

Monitoring and Evaluation sharing experience

By Bill Hamblett

Evaluation

Sharing this experience of using a line evaluation with children key stage 3. Before and after a 6 session theatre process / performance tested in over 30 schools in Wales during Diogel?/Safe?, a process concerning refugee integration focussing on host communities. Researched with refugees in Wales.

Brief description of the "Agree / Disagree" line evaluation.

We used 6 bold, provocative tabloid-like statements and one initial control statement.

Control statement: "Everyone needs food and water." This statement was said and the group of about 30 stand on a line stretched across the hall between 2 of us. One end is AGREE the other DISAGREE. With the control question we expect 30 participants to stand as close to the AGREE end of the line. Mostly they do; everyone understands the process but also it give an opportunity to see if there are participants who are going to challenge the process or present a credible alternative opinion.

Next, an appalling statement: "all refugees have no money". Most participants go to DISAGREE. A few may place themselves along the line in degrees of agreement or not.

If they were in the middle they may have an unformed opinion or are undecided, or think both agreeing and disagreeing is possible. Nearer one end or another they expressed shades of opinion when asked by the facilitators.

What's the point?

Well, we thought we would get hard statistical baseline data on opinions at the beginning of the project to compare with the same exercise at the end of the six weeks in each community. It did, in a way, but what was more interesting was the depth of understanding of the issues that developed. Again the statistics were not so important, it was this understanding of the complexity behind the reaction to the tabloid-like headline statements that showed thoughtfulness and learning. It doubled up as a teaching aid, not just a fun evaluation exercise. Shades of opinion could be explored and new thinking could be shared.

Advantage: this process allows the participants to put themselves 'on the line' and 'stand by their opinions' in a physical way. It is fun and fairly quick. It gives a picture of the depth of thinking taking place before and after the intervention the theatre process. Peer learning takes place. They can change

their minds on an issue by hearing what others say. It can be used with adults too.

Disadvantage: some teachers can see it as children challenging adult opinions and wisdom. The statistics don't really mean a great deal. Finding an extra 30 minutes can be hard in some schools and is harder to present in traditional evaluation formats.

For more info on the Diogel? / Safe? project:

<http://www.smallworld.org.uk/safe.html>

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