

Brief guidelines for integration and application of the "CULPEER" approach in schools



C U L P E E R

Gefördert durch



Erasmus+
Schulbildung

- The problem of ***social exclusion on the school level is quite acute and important for all EU member states***, especially in the big cities and urban centres.
- More and more young students ***see no perspectives*** in terms of personal, professional development or social inclusion and confront barriers within their environment.

- Many of the young people facing exclusion risks do not find access to the educational systems, either by formal or informal channels.
- The majority of the classical pedagogical approaches fail to reach this group and make a difference for their lives and their future – social, cultural, professional.



Illustration by: C R Sasikumar, source:
<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/defined-by-exclusion/>

- The cultural and artistic, rather than purely cognitive, approach, in combination with meetings with cultural groups for peer learning, creates an ***easier access to solutions to social and integration problems*** by means of ***concrete experiences*** and ***socio-cultural exchanges*** with other young people concerned.

- The combination of cultural approaches and peer-to-peer learning methods opens up new possibilities for targeting social integration problems both on a political and decision-making level, as well as on a basic, ground level by initiating and demonstrating the effects of a socio-cultural dialogue among participants who have the greatest chance to influence each other via music, artistic and drama projects.

Benefits of peer learning

- Peer learning requires students to work together as a team, to plan, to create a common learning community, which relies on them and in which they have a stake.
- This ultimately leads to the development of collaboration skills.

Benefits of peer learning

- Leaving the authority of the teacher in the background (not leading the process or setting the objectives) increases possibilities for students to engage in reflection and exploration of ideas.

Benefits of peer learning

- Students gain more practice in communicating in the subject area, because they are able to articulate their understanding and receive feedback from peers as well as learn from experiencing different roles and viewpoints.

Benefits of peer learning

- Peer learning is about a group of students taking collective responsibility for identifying learning needs and planning how to address those.
- This is a crucial learn-how-to-learn skill and at the same time a practical experience of the interaction.

Benefits - why is cultural peer learning necessary?

- The cultural peer learning adds extra flexibility and value to other peer learning approaches and is particularly beneficial for disadvantaged learners by facilitating a low-level-entrance to the learning processes for them.
- It also enriches the students' emotional intelligence for an improved understanding of the cultural background of their peers and thus – an improved understanding of the grounds and motivations for their actions.



A capoeira workshop led by a Brazilian group at a BG school

1. Reasons for exclusion and groups facing exclusion in the partner countries

- Teachers must always be alert in order to manage to identify in a timely manner the signs of a child being pushed away or isolated. Positive indications about this are:
 - *hardships in learning the school material*
 - *low self-assessment*
 - *nasty or cheeky behavior*
 - *absence from school*
 - *family problems*
 - *communication problems or conflicts with teachers and fellow-students*

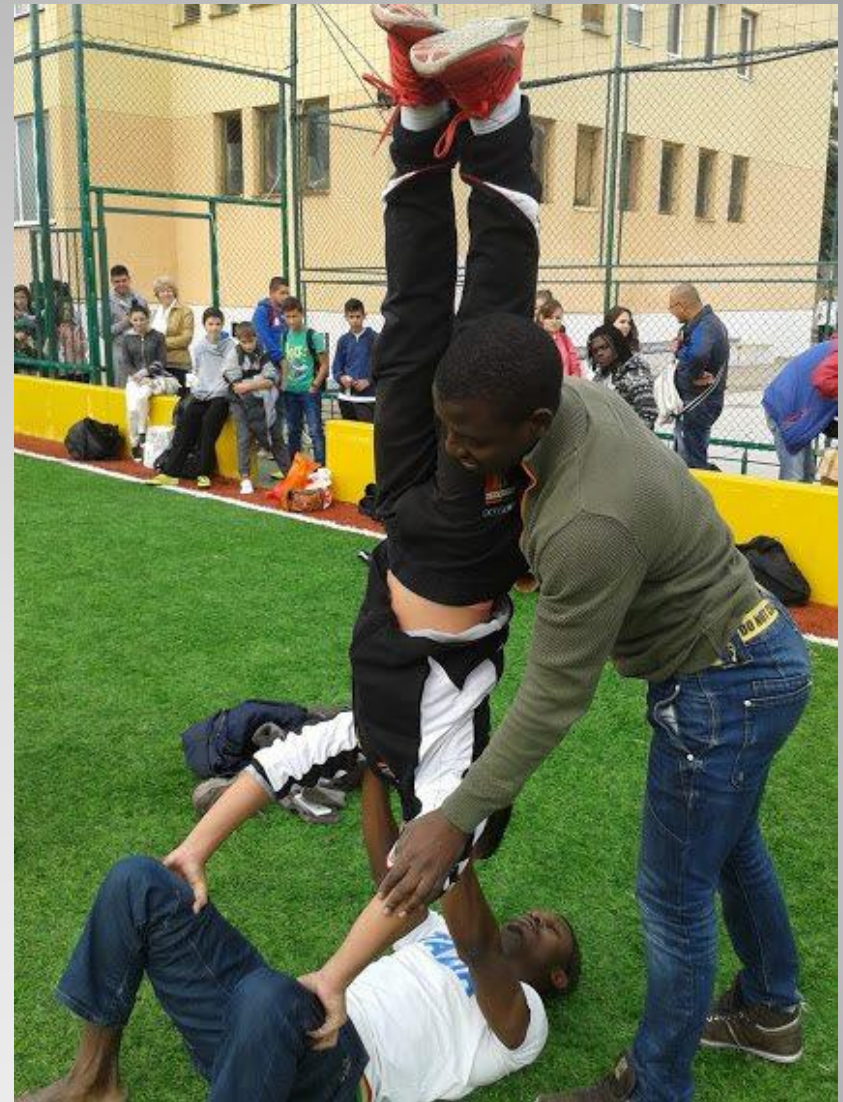
- **Economic reasons and unemployment:** low income and living standard as well as poverty place a great number of children in conditions leading to an increased risk of early school leaving.
- **Social reasons:** related to parental lack of interest, arguments, conflicts, tension and crises in the family, negative influence by the home environment, functional illiteracy or low education of the parents, single parent families, children raised by grandparents, children and students at risk of antisocial or abusive behavior, which is against the law, home violence, disregard of the children's right to choice, imposing harsh punishments.
- **Educational reasons:** hardships in comprehension of the educational content, weaknesses in the methodology of teaching and the organization of the educational process.
- **Ethno-cultural reasons:** the ethno-cultural variety in the contemporary EU educational system manifests itself in the specific ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic dimensions.

Various problematic aspects in the process of inclusion could find a solution thanks to the use of peer learning, as is explored by **UNICEF** in the section “**Why use peer educators?**”:

“Qualitative evaluations of school-based peer education have shown that:

- Young people appreciate and are influenced in positive ways by a peer-led intervention if it is well-designed and properly supervised;
- Serving as a peer educator provides a challenging, rewarding opportunity to young people to develop their leadership skills, gain the respect of their peers and improve their own knowledge base and skills. Peer educators often change their own behaviour after becoming a peer educator;

- It can foster fulfilling relationships between teachers and students;
- Peer educators can provide a valuable link to health services;
- Peer educators and adult-led education can (..) complement each other."



How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

1. Involvement of institutions experienced with working with children and young people at risk of exclusion

Change processes towards inclusion often begin on a small scale and involve overcoming obstacles such as “existing attitudes and values, lack of understanding, lack of necessary skills, limited resources and inappropriate organization”.

Schools and NGOs with no CPL experiences, should not discourage themselves. They should simply **involve in the process an experienced agency**. It is really important that the persons in charge of the target groups are able to assess and select the composition of the cultural groups for peer learning that will be interacting in an appropriate way.

Appropriate rooms and equipment (if necessary) should be available for the activities, as well as alternative settings - the premises of youth centers, NGOs, etc.

Very helpful can also be potential spaces for outdoor activities.

How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

2 Choosing the topic of CPLA

- The topic of the cultural peer learning experience should be selected very carefully - **different issues should be addressed by different kinds of artistic activities**. For example, a rap group usually addresses problems and topics that are different from those, which are targeted by a theater group.
- For the composition of the target groups, it is important to consider criteria such as the gender, age, type of background, school and grade level - **mixed target groups can promote discussions and experiences but can also block activities**. Large differences in the interests, both in terms of artistic preferences (kind of music, dance form, drama, etc.), and in terms of issues targeted, could appear.

- The **teaching rhythm** in the different schools and grades should also be taken into consideration and be carefully coordinated over the period of the CPLA.



How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

3 Gender considerations

- An important result of practical experiences is that a gender-mixed target group can work successfully under specific conditions and fail under other conditions. There is no uniform formula. Although in some cases the participants could promote the direct examination of their own gender role, in other cases they could also block activities and exchange, especially if children and youth in the (pre-)adolescent phase are involved. Sometimes in cases of practicing or even presenting a piece of music, dance or theater, the shyness towards the opposite sex could be so great that any development is hindered and even presentation events may be refused.

How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

4 Artistic and educational management

- The responsible facilitators, who are involved in facilitating the CPLA should possess both artistic skills, as well as pedagogical and motivational competences, in order to be able to inspire children and young people from often disadvantaged social backgrounds to take part in the activities. In addition, they should have the ability to develop relationships of trust with children and young people facing exclusion, and if possible have experience in collaborating with them. The specific knowledge of their behaviour, attitudes and expectations is an important basis for appropriate design and implementation of workshops and courses.

How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

5 Design of services and activities

- There are many possibilities - from one-off workshops of one or more days, through on-going activities during a school-term or longer, to regular weekly or monthly fixed days and time, weekend and vacation courses, etc.
- One-time and short-term offers should mainly be used to provide incentive, making sense sometimes as an intervention tool for expansion and continuity with steady project cultural peer learning groups. In order for the concept to be implemented in a sustainable manner and with long-term positive effects on the participants, it is recommended that it covers a period of half a school-year with a rather fixed weekly schedule. The regularity and fixed structure usually makes it easier for children and young adolescents to get used to it and engage in the activities and setting, after an introductory period.

- A special appeal lies in the inclusion in the courses of final and interim public presentation events. There is usually a kind of shyness and fear of public presentations, but with increasing security in the artistic activities during the course, these become normal and the challenge and interest in the presentation of the newly-acquired skills become central.
- In the next steps the conceptual details (target groups by age, gender, migration background, school type and grade level, artistic direction, type of event, addressing the target groups) between the involved schools and the artistic and educational director should be clarified. All these questions should be answered at least four weeks before the end of the school year.
- With the start of the actual project, the enrolment should take place through direct contact with the target group. This is recommended to be implemented through posters, announcements and presentations. The direct targeting of children and young people, who are in danger of exclusion makes sense, when an artistic interest is assumed or even known by the teachers and educators. A little later, well before the next school holidays (especially in the season of early autumn holidays) the initial implementation should start.



How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

6 Planning and time horizon

- A long-term and detailed planning is a key prerequisite for the success of such activities. For a more permanent type of event during a whole school year, the planning of all essential details (funding, design details, partner schools, and target groups) should be clarified weeks before the end of the previous school year so that the enrolment of the target group and the initial implementation can take place.
- The starting point of planning is to clarify the financial resources needed and the funding available. This is relevant even if we are speaking about intra-school CPL – there should be room for practicing and presentations, there should be a responsible and competent adult to turn to in case of need or in case of artistic or practical questions, there should be materials or props or decorations or costumes, when such are needed – all these require funding.

- It is worth noticing that currently more resources are available for integration projects for young people with an immigrant background and cultural projects for youth. Depending on the country, there may also exist different funding opportunities related to national policies and strategies, concerning schools. It is worth to investigate in advance, whether subsidies are available, especially in municipal or regional programmes. Other financing options are foundations and private sponsors, such as shops and businesses. In addition, events could be funded to a lesser extent, through entrance fees.



How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

7 Selection of artists for the incentive events

- When the CPL is going to involve foreign groups, it is important to invite ones that are able to inspire the targeted participants, facing exclusion risks, with their cultural activities. This applies both to the genre, e.g. music, dance, theater, circus acrobatics and performances or other forms, as well as to other specifics of the hosts.
- The selection of non-European young artists for the kick-off event plays an important role because the performances and workshops with their peers shall motivate the targeted students to use artistic expressions also for dealing with their everyday life, problems and perspectives.
- The workshops have a very mobilizing effect. Here the children and young people come directly together with the young artists of the same age from African, Asian and Latin American countries and - in a mostly non-verbal and associative manner - exchange with them, learn from them and experience them as role models for their own development.

How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

8 Advertising and Public Relations

- Especially for the incentive events an intense advertising and public relations strategy in the context of the implementing institution, the schools and the cooperation partners, is necessary.
- Here it is also recommended, besides the usual advertising and announcements, to distribute handouts and flyers in homes and shops of the district and in the cooperating schools and other facilities; and in addition to that, to publish supplements in local newspapers. Helpful are also direct announcements of the teachers in the classroom and direct targeting of children, adolescents and parents.
- The local media should be included by direct addressing and informing. Reporting in public media has a positive return on the mobilization and involvement of children and adolescents because it confirms the activities and achievements of the target group.

How to prepare your school / youth center for the inclusion process – what you need to consider if you want to do inclusive education through CPL

9 Continuation of the activities and cooperation

- Culture-related activities for the integration of children and young people make sense if they are offered continuously by the youth centers and the cooperating schools in the long run. Individual short-term actions and events should only be used for creating an initial incentive. Medium-oriented activities over a school half-year have more the character of a pilot project and allow the involved parties to develop the conceptual basis and to establish the cooperation.
- Regular evaluation of the activities should be planned and done not only by the responsible of the cooperating schools and the artistic and educational coordinators, but also by the children and young people.
- The stabilization of the collaborations with already involved schools is also desirable. The stronger the established cooperation, the better the activities and offers adjustment to the school framework and classroom topics and the better their embedding in the school reform approaches, e.g. the concept of the open full-time school.
- In order for this activity to be sustained smoothly, cooperation with other cultural institutions, such as music schools, dance projects, theater groups, and circus projects managing the artistic areas, is recommended.

What to expect from the five e-learning modules and the online portal

The modules that the partners consider important to develop in order to create the necessary preconditions for the successful implementation of CPLA in as many schools and youth/educational centers as possible, are the following:

Module 1: Introduction into Cultural Peer Learning Approach (CPLA) – definitions, main concepts

Module 2: CPLA for enhancement of key competences - basic skills such as communication in one's mother tongue, foreign languages, digital skills, literacy, and basic skills in mathematics and science, as well as horizontal skills such as learning to learn, social and civic responsibility, initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, and creativity

Module 3: CPLA for integration of disadvantaged youth (combining the previously anticipated "Integration of social and economic disadvantages youth", "Integration of pupils with migrant backgrounds, minorities suffering from exclusion" & "Integration of refugee children and youth")

Module 4: CPLA for diversity and equal opportunities

Module 5: Good practices of CPLA across the world.

**Brief guidelines and full
version of the guidelines are
available here:
[http://culpeer.eu/en/material
-output-en](http://culpeer.eu/en/material-output-en)**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.