WORLD LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE
CLUB DE MADRID

The Shared Societies Project:
Leadership for Dialogue, Diversity and Social Cohesion

Building a world safe for difference

Replicable example of practice

Commitment IX

Promote respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity and support local communities in exploring their identity, sharing their experiences with other identity groups and working together with those groups on common concerns

Suggested Approach:

- Establish and support training programmes to train skilled community workers to work with local communities in establishing local groups and organisations and in exploring issues of cultural identity and diversity.

EPIC – Training Professionals for Social/Cooperation Field

Country: Spain

Background

- Since 2000, the percentage of foreign immigrants in Spain has climbed from 2, 61% in 1999 to 17,01% in January of 2010.
- Madrid has been one of the main destinations for immigrants to Spain and the local authorities have made a commitment through a series of integration plans to provide programmes and services to facilitate the smooth reception and integration of immigrants into the region.
- Madrid and its services were not equipped to receive so many new people and to meet their distinctive needs.
- Most professional in the caring professions had little experience of immigrants, the experience of being a migrant, the countries that the migrants were coming from and their culture, values and traditions
- The regional government recognised that in order to provide services in an effective and sensitive manner it was important that there was a cadre of professionals with the understanding and knowledge to be able to work with migrants seeking help

Goals

- Promote training for those, especially social workers, who wish to specialize in immigration work and international development cooperation.
- Offer a professional qualification in the migration field recognized at university level.
- Create a centre for research, information, awareness and debate on migration, immigrant integration and development cooperation.
- Facilitate the awareness of immigration issues in departments of regional government, voluntary organisations including immigrants associations and in Madrid society as a whole.

Method

- The regional government established EPIC (Escuela de Profesionales de Inmigración y Cooperación/School for Professions in Immigration and Cooperation) in 2008 as a training centre operating in the framework of the Integration Plan 2009-2012 of the Ministry of Immigration and Cooperation.
- The school is housed in a building that was once a Turkish bath.
- EPIC grow out of an existing training organisation, EMSI (Escuela de Mediadores Sociales para la Inmigración) which had existed since 1998.
- They arranged a partnership with the Red Cross and the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, who both have previous formative experience in immigration issues,
- Red Cross has proven experience in education and training as one of the first institutions that specializes in care for immigrants in Spain and it oversees the day to day management of the school.
- Universidad Rey Juan Carlos supports the academic content of the courses of EPIC and recognises the School's qualifications as university degrees.
- There are ten staff with 6 professional staff: director, co-ordinator of studies and four tutors. Outside tutors are also used on specific issues.
- The school offers two levels of training – basic (600 hours) and the master's degree (an additional 400 hours). These modules are repeated during the year if there is sufficient demand.
- The courses are in a modular form and students build up modules to achive the diploma or Master's qualification.
- The School also organises short courses lasting from two days to one week, catering for the specific needs of particular groups: civil servants, teachers, journalists, health workers, police etc. They have also providing training for immigrants and immigrant associations on working with the media.
- The basic values of the programmes include the principles that different view points should be considered and that all ideas must be discussed respectfully. The existing values of the community need to be respected

and are non negotiable though it is important to be open to what others bring to our understanding of those values.

- The basic vision is that everyone should learn the most positive ways to live together and respect each other.
- The school believes that integration is not about groups becoming integrated but it is a process in which individuals, with their own person projects and agendas, integrate with the host community
- There is a low drop out rate from courses because participants have a professional interest in being there.
- The school also organises awareness raising activities and campaigns which are less academic and involve more interactive debates between participants.
- One recent awareness raising initiative was an exhibition and book on the theme “A place far from home” in which they compared the experience of migrants coming to Spain with the experience of migrants going from Spain in the past.
- The school has good and regular contact with the media, including the media that serves the immigrant population.
- In its awareness raising and campaigning work the school does not give opinions on political and public issues as it is an academic institution.
- Courses are free and the costs of running the centre are met by the regional government.
- EPIC has a prominent role as promoter of awareness initiatives such as "A home away from the homeland: Immigrants from yesterday, Immigrants from today".
- EPIC has restructured its educational content, taking into account the work done by other entities and the experiences of other regions and countries, seeking to specialize further and enhance the academic value of their courses and research activities that generate new knowledge about immigration and cooperation.

Impact

- EPIC and its predecessor, EMSI, have been operating for nearly ten years and in that time have offered about 400 courses, workshops and activities which have involved more than 15,000 people. Almost all professionals in the field of immigration in Madrid at some time have passed through its classrooms.
- EPIC is a reference model in Spain, with basic training programs, Master program in Integration, Development and Co-development and independent and tailored courses.

Enabling conditions

- The EPIC was born out of the experience and goodwill accumulated since 1999 by its predecessor, EMSI and the other agencies involved..
- Professionals in Madrid and their employers recognised their need for training for working with immigrants and were ready to take up training opportunities.
- EPIC is fully supported by the regional authorities, who see the benefits in such training. They employ many of the students directly or support NGOs that employ them and therefore it is a support to professional development. The current Integration Plan 2009-2012 promotes the activities of EPIC with the aim that it becomes the focal point for all professionals working in the field of immigration, and development cooperation in Madrid.

Comment

- EPIC collaborates with the Observatory for Immigration Studies and Data Centre of the Regional Government of Madrid in studies on migration and development cooperation.

References/Contacts for further information

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