

Week 7 Report

What Other Groups Did & Group Dynamics

As we approach the end of the semester, facilitators reported good and excellent dynamics in most groups, with many adding that their students are not only taking the initiative to share their thoughts but also demonstrating the skills they've acquired over the semester. The majority of facilitators confirmed that students are being honest, are willing to raise controversial issues and are challenging each other in respectful, constructive ways. Facilitators also noted that students are venturing into new territories, learning to work through the tensions without prompting from their facilitators, and are using a forward-thinking approach.

Most groups began by doing the Change activity, in which students explore the concept of change and their relationship with this concept. Students looked into how they view change, the underlying social and cultural norms, assumptions and values, and how they interact with change. Most groups showed some really developed cross-cultural communication skills, and students presented an awareness of other perspectives and voiced viewpoints that were not their own. They've therefore formed a solid relationship of respect and understanding of each other's differences and appreciation of each other's honest perspectives. Based on this activity, students explored some of the global and social challenges they face in everyday life, and the reasons these challenges exist. They also investigated how they can work individually and collaboratively to change that. Overall, groups were engaged with each other and discussing their varying viewpoints strongly and respectfully, and several participants were re-evaluating communication patterns and lenses through which they typically view things. Many students are also asking each other more questions, and engaging around issues that are important to them, or about which they are curious and would like to see others' points of view. Discussions thereby branched out in many directions, based on each group's interests, and groups had free-flowing conversations on a broad range of topics, including education and unemployment, everyday life in different communities and cultures, racism and stereotypes, youth mobility and exchange and the power of social movements to affect change.

Attendance & Technology Update

We have seen some improvement in attendance levels, with a little under 80% of students attending their sessions this week. Thank you for your efforts in ensuring your students attend their sessions! **Since next week (week 8) is the final session and in many ways the most important and memorable one, we would be greatly appreciative of you could encourage your students to attend the full, 2-hour session.**

Next Week

Students will be using the final week of sessions to discuss any topics they have not had a chance to raise over these past seven weeks. Facilitators have asked students to reflect independently on the pressing issues and questions they would like to explore with their groupmates before the program ends, and we expect that this will bring a colorful and varied range of discussions in the group meetings. In addition to that, facilitators are working to pull together what the students have learned through their online dialogue process. Most groups will thereby take some time to reflect on the discussions and what they have learned throughout the semester.