



Round Trip Stories

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Section 1: Presentation

“Stories are like the flu: we catch them and then we spread them around”.

António Gouveia, storyteller from Angola

Round Trip Stories originated in Oeiras, one of the biggest councils in Portugal, near the capital, Lisbon. The project started in 2004 and it is based on storytelling and oral tradition. It is an initiative from Oeiras Public Library and it focuses on intergenerational and cultural collaboration between the library and the community.

When this project first started, it counted, together with four other European libraries and a museum, with funds from the European Union, under the scope of “Culture 2000”, and its main objective was to share traditions from Eastern European and Portuguese-speaking countries, the ones that send more migrants to Portugal. It was also a time in which Eastern European countries adhered to the Union, so it was urgent to receive and integrate them. With that purpose, different stories were collected, migrants had the opportunity to be trained in narration, public storytelling sessions were promoted, and even an anthology was edited (including pieces as diverse as life stories, imaginative tales, legends, adages, and even recipes).

The project organizers started by promoting informal encounters with migrants’ associations and schools in order to minimize barriers and inhibitions. This first approach was also fundamental to perceive who, from the group, could succeed as a storyteller. At the same time, stories and tales started to be collected and audio recorded. Once they finished this previous work, the aforementioned workshops on narration started to be promoted, culminating in storytelling festivals, both locally and internationally. But the developed work did not stop here. The final publication was distributed in schools, individuals and institutions who work with migrants and an amateur narrator group was created to collaborate with various institutions.

The funds only lasted for this first year, which, however, did not represent the end of the project. The high interest demonstrated by the public became even more obvious when the library was faced with an increasing number of persons in the narration training sessions, from all sorts of backgrounds and with very different school qualifications. Moreover, educative centres and other municipal institutions showed interested in establishing partnerships with the storytellers, with very positive results.

Believing that early contact with reading is key to the global development of children, one of the project's objective is, in fact, to promote reading habits in children and adults, creating a space of permanent sharing between families, educational institutions and the library. During the first two years of the project, 32 sessions were performed in three local schools, reaching 1780 students of different ages.

Later, in the school year 2014/2015, a continuous work was carried out in the local primary schools and even in kindergartens, involving the entire school community in the storytelling sessions: educators, children and, sometimes, even the parents. The school year ended with an exhibition from the children work in the Public Library, based on the stories they had heard and learned.

This practice can easily be used to integrate migrant students, independently of the age group, since adults are also frequent participants of the storytelling sessions. It can be adapted to schools, seniors, families and the general public, as it has occurred in literary festivals, where Round Trip Stories was present, given its success. If done right, storytelling can captivate all audiences.

Nowadays, some narrators are, in fact, Portuguese, sharing popular stories from our country imaginary, most are migrants from very different countries, namely the former Portuguese colonies, as Angola and Cape Verde, for example, and wish to share traditional stories from their own realities. Some they lived, some have been passed out from generation to generation and work as a way of connecting people, developing a sense of belonging in migrants and empathy in listeners, therefore promoting close relationships.

To summarize, the good practice consists of recovering oral traditions from the migrants' countries and telling them to a diverse audience. It is based on the premise that storytelling can improve relational abilities, stimulate language learning and promote social networks. At the same time, migrants are also faced with stories and traditions from our country, enriching the intercultural exchange process from a shared patrimony: traditional tales.

Sources:

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- Oeiras a Ler (2014). *Histórias de Ida e Volta: Serão de Contos | «Contos da Primeira Vez» na Biblioteca Municipal De Carnaxide*. Available online at: <http://oeiras-a-ler.blogspot.com/2014/09/historias-de-ida-e-volta-serao-de.html> [04/12/2018].

Section 2: Resources

To implement this good practice, you will need:

- A room (a comfortable place, where students can sit on the ground around the narrator will be more attractive and engaging).
- Human resources: teachers should perform all the tasks above (collecting the stories, training the students to tell them, organize the sessions,...).

Section 3: Duration

As it takes some time to properly prepare, this good practice may occur occasionally, once or twice a month. With practice, it is expected that it becomes more frequent.

Section 4: Expected results

By implementing this good practice, you will:

- Create social networks to the inclusion of migrants;
- Promote intercultural exchange;
- Stimulate the learning of the host country language;
- Deepen the migrants' sense of belonging;
- Stimulate reading habits;
- Develop students' empathy towards the other;
- Deconstruct stereotypes.

Section 5: Final reflection

How can we adapt this good practice to our context?

Please write a small reflection, considering what is doable and positive and what is not. Here are some questions to help you with this task:

- What competences should the professionals have?
- Do we have the resources needed?
- How can we include this good practice in the school plan of activities?