

Freire Residential Report 2nd 3rd Feb 2017

1. Date and Venue

The Freire residential (training workshop) took place at Campanile Hotel, Bradford on 2nd and 3rd Feb 2017. The training team arrived at the venue three hours prior in order to meet for fine tuning of the agenda and coordination of facilitation.

2. Training Team

The members of the training team were Mr Paul Wilkinson and Dr John Lockhart

3. Agenda

3.1. The training team agreed a draft agenda prior to the Freire Residential (training workshop), which would constitute the basis of our approach to pedagogy. This was then sent out to participants who were informed that this is an organic process dependent on dialogue created within the group.

3.2. Paulo Freire believed, like some other contemporary educators, that education can be employed in a way that either restricts people, or liberates them. One of the most restrictive forms of education is 'banking education', a model where it is assumed that the teacher has the monopoly on knowledge and this is then delivered to an 'empty' student. (Freire, 2007) In this situation the teacher can choose which pieces of information are important, which to divulge and which to withhold. This in turn creates a hierarchical power dynamic. Our methodology, by contrast, is based on an understanding that we all act mutually, as both learners and teachers, sharing our knowledge and assisting each other to develop.

3.3. A progressive pedagogy assumes that we all have a great deal of knowledge about the situation in which we are living. We refer to this as our 'social knowledge', the information we have about what is happening in our communities. Traditional 'banking' educational processes often make us distrustful of the vast amount of knowledge we actually possess. (Lockhart, 2017) Sometimes we are made to feel that it is only outside experts like economists or sociologists or government officials who really understand what is occurring. We become hesitant about sharing our knowledge as a result.

3.4. Day 1

- Opening and introductions (icebreakers)
- Concept of Freirean pedagogy
- Understanding ourselves
- Understanding what already exists (policies and procedures, existing barriers within communities)

3.5. Day 2

- Understanding where we wish to go
- Building and testing strategies, acquiring resources and implementing action
- Group role play (our ideal society)
- Action-reflection

Adjustments to the programme were made in accordance to dialogue, which enhanced the training as it allowed participants to think collectively about certain issues and barriers within their communities, which in turn enabled them to think critically.

4. Participants (ECU Volunteers)

The Freire residential (training workshop) was attended by nine (9) participants.

Tania Ahmed

Jo Wood

Anthony Mcalary

Pat Mackela

Lanre Omolabode

Vicky Kelly

Shaheen Badshah

Fatima Shah

Nadra Khan

5. Training Workshop

5.1. Day 1

The Freire residential was opened with an ice-breaker, *'Would I Lie to You'* (description below).

Ask everyone to write on a piece of paper THREE things about themselves which may not be known to the others in the group. Two are true and one is not. Taking turns, they read out the three 'facts' about themselves and the rest of the group votes which are true and false. There are always surprises. This simple activity is always fun, and helps the group and leaders get to know more about each other.

This enabled participant the opportunity to engage with other participants which in turn created a dialogue and gave participants the chance to get to know each other better.

Once the icebreaker was over Dr John Lockhart and Paul Wilkinson introduced the process and the Freirean Pedagogy delivered. They provided an introduction to the ECU Project, *"Changing the Story"* and how to incorporate Freirean methodology within the ECU Project.

i. The first session established the participant's self-awareness. The fact that we may be unanimously committed to a project or an action does not, of course, mean that all members of the group see things in the same way. Our perspectives, our understandings, and the value base from which we work may be quite different. It was important at the beginning of the process to establish our personal standpoints and what values we hold dear.





ii. The second session after the dinner break involved participants engaging with one another and highlighting what policies, procedures and legislations are in place within their own communities. 'What exists' may be taken to mean the organisation in which we are working, the community around us or the society in which we live, but for the purposes of illustration we referred to our community. We began by looking at the 'generative themes' in the community: what issues (or events, ideas, stories) generate strong feelings – these may be positive or negative. The groups focused on lack of funding or funding going elsewhere within their community as well as lack of integration which participants believed created divide within communities they are a part of. There may be some recent experiences that will form the raw material for analysis.

Two generative themes pertinent throughout this session was both funding cuts to projects around the Burnley and Pennine area and lack of integration, which all participants agreed needs to be addressed for a better community as a whole.

iii. There may be more general concerns (e.g., poverty) that come to the fore. We used the experiences of the community and (crucially) how these are articulated as the focus of the exercises. At this stage in the process we built up a 'photograph' of what is happening around us.

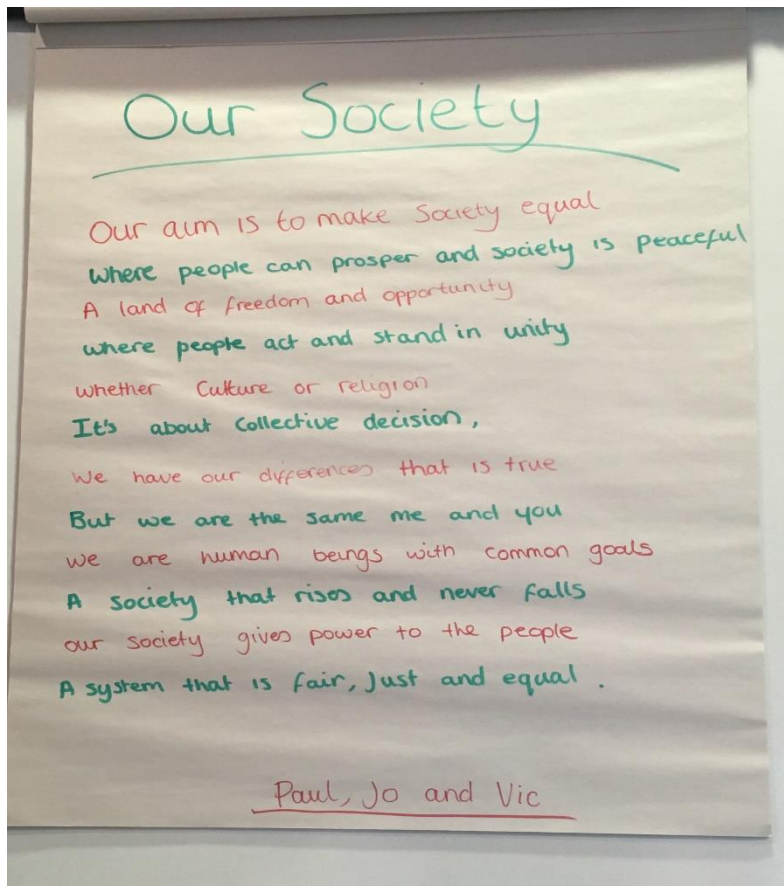
5.2. Day 2

Day two of the residential training started with another ice breaker known as '*Freire Hunt. Engage, Empower and Enable*' (Description below).

i. Each group starts with the same letter (E) with a riddle attached which once solved leads to the next letter until all letters have been collected. The groups would then make their way back to the conference room and within their groups would figure out the word which was either engage, empower or enable. Although this helped participants work together as a team it also helped create dialogue in regards to the three words (engage, empower and enable) to give participants more of an understanding about the Freirean approach and how were looking to incorporate Freirean way of thinking into the ECU project "*Changing the Story*".

ii. Following on from our dialogue, we then looked at our personal trajectory with regard to specific communities. We were then able to form conclusions about the problems in our community and were also able to form a vision for future direction. As a group, we thought of our 'ideal' for the community, which may or may not be achievable. It was important that we clarified precisely what our vision is, so that we could determine whether it is shared by others. The building of our vision is generally the most difficult task in the process, for we are often taught to expect that little can change and it is fruitless trying to think of doing things differently. From our broad vision we started to think about achievable goals: what can be achieved in (say) ten years, then five years, then next year. We broke it down further: what should we aim to do by next month, or next week?

iii. We then asked participants to form groups of three for the role play which could be acted out as a drama, poem, collective presentation or all three. This enabled Paul Wilkinson and Dr John Lockhart to measure whether the process and dialogue created was being incorporated into the role play and also if participants had a good understanding of the training being delivered.



The final session consisted of reflecting on past experiences working with community and projects. Participants within their groups identified something they can all relate to, for example, university.

iv. The final phase looked at barriers people and organisations face. This stage is about starting to put our vision into practice. Different individuals and groups will have different roles and it is important to understand where we all fit into the picture and who our allies are. We also needed to develop techniques to evaluate our strategies. At this stage we considered specific skills and resources: what tools (knowledge, skills, material resources) do we need to acquire? How are we going to acquire them? We undertook detailed step-by-step planning and training in the necessary skills. We may, for example, learn specific technical skills or get access to specialised knowledge and resources.



As we engaged in the process of implementing the steps we have decided upon, we found that our perspectives are being challenged and our values are subject to intense questioning. We are therefore not participating in a simple project which comes to an end, but rather a lifelong repetitive process (albeit in new forms, and with new experiences and challenges).

6. Outcomes of the Freirean Training

6.1. The Freirean residential training provided everyone with an opportunity to get to know one another better, as well as developing a pedagogy for the ECU Project. It also established a correlation between people's motives for participation in the project. For example, the majority of participants faced similar barriers in gaining access to both education and higher education due to their cultural backgrounds.

6.2. Although participants entered the workshop with varied levels of knowledge regarding Freirean pedagogy, once the role plays and sessions had been delivered, it was clear that all participants had a good understanding of the Freirean approach and how we can implement this within the ECU Project "*Change the Story*". Attached are feedback forms from participants which confirmed the training that took place was necessary and productive. Training helped our new volunteers get to know the people, the program, and the project quickly and efficiently. Training our volunteers established the competency and underpinning knowledge necessary for them to engage, empower and enable the communities they live and work in.

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References

Freire, P. (2007). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. NY: Continuum.

Lockhart, J. (2017). *Changing the Story Peer Training*. Bradford: Freire Institute.

