Focus Group Workshop
“Hard-to-reach learners and youth”

25 – 26 October 2013
Berlin, Germany

Report

By Mayte Kappel Rovira with Benjamin Wunsch-Grafton and Christoph Müller-Hofstede

1. GOALS AND TASKS OF THE FOCUS GROUP HARD-TO-REACH LEARNERS AND YOUTH

The Focus Group Hard-to-Reach Learners and Youth (FG HTR) is a national and international...
...learning and exchange network (platform and support for in formal evaluation/peer-to-peer)
...common project network (brainstorming, international)
...network for partner finding and funding opportunities
...network within the network (NECE)

"The Focus Group Hard-to-Reach Learners and Youth (FG HTR) is an international learning network which brings together European learners, practitioners, researchers and policy makers from formal, non-formal and informal education for the evaluation of current and the development of innovative practices which aim towards the facilitation of access of learners to formal and informal learning opportunities. The premises on which we base our work is the right of all people to education in general and citizenship education in particular. The network is particularly concerned with young people’s access to citizenship education learning opportunities particularly of young people who belong in groups at risk of social exclusion and marginalisation. The diversity of experiences and expertise of its members allow the network to be involved in a wide range of activities which include but are not limited to the development of common educational and research projects, of educational interventions and of methodologies for the evaluation of educational practices.“ (Michalis Kakos)

The FG’s tasks are:

à Concerning NECE
- Raise the visibility of NECE results and the sustainability of NECE activities
- Strengthen networking (on HTR) in Europe and internationally
- Develop NECE further
- Enable co-funding and fund-raising
2. CONSENSUAL HARD-TO-REACH CONCEPT

In order to work with a common umbrella definition, the FG will work with the following consensual HTR concept: "Working Title" (Michalis Kakos)

HTR are educationally and/or socially and/or economically disadvantaged people who are often ‘forgotten’ by the mainstream of citizenship education or left behind in schools or other educational facilities. Young people, especially immigrants, are particularly affected. A growing group is the economically disadvantaged and the NEET (not in education, employment or training). We have to be aware that many different communities may be considered HTR and each need specific tailored strategies. Different HTR learning settings are informal settings (peer context), non-formal settings (structured, NGO’s) and formal setting (obligatory education)

“We have also to be aware that the term HTR assumes that there is a public interest and indeed an effort for marginalised and excluded groups to be reached and to be offered with opportunities for inclusion. Moreover, the term signifies the responsibility of the state and of those who do not consider themselves as excluded or marginalised to reach those learners.” (Michalis Kakos)

As the term of “hard-to-reach learners” emanates from and reflects the unilateral perspective of educators/CE workers, the Focus Group (FG) discussed the option of using the term “HTR” for internal communication and as a working term among professionals and “Working with the disconnected and de-privileged or vulnerable groups” as a term for external communication and perspective. There is obviously a need to combine a pragmatic and critical approach to this terminology.

First attempts were made to map the landscape of HTR work – these may be seen as work in progress which members of the Focus Group might like to pursue as one of their task teams.
3. FG MAPPING: EXPECTATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND TOPICS

3.1 EXPECTATIONS

Definitions
- Clarify the term and the “who” of “hard-to-reach”
- “Engage in process of identification of the ‘who’...“ (Michalis Kakos)
- Come up with common thoughts about HTR
- “Develop and suggest a framework for thinking and working with and for HTR learners” (Michalis Kakos)

Exchange and networking
- Meet more practitioners, people from the field and new projects
- Establish platform for learning and exchange
- Learn about conditions in different countries
- Create a common European vision
- Share personal experience as a HTR

Methods
- Develop special curricula for HTR
- Shape first ideas towards common approach

Projects
- Generate enough ideas to continue our work

3.2 CONTRIBUTIONS

Access
- Experience on how to work with HTR and of good practice
- Provide access to schools for testing ideas
- Access to marginalized groups, possibility of including them

Conceptualization
- How to conceptualize projects for HTR, inclusion, CE
- Experience and expertise in writing proposals
- Theorizing the discussion of HTR (concerning inclusion and civic education)
- Ideas of how to link the (“far away”) civic education and youth

Resources and approaches
- Developing materials for teachers who work with HTR
- Approaches in the field, practical side, training of trainers
- Cultural approach to create new learning spaces (peer learning, gender perspective)
- Approach that combines civic education with psychological approaches

Exchange
- Bring in the expertise of other networks/projects, transfer of knowledge
3.3 TOPICS

Concepts
- Investigate on formal / non-formal / informal settings
- Connection between migration, socially disabled people and culture – “not sure what socially disabled people may mean...“ (Michalis Kakos)
- Why to teach and what works / doesn’t work
- “I think that this should read: why to REACH. I think that this should be separate to 'what works' and that the latter should read: 'what works /doesn't work AND WHY' (Michalis Kakos)
- Research of psychological needs of HTR

Direct environments
- To interview, invite, meet HTR

Funding
- Get funding for HTR projects

Strategies
- How to access these groups
- What to teach and how to teach
- Participatory observation at street education
- Train the trainers (Experts)
- How to remodel civic education to reach specific ethnic groups? Eg How to rethink sensitive topics like Islam and Antisemitism/radicalism when working with students coming from immigrant families with a muslim background. How to avoid cultural and ethic labels and stereotypes?
- How to empower people
- How to reach out to parents of hard-to-reach kids. How to involve families.
- Empathy, identity, media, mediation

Good practice
- Collect case studies / good practice
- Resources sharing
- Find out about different and/or common challenges, situations and chances of CE with HTR
- Current theories and articles of HTR à Know about the state of the art in different countries
4. CLUSTER GROUP WORK: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND FUTURES IN THE WORK WITH DIFFERENT TARGET GROUPS.

4.1 GROUP “ALIENATED MILIEUS: SUBCULTURES, EXTREMISTS, Hooligans, Gangs”

Definition of the group
These subcultures often self-marginalize themselves, defining their identity through their difference from other groups (“identity game”), especially from “the rest” / people not belonging to the subculture (also “us”: the CE workers). A metaphor to describe their values is the “David vs. Goliath” Myth: It’s the subculture (“David”) that defines “us” as “normal” and dominant (“Goliath”).

Some values in subcultures like extremists, hooligans and gangs are: Male culture, chauvinism, nationalism, avant-gardism, racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, comradeship, survival of the fittest, acceptance of violence, concepts of conspiracy, being at-risk.

Challenges
Being “hard to reach” is part of their identity. So we face ethical challenges: Do we have the right to reach and teach them? Do we educate them to silence reactions to social exclusion? (Wanting to “normalize” them) Do we loose something (diversity?) by reaching them?

It is a challenge for us to get rid of the concept of extremism.
And we have restricted access to them (concerning language, cultural settings etc.)

Opportunities and futures
Facing education as a social dialogue.
Offering education consistent with human rights.
Offering education as a right rather than imposition.
Using the opportunity to think about who we are.

4.2 GROUP “ECONOMICALLY DE-PRIVILEGED”

Definition of the group
E.g. Unemployed, economically de-privileged, NEET (neither in education, employment or training), homeless, rural communities, poor elderly.
- They are excluded
- They have no structures and are therefor individualized (very limited social network)
- Low self-esteem (feeling of being powerless and that their needs don’t count)
- Lack of motivation
- Low access to resources
- We could denominate them as “precariat”
- They don’t see connection between civic skills and their situation.
- They have the feeling of firstly having to satisfy their primary needs before engaging in “unnecessary / luxurious” civic engagement.
- Education is boring (and it’s obligatory)
Challenges
- There are no/not many structures for political participation of these groups and no spaces for unconventional political participation that could fit them.
- Structures need to be collaboratively developed.
- They have to be empowered enough to be able to speak about their needs.
- Structure need to be built to help them to organize themselves (it’s not only up to them)
- We should assure the effectiveness and sustainability of their civic engagement, e.g. when they tell their needs (to avoid disappointment and the verification of their belief that civic engagement doesn’t change their situation).

Opportunities and futures
- Creating unions for the precariat.
- Change the focus from neoliberal hegemony to more communitarism, solidarity, cooperatives and different values.
- In order to approach them, offer fun and interesting inclusive programs in community centres. Use edutainment, festivals, and libraries. Create a meeting platform. Consider the role of mass media and their use of media.

4.3 GROUP “PEOPLE WITH MIGRATIONAL BACKGROUND”

Definition of the group
People (adults and youth) with social, cultural, demographic, economic religious and linguistic barriers to access education, training, employment and civic participation.

Challenges
- Lack of policy framework.
- Lack of implementation.
- Lack of self-esteem.
- Lack of cross-communication.
- Mistrust (from “them” to “the rest of the society” and vice versa).
- Social distance between host-community groups and receivers.
- Stereotypes and prejudice bias.

Opportunities and futures
- Inter-/trans-/multicultural exchange, education and dialogue
- Increased civic participation
- An informed policy framework (that has checked the status quo)
- Enhanced employment and citizenship education
- Fostering social cohesion
- Recognition of prior learnings (formal, non-formal and informal) and hybrid identities.
5. IDEAS AND PROJECT GENERATION FOR THE FG HTR in 2014-2015

General
- Connecting existing networks and establishing a movement that serves the empowerment of underprivileged.
- Creating a 'hub' (Drehscheibe) for HTR-related projects in Europe

Focus group structure
- Website/platform of the Focus Group
- Structured dialogue and exchange about common challenges.
- Coming together, having different perspectives, creating transparency on controversies, different approaches.
- Creating overview about future trends and projects.

Focus Group topics
1. CE in times of “terror” and “security” laws: rethink practice and research.
2. Reflect agency as a CE worker with disadvantaged groups: Position and power? Legitimacy? Ethics of CE and attitude?
3. Reflection on socio-economic contexts of civic education with HTR in Europe
4. Proposal for a topic for the next meeting in 2014: Methods and Communication with Hard to Reach learners
5. Critical debate of EU educational reform and funding
6. Discussion and analysis of good practice of CE / HTR in Europe in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Listen to the subjects and their life histories.

Focus Group working groups
- Working group “School, Islam and citizenship education”: Exchange of international approaches, concepts and practices

Focus Group Projects
General
- Common project of institutions that are represented in the Focus Group with a common approach/method that we come up with in the next Focus Group workshop.
- Advocacy and lobbying CE on EU-level; Political initiative: more money for political / civic education on a European level, especially towards HTR.
- Include policy makers/officials in FG and NECE?

1. Spaces and training
- “European Street Academy” – youth-cultural peer learning (like gangway Berlin)
- European Training Centre for disadvantaged groups. Aims: Gathering, sharing, dialogue, politicization, dissemination.
- EU-wide informal community based learning
- Complementary / supplementary schools support service
- Development of educational tools and platforms for HTR young learners (bridging formal and non-formal educational settings)
- A model / program for teachers / multipliers / educators: “CE for an intercultural world”
2. Network building
- School to School support: A peer support network for 'diversity schools' (coordinated network)

3. Funding
- Applying for co-funds of well matching projects (international meetings, best practice exchanges...)
- A paper / database on EU-funding for HTR / CE projects (use the NECE database)
- Compendium/database of current programs for HTR / CE "ready-to-join": Target groups, methodology, and possibility of cooperation, contact.
- An audit tool for the appreciation of diversity in schools (like Young, Diverse and Equal)

4. Publications
- Discussion papers on topics listed above
- Midterm: E-publication on HTR / CE in Europe including country reports
- Research and study on citizens’ (or young people’s or students’) perception of what is “HTR” (or marginalized groups) in EU and of relationships with (or even responsibility towards?) those groups.

6. PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Mona Bano Qaiser, Katharina Müller: Dialogue macht Schule (Dialogue in Schools)
The basis of the company’s activities is taking dialogue into schools in disadvantaged areas thus promoting a new school culture. The program brings together personal development, civic education and integration in a new way. It aims at enabling students through 2-year long weekly meetings in their school to articulate themselves and to work on topics that interest them, thus working with the students, not on them. What makes it special and successful is it’s long-term approach. Besides, it is curricula-anchored to ensure sustainability.

Khalid Mahmoud: School Development Support Agency (SDSA), projects: Young, diverse and equal and Get in.
Khalid Mahmoud works especially on programs for citizen education through an Islamic perspective. Young, diverse and equal is an accreditation project for schools. Get in is a network that brings together schools serving diverse communities across Europe to form curriculum partnerships, arrange international school links and develop innovative practice. The 7th GET-In international conference “Boosting Achievement: Claiming the Benefits of Diversity” takes place in Leicester – Nottingham, UK, 2nd – 6th April 2014.

Anja Hirsch: master thesis “How to reach the hard-to-reach?” Anja Hirsch analysed the work of the bpb with HTR youth. Now she is investigating private foundation’s work on CE with HTR for her PhD.
Clarisse Costa Afonso: Case study on a Portuguese school with socially disabled youth. The project worked with 7th-graders, migrants mainly from the former Portuguese colonies. The intercultural project aimed at intercultural communication among the students and at involving and integrating the teenagers and their parents. It worked a lot with proverbs and storytelling, thus trying to access different aspects of the foreign communities. The case study has been published.

Ulrike Wolff-Jontofsohn: Demokratielernen in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft (Learning democracy in an immigration society). Berlin-based school development project, working with the most disadvantaged schools in inner urban areas (started in 2009). Aims: To make schools a more supportive and safe place for children (especially from other cultures). The project works with different clusters: 1. Supporting structures in schools for parents and children (e.g. seminars for parents to tell them about the German educational system). 2. Improving the school atmosphere and environment, referring to the concept of resilience. 3. Mediation in intercultural projects (e.g. round tables in school about religious and cultural conflicts) 4. Citizenship education (in the narrow sense). Conclusion: Young migrant pupils need to be given the space to talk about their background and to make their experiences visible before starting to work on CE (CE as 2nd step).

Nico Prucha: Jihadi propaganda impact online. Research project at the University of Vienna. The aim is to analyse online jihadi propaganda (adding numbers, figures and statistics) in order to better understand its impact on society. A new Muslim extremist society is evolving. We need to understand its mechanisms in order to develop tailor-made CE accesses for young people who engage with extremism.

Elena Alenka Begant: VOICE. Developing citizens and YOURopa. YOURopa supports the European Commission (EC) in promoting and mainstreaming active European citizenship during the European Year of Citizenship. VOICE. Developing Citizens is an international project aiming to improve educational practice in civic education by developing problem-based learning materials for secondary school pupils and a teacher training course on skills and background knowledge for implementation of competence-oriented civic education.


7. FUTURE FOCUS GROUP WORK AND NEXT DATES

Future Focus Group Work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>By when</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication tool for the group (Google doc or blog)</td>
<td>Christoph Müller-Hofstede</td>
<td>Asap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition team (definition of the FG’s topic)</td>
<td>Khalid Mahmoud, Elena Alenka Begant, Kacper Nowacki, Ulrike Wolff-Jontofsohn</td>
<td>Until NECE conference in The Hague (14. - 16.11.13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cluster group summary: short and long

Christoph Müller-Hofstede (Group “Migrational background”)
Petr Cap (Group “Economically and rurally excluded and disadvantaged”)
Sara Alfia Greco (Group “Subcultures, extremists and gangs”)

Until NECE conference in The Hague (14. - 16.11.13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NECE Focus Group presentation</th>
<th>?</th>
<th>At NECE conference in The Hague, Saturday, 16.11.13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map of Focus Group activities</td>
<td>Christoph Müller-Hofstede</td>
<td>Will be presented in The Hague</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next dates:

**14. – 16.11.2013:** NECE Conference in The Hague

**September 2014:**
Next Focus Group meeting.
- Speak about next steps and what has been done in the meantime
- 2 full days
- Possibly in Portugal, Leicester or Greece?

**October 2014:**
NECE Conference in Vienna
- Next Focus Group Session

2015:
Publication

8. SUMMARY

The concept of hard-to-reach learners (HTR) basically includes educationally, socially and/or economically disadvantaged people who are often ‘forgotten’ by the mainstream of citizenship education (CE) or left behind in schools or other educational facilities. Young people, especially immigrants, are particularly affected. A growing group are economically disadvantaged and NEET (not in education, employment or training). We have to be aware that any different communities are HTR and each need specific tailored strategies: at the same time, ethnic and cultural labeling is a trap which should be avoided by civic educators,

As the term of “hard-to-reach learners” emanates from and reflects the unilateral perspective of educators/CE workers, the Focus Group (FG) discussed the option of using the term “HTR” for internal communication and as a working term among professionals and “Working with the disconnected and de-privileged or vulnerable groups” as a term for external communication and perspective. There is obviously a need to combine a pragmatic and critical approach to this terminology.
First attempts were made to map the landscape of HTR work – these may be seen as work in progress which members of the Focus Group might like to pursue as one of their task teams. The FG HTR defined 3 cluster-groups within the range of HTR:

1. “Alienated milieus: subcultures, extremists, hooligans, gangs”. Being “hard-to-reach” is part of their identity. The challenge lies within offering them education consistent with human rights without judging or destroying their identity.

2. “Economically de-privileged”, e.g. unemployed, NEET, rural communities and poor elderly. They have no structures, limited social networks and are individualized, paired with the feeling of being powerless and “forgotten”. New structures need to be collaboratively developed to help them organizing themselves.

3. “People with Migrational Background", people (adults and youth) with social, cultural, demographic, economic religious and linguistic barriers to access education, training, employment and civic participation. Challenges for CE lie in the social distance between them and their host-community, in stereotypes and prejudice bias and in a lack of policy framework. Employment and CE for this group need to be enhanced and policy framework needs to be “updated” in order to increase their civic participation and foster social cohesion.

The Focus Group HTR will in the future work in the areas of research on CE with HTR, in projects concerning spaces and training for HTR and school projects, in applying for/facilitate getting funding, in lobbying CE on EU-level and in developing the Focus Group’s structure. As a next step, an online publication on HTR / CE in Europe including country reports is planned for 2015.

As a next step, an online publication on HTR / CE in Europe including country reports is planned for 2015. The next meeting FG workshop will take place in autumn 2014.