



Fritidsforum and ECYC seminar “Ready, steady, go!”

Outdoor Activities and Adventure Education in Open Youth Work

Eslöv, Sweden

4-11 August 2006

NARRATIVE REPORT AND EVALUATION

By: Annina Hirvonen, Bjarni Þorðarson, Ali Ameziane, Monica Wallin, MajLis Blomqvist

The background – idea for the seminar

This seminar developed as a result of brainstorming in an ECYC Executive Committee meeting in Hamburg, Germany, in January 2005 to organise a seminar about adventure education and outdoor activities as a method for human rights education, intercultural learning and diversity. ECYC's Swedish member organisation Fritidsforum was keen on hosting the seminar in Sweden as they are specialised in adventure education as one of the main working methods with youth workers, young volunteers and young people interested in the method.

Having the framework of the European Youth Campaign “All Different, All Equal” was also a perfect setting to start planning such a seminar.

Preparatory team and the preparatory meetings

The prep team consisted of both Swedish trainers and international trainers, as ECYC always focuses on having multicultural teams in their activities. There were four preparatory meetings in total, two with the representatives of Fritidsforum and the Course Director and two with the whole composition of the preparatory team. The first meeting was held in Helsinki, Finland and the second one in Stockholm, Sweden. The two meetings with the full prep team present were both held on location in Eslöv, Sweden.

The prep team members were:

Annina Hirvonen, *Course Director, ECYC Secretary General*
MajLis Blomqvist, *Fritidsforum International Officer*
Bjarni Þorðarson, *trainer*
Ali Ameziane, *trainer, adventure pedagogue*
Monica Wallin, *trainer*

Finland
Sweden
Iceland
Sweden
Sweden

Helsinki, 14 February, 2006

Annina and MajLis met up briefly in Helsinki to discuss the final composition of the prep team, as it was most likely to change from the original suggestion. They also discussed the programme and the technicalities with the venue in Sweden, as the seminar was planned to be held in the region of Skåne, in a small town called Eslöv. The next prep meeting was agreed to have in Stockholm, Sweden in April to meet up with other prep team members and to finalise the Call for Participants and other technicalities in Sweden.

Stockholm, 11 April, 2006

This meeting was attended by Annina, MajLis and Monica. The main idea was to look at existing literature and other resources about the topic of the seminar, to get acquainted with the All Different All Equal-campaign and to finalise the Call for Participants. Unfortunately the whole prep team could not be present in the meeting but it was agreed that the actual planning meeting of the seminar was to be held in Eslöv, on location, in May.

Eslöv, 12-14 May, 2006

This was the first meeting with the full composition of the prep team and thus the first half of the first day was used entirely into team building, as some of the team members had not worked together before. After the ice was broken, the team concentrated fully on developing the different items to the programme and sharing the tasks among the prep team members.

Ali and Monica also explained the rest of the team what was the theory behind the adventure education methodology that Fritidsforum uses in their activities and the team also pondered on how to incorporate human rights education, diversity and intercultural learning into the method.

The sharing of the tasks was that Ali and Monica would take the lead in running the actual adventure pedagogic in the beginning of the week and Annina and Bjarni would focus more on deepening the human rights education and diversity in the end of the seminar week. The team thought that this kind of division between the different topics was necessary in terms of having a thorough introduction to the themes of the seminar.

MajLis was responsible for the technicalities, such as booking and confirming things (e.g. canoeing) and other practicalities.

Eslöv, seminar day 0 (3 August)

The prep team met a day prior to the start of the event in order to complete the last minute preparations and make sure all was OK at the venue and with all the supplies that were needed for the seminar. The actual planning of the event was actually already done, so this day was fully dedicated to sharing information, i.e. for all the members of the team to know who is responsible for what and what is happening and when.

Seminar programme

The programme was divided into several elements, which took place over several days or throughout the whole seminar. The full programme is attached to the appendices.

Day 1

The participants were arriving throughout the day. They were welcomed at the Folkhögskola in Eslöv, in which there was a possibility to relax after a long day (or several even!) of travelling. The

actual programme of the day was very short due to the travelling and was not considered as a full working day but we did have a short ice-breaking and introduction session. This consisted of:

- Registration of the participants
- A brief welcome and introduction to the venue
- A number of icebreakers
- A little walking tour in the surroundings in Eslöv
- Dinner

Day 2

The day was officially opened with practical information and an introduction to the overall programme of the seminar.

The Secretary General of ECYC, Annina Hirvonen, gave a short presentation about ECYC as an organisation and the participants were also able to ask questions.

The participants were also asked to list their hopes and fears for the seminar, and they were discussed anonymously after a 15 minutes pondering on the things they wished to happen at the seminar and things they didn't want to experience in during the seminar. After this, the group created a Working Agreement together, listing things that were allowed ("ask whenever something is unclear"), were not allowed (such as smoking indoors or during a session) or things related to common respect ("be quiet after 23h00", "listen to what other people have to say" etc).

Then the programme continued with the very first introduction to the adventure education as a method of open youth work. This included some very basic exercises and the main focus was in team building.

The idea of the method of daily evaluation, *the Reflection Groups*, was introduced to the participants. For these groups the participants were divided into 4 groups which remained constant throughout the seminar. Each group was facilitated by a member of the prep team, which again remained constant. The Reflection Groups provided participants with the space to reflect on the day's events and its learning points and also to raise issues if they were experiencing any with the prep team or fellow participants. The Reflection groups were held in the end of each working day.

The intercultural evening was the highlight of the evening, and the participants had a chance to give a short presentation about their country and organisation. There were also food and drinks available for tasting from different countries.

Day 3

The programme continued with adventure education and more challenging exercises, followed by a theory session to explain the reason behind the activities and the way they were facilitated. The group was also asked to think about the roles within the group and the feelings their own participation in the group had. Some of the participants did not understand the reason why the facilitators brought certain things up that they had observed within the group (.e.g. someone was smoking during session and the group had to decide whether or not the "rule" was to be kept in the working agreement or removed").

The day ended with a short walk in the town and with dinner in a nice little local restaurant. The participants were a bit tired after a long working day, especially with the weather approaching +30c afternoon.

Day 4

The main activity on this day was canoeing in a stream close to Eslöv. Some of the participants had never canoed before whereas some of them were quite skilled in paddling. We canoed in a small river close to Eslöv and during the breaks we had some simple exercises related to adventure education. Overall the canoeing took us the whole day so the evening was rather easy-going and participants were also given some social time as the majority of the participants were very tired after the day in the canoes.

Day 5

The day started with a team work exercise called the Eslöv Town Hunt which was related to the theme of getting to know some Swedish culture. The participants got a chance to visit the town and fulfil some simple tasks in small groups. After this the participants got the afternoon off, as they were given the opportunity to visit either Malmö or Copenhagen, as they were both located very close to the seminar venue.

Day 6

This day was entirely dedicated to Human Rights Education and as it was raining outdoors, the day was spent indoor after having spent several days outdoors. The participants got a more thorough insight on the topic and also the themes of the All Different, All Equal campaign were addressed through basic role play exercises and group discussions and presentations. The evening highlighted with the Swedish culture evening, by playing Swedish baseball and trying out Swedish delicacies such as herring and knäckebröd.

Day 7

The HRE-focused session continued with creative methods to promote the values of the All Different All Equal campaign and the participants were given the task to make a painting about diversity; a statue from the elements found in the nature, representing participation and a poem or a performance about equality. This was to be done in small groups. These presentations took quite some time to prepare but the outcomes were fantastic and the participants also felt that they really had learned what the ADAE campaign is all about.

This was followed by a thorough evaluation which was done through an action-based evaluation session in which the participants were able to express themselves by sitting in the “hot chair” and giving an overview of their feeling and thoughts about a certain topic (e.g. “the atmosphere in the group”) by the facilitator of the evaluation. This was followed by filling in the written evaluation forms, in which the emphasis was slightly different from the action-based evaluation. The idea of the “hot chair” was to enable the participants to give their opinion on the given topic whereas the written evaluation focused more on specific and detailed evaluation, giving the chance to express things that the participants may not have felt comfortable saying in front of the whole group.

The day ended with a farewell party that was – as usual – full of emotions and signs of international friendship that will last for a long time.

Day 8

This was bye-bye. Everything nice must come to an end but the memory remains and a great deal of wonderful learning experiences.

Evaluation

As a general overview of the seminar, the participants were very happy about the programme and about the methods used during the week. Some of them found the adventure education rather

challenging as a method of open youth work but were very keen to learn more towards the end of the week. The cultural diversity (15 nationalities present) was found to be both a strength and a weakness when exploring the topic. Some participants found it difficult to express their feelings in English but really made a great effort to take full part and speak up their mind. Different conceptions about rules (e.g. no smoking during a session) were also something some people could not understand at times.

The youngest participants of the seminar were only 16 years old and this caused a little bit of age difference in the group. Despite the age, the youngest participants still felt at ease in the seminar and evaluated that they had been accepted as full members of the group even if some of the other participants were more than 10 years older than them. Similar feeling was shared by the older participants and they all felt that the group spirit was very good despite the differences.

ECYC was also given some very useful recommendations and tips when it comes to communications before an event takes place, choice of venue, participants' profile and so on. These will all be presented to the ECYC Executive Committee in Luxembourg in February 2007.

Some of the sending organisations are planning to ask the seminar participants to be their spokespeople in future ECYC meetings as well and this is exactly the kind of continuity ECYC wishes to see in its activities. Getting involved in the organisation's decision-making through participating in the activities oneself first is a great way of showing the way to get involved in democratic life and participation. This also very strongly supports the ethos of the All Different, All Equal campaign.