

ADDA2006-report

Summary

"I came back with complete different opinions, views and impressions about the other, especially the Danish people ... we are in need of direct dialogues, to avoid the misunderstandings that happen all the times due to the lack of this kind of dialogues. And when this dialogue took place my view changed to the positive side." (Egyptian participant).

"The first days I thought about the dialogue between the Middle Easterner group and us Danes. But now I know a lot of very different persons, the differences are much larger than the similarities." (Danish participant).

The Arab Danish Democracy Academy (ADDA) convened 26 young persons the two first weeks of September 2006 for learning and dialogue on Democracy in a period of Global Challenges and Change.

" ... the period I stayed in Denmark was absolutely amazing, I learned interesting things and met interesting people, that have left something in me ..." is a statement that reflects the results of ADDA. Using the folk-high-school tradition proved to be a great benefit. Participants lived and learned together in an open-minded environment.

Participants had intense dialogues with a wide range of persons some of these are: Foreign Minister Mr. Per Stig Møller, Minister of Taxes Mr. Kristian Jensen, Editor in Chief Mr. Tøger Seidenfaden, Professor at Niels Bohr Institute Mr. Kim Sneppen, Int. Director of HLT Intl. Mr. Louis Becker, Imam Abdul Wahid Pedersen and MP Mr. Naser Khader. After the dialogue Kristian Jensen sent this to us: "... it was GREAT to discuss politics so openly and direct, and right on very difficult issues. And with people who live with all the problems ... I hope you will have to really good weeks. Your planned events look so good."

A variety of innovative learning processes such as edu-games and life stories made it possible for a diverse group of participants to relate to issues of Globalisation, Democracy, Human Rights in a reflective and constructive way. The participants defined projects to be pursued in smaller groups after the end of the two week ADDA.

Participants of ADDA have left with a greater understanding of Denmark and the Middle East, Globalisation, Democracy and Human Rights. They have developed friendships and networks – and a number of participants will go on working together.

16 of the participants were Danish – 2 of those with Arab background, 6 participants were Egyptian, 2 Jordanians, 1 Syrian and 1 Lebanese. Participants age was from 18 to 31. 13 male and 13 female participants. Participants were selected on criteria of diversity, English proficiency and stated interest in open dialogue on democracy and culture.

ADDA was organised by the International Academy for Education and Democracy (IAED) in cooperation with the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI) and Vallekilde Communications College. ADDA was funded by DEDI.

Recommendations

- Continue the programme based on the successful experience – and improve based on recommendations beneath.
- Transmit the experiences to parallel initiatives.
- Use the projects and networks created by participants of ADDA.
- Improve the recruitment process.

Goals

The Arab Danish Democracy Academy was set up to contribute to learning and discussion on democracy in a period of global challenges and change. In this context it was furthermore the intention to contribute to the development of Arab Danish relations and to the understanding of Arab Integration in Denmark.

To do this we invited 10 young people from the Arab region, 10 young Danes with Arab roots and 10 young Danes to convene in an open dialogue and learning process giving innovative responses to local, national, regional and global challenges. The point of departure was present day challenges and opportunities at local, national, regional and global levels.

The participants' were seen as essential contributors to the process. The ADDA was planned to use a wide variety of methodologies – from traditional lectures, over visits and excursions, exchange of ideas and opinions to innovative methodologies, games, role plays, video documentation and project work.

Details

Recruitment process

The recruitment from the Arab world was taken care of by the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute in Cairo. The programme was announced by DEDI through networking and on the website of DEDI. The Danish Institute in Damascus and the MS Dialogue centre in Jordan helped identify participants. Applicants sent their cv's to DEDI, and the staff at DEDI selected the 10 participants from the Arab region. There were more than 60 applicants – an unusually high number.

Participants from Arab countries need visas from Denmark. Visas were applied for through the Danish embassies by DEDI. The IAED had contact to the Danish Immigration Service to solve possible problems. This worked very well for everyone except the two participants from Jordan. They received their visas too late – and arrived four days late.

The intention was to have 10 Danish participants and 10 Danish participants with Arab background. The programme was announced through distribution of a printed programme, e-mail, websites and networks. It was surprisingly difficult to find participants especially with Arab background. Very much time was used during the two months before the start of the ADDA to recruit participants – through direct communication (telephone and e-mail) with a large number of individuals and institutions. This resulted in 16 Danish participants, but only two of those with Arab background.

Recommendations

- Continue the successful recruitment procedure for Arab participants, using the network of institutions such as DEDI, Danish Institute in Damascus etc.
- Start recruitment at least 6 month's in advance.
- Make agreements with educational and other institutions and networks on recruitment.
- Make it possible to use the activity as an asset to education and development.

Vallekilde Communications College (VCC)

The venue of the ADDA was VCC, a residential non-formal adult education institution 100 km west of Copenhagen. The venue worked very well for the ADDA in all ways. The lecture halls were good, the traditional buildings with long cultural roots contributed to the process in a very nice way. The combination of learning and living in the same place provided a great environment for the interaction. The food was good – and care was taken to ensure the different needs related to culture and religion. The staff and students were very flexible and helpful.

Accommodation

The participants had single or double rooms at the VCC. Those in double rooms were together with a person of the same gender and national background. Due to the intensive programme nobody spent much time in the rooms – but participants expressed their satisfaction both with the accommodation and with sharing rooms with someone with similar background, after long days with new impressions.

Organisers

Jakob Erle, director of the IAED, Cultural Sociologist. He works with globalization, democracy and dialogue processes.

Amira Nitze Hassan, Egyptian / Danish, finishing master in Sociology, interests: Democracy, Multiculturalism, Gender.

Hanna Ziadeh came to Denmark as refugee from Lebanon in 1986. He is a historian and writes on the Middle East and the West.

Bo Espersen, director of Vallekilde Communications College, expert and educator in international politics.

Results

The course contributed very well to Arab / Danish dialogue and understanding. Stereotypes and prejudice was unlearned and dialogue was very intensive. The indirect approach of the programme – with focus on common challenges instead of mutual differences proved to be very beneficial. Participants state that their views have changed and many participants are going to continue dialogue and cooperation in the future.

The issues of Democracy and Human Rights were predominant in the programme and the use of the globalisation and democracy edugame proved to be effective. It introduced the common challenges for democracy – and made the different conditions and contexts in the Middle East and Denmark very visible. The learning and understanding of the diversity within this field fully met the expectations of the planners.

The numerous and very varied excursions and visits of external lecturers proved to be of great interest and value for all participants – giving a direct insight in the workings and considerations of Danish society. Some of the highlights were the dialogue with the Foreign Minister Mr. Per Stig Møller, a 3 hour intensive informal dialogue with the Minister of Taxes Mr. Kristian Jensen, a thought provoking visit to the Center for Models of Life at the Niels Bohr Institute, hosted by professor Kim Sneppen, and a visit to Intl. Director of HLT International, a global architecture company working in the Arab world. See the full programme enclosed.

Issues of Arab Integration in Denmark were touched upon several times during the programme, but not as much as intended, due to the difficulties recruiting Danish participants with Arab background.

The use of methodologies such as life stories, edu-games and video proved to be mobilising and effective – in combination with more traditional learning and dialogue methods. If the programme is to be continued this should be refined and developed even more.

The programme resulted in media coverage in newspapers, national radio (DR/P1) and the most prestigious television news programme (DR TVavisen).

The participants formulated a number of project descriptions for future projects and formed project groups.

Impressions from the ADDA and a participants webforum are available at www.iaed.info/adda .