

TOOLBOX GROUP

Group 4 – supporting international mobility

AUDIENCE

pupils from 14 to 18

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

BaFa' BaFa' is a face-to-face learning simulation. It is intended to improve participants' cultural competency by helping them understand the impact of culture on the behavior of people and organizations. Participants experience "culture shock" by traveling to and trying to interact with a culture in which the people have different values, different ways of behaving and different ways of solving problems.

- To help participants understand the idea, power and importance of culture
- To help participants learn how to value cultural differences
- To prepare individuals to go to different cultures
- To help members of a dominant culture value people from other cultures
- To reduce inhibitions in binational or international groups

TIME

1 to 2 hours for the exercise, 1 to 2 hours for the debriefing

NECESSARY MATERIALS

Two classrooms

Descriptions of two different cultures on coloured paper (makes it easier)

Nametags (half named "Alpha" in red, half named "Beta" in blue)

1 box of 100 small paperclips for Alphans

1 box of 100 large binder clips for Betans

A special wristband to be taped on the Alpha leader's wrist

STEP-BY-STEP DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

Two simulated cultures are created: an Alpha culture and a Beta culture. The teacher/facilitator briefs the participants on the general purposes of the simulation and then assigns them membership in either the Alpha or Beta culture. To each of the two cultures belongs a certain behavior, which corresponds to an implicit cultural code (for example, two antagonistic civilizations: a collective culture based on common good, solidarity, body contact), and an economic culture based on trade and profit, individualism as well formal and distant relations. Each group moves into its own area where members are taught the values, expectations and customs of their new culture, without knowing anything about the other civilization.

To know better their own culture, the following key questions may be helpful:

- How do we deal with each other?
- What makes us happy?
- Is my culture peaceful or warlike?
- Will my culture rule, observe, adapt?
- What is the goal of my culture (love, rule ...)?
- Religion of my culture: Is there an idol or a priestess who is worshipped or any other form of religious activity?
- What do people in my culture live from and can I get what I need?
- ...

In addition, behaviors and forms of expression should be considered and practiced for the following emotions and needs:

- Uncertainty, fear of strangers, frightening situations
- Rejection
- Welcome (from strangers and group members)
- Affection
- Pleasure
- Love and hate
- How to get help?
- What to do to help?
- ...

Once all the members understand and feel comfortable with their new culture, each culture sends an observer to the other. During the "observer" period, groups will roleplay the values, expectations, norms, and customs of their new culture. The observers attempt to learn as much as possible about the other culture without directly asking questions. After a xed time, each observer returns to his or her respective culture and reports on what he or she observed.

Based on the report of the observer, each group develops hypotheses about the most effective way to interact with the other culture. After the hypotheses have been formulated, the participants take turns visiting the other culture in small groups. After

each visit, the visitors report their observations to their group. The group uses the data to test and improve their hypotheses. When everyone has had a chance to visit the other culture, the simulation ends.

The participants then come together in one group to discuss and analyze their experience. If the purpose of the training is to train a person to interact or travel to a different culture, then the facts of that culture are presented as part of the discussion. If the focus is on diversity, then the discussion and analysis focuses on methods for creating a school culture that allows everyone to feel safe, feel included, be productive, and do their best work. The definition of a culturally competent person then, not only includes the ability to adapt or interact with people who are different, it means being able to design and sustain a work culture that includes everyone and allows each person to do their best work.

It is very important that the groups, together with the teacher(s), are in a position to reflect and answer the following questions:

- Feelings when you were preparing to take on the role of a new culture?
- Feelings as suddenly strangers came into your 'home'?
- Feelings as you visit a culture whose language, gestures and behaviors are unfamiliar?
- Did the other culture react the way you expected them to? Why (not)?
- How did you try to adapt?
- Can you try to explain the culture of the other group?
- Can you explain your own culture?
- What does this game remind you of?

RECOMMENDATIONS / TIPS

The groups should restrict themselves to simple rules, since the discussion is difficult enough.

The teacher should choose neutral civilizations to take the drama out of the dialogue and gain distance from one's own culture.

REFERENCES

<http://www.dija.de/toolbox-interkulturelles-lernen/methodenbox-interkulturell>

Culture descriptions adapted by Jennifer Robertson, Valencia College, 2014:
<http://site.valenciacollege.edu/inz/toolkits/Interdisciplinary/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

APPENDICES

[The Alpha Culture – description](#)

The Beta Culture – description