

Meet the World of Islam: Educational Workshops

Name of organisation:
ARABIA.pl Association

SAMPLE WORKSHOP AGENDA

Theoretical part:

- ice breaker: painting a 'typical Muslim' (later to serve as a point of reference in discussions) = 15 min.
- introduction into the world of Islam: the pillars of faith and dogmas (interactive lecture with discussion) = 40 min
- 'hot issues': women in Islam, religious and political radicalism (discussion) = 30 min

Practical part:

- writing in Arabic and getting to know calligraphy (practical exercise) = 30 min
- Azan and/or Al-Fatiha (listening and comprehending text) = 15 min
- Geography of the Muslim world (which countries are Muslim and which Arabic; exercise) = 30 min
- Music quiz (listening to contemporary music from Muslim countries) = 20 min
- Muslim law (free will – different interpretations) = 20 min
- Learning how to tie *kufiyya* = 10 min
- Fashion show with traditional and contemporary clothes from the Arab and Muslim countries = 30 min
- Gadgets quiz (items of daily use from Arab countries) = 25 min
- Preparation of Arabic tea = 15 min

RESULTS OF FALL 2007 INTERNAL EVALUATION

The evaluation was carried out in 9 schools in 3 regions of Poland using a sample of 750 students (half participated in the workshop, half was the control group). The questionnaire comprised questions related to students knowledge and attitudes (self-reporting). Several measurement tools were used: semantic differential scale, social distance scale, perception of psychological distance.

The most important results are as follows:

- Apart from positively influencing attitudes toward Arabs (specific effect) the workshop also influenced the attitudes toward other cultures – Roma and Hindu (non-specific effect). In this sense the workshop on the world of Islam was a tool for rising awareness about the Others in general, not only about Arabs and Muslims
- There were significant gender differences in regard to the initially declared social distance towards Muslims, displayed more by males than females. At the same time it seems that the workshop had stronger influence on males in changing their perception – that means that the impact of the workshop was bigger in case of males.
- The workshop brought about significant changes in the students' knowledge and their attitudes towards Muslims in most of the areas covered by the questionnaire.
- Some of the stereotypes were still very deep – regardless of the workshop effect. It was easier to obtain a change in case of features that were general and not typically associated with Muslims (e.g. dirty/clean, good-looking/ugly). In cases of 'harder' stereotypes (aggressive/ fanatical/ ...) modification was less observable.
- The same refers to several questions related to students' knowledge. Even though a significant change of 30% was obtained in question on whether women in most Muslim states have to cover their faces, only a third of students disagreed with this sentence after the workshop (in the control group less than 5% disagreed as this is one of the most widespread stereotypes on the world of Islam)