

EUROPEAN ACADEMY ON YOUTH WORK - WORKSHOP REPORT

My World Cards - Exploring the Everyday Life of Young People

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TOPIC / PROJECT DISCUSSED

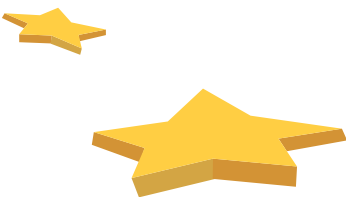
The method “My world cards” was developed as part of the Lunch-time seminars on social pedagogy for employees of Hackney council and interested foster carers of the London borough of Hackney. The aim of this method is to empower employees and foster carers who work with (vulnerable) young people to identify places where the young people spend their time and experiences that they connect to the specific places, and to explore possibilities to include them in spaces that are safe and promote a positive life style.

OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP

- Energiser
- What is the Virtual school for Looked After Children?
- Images of Hackney and our young people
- Developing “My world cards”
- “My world cards” simulation
- Reflection and discussion
- Zoom-out question

The workshop consisted of different methods. At the beginning, there was an energiser that required the active participation of all participants and was connected to the topic of the workshop (the game consisted of “the shield” and “the bomb”). As the “My world cards” method was developed to explore the world of the most vulnerable young people, looked after children (children in care), the dynamic energiser introduced the themes of danger and strengths that are also prominently present in the life of children who went through traumatic experiences. Through the game and its outcomes, the personal experiences of working with children in care could be shared in a less formal setting.

Other methods used included a short presentation about the Virtual School and our work, and the “newspaper method”, where materials gathered in the borough (local newspapers, advertisements, books describing the borough, internet articles, Wikipedia entries, Hackney borough web page description etc.) were distributed to participants and their initial impressions about the borough were recorded: discovering elements that surprised them and pieces of information that were “missing” and were not present in the materials brought. Impressions and the missing parts were noted on a flipchart. Participants were made aware that there were no “wrong” and “right” answers.



Participants got actively involved in a simulation of the “My world cards” game. Together, we discovered the feelings, opinions and values that participants connected to the places and spaces that were surrounding us at the EAYW. The game was prepared with photo material acquired from the EAYW organisational team before the event and also by using photos from the Internet. The game was a simulation as the place was not too familiar to the participants, and experience is different in the places we know well and that are part of our everyday life. Participation in the game led to free discussion on how to use the method, what are the positives of it and what might be the negatives.

What we observed from the method:

- Different places can have a different meaning for every person.
- Participants shared personal stories, for example: a person once got stuck in an elevator and was therefore not feeling comfortable being in elevators in general.
- Photos made a big difference for participants as they could connect the picture to the real places or to a symbolic meaning (for example “transport- car”).
- The group felt comfortable enough to share their experiences (possibly because we knew each other already and the method was introduced at a later stage of the workshop).

Participants shared their impressions about the method on a flipchart:

- “targets individual (inner – self) – can bring out anxiety, fears”
- “includes different environments”
- “for different target groups”
- “visual”
- “conversation starter”
- “can make connections in your mind”



KEY TRENDS AND INNOVATIVE ASPECTS



A key trend in youth work, as identified by the participants, is the use of methods that are less verbal and use more pictures/photos. Connection to digital youth work was also recognised as a very useful aspect. Through descriptions of places that are taken from the Internet, the method can explore online literacy and teach critical thinking about online information.

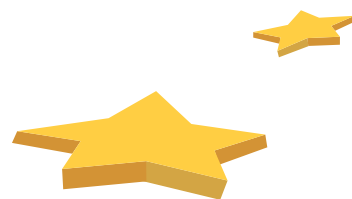
Cards as a tool are used in different countries. The main differences between methods using cards are in “how” we use the cards and “why” we use the method, what is the purpose of it. In one of the countries mentioned in our group, one method that also uses cards focuses on writing and verbal communication, for example: young people have to write down answers about scary places or good places in their life-world. Another person in the group mentioned a method that uses cards which only have imaginary, abstract images on it and are used to explore young people’s feelings.

“My world cards” is not focused on writing (although in one variation of the game writing can be used) but instead, it focuses on realistic images and photos to explore the everyday lives of young people. The method theoretically connects to life-world orientation and the contextual safeguarding approach. Its aim is to explore and improve places where young people hang out, promote new, unknown and positive places and discover opportunities for building the community. The added value of the method is the combination of robust theoretical background, practical experiences and the possibility to use the method in the context of digital youth work (teaching a critical approach to online information).

The method has started from the idea of the “Nadelmethode” (“needle method”) that was invented in Austria. Through the usage of Nadelmethode and working with different young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, the new, improved form was developed. “My world cards” focus on visual images and introduce several new ways of using the cards.

FEEDBACK

Participants identified “My world cards” as a simple but powerful method. Feedback about the workshop was positive with one person saying that she is thinking of how to embed the method into her trainings for youth workers in the following weeks and other participants mentioning the positives of it. A feedback of the workshop received by email by participants was: *“well organised, a lot of input. Thank you, Kristina”*.



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*More information about the EAYW:
www.eayw.net*