

# PEACE

## Peer Education and Conflict Elimination

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### **Abstract in English:**

The "PEACE" project is designed to contribute substantial training material around the development and use of "peer education" models in schools – an approach where the project partners have considerable experience. This general model can prove useful in areas such as conflict resolution, anti-racist work, general initiatives aimed at raising achievement and is particularly suitable for involving disadvantaged and ethnic minorities pupils.

The project concentrates on "peer education" in connection with conflict resolution, with a clear emphasis on raising achievements for pupils in general and for disadvantaged pupils in particular.

The project has produced different training modules and one handbook which gives methodological analyses of the training process, which can be used by teachers or by other professionals involved in activities of education and conflict resolution.

### **Abstract (in italiano)**

Il progetto "PACE" nasce per fornire il materiale didattico necessario per l'educazione allo sviluppo e per insegnare come utilizzare modelli di "peer education" nelle scuole, ambito nel quale i partner del progetto hanno un'esperienza considerevole. Questo modello può risultare utile in settori come la risoluzione dei conflitti, attività sull'anti-razzismo, e iniziative generali che mirano a coinvolgere studenti svantaggiati e provenienti da minoranze etniche. Il progetto si concentra sulla " peer education " in relazione alla risoluzione di conflitti, con un'attenzione particolare ai ragazzi, soprattutto a quelli che provengono da situazioni difficili. Il progetto ha prodotto modelli pedagogici differenti ed un manuale che, offrendo analisi metodologiche del processo di educazione, può essere usato dagli insegnanti o da altri professionisti addetti alle attività di risoluzione dei conflitti e di formazione.

## **1. The practice**

### **1.1 Description of the project**

#### *Objectives*

The project is aimed at spreading the peer education initiatives for conflict resolution in schools:

In particular the project was meant to:

- develop decision making skills and coping mechanisms
- create awareness of situations where conflict is occurring
- enhance the assertiveness skills and confidence of those involved
- focus on conflict from the perspective of young people , rather than adults
- help participants to examine personal lifestyles and behaviours to see where changes might be necessary
- develop a common group approach towards reducing conflict in their class

#### *Activities*

The three partners concentrated on the following activities:

- producing a survey on current practices in the fields of conflict resolution and peer education.

- Collection of material and findings from conflict resolution and peer education projects.
- Analyses of the collected practices and development of theoretical and pedagogical approaches on peer education
- Proposition of prototype training activities and methods that have been tested and refined by partners, throughout courses for various professionals.
- Organisation of activities (meetings, parties, happenings) at school where parents have been involved. During these meetings the issue of conflict has been talked about, and the operators has introduced the concept of “conflict resolution”
- Production of materials and papers in order to disseminate findings from project activities to other relevant institutions and organisations.
- Organisation and implementation of a *in service training* for teachers on the themes of conflict resolution and peer education
- Selection and creation of supporting materials for the participant of the course, where wide documentation on conflict resolution has been given to attendant teachers
- Publication of materials that have been distributed during the in service training course held in Athens in March 2001
- Assessment and evaluation of the course, that included feedbacks from participants. This evaluation has been carried out in order to refine and develop course contents for a second in service training course that has should have been held in November 2001. Nonetheless, this course could not be held as the course informative brochure was not published and rules for participation of delegates were changed. As a result the number of delegates was too little to implement this course.
- Production of an in service training guide for teacher trainers.
- Finalisation and publication of a resource package for teachers using peer education as a method in the area of conflict resolution.

The three partners have been guiding teachers running projects in the areas of conflict resolution and peer education at schools in the three partner countries. In addition the three partners have organised or participated as trainers in the areas of conflict resolution and peer education at both national and international INSET courses.

#### *Results:*

The benefits achieved from this project are as follows:

- Created awareness amongst teachers, about the importance of resolving conflicts through dialogue.
- Emphasised the importance of, inclusive teaching and inclusive learning, through the method of peer education.
- Provided tools and methods to teachers, teacher trainers and school heads in conflict resolution.
- Provided tools and methods to teachers for tackling conflicts in cross - cultural dialogue and cross - cultural encounters.
- Reduced bullying and violence at schools.

The three partners have shared the workload between them. The names of the individual partners, responsible for the individual products, is written on the product.

### **1.2 Time, structure and steps of the project**

The project has been created in order to respond to the increasing level of conflict that concern the whole Danish society, in particular the Copenhagen city. The project Coordinator involved the other partner in order to create a training system for teachers

or teachers' trainers. The idea of realizing a joint training initiative has born from the awareness that a plurality of contexts and competences could enrich the proposal. Therefore the three partners (Denmark, Greece, Uk) decided to cooperate for a Project where every subject had a high level of involvement, both in the first phase of collection of information and production of survey peer education programmes and in the second phase of implementation of the training initiatives. The last phase was aimed at finalising a publication constituted by a resource pack to be distributed to teachers and trainers, in order to disseminate the results of the project.

### **1.3 Place and context**

The Danish educational system pays a relevant attention at intercultural dimension of training. The Danish Ministry of Education recommends the effort of all grade of school in the definition of intercultural programmes and curricula where intercultural approach should cross transversally all the subjects.

The Eurydice survey "Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe", Directorate-Generale for Education and Culture of the European Commission, states that Danish educational system is opened to intercultural approach, but there is a great variation in the extent to which schools' practice reflects the cross curricular intercultural dimension. At the same time the peer education remain isolated to some good and innovative practices. At the time of the Project implementation, there were no national guidelines about this kind of methodological approach to education.

In the city of Copenhagen a great level of cooperation and integration between services has come out from this analysis, as a result of a deeply-rooted tradition in conflict resolution and initiatives, that can be demonstrated by the experiences of the Danish centre for Conflict Resolution.

### **1.4 Target:**

The target is constituted by teachers and educators of 19 lower and upper secondary schools of the three participating countries (Denmark, United Kingdom, Greece). The students (11-17) can be considered as indirected beneficiaries of the activities of the Project.

### **1.5 Methodology:**

The Project is characterised by an **open and participative** training style - with participants encouraged to develop their own materials and be creative.

The Project also focuses on an **experiential** learning style - building on the valuable experiences of the participants, who bring knowledge about conflict and its effects from their own lives.

PEACE Project proposes exercises to build up **trust and respect** - challenging attitudes, values and beliefs both towards conflict and wider social issues and encouraging debate and discussion.

The training of the peer educators allows to overcome the traditional concept of training, which consider trainers/educators as mere recipients of activities and exercises. This method considers them as **active educators** - reinforcing their commitment to the project and its underlying aims.

Another methodological aspect involves the suitability of the Project to the different context, where it is applied with different approaches on the basis of the context, environment and the country or locality where the training modules are based, while keeping common/basic features.

The aims of the project were to develop an in service training (INSET) course concept where we could combine conflict resolution and peer education. We regard these two areas as essential elements in school education. In addition we have concentrated on conflict resolution in cross - cultural encounters and produced a resource pack that teachers can use in their multicultural classes. This resource pack combines the elements of conflict resolution, peer education and conflict resolution in cross - cultural dialogue.

### **1.6 Authors, Funding and Networks**

**Authors:** Copenhagen, Denmark (Leader: Uddannelses - Og Ungdomsforvaltningen Section For Bilingual Pupils); Athens, Greece (Partner: Prefecture of Voiotia), Chesham, Uk (Partner: The Ibis Trust Non-profit association)

**Funding:** the Project is financed by European Union under the Socrates Programme (Comenius 3.1)

**Networks:** the Project involved many other organisations in the project in order to maximise the impact and relevance of the work, including:

- Community Service Volunteers
- Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution
- Council for Europe
- School advisory group - teacher trainers at the School Development Department in Copenhagen
- Schools in Copenhagen, Athens, London and Birmingham
- Department of Education, University of Athens

## **2. HINTS FOR AN EVALUATION**

### **2.1. Strengths**

#### *2.1.1 The organisation's perspective*

The Project Coordinator acknowledges that the project has succeeded in dissemination of trained peer mediators in 19 different schools in The Municipality of Copenhagen. In his opinion, thanks to the project, teachers have more time for teaching while peer mediators assist pupils in solving conflicts.

The strength of the project lie sin the methodological approach of peer mediation that implies the direct involvement of students in conflict resolution process. This Project focused on the preliminary phase of this methodology, that is the training of teachers charged of the implementation of this programmes within the schools.

Another excellent point concerns the materials produced that are aimed at disseminating the results and the ideas that underpin the project. The products planned include a comprehensive package of training modules, a handbook examining and commenting on each of the process stages involved, a catalogue of case studies and a detailed and very practical "Resource Pack" for teachers to use when undertaking their own projects – including activities designed by young people themselves. In order to maximise the impact of the project, the INSET courses planned are specifically designed to "train the trainers" – advisory staff or others who subsequently can run courses in their own localities for teachers, to create a significant multiplier effect.

#### *2.1.2 Interculture map perspective*

The Project had a strong impact on local schools in Copenhagen and in other cities partner. It is not possible to evaluate the level of effectiveness of this dissemination

effort, because the impact is a long term process which can be hardly measured. The Project Coordinator did not give further details, therefore we can consider, at a superficial level that the strength of this Project underlies in the chances to adopt an education model that can be used in context with a high level of conflict, also implicit. In particular the Peer Education can be a useful instrument in multicultural schools.

Peer Education is a teaching method aimed at considering students active actors of the training process: they are involved in a very different way of thinking if compared with traditional education or training.

With Peer Education, values, contents experiences will not just transferred from adults: the young students will confront each other, they exchange point of view, they dramatise problems and find autonomously solutions, on the supervisions of expert adult trainers/educators.

The training of trainers has a physiological multiplier effect that helps the dissemination of the methods.

## **2.2.Critical points**

### *2.2.1 The organisation's perspective*

The Project coordinator stated in the interview that changing teaching staff attitudes is a long term process. Therefore the aim of giving the opportunity to peer mediators to facilitate conflict resolution amongst pupils is a result that comes out from continuous activities, which must be directed at facing conflicts, at working them out, in order to resolve them.

Therefore, it is important not to expect short term results in the level of relationship change.

### *2.2.2 Interculture map perspective*

According to the Project Coordinator, it is very difficult to change traditional education patterns. Schools can welcome a new training methods, teachers can attend a training course, but the level of implementation of this new methods is hard to be measured. The dissemination implies a change of mentality of the whole school. If this global change does not happen, the Project can offer a valid opportunity for some teachers but the traditional character of the school will not change, since just few sensitive and interested teachers will try to adopt the methods in their ordinary and daily work with pupils.

## **2.3. Conclusion: what is “exportable” in the project**

### *2.3.1 The organisation's perspective*

The Project can be proved in another context, but it is important to remind that conflicts are unavoidable; therefore a good project will face conflicts without denying them. This is a real challenge, and dynamic resolution can lead to a better understanding amongst people.

An attempt of exportation has already been experienced: the dissemination has been achieved also by materials that have realised by the Comenius 2 PAX projects, run by two of the partners and other models of good practise in the field of peer education and conflict resolution collated from all the member states.

### *2.3.2 Interculture map perspective*

**Themes:** realisation of training courses aimed at prepare teachers to develop peer education for conflict resolution programmes within the schools.

**Methodology:** since the project deal with a very delicate theme, the exportation of this experience can be realised only in educational contexts were teachers and trainers are sensitive and motivate. In fact, this kind of project envisage the implementation of activities aimed at analysing and discussing our personal behaviours. Therefore it is necessary to choose prepared and motivated teachers to be involved in the training courses.