

**Ben Bachmair 2014**

**Recognizing family story and leisure time activities in a grammar school: awareness path**

At this point of argumentation all children or young people are at-risk learners not only low achievers or Neets. In the irreversible trend of de-limitation (see below) school meets extremely different learners' personalities. The following example of a British Grammar School shows that the family stories are rather diverse but excluded from learning. A half day workshop within a lesson about war and peace should enhance family story and leisure time activities as part of the students' life and should lead to a communicative recognition in the form of become aware.

Within lessons on war and peace which was based on an anti-war film and students' video production the school chaplain as facilitator of the half day workshop organized an *awareness path*. Aim of this *awareness path* was to integrate the students life, experiences and resources outside of the school into their video production. The "awareness path" started with a fine-art-performances at the local war memorial on the churchyard. The second station of the *awareness path* was a coffee shop with informal discussion about the fine-art performance and the third one in a theatre lounge with the presentation of what the students had prepared for the performance but not shown. It ended in school with writing a very short poem, a cinquain. At the beginning of the *awareness path* at the local war memorial just the facilitators nit the students presented their prepared material, but students approached and came in discussion with the school pastor. It was a form of recognizing the teachers endeavours. The next step of recognition used the informal discussion in a coffee shop about what has happened. The participants learned from each other and their referential fame to evaluate what had happened. Afterwards students were ready to display their view on war and peace. For their expressing their views they used their cultural resources by displaying and explaining their prefabricated media. Students used their personal mobile devices but also a photo on paper or written text on paper. These contributions opened a wide field of war and peace-related context from family to sports, entertainment and poetry. They also showed the wide range of expertise of the students.

Extract from the report<sup>i</sup>:

In the lounge of the Oval Theatre, further discussions took place of the already raised issues and presentation of what students have prepared for the live art performance

On the way from St. Mark's churchyard and war memorial, via the coffee shop to school, a local theatre is situated. In its lounge with sofas and armchairs the group sat around a table. In the background a rehearsal ran. On this third site of the morning, the group starts with a general discussion, among others, about conscientious objectors. Facilitators also contributed to this discussion as well as students. The positive and informal climate of the coffee shop supports the discussion. Everybody's contribution is appreciated and widely acknowledged.

One strand of the discussion is on football and war.

The main issue of this third morning session and site is the students' contribution to the live art performance. Students display, explain and discuss their media material, which they have prepared but did not show in the live art performance in the churchyard.

*Students' expression of their expertise and widening the context of war issues to include sports, family history, poetic texts and entertainment*

One might assume that students needed the churchyard and the coffee shop as a

kind of warming-up to rely on their own media material. In the theatre lounge the situation is prepared to introduce their personal media expertise. Probably this expertise is rather far away from the school's mainstream concepts of war and belongs to contexts which usually don't match school e.g. family history, app for using the mobile phone as gun, gun sports, etc.

#### *Family history and Algerian liberation war*

Seymour presents a printed photo of his grandfather who fought and was pursued in the Algerian liberation war. Seymour is definitely an expert in his family story but also in the history of the Algeria history during the time of his grandfather, e.g. involvement of Algerians as French combatants in Germany in World War 2. With his family photos, Seymour opened the context of family history and to an unusually unknown war.

#### *Poetic text*

Darrin reads a possibly self-produced text from the display of his Smartphone and explains it. He presents his poetic expertise and refers to one of the objectives of the project. At the end of the morning, back in school each of the students composes his cinquain, a poem which consists of 5 lines.

#### *Franklyn' poem and the discussion about grace*

With the mobile in his hand Franklyn speaks about his poem which opens a discussion to which the chaplain contributes a longer theological explanation among others about grace. Grace is the central issue of the religious strand of the project. In this context, one of the facilitators asks the chaplain to explain grace as the leading religious input to the event. The chaplain focuses his explanation with the gesture of forming a cross with his hands.

*Tomas's contribution is a well formed poetic text accompanied by figures which he illustrated in his exercise book*

#### *Neal's photos / video of a gun sport site*

Neal show his contribution, photos or videos of gun sport, which he discusses with the group



Figure : Neal talks about gun sport. He recorded an example on his mobile device.

#### *The gunner app on the Smartphone: expertise and context of entertainment*

Students were deliberately invited to bring war-related material from entertainment to the live art event. It should or could be media material which they use themselves. Just at the end of third session outside of school Tomas introduced the gunner app to

a baffled and laughing group. The app transforms the mobile into a hand gun. Two other students, who had the same app on their mobiles, displayed themselves as gunners at the entrance to the school. This leads to a short discussion of whether this app can be used inside school.

### ***Awareness path (grammar school)***

On the *awareness path* in the grammar school project students and teachers wander around in their school neighbourhood, from war memorial via coffee shop and theater lounge to school. These local sites are also contexts of typical conversational forms. e.g. the coffee shop invites for associative discussion about what happened during the fine art performance at the war memorial, which would not taken for granted inside of the school building. Just on the third site and the round table situation in the theatre lounge students were open to display their personal contexts to which or in which they attach their reflection about war. The round table presentation and discussion combines these individual contexts to a disperse but shortly common context. It contains, better, it consists of the migrant family history with the narration about the Algerian liberation war, further with poetic texts, which links to the aim of the lesson. But the modality of the links: poem on smartphone display and in exercise book, is fully in line (exercise book) or in opposition (smartphone) to school. A third poem relates to the religious orientation of the performance and addresses the school pastor. A video on the smartphone about gun sport brings in the array of sport and leisure time. The lively, concrete presentation of a gunner app with a smartphone adds to leisure time and gun sport elements of youth culture and digital fun. The variety of contexts as individual frame for considering war is now objectified and can be addressed by teacher and students. An awareness about the variety of frames is arising.

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<sup>i</sup> Ben Bachmair September (2014). Awareness path from war memorial to school. Project: Re-interpretation of war and peace: a personal learning journey using mobile devices. Report on the Third Project Session, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2014: "Language and Media Warstorm" at Archbishop Tenison's school, KS 5, Project "We Went to War"