



FROM WAR HISTORY TO MODERN EDUCATION

The Second World War through the Eyes of Children and Adolescents – Experiential Learning across the Borders!

You will find downloadable materials from: www.childrenofwartime.com

Abstract

We have published new tools for experiential learning which are designed to be used as part of the history education of schools in Europe. The tools include the comic, the live action role-playing game and the educational drama tour in Rautjärvi (in Finland). The comic and the live action role-playing game are available in Finnish, English and Estonian. There are preliminary distribution agreements concerning the material with 14 EU countries and the distribution has already begun. The material is a part of the project “From War History to Modern Education” which has been funded by the European Union’s Europe for Citizens Programme. The comic and the live action role-playing game are free to be used and distributed. A group of researchers, cultural managers, artists, professionals in the field of education and pupils of different schools have taken part in designing and implementing the tools.

Background and Goal

One of the most significant challenges of school education is the possibility to offer equal education to children and adolescents. Everyone does not learn in the same manner and therefore there is a need for new type of educational material. Our goal was to respond to this challenge and create tools for experiential learning which can become a part of the education in schools. The use of similar material has provided good results but the use of such material has not taken off in a larger scale. One reason is the difficulty and cost of creating the material. We decided to take up the challenge and create tools for experiential learning which are not too expensive to make and can be used in

several countries. As a result of the project, new tools for experiential learning were developed as well as skills for similar work in future. The next stage is to try the tools on field, collect information of their usefulness and after that to consider whether it makes sense to produce more such tools.

Why War History?

We chose war history and the Second World War because it is a challenging theme and there are various interpretations of the historical events. The viewpoint of children and adolescents was a natural choice because that way the material became neutral enough for it to be used throughout Europe. In addition, this point of view makes the material easier to understand and more relatable for the chosen target group. The material describes war in a way which children and adolescents are able to understand.

Information about the Project

The municipality of Rautjärvi in collaboration with the Lappeenranta University of Technology and the University of Tartu were granted EU funding from the Europe for Citizens Programme and more specifically from the European Remembrance section. The project was granted 99,750 euros. The municipality of Rautjärvi was the accountable partner of the project and the universities were responsible for carrying out the research. The project was implemented during 1.8.2015–30.1.2017.

The project was divided into two parts. In the first part of the project, the research was carried out in Rautjärvi and in the nearby regions, and in Estonia in island of Saaremaa and in Tartu city. The research included

interviews of people who experienced the Second World War and its effects when they were children or adolescents. The purpose of the interviews was to find out how the children were talked to about the war and its effects, and how they would have liked the war to be explained. The material collected in Finland and Estonia were compared, and the conclusions were written in the research report.

In the second part of the project, based on the collected material, the educational comic was created. The comic describes the war from the viewpoint of children and adolescents. The purpose was to find new points of view of the subject matter and through them help children understand war even a little bit better. To support this purpose, the live action role-playing game was created. The LARP combines experiencing war as a child and learning about the Second World War. The

material was collected to the website in order for it to be accessible anywhere in Europe. More similar content can be produced for the website in the future. The final stage was to develop the drama tour "Desantti", which is connected to war history, into an educational tour suitable for adolescents in which they can learn about the Second World War through experiential learning. The project has been organised by Juha-Pekka Natunen from the municipality of Rautjärvi and he also works as the Project Manager.

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