CARDS

An educational material on gender, power and empowerment

By

P⚧WER

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Illustration of Cards and cover: Ana Cebrián Martínez.
Layout Design: Miguel Domínguez Rigo.
Coordination of this educational material: EARTDI, University Complutense of Madrid.

POWER

Exploring Gender and
Power through/in Art

INDEX

INTRODUCTION

The project POWER: Who needs empowerment? Exploring Gender and Power through/in Art is an Erasmus + Project (Ref. 2020-2-FR02-KA205-017944) led by the organisation De l'art et d'autre (Dadau) (France) and the participation of several institutions from the EU: Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain), MOH (Italy), Elan Interculturel (France) and City of Women, The Association for the Promotion of Women in Culture - (CoW) (Slovenia).

Power is a fundamental concept in social science as, in all societies, it is distributed unequally between people: they have different influences over decisions, different rights and duties (Eriksen, 2015). Gender is one of the dimensions that seems to organise this inequality of power distribution, with women tending to have a lower rank and less power than men, across different times and places. Though in many European countries there was a perception that these differences have been overcome, the explosion of the #MeToo movement showed that the subject is not quite settled in Europe either. What's more, previously muted gender minorities have highlighted new forms of exclusions and discrimination.

The target group of the project are youngsters (from 18 to 30) from different cultural and social backgrounds, minorities and identities. The main objectives of the project are:

1. To offer young people creative and appealing ways to understand the concepts related to gender.
2. To raise awareness about how gender is connected to power: how people today still live discrimination and oppression because of their gender identity.
3. To empower young people to develop their gender identity in safe and creative ways, to face challenges, oppressions related to their gender identity.
4. To develop understanding, empathy and solidarity towards others with different types of gender identities and sexual orientations to stand up against oppressions that others suffer. To gain tools to discuss gender-related inequalities and challenges.

This introductory user guide describes the results of one of the first Intellectual Outputs of the project: Exploring "Gender", "Power" and "Empowerment" consisting in exploring gender, power and empowerment through art. One of the expected

products is this set of 25 pedagogical cards, with definitions of key concepts related to gender and concrete illustration through personal stories, accompanied by a description of activities that lead to the construction of the "cards" as well as guidelines to use in learning contexts.

These cards have been co-constructed during nine workshop sessions developed by the five institutions participating in the project with 108 young people. The workshops took place between March and April 2021. Due to Covid-19 circumstances, several workshops were conducted on-line.

OBJECTIVE AND USE OF THE CARDS

This set of 25 pedagogical cards comprises definitions of key concepts related to gender and concrete illustration through personal stories, accompanied by questions to use the cards for learning.

The main objective of the cards presented in this document is to relate personal narratives to concepts associated with gender, power and empowerment in order to facilitate learning the definition of some complicated concepts. This highlights one of the most important tenets of Feminism, as it links private spaces with politics.

This way, we are able to link cold knowledge with warm knowledge, as each card contains both of them. According to Kozielecki (1981), cold knowledge represents scientific knowledge which is frequently difficult to apply to real life.

On the other hand, warm knowledge is related to personal experiences and it is operational, practical and much more stable than cold knowledge because it is linked to emotions. Through the real personal narratives, the definitions of the concepts are linked to the reality they label and allows to connect them with personal experiences, which helps to construct meaningful learning.

INTERVENTION METHODOLOGY

The workshops developed in the different countries followed the same structure, but conductors had the flexibility to adapt the activities to their specific participants. The design of the session was divided in three stages: warm up, creation of visual and written narratives and endition. After the warm-up activities, participants were asked to choose one concept related to power, empowerment or gender.

They spread out at three tables in small groups. The tables were full of small pieces of paper with definitions of key concepts. They started by selecting some of them randomly and read descriptions of concepts such as sexual violence, abuse, LGBTIQ+, patriarchy, etc. Stories of personal experiences and questions flowed. As attentive listening aroused, the participants began to open up and mutual trust developed. Then, each participant chose a concept and created a collage linked to a personal narrative according to the concept.

In the next section we will see some ideas and tips to develop similar workshops.

Some tips from our workshop conductors

-It is important to create a safe space.

Some people are open to sharing personal narratives but others may be more reluctant to do so. In order for people to share their personal experiences it is important to create a safe space, where participants can feel confidence in the conductor but also in other participants. In our project, this workshop was the last one of a series of three with the same participants. Therefore, after two previous sessions, participants already knew each other and there was a sense of confidence within the group, as a result of which they felt free to express themselves. In addition, in some cases, they were informally contacted between the two sessions and asked if they felt safe to express themselves freely.

Some ideas to reinforce confidence between the participants:

-To split the participants into small groups to increase intimacy and confidence.

-Conductors must practice and promote attentive listening, as it facilitates openness and mutual trust.

-To establish some basic rules and advices at the beginning of the session, such as:

Respect: everyone's opinion must be respected.

To emphasise the importance of protecting oneself in what one shares of their personal and intimate experience. Selecting what one shares is a way of taking care of oneself and of others.

Respecting the freedom to share: it is important to emphasise that no one is obliged to read their writings if they do not want to.

Confidentiality: personal stories must remain within the workshop.

How we started the workshop

Introductory activities are ideal ice-breakers and warm-up activities as they help to focus on the activity that will take place and they increase participants' sense of confidence. Some of the activities used for our teams were:

-The circle of trust

First, organize participants in pairs. They face each other, holding hands, looking into each other's eyes. Slowly and gradually, they move away from each other, always holding hands, until the only way to keep balance and not fall down is to rely on each other. The process is then repeated in groups of three, four… until they end up doing it as the whole group. They must also keep looking into one another's eyes.

-"The empowerment party"

We imagined organising together a big "empowerment party" to which we invited people who inspired us in terms of empowerment, path models,

thoughts, etc. Each of us could invite one person (from any past or contemporary era). The participants chose one person and explained their choice.

-The game with two truths and one lie

In this game, facilitators suggested the participants write a self-portrait in the third person singular and include in their story at least two truths and one lie. After reading, the group tries to discover the lie. This exercise was a great success, both for the friendly atmosphere, for getting to know each other better, and in terms of the quality of the writing of the self-portraits.

-Exercises of awareness of one's own body sensation.

We started with body stretching, inviting the participants to feel free and initiate the movements they needed to stretch the different parts of their body, which were repeated by the rest of the participants in the circle, with the person guiding the movement changing freely and alternatively. Then we started with the personal connection with three deep brea-

ths and then with the rest of the participants. We started with movements through the space, holding our gaze with the people we met.

-Crosswords

A crossword with some of the vocabulary (about gender, power and empowerment) learned during the first workshop.according to the concept.

How we closed the workshop

After the personal and creative activity, it is also important to close it, checking if everyone feels comfortable and reaching group conclusions. Some of the ending activities that can be developed are:

-Group discussion

A long spontaneous discussion developed after the presentation of the personal stories. The participants wanted to talk about other real-life stories and reflect on the different possible reactions in those situations.

-To detect empowerment strategies and to close the discussion with a word

We exchanged a few words on the changes made to the texts and realised that these changes were indications of empowerment strategies that everyone would put in place in reality (if possible), especially when facing discrimination.

-To use images as the focus discussion.

We moved on to working with images, drawings, cut-outs and collages. In some groups we decided to make them out of personal experiences, in others as a collective task. Then, we think, discuss and negotiate a powerful practice to continue exchanging, problematising and bringing questions to light, based on the image. Once finished and as a large group, we share the work with the big group.

Assessment Jamboard

After all the participants had told their stories about their collages, there was a great atmosphere. We presented them the Jamboard for assessment. Some said that they learned the importance of sharing personal experiences and emotions to others. They would love to further study the themes of the workshops.

The circle of feelings

All the participants threw in the circle all the bad words that had stayed with them for their whole li-

IDEAS TO USE THE CARDS IN TRAINING SETTINGS

ves. As a result, they lost the bad feelings associated to such words.

In this section we propose some ideas about the use of the cards in pedagogical and training settings. These proposals are based on creative strategies but we are sure there is a wider range of possibilities to explore, according to the facilitators' abilities and creativity.

Using the images as an inspirational starting point

Show the cards to the participants and explore what these images suggest. As images are polysemic it will be easy to find different stories or ideas about the same card. Relate the emerged ideas with the concept of the card. You can finish reading the personal narrative and asking participants to talk about similar personal stories.

You can also propose participants to reinterpret the image through a personal creation.

Using the personal narratives as an inspirational starting point

You can read the personal narrative and ask participants what the possible concepts related to this story are. Some of the cards may be related to more than one concept, although only one is written on it. Afterwards, several activities can be made as:

-Ask participants to create a different ending for the personal narrative and to reflect on the social conditions that influence both stories.

-Ask participants to relate similar/different stories related to the original one.

-Organize a role-play with the personal narrative or use a personal narrative from participants. How can we turn disempowering experiences from the narratives into empowering experiences? Explore different versions of the stories.

-Propose participants to create art based on the personal narrative.

Using the concepts as an inspirational starting point

You can read the definition of the concept and ask participants to:

-Create an image (collage or any other technique) related to the concept and to link it with a story (real or fictional).

-Make groups and act out or perform the part of a person or character related to the card's concept and make it fun.

-One player picks a card and hides it from the other players. Other players can ask questions to try to find out the name of the concept. The first player to guess the name of the concept has to choose a card and for the others to guess.

Using the whole cards

-Match concepts or narratives. Make pairs to play with cards and match similar concepts. Shuffle the cards and deal all of them. Each pair has to match groups.

-Guess the name of the concept. Try to match the images with the concepts to check if participants have understood the meaning of the cards.

-Link different images to create stories and act them out.

-Use the questions to debate about each topic.