regarded as readily susceptible to formulaic approaches.

Intercultural learning in changing youth work practices

These observations are not intended as critical reflections on the youth work practice of the course participants, they merely identify the ways in which intercultural learning was difficult to relate to the experience of their project and target group. It must also be born in mind, of course, that the sessions in which these debates emerged were undoubtedly subjective and imperfect. Instead, they should be read as aspects of a wider phenomenon - the changing pathways in and through youth work which were apparent at this course. In many instances it transpired that participants had limited kinds contact with their target groups (when judged in relation to that of a 'classic' youth leader or worker), and in some cases settled on a target group that they felt would be interesting and challenging. In other words, rather than stemming from grounded experience and a focused analysis of needs, many projects appeared as attractive ideas in search of a reality they could insert themselves into. Similarly, many participants had associative backgrounds which were far removed from the classical image of a youth worker or activist embedded in an organisation. Instead, they were members of networks, or affiliated with organisations for the sake of developing their project, and engaged in youth work as a particular aspect of their current interests.

It should be noted that many participants – who worked as local youth workers in a stable organisational context – took a sustainable route through the LTTC, and the successes and development of their projects was a result not only of their work but also of them being involved in contexts where a project was needed and could be moulded and enhanced. On the other hand, the weaknesses of intercultural learning discussed above could be related to the more free-floating experience of a significant proportion of the participants. Those participants who were - to adapt Pirandelli – project-carriers in search of a context and target group, experienced the following barriers to a noticeable extent:

- The lack of ongoing first hand experience of a 'target group' precipitated a fall-back on the individualised discourse and over-reliance on formulaic intercultural learning discussed above;
- The lack of real experience of project implementation inevitably led to a reliance on received wisdom rather than particularised investigation and evaluation;
- Assuming that intercultural learning – to some extent – results in increased peace and harmony alienated many from approaching the shifting dynamics and issues within the training group as core material for intercultural learning. Difficult processes were the 'fault' of the group, not inevitable and unending processes of interaction and negotiation.
- Most importantly, the dissonance between the calcified discourse of intercultural learning and their project experience increased the difficulty of finding a way to express and discuss what they had done, what had happened, and how they wanted to use this reflection in their future youth work.

In their analysis of the evaluation seminar, the team felt that many significant shifts had taken place in relation to these issues. For example, many participants noted their renewed sense of the importance of a real foundational social analysis, and their own realisation that interculturalism can be demystified and approached in more modest terms. This undoubtedly made an important contribution to the competences of these participants as future project-carriers. However given that an objective of the course was the development of projects as meaningful social interventions, the team felt that the personal learning of the participants had in some ways eclipsed the core importance of implemented projects. This, among other reflections present in this chapter, raises questions that will be outlined in chapter three.

Chapter Three: Mapping New Routes

The previous chapters have raised a number of questions about the practice of intercultural learning, its relevance to the target groups of the DYS's training offer, and the ongoing centrality of the label and assumptions surrounding intercultural learning in the youth work of the Council of Europe. This chapter attempts to sharpen and extend these questions, to suggest some routes and possibilities for consideration, and to offer them for further discussion.

The training practice and framework of intercultural learning

(a) If intercultural learning is to be rescued from its bloatedness, training approaches need to develop *critical literacy* with regard to the conceptual, educational and political discourses that culture is implicated in. It could be argued that intercultural education for trainers needs to develop a 'helicopter view' of the porous field, and to train in ways of adapting, innovating and discarding ideas and methodologies that simply have at best no purchase and at worst regressive political associations. A suggestion would be that a training session designed for a known target group should assess its intercultural approach in relation to the following questions:

In terms of the guiding idea of culture at work, key questions should include:

What kind of conditioning is attributed to the idea of culture being employed? How does this conditioning relate to questions of agency? How is culture conceptualised in relation to other intersectional elements of identity, such as gender, class, religion, politics, sexuality, location, and biography? What is the hidden prefix of the term when spoken (e.g. national, ethnic, regional)? How does one learn culture? How does one belong to a culture? What is the declared/assumed location of culture? How is cultural change explained, if at all? What degree of internal homogeneity is attributed to culture, and does this remain at an abstract level or is it applied to particular contexts? What cultural rights and legitimacies are explored? What is the intellectual and political history of the idea of culture being employed, and how is it related to the context in which it is deployed?

How cultural encounters or relationships are imagined depends heavily on the theory of culture being deployed:

In what ways are the groups or cultures in this relationship imagined and delineated? How and by whom is cultural membership attributed? How is the context of encounter considered, both in the methodology employed, and the actual context in which the educational activity takes place? What are the assumed and desired consequences of cultural encounter? Does cultural exchange take place, and if so how and why?

In terms of learning, different approaches to intercultural education posit different learning goals, and notions of what should and can be learnt:

How is the individual imagined as a cultural actor? What is the aim of intercultural learning; efficiency, assimilation, self-reflexiveness? What does one learn about culture or cultures? How is intercultural learning linked to other educational foci, such as human rights education and citizenship? How is it treated in relation to society and political economy?

(b) It is not enough for intercultural learning to assess its relevance in relation to discourses of culture and interculturalism, it must also examine its relationship to other areas of education and other ways of examining human interaction. Particular areas of work need to be reclaimed from a general notion of everything collapsed into “ICL”. Intercultural pedagogy is central to organising inclusive and participatory activities within these areas of work, but it is not a rubric or topic that unites all these areas of work. Needs encountered during the LTTC, and that need to be examined in wider programmatic terms, included an explicit return to anti-racism and anti-discrimination, training on social analysis and social research in the context of project development and embedded youth work, problem-solving in contexts where cultural issues are activated without recourse to the orthodoxies of tolerance and awareness, and relating cultural politics to citizenship and activism, particularly in the new focus areas of ‘inter-religious dialogue’ and ‘conflict transformation’.

(c) It follows from (b) that an open discussion about the political nature of intercultural learning needs to take place. It was the distinct impression of the LTTC team that intercultural learning was regarded as a politics-free zone by many; a form of social managerialism and individual engineering. It goes without saying that this is also a politics of education, but it has disguised its own ideology. For anti-racism and anti-discrimination to be foregrounded once again, an open debate on what intercultural learning wants to achieve must be had in relation to contemporary debates on migration, nationalism, and so forth. It is the impression of this author that another reason for the collapse of political education like anti-racism into ‘intercultural learning’ is that intercultural learning is far more institutionally and politically friendly than an overtly oppositional practice. This fatuousness is based on the assumption that it is nicer to be ‘for’ cultural diversity than ‘against’ racism, as if replacing storm clouds with sun beams on the weather forecast actually changes the weather experienced. Is this the case? Or is it simply another symptom of cyclical priorities and the widespread presumption that racism is ‘caused’ by cultural ignorance? It is regrettable that anti-racism has to a large extent been shired off to minority youth work and Human Rights Education, which mitigates against more general discussions of racism against minorities.

(d) It is the contention of this document that explicit anti-racism work needs to be a visible priority and committed practice of informed youth work. As we have seen, intercultural learning is not a surrogate, it is at best a placebo. In the current climate shaped by the erosion of civil liberties, doctrines of national security, the implicit criminalisation of ‘Islamic minorities’ and the frightening intersection of the ‘war on terror’ and anti-migration politics, it might be argued that not only is anti-racism crucial, but that ten years on from the *All Different All Equal* campaign a more radical mobilisation might be required. Anti-racism should be supported as anti-racism without elaborate evasion; it is ok to be against something, full stop. What this further suggests is that whatever is practised as intercultural learning in a tense political climate is unavoidably political education, through its inclusions and exclusions. *This paper contends that responsible, adequate youth work can no longer abstract these concerns to issues of cultures and their problematic relations.* Of course, this in turn has implications for the visions, approaches and skills of trainers.

(e) The first implication of this, especially for the programmes of the DYS, is that it may be useful to examine the ways in which intercultural learning meaningfully integrates into current priority work areas. In other words, not only do distinct work priorities need to be rescued from the amorphous notion ‘ICL’, but the expertise and practice of the DYS in intercultural learning can be channelled into examining the distinct debates and issues likely to be encountered in Human Rights education, citizenship education, anti-racism work, broader anti-discrimination, and to suggest guidelines and develop approaches to particularising intercultural learning within them. There is a need to re-map intercultural learning’s contribution – perhaps in a curricular or modular way - to these areas in relation to contextual relevance, skills, training needs, prevalent debates, and so forth.

(f) This integrative approach has to be coupled with the realisation discussed in chapters one and two that debates about issues look radically different from different viewpoints, and that ultimately it is only the trainer responsible who can evaluate the relevance and purchase of resources and methodologies with their group and in their training context. Added to this contention is the recent work produced by Hendrik Otten on trainers as knowledge brokers, and by this author on the idea of the trainer as social researcher within the context of DYS debates about training. The cumulative implication of these arguments is that trainers are likely to be interested in training that engages with questions of socio-cultural complexity and educational adequacy, that examines the ‘how’ of adaptation and does not rest merely with the disclaimer ‘should’.

(g) This kind of overhaul should not be taken to mean that a plethora of new tools and resources is necessary. One of the interesting aspects of the over-extension and depoliticisation of intercultural learning is the sense that older publications – such as the *Education Pack*, “Ten Theses on Intercultural Learning” and the *Community Training Modules* are actually more relevant than the modish simulation games and toolboxes that have been developed subsequently. This is undoubtedly because products of the Campaign Against Racism, Xenophobia Anti-Semitism and Intolerance and of the era preceding it were not confused about the politics and limits of intercultural learning, and they operated within a different kind of training economy. With this in mind, it is a welcome development that a new edition of the *Education Pack* will be made available both in print and online with *Compass*³⁶, as this represents the kinds of new, targeted and integrative directions this paper is arguing for.

The institutional importance and location of intercultural learning

(a) It may well be that the DYS needs to consider a needs-based analysis of intercultural learning. The implications of the Long Term Training Course Intercultural Learning are that it cannot be assumed that intercultural learning has a register in the lives and associative strategies of the young people coming to the courses, and furthermore, that it has a relevance to the young people that they in turn work with. The question, simply put, is who needs what we are offering? And relatedly, is it reaching the people that should be reached? A continued programme of intercultural learning demands a far more differentiated offer, which in turn demands a greater knowledge of the needs on the ground, channels for accessing youth groups, networks and communities who have specific needs, and a more sophisticated process of selection. Suggestions from the team of the LTTC for new selection procedures are included in the appendix of this paper. More broadly, the educational offer of

³⁶ *Compass* is an educational manual for human rights education with young people produced by the DYS’s Human Rights Education Programme.

intercultural learning may need in future to be based on evidence-based recommendations building on a renewed needs analysis.

(b) It must also be questioned if the political construction of work priorities, and the ways in which they are described, are adequate to the changes in the intercultural learning field that are required. *The LTTC Intercultural Learning took place within the framework of “Inter-Religious Dialogue” and “Intercultural Dialogue”, but only very occasionally did these phrases describe anything about the needs and challenges of the youth workers and activists present.* More presciently, and perhaps more controversially, the unavoidably aspirational and inoffensive language and objectives of the “Youth building Peace and Intercultural Dialogue” programme (DJSPC200211 Youth Programme 2003 – 2005) reflect the key assumptions about interculturality that this document has sought to critique. Culture is everywhere, and a ‘culture of peace’ is the prime goal. ‘Social and political differences’ are identified as key social problems, and intercultural dialogue is promoted as the answer. Despite the wealth of research that advocates against constructing conflicts in cultural terms - as it simplifies, suggests atavism and normalises the repressive discourses of conflict – conflict transformation is held to be possible through multicultural youth activities. It is of course unfair to read documents of this nature and assume educational logics from them, however on the other hand they act as flagship political statements, and are complicit in cementing the paucities of current intercultural learning.

These paucities once again include a focus on decontextualised liberal constructions of dialogue – between faiths and cultures – without reference to the ways in which this dilutes questions of power within nation-states, for example, or the racialisation of religious groups in contemporary Europe. Faiths do not meet on a level playing field in an exalted European public sphere. Furthermore, at least from this perspective, the acceptance of a primary framework of ‘Inter-Religious’ dialogue seems to validate the noxious simplicities and political prejudices of *clash of civilisations*-style arguments, without an explicit recognition that religious identities and articulations of religious politics are bound up in Europe with geo-political issues. It is naïve to assume that framing educational needs within this implicitly political framework can be presented as apolitical, or be removed from the repressive ‘security’ agenda it is embedded in. And finally, the by now familiar relationship of culture and conflict re-appears as a cousin of this framework, replaying the arguments discussed in this document regarding the risks of perceiving culture as the locus of conflict and the source of its transformation.

In conclusion, this discussion has sought to argue that it is time for the kind of reflection and needs-analysis that activities like the Long Term Training Course advocate to course participants to be applied to the concepts, ideas and educational assumptions that have become conventional in European training practice. It has argued that culture is an important concept rendered opaque and inadequate by the degree of work it is required to do in and across complex societies in the ‘entangled modernities’ of the Council of Europe. It analyses the ways in which hybrid practices of intercultural learning have morphed into something called ‘ICL’, and contended that this threatens the veracity of educational approaches and the political validity of this broad educational project we are engaged in. It concludes by reflecting on the fact that institutional priorities and the ways they are expressed involve a high degree of political capital, and that at the moment particular foci relating to culture and its consequences are unaware of the political charge and accents they validate. To finish with the title, if ‘culture’ can be seen as a ‘plastic, political and contingent’ concept, then

education about culture and 'cultures' needs to be alive to the constant shifts and dilemmas involved in working with it.

Appendix 1:

Call for participation for the LTTC Intercultural Learning



**Youth Building Peace
and Intercultural
Dialogue**

**Long Term Training Course
Intercultural Learning**

**A European Training for Youth Leaders and Youth
Workers carrying out projects
with young people in a multi-cultural context**

November 2 – 16 2003
European Youth Centre, Strasbourg

June 2004
European Youth Centre, Budapest



**Profile and aims
of the course
Application form**

www.coe.int/youth
DJS/LTTC-ICL (2003) 1 eng.

Why train youth leaders and workers?

Over recent years, training has become an increasingly important instrument to pursue the aims and principles of the Council of Europe's youth policy. Similarly, within youth movements and institutions, it is nowadays acknowledged that the ever-growing complexity and diversity of youth work requires competent and motivated volunteers or staff members to secure quality and a maximisation of results. For those active in youth work, on a volunteer or remunerated basis, temporarily or permanently, the commitment put into and the experience acquired in youth work can be better valued in other professional circles if accompanied by training.

At the level of European youth activities – and what may be broadly defined as European youth work – training is necessary and important in order to prepare those volunteers or professionals to act within an international and intercultural environment and, generally to develop their competence to work and act within a European framework. The priorities of international youth organisations and also those of the Council of Europe have traditionally been put in this area, through the training of leaders to run international youth activities, youth projects, to run and develop European organisations and generally to participate in the definition of European youth policy.

The need for intercultural competence has also been highlighted in the European Union's Youth for Europe and now in the Youth programme. A Partnership exists between the Council of Europe and the European Commission, precisely in the area of training youth.

Within non-formal education – a priority area for the Directorate of Youth and Sport – training and education activities form the backbone of youth work. While their non-formal nature gives them credibility, flexibility and increased relevance to the young people's needs, their status and quality can only improve with an increase in the number of qualified and trained youth workers and youth leaders working in the field.

The Long Term Training Course “Intercultural Learning” – A European Training for Youth Leaders and Youth Workers carrying out projects with young people in a multi-cultural context

The Long Terms Training Course (LTTC) is one of the most intensive training courses offered by the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe. It aims to enable youth workers and youth leaders (both professionals and volunteers) to give an international, European and intercultural dimension to their youth projects and to become more effective the preparation, implementation and evaluation of youth projects with an intercultural dimension or that take place within a multi-cultural context. The partners of the Council of Europe Directorate of Youth and Sport: international non-governmental youth organisations, national youth councils and municipal, regional or national youth services regularly express the need to offer their members training which emphasises project development and intercultural learning.

Since 1990, the LTTC has effectively provided project development training using intercultural approaches for youth workers and leaders who carry out youth projects which have an international, intercultural or European dimension. The construction of a social Europe, and the challenges European societies face in managing cultural diversity, demand concrete action in favour of social cohesion and intercultural understanding. Therefore, this course is particularly relevant for youth workers or leaders who work with young people in a multi-cultural context, who have to deal with issues of diversity in the daily practice of their youth work and who wish to more competently undertake the challenge of working in or

with multi-cultural groups of young people. The course is also designed for those youth workers or leaders who wish to undertake projects with young people on an international level, or which take place within the context of multi-cultural environments.

Since the end of the 1990's the issues of peace and intercultural dialogue have become more important key areas of work for the DYS. From 2000 to the end of 2002, the work in this area was concentrated on young people who experience life in regions of conflict. For the years 2003 to 2005, the Directorate of Youth and Sport has initiated a broad based programme on "Youth Building Peace and Intercultural Dialogue", considering young people to important carriers for the promotion of a culture of peace and for intercultural dialogue. The aims of the three year programme are:

- To increase awareness of the importance of intercultural dialogue and education for the development of a "culture of peace";
- To support youth organisations and multipliers in the youth field in developing activities aimed at peace building and intercultural dialogue;
- To provide practitioners in the fields of peace education and intercultural education with materials and training relevant to their work.

This LTTC is one of the highlight training activities within the three year programme of the DYS on "Youth Building Peace and Intercultural Dialogue".

Aims and objectives of the training course

Within the context outlined above, the "Long Term Training Course - Intercultural Learning" aims to:

Empower and train youth leaders and workers to develop projects and associative strategies with an international, European or an intercultural dimension and taking place in a multi-cultural context and based in the values of democracy, active youth citizenship, civil society, youth participation and intercultural education.

Specific objectives:

- To enable participants to prepare, run and evaluate a project with an intercultural / multi-cultural dimension in all its aspects;
- To develop participants' skills in the areas of leadership, project and programme development, project management, intercultural communication and organisational capacity building and development;
- To create an environment conducive to developing innovative operational tools and methods that can be used in youth work in multi-cultural contexts;
- To provide information about European institutions, structures and programmes relevant for youth work with an international, European or intercultural dimension;
- To motivate and enable participants to share their acquired knowledge and experience and to act as multipliers;
- To develop new approaches to working with the challenge of diversity (national, religious, linguistic, cultural and lifestyle, etc.) as manifest in youth work and in youth projects with an intercultural dimension;
- To initiate innovative youth projects that can have a relevant impact on the life contexts of young people living in multi-cultural contexts.

Participants stand to gain the following as a result of the Long Term Training Course:

- Skills for how to prepare, run and evaluate a project;
- Experience of living and working in a multi-cultural and intercultural group of young people;
- Knowledge about multi-cultural realities and situations of youth work in other countries of Europe or further;
- A deeper understanding of youth work with an intercultural dimension;
- A deeper understanding of the concepts such as peace and intercultural dialogue, as well as attendant issues such as conflict, interreligious dialogue, intercultural communication, etc.
- Useful contacts and partners for further work on the theme.

Methodology and calendar of the course

The Long Term Training Course takes place in three phases: an introductory seminar, a project phase and an evaluation seminar. The course is designed as an open learning process based on participant experience and exchange. The multi-cultural group of participants is in itself a forum for intercultural learning and a framework for personal development. The course programme and contents are organised so as to allow for the maximum participation of the group using active and participatory methods. A team of experienced trainers organises the learning process and provides guidance to the development and evaluation of the project work as well as other training inputs.

The planning and implementation of a concrete youth project by each participant serves a dual purpose. In the first place, the project is a tool for learning, developing practical experience. In the second place, the project is seen as a concrete initiative that can contribute to the improvement of the quality and outreach of youth work on local and regional levels.

Phase	Dates	Place	Function
Introduction seminar	2 – 16 November 2003	European Youth Centre Strasbourg, France	Exploring the key issues and institutional framework of the course. Development of the projects with the assistance of the trainers and the other participants. Basic information on European youth work, work on the course themes. Project planning and management skills. Additional skills training.
Project phase	November – June 2003	Participants' country and organisation	Participants implement their projects in their country. Networking with other participants and projects. Visits by team members to participants' projects.
Evaluation seminar	June 2004	European Youth Centre Budapest, Hungary	Evaluation of the projects. Completion of skills training. Contributions for the development of networks amongst participants and their organisations. Reviewing the key educational approaches and preparing for the course follow-up.

Criteria for the projects

The projects to be developed within the course must conform to the following criteria. Projects should:

a) *Address multi-cultural realities of young people, intercultural dialogue and learning and/or situations of tension and conflict that have a cultural or religious dimension*

Projects should address situations that young people face in their multi-cultural environments, the needs of young people in terms of increased competence for managing or dealing with tensions that have at their roots cultural or religious reasons, situations of dialogue between young people from different cultures, and provide opportunities for young people to engage in intercultural learning.

b) *Be concrete and relevant, reflecting the situations and challenges faced by the young people that it addresses.*

They should address a particular community and/or group of young people. Projects can also have a national, international or European target group. They can also embrace different categories of young people within one project. They must be based on real needs and aspirations of the target group(s) and represent an added value to the community or to the organisation.

c) *Aim at empowering young people and fostering their participation.*

Empowerment and participation should be understood in a broad sense as strategies to overcome or counter the barriers of many kinds, including social exclusion, oppression, discrimination or isolation, that can be met by young people who take part in youth activities in a multi-cultural context. This can be pursued through, for example, the development of projects that involve education and training or the development of structures of participation.

d) *Be based on an intercultural approach.*

The aims and activities undertaken by the project should contribute to better understanding between different national and cultural groups and to improving relations between young people of different backgrounds.

e) *Have clear aims and objectives.*

For this purpose the projects must have a beginning and an end - even if a follow-up is foreseen - so as to allow an evaluation and assessment of the results achieved. A project is thus more than a single activity but should be concrete enough to be effectively managed and evaluated.

f) *Run by and for young people.*

The leaders of the project should be youth leaders or representatives of young people and the project should have young people as the ultimate target group or should promote their interests as an ultimate aim. Young people should be involved in the definition of the project, its implementation and evaluation. They should be truly concerned partners and not just "recipients". Projects should be run by a team, of which the project carrier that participates in the LTTC is a member.

g) *Carried out in the framework of an organisation or association.*

Purely individual projects will not be accepted, in as far as possible, the projects should correspond to the organisation's priorities. The nature and size of the organisation or association can vary (from small and local to national or international/European organisations) and so may the form (informal association, foundation, federation, etc.). The scope of the project should respect the capacity (in human and financial terms) of the organisation promoting it.

h) *Initiated during the course.*

Since the nature and size of the projects will be very different, it might not always be possible to finish the projects before the evaluation seminar. But to benefit from the support by the course team and in order to allow for an evaluation, at least some activities should be undertaken before July 2003 and the beginning of the evaluation seminar.

NB: Financing of the projects :

During the course, participants will receive information and advice about different European/international funding sources that could be interesting for co-financing the projects. The Council of Europe, however, cannot make any commitment to finance the projects of the

participants. Fundraising and the financial management of the projects are the sole responsibility of the project leader (the participant) and of the sending organisation, group or association.

Working languages

English and French are foreseen as working languages. Simultaneous interpretation in these two languages shall be provided.

Profile of participants

Participants will be youth workers and youth leaders who are:

- active in local associations, community organisations, youth clubs and initiatives,
- active in regional, national or international associations
- representatives of local, regional and/or national governmental youth structures/services

interested in or already responsible for developing projects with an international, European or intercultural dimension for young people in a multi-cultural context

All participants must also be:

- Resident of a Council of Europe member state or of a country signatory to the Council of Europe Cultural Convention (*some places may however be offered to participants resident in other countries*);
- Willing to undergo training and set up a project within the framework of the course;
- Aged between 18 to 30 years;
- Ready and able to attend for the full duration of the course;
- Supported by their organisation or association;
- Competently able to work in either English or French.

Financial conditions

- Board and lodging are provided at and paid for by the European Youth Centres;
- Travel expenses are fully reimbursed according to the rules of the Council of Europe;
- An enrolment fee of 54 EURO is due by each participant for each seminar. This fee will be deducted from the amount to be reimbursed for travel expenses;
- The Directorate of Youth and Sport operates a system of compensation for the cost of living for young workers and young unemployed people under the age of 30 who are obliged to take unpaid leave in order to attend one of its activities. Eligible participants will receive further information and details at a later date.

Procedure for applications

Candidates must send **all 4 pages** of the enclosed application forms directly to the EYC by post, fax or e-mail. Candidates accepted will be informed end September or beginning of October 2003 and will subsequently receive a course file with additional information and a draft course programme.

Deadline for applications: 1 June 2003

Applications must be sent to:
European Youth Centre Strasbourg
30 rue Pierre Coubertin
67000 Strasbourg
France
e-mail: nina.kapoor@coe.int
<http://www.coe.int/youth>



Directorate of Youth and Sport

European Youth Centre Budapest
Zivatar utca 1-3.
H-1024 BUDAPEST, Hungary
Fax: + 36 1 212 40 76
Tel: + 36 1 438 1030
www.eycb.coe.int

European Youth Centre Strasbourg
30, rue Pierre de Coubertin
F-67000 STRASBOURG, France
Fax: + 33 3 88 41 27 77
Tel: + 33 3 88 41 23 00
www.coe.int/youth

7. What type of training have you followed in youth work?

8. Have you applied for, or attended, any other training or language course of the Directorate of Youth and Sport in the past two years? (if yes, which one(s)?):

9. Do you have any special needs or requirements (e.g. dietary, disability, etc.)

10. Visas

If you are accepted as a participant on this course, will you require assistance in obtaining a visa for:

1. France? No Yes

2. Hungary? No Yes

If yes, please indicate:

Date of birth: Passport No.: Issued at (place):

On (date): Date of expiry:

MOTIVATIONS, NEEDS AND PROJECT:

11. What are your motivations for taking part in this course?

12. What do you consider to be your main training needs?

13. Short description of the aims and nature of my organisation/association:

14. The outline of your project idea (please attach any additional relevant documentation):
a) What is the project idea?

b) When and where will the project take place?

c) Which target group/s of young people will be involved in the project and what will their role in the project be?

d) In which way/s do you think your project fulfills the criteria laid out for projects in the course description?

e) What do you expect to achieve with your project?

15. How did you obtain this application form? Through:

your international youth organisation your national youth council

local, regional or national authorities (CDEJ, government, ministry, municipality...)

local youth organisation Internet

other (please specify)

Date:

Signature:

Appendix 2:

Programme of the two residential phases of the LTTC Intercultural Learning

Introduction seminar

Sunday 2 Nov	Monday 3 November	Tuesday 4 November	Wednesday 5 November	Thursday 6 November	Friday 7 November	Saturday 8 November	Sunday 9 November
	Official opening Introduction to - LTTC - team - participants -reimbursement Expectations of participants	Introduction to participants' projects Introduction to participants' organisations	Introduction to project development How we will develop the project in the LTTC	Intercultural Realities and Situations	Project Group 1	Information about Free Time FREE TIME (packed lunch)	Project Group 3
A R R I V A L	Group building Reflection space	What is the Intercultural dimension in my project? Why is there an Intercultural dimension in my project?	Meta Needs Analysis <i>Reflection Space</i> Realities, situations of Youth	Culture + Diversity	Project Group 2 Reflection Space	FREE TIME Dinner in town	Intercultural Learning Methodology Pedagogy Educational Approach Reflection Space
Welcome		International evening				Social gathering	

Monday 10 November	Tuesday 11 November	Wednesday 12 November	Thursday 13 November	Friday 14 November	Saturday 15 November	Sunday 16 November
<p>Intercultural Learning</p> <p>Methodology Pedagogy Educational Approach</p> <p>ICL Methodology in context</p>	<p>Project Group 5</p>	<p>European Funding Programmes</p> <p>Budgeting</p>	<p>Individual Budgeting</p> <p>Budget Clinic</p>	<p>Project Group 6</p>	<p>Project presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - oral - creative 	<p>D E P A R T U R E</p>
<p>Project Group 4</p>	<p>Quality</p> <p>What is it?</p> <p>What is it in my project?</p>	<p>Funding, Other Resources and Fundraising</p> <p>Input by Richard Hamilton</p> <p>Reflection Space</p>	<p>FREE TIME</p>	<p>Roles of Project Carriers</p> <p>Team work Conflicts Work with groups Communication Motivation Multiplication Facilitation</p> <p>Reflection Space</p>	<p>Evaluation of phase 1 of this training course</p> <p>Looking ahead to the second & third phases of this training course</p> <p>Closing</p>	
	<p>Dinner in town</p>				<p>Farewell evening</p>	

Evaluation Seminar

Wednesday 21 July	Thursday 22 July	Friday 23 July	Saturday 24 July	Sunday 25 July
	<p>Introduction to the evaluation seminar:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - methodology - EYC Budapest - reimbursement - project update using symbols <p>Pax. Expectations and training needs</p>	<p>Review of Project Phase of the LTTC</p>	<p>Input on Evaluation</p> <p>Update on Projects in e-groups</p> <p>Self Reflection</p>	<p>Social Analysis – The ICL dimension of the project</p>
<p>A R R I V A L</p>	<p>Group re-building</p> <p>Group dynamics</p>	<p>Forming the (E)valuation Groups and Debriefing</p>	<p>Social Analysis e-group</p> <p>How to assess the social reality of the target group?</p>	<p>Evaluation of the ICL dimension e-group</p> <p>Check in and round up</p>
<p>Welcome evening + catch up</p>	<p>Target Group Party</p>		<p>Dinner in Town</p>	

Monday 26 July	Tuesday 27 July	Wednesday 28 July	Thursday 29 July	Friday 30 July	Saturday 31 July
<p>Parallel Training Elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - theories of interculturalism - intercultural processes and methodology - anti-discrimination 	<p>Non-Formal Education e-group</p> <p>Training Element</p> <p>Working in Teams</p>	<p>Project Management e-group</p> <p>Budgeting and Fundraising groups</p> <p>Consultations</p>	<p>Free Morning</p> <p>Packed Lunch</p>	<p>Follow-up and Associative Strategies input</p> <p>Planning the follow-up e-group</p>	<p>D E P A R T U R E</p>
<p>Packed lunch</p> <p>Free Afternoon</p> <p>Money for dinner</p>	<p>Training Element</p> <p>Working in Teams (continued)</p>	<p>Project Management Café</p> <p>Q + A session</p>	<p>Programme begins: 14.30</p> <p>Youth Work Context + Multiplication e-group</p> <p>Multiplication: What Works?</p>	<p>Evaluation of the seminar and of the LTTC</p> <p>Personal follow-up plans</p>	
<p>Dinner in town at a location of participants' choice</p>			<p>Multiplication Café 20.15 – 21.15</p>	<p>Farewell Party</p>	

Appendix 3:

Recommendations for changes and improvements to the recruitment procedure for the LTTC:

The following recommendations for changes and improvements to the recruitment procedure for the LTTC were identified by the team of the course³⁷:

- Introduction of a dual application process, including the questioning of both candidate and organisation (c.f. example of the Language Course Programme as a starting point);
- There should be better specification of importance of context and organisation in the call for participants;
- A different way of asking candidates to present their project should be introduced. Candidates should no longer present a project idea, but a project for which they are already responsible. This should somehow be verified by the organisation. It should be noted, however, that this risks an increase in the number of candidates applying with projects already underway. The project should not have begun yet, but be in the process of preparation / planning. This should be explained in the call for participation;
- Introduction of targeted phone interviewing in order to avoid that we don't lose the « innovative » or less clear cases among the candidates (borderline cases). It was also noted that systematic phone interviews of candidates under serious consideration during the selection meeting could be considered too;
- The actual profile of participants needs to be more specific. An explanation of each of the dimensions of the profile should be undertaken and outlined in the call for participation, as is already done in the case of the criteria for projects;
- A form of targeted advertisement / recruitment to specific organisations who are best suited to providing the profile of participants relevant for the given course could be undertaken. This could necessitate specific communication by e-mail or telephone. This was for example done in the case of the Long Term Training Course for the Caucasus region, and did bear some positive results;
- The team suggests that the call for participation should not be advertised on the internet at all. With the increase in access to internet, the DYS has seen a dramatic increase in the number of poor quality applications for all courses, and in the tendency of any young person to drop off an application just for the sake of it. It would be interesting, therefore, to consider returning to the original “snail mail” and “e-mail” mail shot advertisement procedure to see if this would increase the number of quality applications received in combination with some of the above recommendations;
- It was noted that the time frame for opening the call for participants is a delicate matter. If it is opened too early and long in advance of the deadline it can be problematic too. A reminder e-mail to the mailing list 2 / 3 weeks before the deadline for such a course was suggested as an effective means of recreating interest in the course.

³⁷ These recommendations have been extracted from the minutes of the evaluation of the course conducted by the team at their final meeting in November 2004. Full minutes of the meeting are available on request from the Secretariat (yael.ohana@coe.int).