

Barnga

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TOOLBOX GROUP

Group 4 – supporting international mobility

AUDIENCE

pupils from 14 to 18, minimum of 9 players

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To realise that different cultures perceive things differently and/or play by different rules
- To use this awareness to try and adapt to a new set of rules
- To raise awareness of our reactions in conflict and communication styles
- To experience a mini culture shock

TIME

60 to 80 minutes

NECESSARY MATERIALS

6 tables (or less if the group is too small)

for each table:

- a copy of the rules for that table per player
- a deck of cards (use only A-10, no face cards)

STEP-BY-STEP DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

- Players form 6 (or less) groups of similar sizes (3-6 players) and sit at a table where there is a set of rules and a deck of cards.
- Players are given a few minutes (about 5) to study the rules and practice playing “Five Tricks”.
- Once everyone has the hang of it, the facilitator collects the rule sheets and at the same time imposes a strict command of “no verbal communication.” This means that players may gesture or draw pictures if they wish, but may neither speak (orally or by signing) nor write words. Clearly, communication, should it be needed, is going to be more

difficult henceforth.

- The facilitator then announces a tournament. As in any tournament, some players leave their home table and move to another, some from that other table have moved to yet another, and so on. They sit down at their new table, look around, and begin at once playing “Five Tricks.”
- Each round lasts a few minutes. When the facilitator indicates it, the players move tables according to this scheme:
 - the player* who has won the most games during the round moves up to the next highest numbered table; (*if there are 5+ players per table, 2 players move)
 - the player* who has lost the most games during the round moves down to the lowest numbered table (*if there are 5+ players per table, 2 players move)
- When it is time to finish the game, the facilitator organises a debriefing. As with any simulation, the debriefing is the most important part. It should be allotted about half the total time of game and can ideally follow the phases in order:

PHASE 1: Description

- What did you expect at the beginning of the game?
- What did you think or felt while playing?
- What were your greatest successes / frustrations?
- How did not being able to speak contribute to what you were feeling?
- What was going on?
- When did you realize that something was wrong?
- How did you deal with it?

Many different explanations may arise. It is important to acknowledge them all. Some may think other players were cheating / they themselves had not learned the rules correctly / others didn't play by the rules because of lack of understanding / ... The hypothesis of multiple versions of the rules will come up. Confirm the truth once there has been ample opportunity for alternate explanations to emerge.

In fact, at the beginning of the game each group had received a slightly different version of a basic set of rules to “Five Tricks.” In one set, for example, Ace is high; in another, Ace low. In one set diamonds are trump, in another spades, in another there is no trump at all. Variations on these few differences are the only differences, no matter how many groups are playing. This means that virtually everything except one or two aspects is the same for everyone.

PHASE 2: Analysis

- What specific real-life situations does Barnga simulate?
- Have you ever had an experience where there was a rule difference you didn't know about?
- How does this game focus our attention on the hidden aspects of culture?
- What is the most important thing you have learned after playing Barnga?
- What if you had been able to talk?

- What if the play lasted longer?
- What does the game experience suggest about what to do when you are in the situation in the real world?

Reflection upon the problems that arose while playing:

- During the game, all did their best, but each group was operating out of a different set of circumstances and ground rules.
- Many discovered or suspected that the rules were different, but didn't always know what to do to bridge the differences.
- Even if people knew how the rules were different, they didn't always know what to do to bridge the differences
- Communicating with the others is difficult; it demands sensitivity and creativity
- The above statements are true even when almost everything is the same and the differences are very few or hidden. In fact, when the differences are very few or hidden, it may be even more difficult to bridge them than when they are many and obvious.
- In spite of many similarities, people have differences in the way they do things. You have to understand and reconcile these differences to function effectively in a group.

RECOMMENDATIONS / TIPS

See appendix for the FIVE TRICKS different sets of rules.

REFERENCES

Barnga: A Simulation Game on Cultural Clashes, Sivasailam Thiagarajan & Raja Thiagarajan

APPENDIX

[BARNGA Five tricks 10 Versions](#)