

## Interview Leah Davcheva

Country	Bulgaria
Partner	Sofia University St. Kl. Ohridski, Eliza Stefanova
Storyteller/Interviewee	Leah Davcheva
Interviewee Background <i>Include website if possible</i>	coach and intercultural trainer; researcher; educational materials writer <a href="http://www.ahamoments.eu">www.ahamoments.eu</a>

1. How long have you been a storyteller and what sparked your interest in storytelling?  
I am not a professional and / or performing storyteller. I tell stories as part of my training and pedagogic endeavours. My interest in storytelling and using stories in my professional work started in 2000 when I was reading, noting, and commenting on a colleague's PhD thesis in the field of narrative research.
2. What, for you, is the importance of storytelling in intercultural relations and human relationships in general?  
Stories create magic and connect the hearts and minds of people across all sorts of difference. Through telling each other our stories, we grow into ourselves and establish common ground. We create more and meaningful connections. We learn from each other's journeys.
3. Can storytelling serve as a pedagogical tool? If so, in what ways?  
Yes. Storytelling empowers the speaker and creates a shared environment. Stories bond individuals and engage one in listening. They are tools for encoding information and for thinking. They can be powerful influencers and guide one in the direction of solutions and healing.
4. Have you ever lead/helped lead an adult training program as a storyteller?  
I use storytelling in nearly all my training programmes. They all differ as to their training context, goals, learning outcomes and participants. In general terms, I employ storytelling to bring people to a whole new level of making sense and communicating.
  - a. What was the aim/target of this training?  
On one training occasion, when I worked with corporate clients, they wanted to make better sense of the company's mission statement.
  - b. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the program?  
The participants in the training seminar took ownership of the company's mission through sharing personal experience and learning. As far as my understanding of how the seminar flowed, nothing happened that can be classified as a weakness.
  - c. In what ways do you think your approach as a storyteller differs from that of an adult trainer without a storytelling background?  
I do not see a point in comparing and generalising. There are strengths and advantages to any approach when employed thoughtfully.

## Interview Leah Davcheva

- d. How is storytelling used differently in an adult training program than in a classroom with a younger public?

Again, I do not subscribe to general rules and principles. Each and every programme is unique in itself and follows its own logic and dynamic. However, one thing I can think of, is that I always consider the greater risk of young people revealing more than they would like to, when telling their stories. In that sense, I am alert as to such self-exposure. It is necessary to distinguish between training programmes and therapy.

5. In what kind of adult training programmes would you consider storytelling to be a good pedagogical tool? How would you structure such a training?

Any. Structure depends on what the participants' best hopes are and what they agree to achieve during, and as a result of, the training event.

6. If you were going to create an adult training program that used storytelling as a pedagogical tool, how would you organize it?

Please see 5. above. I might use, prior to training and if appropriate, stories as a 'diagnostic' tool to find out how the participants think and feel about the issues to be addressed during the training

7. What are the tools that the art of storytelling can contribute to adult education? What needs could storytelling respond to and how?

One specific tool is the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/AutobiographyTool\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/AutobiographyTool_en.asp)

Storytelling can contribute to aspirations for positive change on five interconnected levels: (i) telling, (ii) learning, (iii) becoming aware, (iv) interpreting, and (v) behaving.

8. In your opinion, what are the steps necessary to succeed in promoting storytelling as an educational tool? In your opinion, in which contexts should storytelling be promoted as an educational tool?

Any storytelling occasion is a success in its own right. A trainer / facilitator needs to make sure she has a full grasp of the task and the emerging context when deciding what story to tell herself or invite others to tell. In other words, customising or asking for a story to be customised to the group is essential. Willingness to be vulnerable with the group is another prerequisite. Authenticity is important by way of engendering trust. Related to this is the congruence between the story one tells and their behavior. A facilitator needs to remember that she should elicit more stories than she herself tells. Openness, respect and withholding judgement are also important. And finally, a facilitator needs to build in room for story sharing when she designs her training.

9. How could storytelling be used as a tool to enhance inclusion and intercultural dialogue?

Through the power of empathy and having more voices heard.

10. Are you familiar with different cultural traditions or methodological branches (differences in storytelling techniques, for example) in storytelling?

## Interview Leah Davcheva

I am afraid not. My approach is rather eclectic and emerging. However, I am aware of different cultural contexts influencing the way one tells their life story, for example. I am familiar with narrative research methodologies.

11. Do you know of any resources (books, websites, etc.) that focus on the use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool in adult education?

For example,

Gargiulo, T.L. (2007). *Once upon a time*. San Francisco : Pfeiffer.

Other Relevant Questions/Comments: