Paper for Workshop III: Competences in the Media and Information Society

Institut für Bildung und Medien der Gesellschaft für Pädagogik und Information
Dr. Elfi Bendikat (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)
Berlin, Germany

"Media and ethical European civil society"

This project aims at making a contribution to blended learning practices regarding the content and the didactics for the use of multimedia in the training of adult educational trainers on ethical European civil society.

Conceptual framework
The project starts from the idea, that cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity is a central feature of European civil society. The orientation towards the nation state has however covered up this phenomenon for a long time. Since the 1960ies, however, diversity moved into the political limelight which, as a consequence, required a change of mind. This change of political thinking was enhanced by transnational migration towards Europe, which not only was a migration of the poor but comprised highly qualified manpower as well. As a consequence one pillar of the concept of a European civil society is not homogenization but multiperspectivity and the acceptance of diversity. In an ethical sense, the civic components of multiperspectivity and diversity are tolerance, freedom, democracy, equality, social solidarity, human rights, western civilization and intercultural dialogue. In European history they repeatedly have been challenged by various forms of intolerance, i. e. xenophobia, right-wing radicalism and anti-Semitism. In view of this still current challenge to civil society the project intends to foster an active and participative EU citizenship guided by ethical responsibility towards diversity.

Activity design
The conceptualization, validity and implementation of ethical civil values are dealt with in a historical (20th century) and comparative European perspective. The ethical components are grouped under such headlines as violence and exclusion, peace and war, social solidarity and justice, citizens and civil society, man and environment, city and diversity.

Example - European Cities, civil society and diversity
As an example I would like to focus on one subject which is suited to exemplify intolerance and xenophobia on the one hand and the acceptance of diversity on the other. In European history cities are regarded as a political, social, economic and cultural „nucleus of civil society" as well as a symbol of its social and cultural historical characteristics. Due to transnational migration of people from various cultural backgrounds cities traditionally have developed into workshops of integration at economic, political, socio-cultural and spatial levels. This is particularly valid for metropoles like London, Paris, Marseille, Madrid, Berlin, Amsterdam – just to name a few. They are excellent fields of research and objects of demonstration if it comes to strategies of politico-cultural inclusion or exclusion.
One approach to exemplify the challenge and practice of ethical civil values is public space. Proceeding from the ideal of the ancient Greek agora, public space is a space of civil society, where public affairs are dealt with, where legal controversies are staged and economic transactions are realized. It is the stage for socio-political conflict and socio-cultural difference. It

is also the stage for interactions, for the expression of protest, power, legitimacy, fear, joy, community, attacks, discrimination and ethnic identity. Thus visibility here has a constituent meaning for civil society. It implies legitimate presence, the acceptance of civil society of difference, variety and self-assertion. Consequently, one is not surprised that many migrants with a different appearance have had and still have perceptions and experience of exclusion in public space.

Didactical approach - content
In order to develop multiperspectivity and tolerance as one major ethic value of civil society it is necessary to know diversity and to learn to recognise it. The next step would be to accept this diversity and to handle it.
In relation with the city one important approach would be to link up with the learners' experiences of diversity and discrimination in public space, with standards of social behavior, symbols of otherness, rituals of others and with his own civic values. Last but not least the street is the space for racialist and discriminatory expressions and actions as well as acts of cooperation and integration. This link up with everyday experiences starts reflections on the learners' side. One reflection could be that anti-discrimination laws and police intervention are not the only means to redress racism and xenophobia, that civic courage also is demanded.

Didactical approach - multimedia
The project deals with multimedia at three levels: It evaluates multimedia and eLearning products for teaching, it conceives blended learning courses and promotes multimedia competence. The evaluation comprises the contents, intention, didactics, design and operating comfort. The blended learning courses (learning which combines online and face-to-face approaches) combine content and multimedia competence: how do I use online ressources effectively, motivate and support learners, get learners to work as a group, how to build in the face-to-face component, which platforms and forums are available to support learners.
The use of multimedia as a rule intends to extend, intensify the perception and experience of the learners, to stress particular aspects and to structure the session. Related to the subject city, diversity and tolerance there are many films, videos, CD-ROMs and photos at our disposal. In relation to the subject civil society it would be important to discuss images, goals, perspectives and to integrate them into everyday actions, to show the importance of ethical values in everyday political, cultural and social relations and to make them part of your own experience.

Policy-related consequences
The blended learning courses on ethical civil society pursue four aims:
- to develop an understanding of diversity and tolerance: an interest in the other, e.g. in his experiences, values, ways of life, an understanding of one's own picture of the other and vice versa,
- to identify an ethical repertoire and to contribute to an ethical responsibility discourse.
- to teach media competence: selecting the right combination of media and face-to face-teaching, to understand the strenghts and weaknesses of each media type
- to open up avenues for transdisciplinary cooperation between scholars and practical work.

Relevant internet resources:
www.gpi-online.de
www.treffpunkt-ethik.de
www.unitedagainstracism.org
www.migration-info.de
www.mekonet.de/inhalt/a/al/al_medienkompetenz.htm

Dr. Elfi Bendikat, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany, elfi.bendikat@rz.hu-berlin.de
Institut für Bildung und Medien, Alt-Friedrichsfelde 60, Haus 14, D-10315 Berlin, Germany