

The project "Artisan Education" with Volkshochschule Murrhardt eV

In our time fewer and fewer people have almost no relationship with craft and practical work, and as a consequence their importance for a comprehensive education is underestimated.

In the project, master craftsmen and specialists passed on their knowledge and practical mechanical skills within the framework of a guided tour of a museum, lectures and workshops. These events took place in November and December 2010. The project connected people of several generations, nations and beliefs, and was promoted by Sozialministerium, the Social Services Ministry, of Baden-Württemberg. Its motto "Participation for all" was one of the central demands in the framework of the "European Year against poverty and exclusion 2010".

Of all crafts stone working is the oldest. Therefore at the beginning of the project the development of stone working and associated trades were explained. During a guided tour of the museum of local history, Carl-Schweizer-Museum, and a tour of historical Murrhardt, Christian Schweizer, renowned expert, showed and explained a lot of exhibits ranging from Stone Age to the modern age. These exhibits indicated the close relation between workmanship and arts.

In the following workshops other materials like wood, metal, fabrics as well as food were used. The participants were able to learn for themselves how to use simple tools, machines and natural products.

In the workshop, an old artisan handicraft of knitting on loom boards was rediscovered. First, under the guidance of two skilled carpenters, the children built their own loom boards which turned out quite diverse depending on the distance of the nails. Then it came to casting off stitches and some of the children showed they were skilled enough to have knitted quite a sizeable piece of a scarf of handspun wool within a short time. In contrast, in the following course for women well experienced in classical knitting, the new technique took a bit of getting used to. The medieval knitting technique using four fingers was new to about 90 % of the participants of all generations and nations. The medieval knitting fork was later partly replaced by the two-finger-knitting system.

To use a hammer and an anvil and to work at the vice was a novelty for the children. They got help and instruction from a mechanical technician. The children made jewel pendants of copper, and even a candlestick was produced as a piece of art metalwork. The metal working techniques demanded brains and skills, but were great joy and fun as well.

After that, a homemade vegetable stew was served with homemade bread, both without any additives, just with a pinch of salt. The characteristic taste of each vegetable was another new experience for many participants. A health adviser and a dietician provided information and advice for them and some language learners who were invited to join them for the meal.

The last event of the project was a practical demonstration of works done at the so-called Boulderkubus which is being built voluntarily by members of the club Experience. A master carpenter

fixed handles and steps on the big walls of the wooden climbing box. He also placed holes and sleeves to make it possible for the new climbing routes to be set up again and again.

The project was aimed at exchanging experiences of the values of society. In some jobs two languages were used for better communication. The young people profited from the experience of the older people, and the older generation passed their knowledge on to the younger one. Children without grandparents benefitted, as did the older generation. The joy both had working together also helped to achieve results faster. The integration of both abled and disabled people brought better cooperation. The participants had the opportunity to process different materials using handmade tools. Passing on the acquired knowledge to others was good practice and experience.

The project description was translated into English, French and Polish and sent to the twin cities of Murrhardt.

The pilot project was met with approval and it is planned to continue it in 2011 offering events on the topic of "Artisan Education" once a month.