

Legal Framework and the clash of cultures

Exercise Code: slguen0001 (means **s**ocial **l**iteracy – gunet – en - number)

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| Category: | Size: | Duration: | Language: |
| 8 .Situational Awareness  10 Supervision : Intervision | group (6-12) | 60 Minutes | English |

# Purpose/Aims:

How to understand unlawful behaviors when they result from cultural specificities?

For instance: In France, the predominant view of the Republican model is based on the notion of secularism. It advocates a strict division between the public and private sphere and tend to put aside cultural specificities. So what happen when we are faced to unlawful behavior? In a society, where the trend is to turn social relations into ethnic relations, shouldn’t we be very careful to insure the maintenance of communication with the newcomers.

# Description:

The concept of secularism generates difficulties in the implementation of social workers’ daily missions.

To carry out their missions they have to learn how to work around two principles: individual equality and assertion of identity.

Before taking any actions or steps, shouldn’t we therefore pay a close attention to the very nature of behavior?

Does it result from, what could be called “cultural handicap to integration” or from “social handicap”.

In order to do so, we need to maintain the process of communication with newcomers to:

* Understand their cultural frame (belief system, social hierarchy, socio-economic context…) which would lead to a better understanding of conflicts.
* combat stereotypes
* Avoid justifying social reality and behavior on the basis of people origins

Falling that, to restore communication, people should work on their negative representations. Social workers, who work with migrants, face these difficulties.

Most of the time migrants have a poor image of social workers as they perceive them as institutions. They see their work as a control or a threat for their family cohesion. So they do have to think about their professional practice as some situations can’t bear either failure or the arising of stereotypes or prejudice. As a matter of fact, this could make a conflict situation worst and lead to a dead end situation.

The notion of “children at risk’ is an example that can help to get a better understanding of the complexity which might be existing between the respect by all of a legal framework and the respect of educational principle to which a community is attached.

Therefore, some fathers say to be very concern to see their children “behave” because in their opinions, a good education can, sometimes, justify, corporal punishments. Considered as abusive parents by the institutions, they say: “as any other parents, we love our children and we are not torturers.”

**Suggested exercise:**

You work within a social service which organizes regular workshops and debates aimed at migrant families. You are in charge of conducting a workshop on “the educational principles and children at risk”.

The objectives are :

* Provide migrant families with the means to understand and find their way within the different educational systems.
* Help them reach a better understanding of the existing laws both in practice and in the spirit of the act.
* Make people carry out an in-depth reflection on attitudes and individual behaviors likely to conflict with the legal framework.
* Insure not to give rise to any cultural chocks that could lead to a breakdown in communication
* To be able to address the process of acculturation, that can be experienced in very different ways depending on people’s individual experience of life.
* Avoid explaining social realities on the basis of people’s origins.

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| Thinking style and typical response | *Explanation* |
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# Material:

Paper, flip chart

# Methods:

Role-play; discussion and sharing

# Advice for Trainer:

* Trainers will have to pay attention to exchanges and interactions between participants. They will make sure that participants lead a reflection on the idea of values, legal framework, belief, the sense of belonging to a group, the notions of assimilation and integration.
* Make sure that through the questionings and exchanges within the group, no words which could offense or hurt the other in what he or she is, arise.
* Make people aware that a society can not work without an acceptation and understanding of common rules.

# Source/Literature:

Insup’s Expérience

# Handouts:

Guideline to allow the implementation of the activity and the involvement of every participants in the role- play.

# Contributor (partner):

INSUP