

Report of the young IDEA Lab in January/February 2020 Lomé Togo.

Marion Küster for the DAAD and IDEA Board

International Conference „*Theatre in Education*“

The organization of the conference was largely in the hands of the University of Lomé. A team of professors was formed for the purpose of organizational and content-related preparation, with Prof. Marion Küster as the German representative.

Already in Germany, extensive meetings with Professor Dr. Gilbert Dotse Yigbe and Dr. Koku Nonoa, who holds a research position at the University of Luxembourg, took place to discuss the content of the conference.

With this conference, the University of Lomé aimed to achieve a largely international participation, in order to give publicity to the newly installed course of studies "Theatre and Education" and to make the University's orientation towards the fields of cultural/art education clear. On the other hand, cooperation with other countries, especially West African and African countries, was deepened in this way. Prof. Küster was largely responsible for the international participation of members of the world organization IDEA (International Drama/Theatre and Education Association). Through participation in the IDEA board of directors, it was possible to win representatives of IDEA over to participate in the conference.

Prof. Dr. Mercy Mirembe Nantangaree, former Vice President of IDEA, from Makerere University Kampala/Uganda, was invited as the first keynote speaker. She discussed the importance of theatre in education and gave an overview of current African trends, traditions and difficulties in this field.

Olafur Gudmundsson, theatre teacher from Reykjavik, was another IDEA representative who attended the conference with a presentation on the educational system "Theatre in School" in Iceland.

The IDEA Director for Project Work, Tom Willems, organized the participation of two students (Chaja van Kolem and Chanan Molenaar) from the Amsterdam Academy of Theatre and Dance, who also gave a contribution to the conference and highlighted their practical approach of working with theatre pedagogical methods.

The conference was attended by university representatives from Ghana, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Benin, Burkina Faso, the USA, Brazil, France, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany, among others, and through the various contributions offered a broad insight into the work in the fields of theatre and education.

Prof. Küster was given the task and thus the honor to hold one of the keynotes, which was dedicated to the topic of participative theatre "From passive participation to active sharing".

The students of the hmt Rostock and University of Lomé took part in the conference and gained insight into international perspectives of theatre pedagogy.

On the one hand, the conference was based on lectures, on the other hand practical workshops took place, in which the guests were invited to actively participate and could thus examine methods practically.

International Young IDEA Lab I - Topic: "The power of/within Family* - *Family-what's that?"

Overlapping with the conference, the first Young IDEA Lab started at the University of Lomé on 30th of January 2020. In addition to the students from Togo and Germany, representatives* from Germany, France, the Netherlands, Peru, Switzerland and Taiwan, Mercy Mirembe Ntangaree from Uganda and Olafur Gudmundson from Iceland took part in the lab, as did the Togolese IDEA representatives of the Caer Association, Arnold Koljedi, the chairman Salem Buram and two other members of the association. Representatives from Brazil, Hong Kong, Kenya and the USA were not able to realize their intention to participate due to lack of financial support.

The total number of participants was about 50 theatre professionals between the ages of 16 and 60.

The basis for this international encounter was formed in May 2018 at a Young IDEA student conference at the hmt Rostock. The result of this conference was a method to get to know the life of children and young people in family structures in the time of globalization in order to gather information about the influence of digitalization on family structures. Within this conference the question changed to the extent that it was recognized that this must be preceded by a general questioning of which family models exist. Following questions were filtered out: "What is the meaning of family for children and young people in different places of the world?" and "what is the value of the family in the social context?". The aim was to find out what power emanates from families on the one hand, and on the other hand the question was raised what role all forms of violence and power play within families.

On the basis of these questions, the conference participants and the German organization team developed a concept to find answers to these questions using methods of theatre work.

A team of German drama educators under the direction of the Young IDEA directors (Prof. Marion Küster, Maria Nefeli Angeloglou) took over the organization and in exchange with the international representatives the content structure of the Young IDEA Lab 1 was developed.

The process of the Young IDEA Lab 1 was divided into different working phases:

1. The work began with group forming workshops on non-verbal communication and an awareness workshop aimed at the sensibilization of the participants for transcultural communication and questions of discrimination.
2. Taking part and being guest hearers in the conference "Theatre and Education" of the Université de Lomé.
3. Six INPUT workshops, in which the participants presented work approaches to each other under the given topic. The workshops were divided into the following main areas: movement and non verbal theatre, visual arts and theatre as well as biographical theatre.
4. Transcultural CREATE working groups were then formed. The working groups prepared project days with children and young people at two schools in Lomé, the Lyceé Sanguera and the Lyceé Togblokope, where the TRY OUT phase took place as they facilitated the workshops they created to answer the research questions through theatre. As in the previous school practical exercises, each was divided into active play-leader teams and observer teams, which reflected about each other after the work was completed.
5. In the phase of REFLEXION/TRANSFORMATION, the last days were used for a detailed evaluation of all phases of Young IDEA Lab I and for the preparation of Young IDEA Lab II, which was planned for 2022.
6. The Lab was rounded off in the beginning by a welcome evening organized by the German Embassy in Togo for the Young IDEA participants.
7. The Togolese IDEA representative "Caer e.V." invited the Young IDEA College and representatives of the University of Lomé to the cultural centre Togblokopé to present their work with the children, teenagers and young adults there.
8. The participants also had the opportunity to visit the sights, especially the Palais de Lomé, to gain insight into Togolese culture and traditions as well as the colonization history of the country.

A summary of the work and difficulties

The Young IDEA Lab I was characterized by a high density of events and an intensive working atmosphere.

The participants were also accommodated on the university campus, in the guest house of the Village du Benin. This had the advantage that paths above it were shorter and the work rooms were in the immediate vicinity. This advantage turned out to be a disadvantage, as there was little room for retreat, as well as great proximity between the participants.

The university's canteen took care of the catering and in the evening the participants could meet in the university's open air restaurant "Campus Plage". The free time for the participants was very limited.

Difficulties appeared on different levels. For all non-African participants the adjustment to the climate in Togo and the change of food was a big challenge. Some of the international participants had only come for 14-16 days, had travelled great distances and were required to adapt to the changes and work intensively in the shortest possible time.

The resulting overlapping of dates and events of the conference and the lab were not planned. The organizing team had to redesign the schedule of the lab in a quick reaction to meet this difficulty. Overlaps of work processes were the result. This was especially true for the final rehearsal phase of the theatre production between the German students of the hmt Rostock and the Togolese students of the University of Lomé, the start of the conference and the arrival of the international participants. Due to the lack of breaks, part of the German organization team was at the mercy of a high degree of excessive demands and physical exhaustion.

In addition, the requested financial means were cancelled immediately before the meeting and the events had to be implemented with a tight budget. An online Crowd funding initiated by the German organization team helped to save the financially difficult situation and private donations and disbursements of the organizers bridged financial shortages. The university, for its part, ensured that all undertakings were also secured, by providing the rooms and venues for the meetings, workshops and working sessions. We were lucky to be the only guests at the students accommodation facilities of the Village du Benin building B, so that we used all the places it had to offer, small meeting rooms, the yard and the roof to host the Lab.

The German and Togolese students also showed signs of exhaustion and illness after the completion of the theatre production. The Togolese students were not staying at the University Campus students residents and had to cope with long journeys and domestic obligations, which often led to cancellations and delays.

Thus, the arrival of the international participants and part of the German team fell into a very tense work phase, in which there was little time for their acclimatization and they did not feel sufficiently introduced to the meeting, which initially caused disorientation.

The working rooms were small and not air-conditioned, corresponding to the number of participants, which led to early fatigue.

Since the German and Togolese students were already familiar with each other, but the international guests knew each other little or not at all, the trust between them had to be re-established and balanced.

Communication with the Togolese responsible people at the university was, despite great efforts on both sides, difficult for a short time due to a high workload and two further conferences taking place.

Thus, the transition from the theatre production to the conference and the Young IDEA Lab I was an enormous challenge, which demanded all forces and concentration.

After these initial difficulties, however, the structure was successfully put back on track and the participants were given the appropriate attention.

The workshops were visited by the participants with great interest and were perceived as a huge gain and enrichment of a variety of methods.

The aim of the organization team was to work with flat hierarchies and to enable the participants to work in a participative manner on an equal footing. However, not all participants were equally prepared for this approach. Thus, the work in the working groups was effective in different ways. While in some working groups the process of building a group and understanding each other was completed in a short time, in other groups this process proved to be problematic. Through supervision the organizers tried again and again to resolve tensions, which turned out to be successful. The results of the work in the teams were then satisfactory and goal-oriented in all cases.

The work with the children and young people in the schools was very successful, similar to the previous practical school work, and comparable results were achieved. The transcultural teams of the international working groups created teaching programs that were a result of a variety of methodological approaches from the different continents. It was gratifying to see the way in which the instructors in the teams supported each other in order to provide the children and young people with a playful/ scenic approach to the topic of family. The children and young people reacted to the offers with curiosity and enormous joy of playing. The interest in the schools for the theater-pedagogical invitations to the play was so great that even pupils from other, non-participating classes were invited to the games, This was a challenge for the teams in charge of the game at times. They could only withstand the growing size of the groups with extreme effort.

During the days of reflection, all phases of the lab were evaluated using methods of visual, textual and performative form.

During the evaluations, the teams became aware that for such game processes in future follow-up actions, different spatial and temporal conditions would have to be created in order to create safe playing spaces. The safe space needs to be quiet so that a more individual approach to the children and young people is possible. In addition, the play actions must be created in a process, i.e. the groups of players must be given a longer period of time to allow for more in-depth work. Thus, the quality of the encounters initially consisted for the international work teams in

grasping the conditions in the Togolese schools and the enthusiasm of the children and young people and in winning them over to the forms of theatrical-pedagogical play. Especially in the school in Togblokopé, where the teams organized a project day, theatre play was already introduced as a method by the colleagues of Caer. The international campaign strengthened the use of theatre as a valid form of learning at the school and thus publicly acknowledged the work of the national organization Caer.

It became clear that participatory work strongly challenges individuals to create jointly valid work structures. It was recognized that flat hierarchies demand the assumption of responsibility from each individual and that transcultural communication requires patience, respect and, time and again, calmness and time to integrate the newly learned information. Assumptions were replaced by insights into the specific qualities of the working partners.

Long-term planning as well as careful search for financial support is necessary to secure the encounters. The division of functions and work, as well as long-term continuous communication using technical media, creates the conditions for planning and designing future projects across national borders.

Second young IDEA Lab organizing team

The last day was dedicated to the formation of a new team to take over the leadership of the Young IDEA Lab 2022.

While the organization team of the last two events, the International Students Conference 2018 in Rostock and the Young IDEA Lab I Togo, consisted mainly of 6 German women and one man, in Lomé a team of about 10 Togolese men, one Togolese woman, one French man, one German man and two German women was formed. The team is accompanied by the two Young-IDEA directors, but the format of the lab as well as the organization is left on the hands of the new team to ensure that young IDEAs work keeps reaching new young people, stays up to date with the current development and needs of young theatre practitioners around the world and continues being inclusive, multicultural and aware of any racist/ colonialist structures.

. This change in the composition of the team was perceived with interest and as a sign of equal cooperation and was welcomed on all sides.

While in the first lab English was used as the main language of communication, in the upcoming Young IDEA Lab II French will be the 1st language of the organizers. Lion/France has been considered as the place for the next meeting in 2020. Maxime Seschaud long time member of young IDEA from France will provide his knowledge of project management and a network in France and will be working in the new team.

Results of the Young IDEA Lab I:

The Young Lab I in its complexity has produced a wealth of achievements, experiences and insights:

1. Within IDEA a new form of Young IDEA cooperation has been established Young drama educators and theatre professionals from all parts of the world come together to meet each other, to exchange ideas and to initiate worldwide actions together through ways of participation and flat hierarchies.
2. Participants of the Lab will continue to influence the work of IDEA and to take responsibility for the continuation of the ideas, goals and strategies of IDEA.
3. To develop joint projects, form working teams, and to conceive and apply theatrical pedagogical knowledge and skills in different places in the world.
4. Through the projects they learn about the position of different countries in relation to Arts Education and make the values of these countries clear.
5. They enter into an exchange with the respective national institutions, artists and teachers and learn to mutually expand their knowledge and skills in the artistic-pedagogical field and to raise the position of theatre in education to the awareness of socially responsible people.
6. The international teams of Young IDEA get in contact with children, young people and parents on site through theatre pedagogical projects and get to know their specific living and working conditions and their culture.
7. They practiced transcultural communication, appreciation and respect.

4th phase April/May/ June 2020

Results

1. 27 students from the University of Lomé were successfully taught the subjects basic seminar of the play and the scene, improvisation seminar, school practical exercise as well as development and implementation of a theatre project.
2. At the University of Lomé, at the FLLA, the approval for the implementation of the Master "Theatre and Education" has been granted; Prof. Dr. Kangni Alem has taken over the direction and together with Dean Prof. Dr. Komlan Essizewa and Vice-Dean Prof. Dr. Gilbert Dotse Yigbe will initiate all further steps for the implementation of the curriculum. The process of enrolment of students and recognition of the work already done in the form of ECTS points for the Master's degree is underway.
3. The conference "Theatre and Education" was successfully carried out with great international participation and formed different cooperations, a publication of the conference is in progress under the direction of Prof. Dr. Kangni Alem.

4. An agreement on cooperation between the University of Lomé and hmt Rostock has been signed.

5. Nine students of the hmt Rostock, of the study course Master Theatre Pedagogy conducted a six-week internship under the direction of Prof. Küster together with 18 students of the study course Master Theatre in Education of the University of Lomé /Togo. Together they developed a theatre project, carried out practical exercises in schools and participated in the conference and the Young-IDEA Lab I.

6. An exchange between students of the hmt Rostock and the university is planned for periods after the Covid -19 - situation. A delegation of students from the University of Lomé is to come to hmt Rostock. For the year 2021 it is also planned to organize an excursion to the University of Lomé for students of the course of studies "Teacher Training - Theatre in School" via a DAAD application.

7. The Young IDEA Lab I was carried out with 50 participants at the University of Lomé and the Young IDEA network was strengthened and expanded. The cooperation with the national IDEA member, Caer is stabilized and expanded. Within the Lab a Brazilian contribution was shown in the form of an exhibition on the topic "The power of/within Family* - *Family what's that?".

Another Young IDEA Lab II is planned for 2022 in Lion / France. The German organization team has handed over the work to a Togolese / French / German team. Regular planning and concept meetings are already taking place via technical media.

8. A detailed evaluation of the trip was carried out with the students of hmt -Rostock who took part in the excursion to Togo. The results influence the design of the master projects and master theses currently being developed.

9. In the aftermath of the cooperation in Togo, a digital international project on the topic of "Mental Health" was carried out in March/April 2020 in cooperation with study programs for theatre and education from the USA (South Carolina/ Columbia), Great Britain (London), Australia (Sydney), Germany (hmt Rostock) and Lomé (Togo). The students developed videos on the topic in small international teams and presented them to each other in a zoom meeting.

10. the team of German organisers* developed a magazine via the Young IDEA Lab I, which will be published and put online in 2021. The book will contain a documentation of the transcultural meeting with interviews, comments, reports on experiences, workshop and structure descriptions, which will spread the idea and approach of this form of transcultural, theatre-pedagogical project work, as well as providing support and orientation for future work.

11. The projects were successfully supported by the DAAD, the BAG Spiel und Theater, IDEA, TiB e.V. MV, Caer e.V., hmt Rostock and the University of Lomé as well as the German Embassy in Togo.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my colleagues at the University of Lomé for their intensive cooperation and the warm appreciation of our work.

Prof. Dr. Gilbert Dotse Yigbe, who has been intensively involved in the exchange and development of the Master's program at the University of Lomé since 2018, and who has always supported us with his knowledge and care.

Prof. Dr. Komlan Essizewa has actively supported us in the planning, financing and implementation of the projects, and Prof. Dr. Kangni Alem is also to be thanked for his commitment to the organisation of the conference and the implementation of the Master's program at the University.

I would like to thank my colleagues at the schools Lyceé Sanguera and Lyceé Togblékopé, especially Mrs. Isabell Adabra and Mr. Arnold Koljedi of Caer Lomé, who brought us into contact with the schools, accompanied us professionally and lovingly and were always available for exchange.

Thanks are also due to the management of the university, who created possibilities for the installation of the Master and whose recognition we found with our projects.

We would also like to thank the management of the Village du Benin, who provided our students and the participants of the conference and the Young IDEA Labs I with very good possibilities for their stay.

The recognition of our achievements, which we experienced, was and is a great joy and gives us energy to continue our work with energy.

Thanks also to IDEA for the financial support and the interest and trust that the association has shown in the work of Young IDEA.

We would also like to thank *BAG Spiel und Theater* for the financial support of the German organization team, because this made it possible for the members of the German organization team to travel to Togo. In particular I would like to thank Ute Handwerk for her understanding and advice on our projects.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr. Michael Zinn who, as Deputy Ambassador of the German Embassy in Togo, gave the students an unforgettable impression of the organization, design and invitation to a welcome evening and also gave me advice and support in complicated situations.

My special thanks go to the DAAD, which gave me the opportunity to develop and implement these projects through the guest professorship at the University of Lomé. I would like to thank Nicolas Leube in particular, who is the DAAD representative at the University of Lomé and who was always available to us and to me in particular for advice and support.

The DAAD also made it possible for the students of the Master's in Theatre Pedagogy to have a very informative and instructive stay by sponsoring an excursion which contributed to an intensive exchange with the Togolese students, teachers, the population, children and young people as well as with the culture of the country.

Thanks also go to the Rostock University of Music and Drama for supporting the guest professorship and the excursion of the students, also with the help of the university's supporters' association.

I would also like to thank the members of the German organization team.

Above all, I would like to thank Nefeli Angeloglou, with whom I shared the position as director of Young IDEA and with whom I have been working intensively ever since. Also to Kathi Goosses. Together with me, she and Nefeli Angeloglou managed the theatre project with 27 players, a very complex and not always easy task.

I would also like to thank Nina Peitsch, Babette Büchele and Patrick Niegsch, as well as graduates of the master's degree course in drama education at hmt Rostock. They all dedicated their commitment, all their skills and abilities in incredibly time-consuming, intensive, sincere and above all voluntary work to making the projects a success. The cooperation with the young team was and still is a source of joy and inspires all my confidence.

I would also like to thank the students of the University of Lomé and hmt Rostock as well as the participants of the Young IDEA Lab I for their intensive, creative and responsible cooperation.

I am convinced that the projects in Lomé are important steps for cooperation, for exchange, for the recognition of joint achievements, for respect, mutual esteem and dignity.



Prof. Marion Küster

Rostock, the 27.06.2020



Nefeli Angeloglou MA

