University students as active co-creators of education content in the topics of otherness and diversity in elementary schools

Poster is published under the project KEGA 040UMB-4/2018.

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We deem it important that young people are raised as active citizens ready to contribute to the development of democratic and sustainable society. It is necessary to support skills that will enable them get engaged in life in variety of communities, think critically and reject discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices.

In 2018-2020, the project KEGA 040UMB-4/2018 has been implemented at the Faculty of Education, MBU. This project has two target groups. The first, direct, target group consists of Faculty of Education students. The second, indirect, target group involves pupils from Elementary schools in the Banska Bystrica region. Our partners in the project have been the non-governmental organisations Centre for Community Organising (CKO) and Eduma. Service learning strategy is one of the ways how to ensure that formal education leads to acquisition of knowledge, skills and formation of desirable attitudes. We are aware of the fact that it is necessary to have real experiences with different kinds of people (minorities, experts from the field, people who have experienced discrimination) to be able to form the right attitudes in the topics of global education. At the same time it is important to enable students become active co-creators of their own education, not just passive subjects of it.

The project has used an applied research methodology and an interdisciplinary approach that integrates knowledge and methods of pedagogics, psychology and social work.

In 2018 we focused on measuring attitudes of students at the Faculty of Education MBU as well as at selected elementary schools. We concentrated on perceptions of otherness and diversity through a quasi-experiment using a narrative group method. The objective of this preparatory stage was to establish the students' and pupils' attitudes towards otherness and diversity. Initial testing of students' attitudes towards otherness and diversity of different types (ethnicity, sexual orientation, attractiveness, special needs etc.) was carried out at this stage. The data are to be evaluated at the final stage.

In 2019 we realised a training course – theoretical preparation of students with clear educational goals and opportunities to apply them in practice (preparation of students for realizing online live libraries and application of a narrative group method by experiential activities).

training was realised in cooperation with the Centre of community organising and Eduma. In addition, there were service learning activities realised in experimental groups of elementary school pupils (direct intervention). The stage was concluded with measuring the changes in the attitudes of these pupils.

In 2020 we have realised an analytical and evaluation stage. The objective of this stage is to establish the attitudes of Faculty of Education students towards otherness and diversity after the intervention and service learning activities were implemented. The data will be processed in relation to the set objectives. At first we are going to analyse the outputs of pupils and their attitudes to otherness and diversity before and after the intervention (outputs connected with experiential activities and methodology of live and online live libraries). Secondly we are going to focus on evaluating the outputs of students and their attitudes to otherness and diversity before and after the realization of the service learning strategy. This will go hand in hand with evaluating the efficiency of service learning strategy. Another activity of this stage is to disseminate the results of the project and writing a textbook for university students.

How students evaluated the subject Human library-their feedback

"A story has what can motivate another person not to remain inactive, but to use his potential for himself and others.„

"It makes people people - their story."

"The story has power, its meaning. Knowing the story of others leads us to understand their inner experience of the situation. „

"Every story has a big heart, it hides a lot of pain, suffering, but also a lot of good.„

"I'm grateful for everything, today's class has given me a lot, a lot of respect, I'm putting on my hat.„

"Now I'm going to pay more attention to other people's diversity.„

"I wish I could participate in similar activities more."

"Now I value those who do something for others more."

"Through stories, I can more easily understand what people have been through, through their emotions that I can realistically see and feel and discuss more."

"Stories are important to people, they know how to portray the real world, not just an idea.„

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Categories of free feedback to a story

category	Examples of statements
Personal experience	"My own experience is the surest way to explain to me, and it is only through it that I can combine knowledge into logical contexts." "The important thing is a personal experience that needs to be experienced first hand, not just learning to listen. Practical experience gives me more in life, that I can do it and teach me new skills in life. "" Only through experience can one understand, feel, discover and grow as a human being.
Change, innovation of teaching	"It contributes greatly to the change of society, to the change of thinking, to tolerance, to a better relationship - it can contribute to fundamental changes in our country." "Experience can be gained in other ways than sitting at school." "It was an experience for me, an experience, a new knowledge, an insight. I think it's something new, we just won't meet. "" It was a very interesting thing that opened my eyes and introduced me to another world, I live a bag. "" Thanks to this education, I diversified my perception even more so that the theory gave me It will give me information, but the practice of experience is irreplaceable. "" It gave me a lot of new information about experience, how people other than the majority live and manage ordinary things, it gave me a new perspective on things I didn't have the slightest idea before. "" It forced me to think about the things I used to take for granted. "
Perception of diversity in society	"I was struck by people's behavior towards those who are disadvantaged, people's reactions and the uncontrollability of their behavior towards them. Simply discriminate against them. "" There is no need to be afraid of otherness. "" I have learned to see several communities I knew about, but they did not deal with the problems in our society. "" The world is full of extraordinary people who have something to offer. All I have to do is give them a chance and not be afraid. "" I realize how many different people go around the world, their problems, I try to change something and not swim through life unnoticed. "" Now I pay more attention to extremism. Both in politics and on their own. "
Sensitization	"I was indifferent to my prejudices. As if none existed before. "" I never realized that emotions could play such a role. "" Now I value the people around me more. I perceive more. I realize that what is unknown is not bad. "" I am more receptive to my surroundings, my head to socially excluded people. I know more about their situation and experience. "" I am more aware of and appreciate people who have a difficult life, know how to fight and overcome obstacles, and can be a motivation and role model for others. "" Now I value my life, my family more what I have. I appreciate more people who haven't had it as easy in life as I do."
Cognition as a basic aspect of tolerance	"First of all, to know yourself and the world around you. What am I going to, where am I going, what do I want to achieve and how? "" What is often presented to us may not be really real, and only what we really experience, we know, can give us a real perspective. "" Human growth as such, by getting to know new people, new information, new experiences we experience, we become better and more receptive, which is important if not the most important thing today. "" Knowledge for me is opening up and clarifying things not yet understood, gaining a new angle perspective, connecting new contexts. "" Knowing about something / someone more than usual than necessary. Trying to understand, to understand. "" Experience — awareness — knowledge. Knowledge = final product and then possible mission.

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