

Narrative work for integration

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Fifty pupils in upper secondary school, a mixed group of 25 Norwegian drama pupils and 25 from the introduction class for immigrants, were working together for several hours in a drama workshop. After they, in pairs, were sharing a story about a true friend, the drama teacher asked if somebody wanted to share their story in plenum. One of the Norwegian pupil encouraged his partner to share, and the refugee stood up in front of everyone and started:

I had a true friend, and we shared everything. We were together day and night for two years, until the police came and picked him up in the middle of the night one year ago. They were going to send him back to the Afghanistan. Since that time, I have not heard anything from him...

There came a gasp from the other pupils.

In Norway, newcomers who do not have proper skills in Norwegian language and society, must attend own classes for newcomers to learn Norwegian language and about the Norwegian society. The schools do not have good tools to ensure a good transition from the classes for newcomers to the ordinary classes, and both teachers and students are telling about difficulties with the integration process.

The aim of this study is to investigate how narrative work can be a tool for integration between pupils in classes for newcomers and for pupils in ordinary classes.

The context – the Norwegian case

In Norway, as in many parts of Europe, many refugees came to us during 2015-2016. According to statistics of Norway, most of the refugees who came in that period are from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan, 60 % are male and 2/3 are under 30 years old (SSB, 2017). More refugees than ever before are single minor refugees, mostly young male from Afghanistan (50%), Syria and Eritrea (SSB, 2017).

To attend upper secondary school in regular classes, you must prove that you have completed a 10-year elementary school or equivalent. Many of the newcomers do not have this prior learning, therefore many primary and upper secondary schools offers an introduction class for those students.

We do have challenges with integrations of youngsters who are newcomers in upper secondary school. The newcomers experience that it is difficult to relate to the majority youth, who attend ordinary classes. Students from the introduction classes do not know how to make contact with the majority students, and they experience a lack of common interest between themselves and the majority youth. It is also a challenge with interactions between students from the introduction classes and the ordinary classes. The minority youth do not interact with the majority either at school or in their spare time (Hägg-Ottesten, 2017).

Anna S. Songe-Møller og Karin K. Bjerkestrand K.K (2016) have worked with students and immigrants over several years. Their focus is neglected narratives, and they use forum theatre as a working method. They use forum theatre as a part of the performance shown for a group of hundred to two hundred participants.

In this study, we want to investigate if **storytelling** as a methodology can bring students from introduction classes and ordinary classes closer together. We want to gain knowledge about storytelling as a methodology for integration. This are big questions, and in this paper, we want to focus on our first explorative meeting with the youth. What did we do, and how did it worked. Our research question for this paper is:

How can storytelling as narrative work bee a tool for integration between students from introduction classes and ordinary classes at upper secondary school?

Narrative work for integration

Two researchers, one drama pedagogue and one pedagogue, attended an upper secondary school in western Norway and worked with story-telling and forum theatre as methodology. We worked with 25 pupils from the ordinary class and 25 pupils from the introduction class. Together with us, 8 students from Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL) attended the workshop as assistants to the facilitator (drama-pedagogue). The pupils from upper secondary school were about 16 – 17 years old. The pupils from the ordinary class are mostly Norwegian-born students with Norwegian-born parents. Most of the pupils in introduction class has lived in Norway for 1-2 two years. They are mostly from Afghanistan and Syria, and some of them are from Eritrea and Somalia. There were only three girls in the introduction class. In the ordinary class, 8 of the pupils were boys. Most of the boys in the introduction class live here alone without their parents. Some of them do not have parents alive or now if the parents still live.

We wanted to create room for interaction between pupils who do not share common life stories, common educational progress and common languages. We worked with them for two days together with their teachers, before we invited the pupils to our university college to performance for a group of Nordic researchers in a network for participatory theatre in public services (NOS-HS). They worked with forum theatre together with researchers and teacher students.

Storytelling as methodology

Storytelling have for thousands of years, been a way to communicate with each other. All communities have their own stories, growing out of the landscape, the history or the society. In many societies, personal stories has been something private, something you share with your closest family. For the last 10 years, there has been more focus on how you can us personal narratives in different areas as in mental work, in schools, in the society or in applied theatre.

Our interest in personal stories grows out of our earlier research with intercultural groups Lyngstad (2016). Some of the findings here was that they felt lonely in our society, but when they were listening to stories from other immigrants they were mirroring them self in their stories, and experienced a community with them.

Marianne Horsdal (1999) talks about how young people identities are in a mowing position and that their identities therefor grows in collaboration with others. Therefor it is very

important that young people are trained to tell their own stories, and listen to others stories. The room that is between the one who tells and the one who are listening creates new stories.

There are several types of stories to tell in a storytelling workshop. Through storytelling, they can create new meeting points (Lyngstad 2016). Heidi Dahlsveens (2014) findings from here work with immigrants is that the community promises memories.

When working with storytelling it is important to make a professional development. In the beginning of a storytelling workshop, it is necessary to create safety within the group (Lyngstad 2016, 2017). This is a decisive factor for making equality in a dialog (Solbue 2016).

Theoretical background

The core theory for our work is intercultural education and intersubjectivity. *Inter* and *culture* means mutual dependence and recognition of values and symbolic representations in ways of understanding the world (Abdallah-Pretecille, 2006). The term intercultural includes the range of interactions that occur in cultures, and between cultures, and which also change in time and space (Rey-von Allmen, 2011). The interactions between members and that the members understand other people is central.

To understand more of intercultural education, Portera (2014) links the quality of the dialogue to intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is a type of competence that enables diversity in a way that enriches the individual and society as a whole. A society where identity and culture are understood as dynamic processes that are in constant change, and no longer understood as rigid structures. By understanding the potential of intercultural competence, you do not understand participating in a multicultural society as a risk factor. Diversity, diversity, immigration and life in a complex and multicultural society can on the contrary provide opportunities for enrichment and growth (Solbue & Helleve, 2016).

Intercultural competence is a set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that make it possible to master relationships with people who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Portera (2014) claims that we have different levels of intercultural competence influenced by various factors. These factors are that your basic needs are met, your overall life quality, intelligence, attitudes, knowledge and skills. Thus, one can understand intercultural competence as a dynamic competence that is constantly moving from the various factors that influence and affect the level of competence. An important lesson here is that this competence is not static. Intercultural competence is constantly moving and changing, based on the context in which you are (Solbue & Helleve, 2016).

Intersubjectivity is based on confidence and mutual respect in a temporary shared world (Rommetveit, 1974). The main assumptions are the ability to take others' perspectives (Linell, 2008). In this temporary shared world of understanding, the different voices give an opportunity to learn from different opinions, and it gives a possibility for development meaning and new knowledge (Rommetveit, 2008).

In our theatre work, inspired by Augusto Boal (1995), the main course is to put a focus on a non-verbal communication process. Since the participants are using their body language in this non-verbal working process, the participants do not have the language barriers between

them in the communication. Through creative processes with improvisation and tableaux, the delegates are given different possibilities to impress feelings through their bodies (Songe-Møller & Bjerkestrand, 2016).

“An important part of freedom is being able to express its distinctive character, its history, its truth. Many people have been denied this freedom. They live in the “culture of silence”. Expressing its truth is to overcome powerlessness and restore one’s life.” (Nordrehaug, 1999:7) (The authors' translation).

Explorative research

We call our research explorative, that means where we as researchers develop strategies for research not determined from the start of the study, but changes beyond the research process (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Methods used in the research are as follows:

Participating observer	Drama-pedagogue acting as a facilitator and observer
Observer	Pedagogue observing
Log	Drama-pedagogue and pedagogue writing their reflections after every day
Film	Pedagogue filming some of the actions
Focus-group interview	8 students from University interviewed by the pedagogue

Storytelling as methodology

Before the workshop, the facilitator (drama-pedagogue) had worked out a plan for the workshop. During the workshop, she has the knowledge to improvise the plan to fit the group. Methods used in the workshop are as follows:

Day one	
Working in 5 groups with warming up games	hi, ha, ho and zip, zap, boing
Collect a nickname for their group	What do they have in common?
Made a huge tableau in their group	symbolise what they have in common - Weather - Kebab - Egg - Chips
Role-on-the wall. This is a drama method where they collect thoughts of young people through creative work.	describe youth in Bergen today
Different storytelling exercises	A place you liked to play A travel you remember The story about your name A friend I like

Day two	Working with Boals different techniques
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Mirror practise with different leaders	in pairs (A and B). A is leading. B is leading, both are leading
Mirroring in lines	one in the front were leading the line
Making tableaus out of different words 1	democracy, integration, freedom, equality
Performance	The facilitator were making a little performance with the whole group, with putting different scenes from these two days together
	Practise the performance with an intercultural music

Day three (one week later)
We started with a reviewing and repeating the performance. Some new pupils were entering the group
The performance opened a Nordic seminar of researcher

Preliminary findings – focus on storytelling as methodology

The importance of having games and exercises to start the working process

- Focus on interactions, not skills in subjects
- We need a facilitator to lead the process
- Flexibility – we have to meet the pupils and work out from their focus
- Start with non-verbal communication. Verbal communication makes distances
- Let the pupils work together in creative processes.
- Create groups where the pupils don't know each other
- Choose exercises that is new for both groups
- Remember to encouraging the immigrants to lead some of the work
- Use music that combines different cultures
- Make a performance out of the material they make during the workshop
- the importance of playing for an external audience

Preliminary findings – focus on integration

After analysing the observations, reflection logs, videos and the interview, we have some preliminary findings about story telling as narrative tool for integration.

Despite very different childhood, they share many common experiences and stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Animals at home could be a dog, cat or a goat - They have many siblings; in Syria and Afghanistan, they often have 6-7 siblings with the same parents. In Norway, many of the pupils have divorced parents who have kids with new partners.
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Stories about very different backgrounds and experiences where told	- tell us about a friend or a relative that means a lot to you. The friend who was taken away by the police from the refugee camp and send back to Afghanistan. They lived together in a room, both single minority refugees. Now he has lost his best friend. Telling this in the audience –
New friendships are linked	
Curious about each other	

Discussion

In this intercultural workshop, we wanted to investigate storytelling as methodology for integration between groups of pupils who did not know each other before they met in the workshop. The background of the pupils are very diverse, half of the group have lived in Norway their whole life, and the other half had flight from their homes in Afghanistan, Syria and Eritrea.

During the workshop, observations shows the changes in the group of pupils. In the beginning, we could observe the insecurity among many of the pupils, especially pupils from the introduction class. Most of the pupils from the ordinary class took the responsibility when meeting the refugees, helped them with the language difficulties, gave them support and made the refugees trust them. According to Portera (2014), we can understand those differences in responsibilities as different levels of intercultural competences.

In the workshop with this intercultural group, the participants are lead into different interactions where everyone's complex background and story make a very interesting scene of intersubjectivity. By using non-verbal communication in different tasks, the youth learned to understand each other in the communication. It is clear that story telling as a methodology, can develop and strengthened the pupil's intercultural competences. All the tasks had a core value of challenging the pupils to take another person's view. They also gave the students the opportunity to learn the others stories.

For us, it seems clear that the role of the facilitator is very important. She has to be impulsive, to be sensitive to the group of participants and their limits. Her intercultural competences must be on a high level, and she must be able to lead the group on a safe travel balancing on a line. Working with personal stories among youth, and especially refugees, is challenging, and you always work with the risk of coming to close to one's personal story that may be a traumatic experience.

Storytelling as methodology for integration is based on creating a confident and mutual respect where the participants share their stories in a temporary shared world. Something happened in the room those days. Burned into our memories are the eyes of some of the refugee boys. The first day we met them, their eyes where so unsecure seeking for safety. The last day their eyes where filled with laughter and joy, telling us this where their best days at school this year.

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