

Shaking the Habitual Newsletter from meetings in Iceland, October 7th-9th, 2015

The first meetings for the Erasmus+ project Shaking the Habitual were held in Iceland from the 7th-9th of October. The theme of the meeting was “An Introduction to Gender Issues” which was reflected in presentations during the meetings. Another major theme was an introduction to the project itself and Erasmus+, since this was the first meeting of the project. Áki and Svandís were the hosts on behalf of Hjallastefnan (Hjalli Model). A schedule was sent to participants along with some practical information before the meetings. The group met at the Hjallastefnan main offices as well as at Hjalli preschool, which is the participating preschool from Hjallastefnan in the project.

Present at the meetings: Crister Carlsson (Härryda), Susanne Palm (Härryda), Annika Gry (Härryda), Maria Stendahl (Härryda), Cristian Fabbi (Guastalla), Simon Armini (Gustalla), Kristian Wallin (Nicolaigården/Egalia), Anders Szpigler (Nicolaigården/Egalia), Aki Arnason and Svandís Anna Sigurðardóttir (Hjallastefnan) who wrote the newsletter.

Wednesday, 7th of October

We met at Hjallastefnan main offices, with Svandís and Áki (the hosts) greeting guests. Our first meeting started a little late as people were finding their way around the Reykjavík area. We enjoyed coffee together and started the meeting by introducing ourselves. After the introductions Svandís went through the schedule of the meetings which was discussed with participants. Crister then went through some slides about the project and the group discussed practicalities. The group decided that each host would be responsible for writing and posting the meeting newsletter on eTwinning, they would also be responsible for printing and getting attendance signatures at the meetings and taking a group photo. Prior to the meeting the group had agreed that each participant would be responsible for their own travel and accommodation. The group discussed recordings, both audio and video and decided that if there were recordings they could be uploaded on a closed section of the eTwinning website, only for project participants to use.



As was written in the application, each participating organisation is to host two meetings during the project and pick a theme for those meetings. This was discussed by the group along with the importance and condition that each participating organisation send a representative to each meeting, which must be present for the duration of the meeting.

Dissemination to our own organisation after each meeting was discussed, along with informing parents and caregivers. However it was also discussed that each organisation should find their own way to implement project goals and assignments, in a way which is fitting for the organisation. The group discussed focus groups in each school along with university contacts, which as being looked into by Guastalla and Stockholm.

Cristian and Simon from Italy then informed the group of the situation in Italy, and how they perceived it as bloody, with gender and equality being very much contested and debated and conservative right winged groups very much against any progress in the field.

After a coffee break Svandís held a presentation of gender and equality at Hjallastefnan, first outlining the Icelandic context and gender system, and then explaining how the Hjalli Model deals with and works towards gender equality. This sparked a good conversation about gender and equality and the group had many questions about the Hjalli Model. The group then had lunch together.



After lunch discussions about practicalities continued, looking into Erasmus+ and the rules and regulations surrounding the project. The budget was discussed along with registration of all costs into Mobility Tools (which is not yet up and running).

Some participants discussed involving politicians in the meetings, however it was not thought to suit everyone. Also the length of the meetings was discussed, with participants from Hjallastefnan asking whether two days of meetings would be enough, since four meetings per school year means a lot of time away from work (and therefore the children), when there are three days of meetings and at least one day of travel on top of that. Other participants were happy to keep the three day plan, but the group decided to revisit the discussion again later, once more meetings had been held.



Participants from Italy discussed the possibility of publishing material from the project, for e.g. in the form of a book. They then presented the logo they had worked on and the ideas and thinking behind it. The group agreed to use the logo for the project, however wanting to wait until Kristian and Anders from Nicolaigården/Egalia arrived before making an absolute decision (they later agreed on using the logo). Simon agreed to make a letterhead with the project logo and logos from each organisation, along with the Erasmus+ logo, which could be used in documents and all newsletters from the group.

Svandís then showed the group a letter she had written and planned to send to parents and caregivers announcing and informing them of the project. The group asked her to post it on eTwinning for them to use as an example. The group then discussed possible themes for meetings which was noted in the presentation from Crister and was to be posted on eTwinning.

The group discussed again the different situation of the organisations and their contexts, along with different ways of working on gender and equality and agreed that this must be taken into consideration when working on projects. So that each organisation would implement assignments and aspects of the project to best suit and meet their needs. The participants from Italy for e.g. told the group that for them it would be important to observe and reflect, so that they would be very aware and informed when starting their gender work with the children.

Meeting adjourned 16.00.

Thursday, 8th of October

Today's meetings were held at Hjalli, the preschool which will participate in the project on behalf of Hjallastefnan. The day started with a presentation from Þórdís Þórðardóttir, a lecturer from the School of Education at the University of Iceland.

Þórdís presented her findings from research which she conducted in 2012 in which she asked first year students at the School of Education to write down their first memory connected to their own gender. The results were alarming, yet not so shocking. Most memories showed that boys were taught to avoid things that were thought of as "girly", and girls were banned from things that were thought of as "boyish". As Þórdís herself said, homophobia seems to be a driving force and underlying the way we police gender. Ideas and actions connected to boys were seen as more important than those connected to girls, and in some cases students could not even recall what the girls had been doing as children (regardless of their own gender), which Þórdís said pointed to how unimportant and unexciting the world of girls and femininity is viewed in our society.

Þórdís cited a lot of articles and books: Connell (2014), Martin and Ruble (2004), Robinson and Diaz (2006), Paechter (2007), Connolly (2006).



After her presentation the group asked questions and had fruitful discussions. Þórdís said that if she were in charge and could work on gender issues in a preschool she would always start with the staff, educating them and giving them tools (vocabulary) to tackle the gender system. When asked about how to approach parents in a society where gender equality is not widely viewed as a positive thing, Þórdís suggested finding feminist allies amongst the parents, and starting to work on equality issues with them.



Þórdís stayed until lunch, which is when Kristian and Anders from Nicolaigården arrived. The group had lunch at Hjalli preschool.

After lunch Svandís and Áki introduced the Hjalli Model, going through the basic principles and gender curriculum. After the presentation and discussions, Áki gave the group a tour of the preschool. The group got to see how the Hjalli Model works, what the inner and outer environment is like, and the daily, weekly and annual routines of the preschool. Participants asked many questions and discussions about the Hjalli Model continued over the coffee break (after the tour).

Children's literature was discussed in detail and different ideas from participants' organisations were compared. Children's literature and media became a topic of interest and the group decided to continue with the discussions throughout the project. Meeting adjourned 16.45.

In the evening the group met up again at the restaurant Matur og Drykkur, downtown Reykjavík. We enjoyed a lovely meal together and of course discussed certain things connected to the project, but also got to know each other better.

Friday, 9th of October.

Our Friday meeting was again held at the Hjallastefnan main offices. Unfortunately Anders had to leave early and could not stay for the day's meetings. The group discussed the

possible dates for the next meeting in Stockholm. The first week of February 2016 seemed to suit everyone.

An idea of having lectures and presentations during the meetings after work hours was discussed. This was so that staff members of the organisations could also attend and gain valuable information. The group agreed to this.

Participation and involvement of parents and caregivers was discussed. Svandís informed the group that there would be a staff meeting at Hjalli preschool in the coming week, which would be followed by a letter to parents about informing them of the project. The idea was to also have a presentation about gender and equality in the second year of the project.

The group then went through a document with the main goals and assignments of the project, which was taken directly from the application. The group discussed certain terms and ideas about the project to ensure that everyone had a similar understanding of what was expected. Certain assignments and goals did not seem to suit each participant. Again the group discussed how each organisation should implement things according to their own context. The group then went through a checklist from Svandís (one of the assignments of the project) which she had prepared for the staff at Hjalli preschool.

Following that, the group discussed literature for children, guidelines for managers, checklists for hiring interviews and employee interviews and questionnaires for staff; which are all things that are listed as assignments and goals in the project. The group then discussed educating their own staff group, which also is part of the project. A draft questionnaire prepared by Svandís was then presented and discussed. Some notes about the questionnaire were made, but it was decided that each organisation would use it as it suited them (change it according to their own context). Annika pointed out that it would be interesting to have some questions in common between each organisation so that differences could be seen, however this was both agreed on and debated since the organisations are different. Italy for e.g. did not foresee using a questionnaire. It was discussed that this was listed as a goal of the project, and that some form of evaluation must be done both in the beginning, middle and end of the project, both for the group to see if progress was made, but also to meet our own goals which were stated in the application.



The group then discussed the possible theme of the next meeting, with children's literature being of much interest.

After lunch the group finalised details for the next meeting and the next steps. The next hosts will be Nicolaigården in Stockholm and the working theme for the meeting is Children's culture and literature in play, reading and drama from a gender perspective. The group discussed meeting in the beginning of February 2016, however dates will be finalised within two weeks of the meetings in Iceland, once Kristian and Anders from Nicolaigården have looked things over with their coworkers.

Meeting adjourned 13.30.





Erasmus+



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