

GALE is using the power of storytelling

In many parts of the world storytelling is the basic way of transferring social knowledge between generations. It is the oldest way of education. The different 'discourses' about sexuality and morality, by both conservative groups and by progressive groups like LGBT movements, are examples of the power of stories. A famous LGBT example is the discourse on gay and lesbian identities, which was introduced in the late 19th century and nowadays dominates the feelings and emancipation movement of most Western gays and lesbians. These discourses are of course 'large' narratives, but they always have a translation to personal lives and experiences.



The need for improvement of storytelling on LGBT issues

In a range of European countries and in French-speaking Canada, panel sessions about LGBT issues for secondary school students (aged 14-17 years) have a long tradition and it has become clear how telling you stories in specific ways can enhance the effect on students. There are

a number of good practices on this, but there has been no research as yet on what are the factors that can increase the effect. Besides most (volunteer) educators are not professionals. This means they aren't always able to determine which stories are relevant or acceptable to specific groups, which may lead to provocation, conflict and counterproductive effects. Also, personal experiences should be placed in a broader perspective. Some panellists may have a lack of tolerance to other ways of being LGBT than their own. This means there is a need for reflection and space for improvement.

Transforming everyday life stories into educational tools

GALE proposes to collaborate internationally to enhance the educational effect of telling personal stories or testimonials. By training interviewers to interview LGBT people, we know that it is not easy to analyze stories and to put day to day experiences into a context of heterosexism and human rights. People may think of their lives as ordinary and 'normal', even when they experience severe social exclusion. When discrimination is common and survival depends on being able to cope with (potential) exclusion every day, it may be psychologically helpful to suppress or deny such daily negative experiences. This means that in developing storytelling methods and projects, we need to consider the relations between daily stories and social exclusion, and the sense

of citizenship and human rights. Only by putting such stories in a meaningful context, they will become effective educational and advocacy tools.

methods and good practices. In other parts of the world people have already more experience and maybe even did effect research. Because GALE is an operational partner of UNESCO, GALE is sometimes able to give access to general institutions.



GALE started a storytelling program

GALE emphasizes the necessity of working on a local level. The local implementation of the GALE storytelling program includes:

1. Carrying out a local storytelling project
2. Describing the methodology in order to share it with other GALE members
3. Developing a visible product which shows the impact made by the local partner and the added value of the GALE collaboration

The international collaboration of the 2010 GALE storytelling program includes:

1. Funding of six pilot projects on storytelling
2. Integrating the methodologies in the international toolkit (1.0)
3. Discussing the toolkit and experiences in a intercultural summer school
4. Starting a network of storytellers and panel session volunteers
5. Making links to internationally relevant mainstream programmes,
6. Collaboration for the creation of new projects and fund searching

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The mission of GALE is also to organize cross cultural collaboration. There are several advantages of collaborating on international level. You can identify more

The intercultural summer school in Marseille



A crucial step towards both starting the network and creation of new projects has been the GALE summer school. GALE organized a summer school for volunteers in panel sessions and storytelling for schools. From the 18th to 25th July 2010, 30 volunteer LGBT educators from fourteen countries were represented in Marseille: Chile, China, Colombia, France, Hungary, Indonesia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Portugal and Spain. The key issues of the summer school: training, education and exchange of experiences.

GALE organized the summer school in collaboration with the Universités d'été euroméditerranéennes des homosexualités. Since 2009 GALE has been carrying out an European quick scan on the right to education and on LGBT interventions (e.g. in schools, parliaments, media). This has led, among other things, to a network of organizations who take an active role in organizing panel sessions on schools. The aim of the summer school

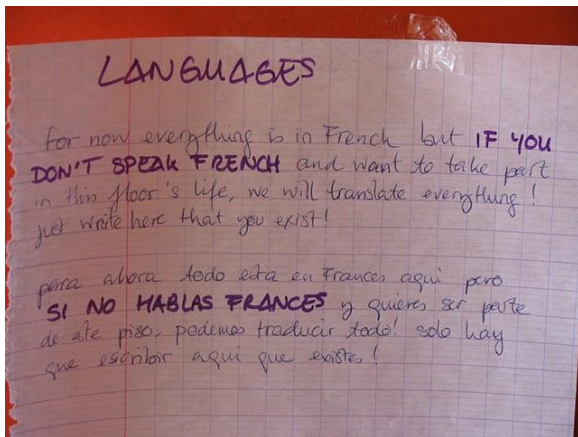
was to train volunteers and offer them tools for storytelling, mainly by exchanging experiences. Besides, building a network offered participants cross cultural partnerships from which possible innovative projects can arise. The results of the exchange will be published in an international toolkit for storytelling and peer education. A 1.0 version of this toolkit will be published soon.

Fifteen seminars and the outcome of the network

GALE offered a program of fifteen workshops (based on the preferences of the participants). The workshops included the discussion on interview techniques, a model for story dialogue ("Living Library"), the use of role play and games, the use of video to tell about LGBT stories. Some workshops were theoretical, for example how to connect your story to the notion of human rights, what machismo or fundamentalism is about and which possible interventions you can use to deal with such attitudes. The workshop how to



deal with frequently asked questions concerning LGBT issues was also based on academic theory. On one hand GALE aimed to meet the needs of most of the participants for practical training. On the other hand the aim was to launch a cross cultural process of exchange. For that reason we asked some participants, who were relevantly qualified, to facilitate the workshops and make them as interactive as possible.



The summer school as part of the UEEH

The GALE summer school was part of the Universités d'été euroméditerranéennes des homosexualités, a queer summer camp established in 1993. Some of the participants of the GALE summer school also attended workshops of this summer camp, which were focused on personal identity development and political activism. The participants of the GALE summer school enjoyed the social atmosphere of this summer camp. They experienced it as a pleasant way to meet and be surrounded by a very diverse community, in where gays, lesbians, transgenders, intersex people, feminists and others can live together in an open diversity and a safe atmosphere.

The summer camp was located very near the Mediterranean which provided a pleasant holiday feeling. Traditionally the UEEH has mainly French participants. The participating of GALE added people from three continents and a wide range of European countries. This provided a great cultural dynamic. Both the UEEH organization and the French participants felt the urge and motivation to become

“After all we found that the multiplicity of identities, nationalities, ideas, beliefs and backgrounds clearly has an added value. You learn not only of the GALE workshops that are given, but also talking to and living with the participants of the UEEH. We enjoyed the UEEH and the general atmosphere, the deeper contacts, because you really live together with other participants. This atmosphere is less likely to come about in hotel or other formal conference setting...”
(Participant of GALE)

more international. For the first time UEEH members not only communicated in French, but also in English. The UEEH organization will reflect on how it can make the camp more international for the edition of 2011.

See also www.ueeh.org



Millions of people touched by the online stories of Queer Comrades in China

One of the workshops was facilitated by Queer Comrades. They are China's only independent long-running LGBT web cast. Queer Comrades broadcast online videos with different empowering images of queer life. Director Xiaogang Wei and producer Stijn Deklerck were present to offer three workshops. One of their workshops was about the possibilities to work with LGBT web casts and the power of queer imagery. They also showed how to tell a range of stories by creating of online videos.

The second workshop taught participants how to create an animation movie by using LGBT and other magazines. This resulted in an individual photographed frames of pictures captured in a twenty

seconds animation movie about the characters L G B T. This workshop challenged participants to think about new ways of communicating LGBT stories in a more casual way. They learned how to create such an animation movie in a simple way by using easily available free software.

Their third workshop showed participants how to present a five minutes talk show and how to film it. They learned more about differences between interviewing and presenting a talk show. They also reflected how they could create such a show discussing an LGBT issue in their own country.

See also www.queercomrades.com



Visitors of events being invited to talk with 'living books'

During one of the workshops experiences where shared about the performance of a Living Library. A Living Library functions as a common library, however instead of real books, minorities (e.g. disabled, unemployed or LGBT people) 'are' the books telling their stories. The setting of the Living Library can be different: the parliament, a festival, a school, a book fair or indeed a library. Visitors are invited to get into a constructive dialogue with the 'living books'. This offers them the opportunity to question their own prejudices and stereotypes.

Rob Stoop, educator for an anti-discrimination agency and educator in panel sessions on schools in The Netherlands: "There are many people who want to develop for themselves an open way of communicating with and understanding others. Such others may live next door you meet them in the supermarket, in school or at work. The Living Library is aimed at people who usually have little access to non-formal educational programs. It offers people an opportunity to talk in private and personally to a 'stranger' in a structured,

protected, yet completely free space – within a limited time, but without any further commitments."

One of the project plans of GALE is to organize Living Libraries in different countries, events that allows participants linking their story to human rights concerning sexual diversity (as they are anchored in the Yogyakarta Principles). The new element in the Living Library methodology is that within the setting of dialogue people become more aware not only of the fact that their story relies on understanding, but also that it can be connected to recognition of their rights.



Ongoing debate on the cross cultural applicability of human rights

Living Library is a practical way to connect the narrative of a personal LGBT life story to human rights. During another workshop participants discussed the Yogyakarta Principles, which documents human rights concerning sexual diversity (see www.yogyakartaprinciples.org). This seminar Wim Monasso, international

consultant of FILAD, presented a historical introduction on the origin of human rights. Rob Stoop asked the participants which the principles are most relevant in their own cultural context. The Chinese participants indicated that within Chinese culture people think in terms of what one is in relation to someone else, than in

terms of what one has a individual right to. In that context, human rights may have to be retranslated in social mutual obligations. The Latin-American participants thought the Yogyakarta Principles might constitute a kind of post-

colonialism when applied without consideration in the Latin American context. During the seminar the question of applicability of Yogyakarta Principles in diverse cultures remained undecided.



Dealing with Macho's

Kathryn Lum, working for Sin Verguenza in Spain, introduced the topic about masculinities and homophobia. She showed how masculinity can vary across cultures and time periods. She used the theories of M.S. Kimmel and R.W. Connell to show how we can define a hegemonic masculinity in terms of power and how that subordinates other masculinities and femininities at all. Psychological effects of hegemonic masculinity on men are:

performing and proving one's masculinity, a relentless competition, emotional impoverishment and last but not least homophobia. Attention was also paid to the nature of homophobia in adolescents. With adolescents, homophobia is also linked to a more generalized psychological immaturity. Kathryn promoted some principles for how to reach a world of inclusive masculinities. After that the participants split up in groups to discuss



what kind of interventions could be thought of to promote a consciousness of gender socialization among adolescents. Plenary regrouping, the participants came up with a list of possible experiments, like organizing gender role play, role swapping

between boys and girls, peer education about gender issues and setting up a light discussion about masculinity and femininity. A number of the suggested interventions will be integrated in the international toolkit.

Discussing the storytelling project in Indonesia on interviewing techniques

In Indonesia Sigit Sardjono and Sri Agustine, working for GAYA Nurantura in Surabaya and for the Ardhanari Institute in Jakarta, did a story telling project supported by GALE. The workshop explained the method of interviewing a number of LGBT people (35 people between 19 and 50 years old). The interviews were based on five general questions: what are you proud of in your life? Which challenges do you face at home, in school, at work? What should other people do to help make your life better? What can you do to empower

yourself? And what is your dream for the future? They told the participant how they did the interviews. This led to an interesting debate about the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, the location of interviewing and questioning within the domain of leading questions. The interviews will be published in a booklet.

Read more about Agustine's work:

<http://rightsofpassage-nctc.blogspot.com/2009/02/in-jakarta-courage-comes-in-small.html>





Participants training each other how to tell your story effectively

In two workshops Alejandro Riveron, coordinator of Ben Amics in Palma de Mallorca, and Rob Stoop trained the participants on how they can construct and tell their LGBT story with more awareness. The participants were motivated to think about their own story and how to divide their story in episodes. Afterwards participants shared their story with fellow participants and received feedback. The listeners also monitored the more technical aspects like language, words, gap fillers, intonation, eye contact, body language and the storytelling style (emotional, collective, humorous). After the group was split up in English and Spanish speaking groups, participants felt

more comfortable expressing themselves in their own language.

The second workshop elaborated both on the ways in which a personal story can be told and on the goals you can formulate by sharing this story. One subgroup thought about a range of goals and the other subgroup thought about ways for telling your story. After this exercise participants selected the goals which connected best to methods.

The used exercises, the outcomes and suggestions will all be integrated in the international toolkit.



Other seminars

Teacher Training

Rob Stoop discussed which competences trainers need and which competences teachers need to teach students.

Using Role Play

Peter Dankmeijer showed how different kind of role playing in the class room can make students aware of sexual diversity and heteronormativity.

Using Games

Christian Sánchez Torrero showed different kind of games that can be used in sessions based on experiences in Spanish

schools. After participants discussed other useful games to explore the theme of sexual diversity.

Dealing with Fundamentalism

Lech Uliasz, working for the Campaign Against Homophobia in Poland, explained how the level of Polish nationalistic and Catholic fundamentalism is influencing the lives of Polish people. Giancarlo Cornejo Salinas from Peru presented some theoretical insights into the phenomenon of Catholic fundamentalism. Finally participants discussed the definition of fundamentalism and interventions to overcome situations when fundamentalism is predominant.

Story Festival Night



Experiences and outcomes of the workshops during the week were used for an entertaining catwalk by Rob Stoop in cabaret style. The Chinese participants showed the films made during workshops, the Polish participant told

Would you like to present LGBT stories in a casual way and in different forms? Then you can organize a Story Festival Night. We did so on Saturday night of the summer school for all UEEH participants.

his coming out story, a group of participants sang a Latvian song, a number of people played a coming out scene in a forum theatre and a Spanish participant sang Karaoke.

Next steps of the GALE storytelling program

The GALE strategy for concerning storytelling program consists of three major steps: publication of an international toolkit, organizing five new projects which were initiated during the summer school, and organizing a series of follow-up summer schools.

International toolkit

The international toolkit is a collection of guides and articles on how to do storytelling in the most effective way. It contains a tool on a how to set up a peer-education group, a tool on how to deal with difficult situations in the classroom, a tool on frequently asked questions, classroom exercises and other background articles and methods. Part of the methods will be elaborations from the discussion during the summer school.



The education, training and reality in countries are very different. The toolkit should provide a guide on how to choose content and strategies targeting students, teachers and authorities. The toolkit will be published in Word format, which allows GALE members to edit the tools to suit their own needs. GALE will ask its members to describe their experiences and share their edited versions of tools, so we can bring the tools to a higher level. GALE intends to make a continuous effort to enhance the quality of these tools.

New projects

At the end of the summer school week participants evaluated the workshops and proposed five European projects. The participants decided to form a network and two volunteers came forward to be contacts for each of the five proposed projects. The projects: creating a database with methods, intercultural comparative research on how to get access to schools, further development and implementation of the Living Library, the organization of summer schools in Europe and in other regions, and offering video training to enable online storytelling.



If you are involved in panel sessions and storytelling at schools or other educational settings and you would like to join the international working group storytelling, then become a member of GALE by registering at <http://www.lgbt-education.info/en/join>. We then can add you to the online group and you will receive all relevant information.



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