



#CultureLAB
International
2023 - 2024

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Hanover, December 2024

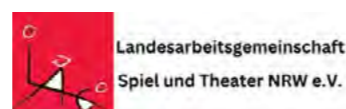
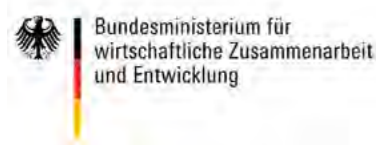
Documentation

#CultureLAB International 2023 - 2024

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A look inside the project: background, aims and ac- tivities

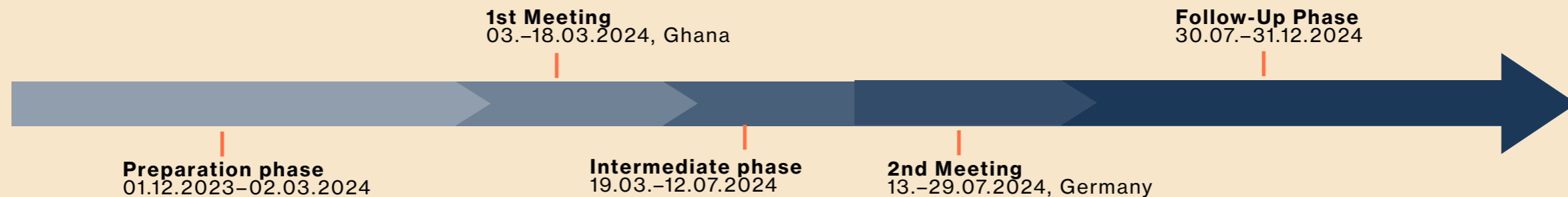
Project idea and background

The #CultureLAB International builds on experiences from the long-standing cooperation between the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft (BAG) Spiel & Theater (Federal Association of Drama & Theatre) and the Theatre for Social Change (TfSC).

The **BAG Spiel & Theater** is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and the umbrella organization for theatre work with and by children and young people in the Federal Republic of Germany. It enables children and young people to practice, reflect on, organize and innovate artistic and aesthetic theatre in a variety of formats throughout Germany and internationally.

Theatre for Social Change is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that has been running school and extracurricular projects in Ghana since 2003 and works with national and international partners to promote health awareness, education and children's rights. Young people use theatre to discuss and question their own attitudes, behaviour and socio-cultural environment. Through theatrical debate and reflection, they are encouraged to develop and defend their own positions.

During a prior Ghanaian-German youth exchange (2019) the participants expressed the need for a project or programme that would enable them to develop and conduct their own cultural projects and thus become active members in the cultural scene. The #CultureLAB International builds on this idea and was a transcultural format that focused on the educational concepts of global learning and education for sustainable development and combined them with the aspects of participation and empowerment of young people.



The #CultureLAB International invited young people between the ages of 18 and 27 from Ghana and Germany to take part in a 14-day exchange in Ghana and Germany each to explore the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 'Quality Education' and to design their own sustainable and extracurricular learning spaces in the form of theatre and cultural projects. The participants were invited to playfully and creatively explore how exciting extracurricular learning spaces can be created with theatre and cultural activities, how access to education can be made possible for everyone and to what extent topics such as educational justice, climate change and sustainability can be discussed with the help of theatre as an art form and what knowledge is needed to design cultural projects. After a development phase, the participants presented their results in a public performance and invited the audience to share and discuss them.

The project goals were:

- creating a transcultural exchange between young people from Ghana and Germany,
- empowerment of young people,
- creative engagement with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 'Quality Education' and its implementation in Ghana and Germany,
- creation of a theatre performance about 'Quality Education',
- empower young people to realise/organise their own cultural projects,
- getting to know different theatrical and media means of expression,
- raising better awareness and understanding of global contexts.



Visit and talk at ICDP (International child Development Programme)



Input "Impact of colonial structures on theatre"

The project was aimed at young people:

- between the ages of 18 and 27 from Ghana and Germany,
- from different educational contexts,
- with and without experience in theatre work,
- with an interest in developing youth-specific cultural programmes in a (socio-)cultural context,
- with an interest in international exchange and global contexts,
- who are looking for a space to experiment with their ideas.

The 14-member project group was made up of equal numbers of participants from Ghana and Germany: 5 young people each from Ghana and Germany, 1 artistic director each from Ghana and Germany and 1 project manager each from Ghana and Germany.

**Lina
Hildesheim, Germany**

My first highlight was the Skate-Performance we watched together in the theater. I was so impressed by the performers and the whole atmosphere of the piece. It especially made me happy, that the Ghanaians enjoyed watching it, it was a great group experience!



Visit of dance performance "skate-park"



Visit at Theatre for Social Change office and talk with members of the board



Theatre input and workshop

Project Meeting in Ghana

The group from Germany travelled to Ghana from 3–18 March 2024. An exciting and comprehensive programme with numerous inputs, workshops, visits to institutions and projects on the topics of 'sustainable education', 'project organisation', 'theatre' and 'life in Ghana' awaited all participants. Based on various inputs on the topic of 'sustainable education' and 'theatre', the participants developed a theatre performance on this topic under the guidance of two experienced theatre educators. This performance was shown to pupils and teachers during a visit to a local school in Accra and subsequently discussed with them. A second performance was then developed building on this first performance, which was then performed in public at the end of the encounter in a youth centre ('Jamestown Community Centre'). The young people also learnt what it means to plan their own cultural projects. In workshops with experienced cultural practitioners, they were given an insight into their work and exchanged ideas with them on the topics of project management, funding, press and public relations work and networking. These thematic aspects were closely linked to SDG-related topics and embedded in global contexts, taking Ghanaian and German perspectives into account. The programme was rounded off by a comprehensive specialist programme on Ghanaian history, culture and realities of life. This included visits to the former slave fortress in Cape Coast, the national park in Kakum and memorials to Ghana's independence. The encounter concluded with a detailed evaluation, the results of which were incorporated into the plans for the second project encounter.



Performance at local school and discussion with students



Johanna Bielefeld, Germany

My highlight of the framework program was the trip to Cape Coast, especially the visit to Cape Coast Castle. Until then, I had only engaged with the topic of the slave trade theoretically through books or films, but physically standing in the place where so many cruel events occurred leaves a completely new impression. It was very overwhelming yet an important experience. For me, it was particularly meaningful to share this experience and exchange thoughts with the participants from Ghana and also to end the afternoon and evening together as a group.

SIMON Accra, Ghana

Our visit to Tete Adehyemma Dance Theatre in Accra was one of the most memorable events we had during the project. We learnt a lot about Ghanaian cultural dances from the ethnic groups in Ghana. We also participated in the dance which made everyone happy. It's one of my highlight because it gave an insight of our Ghanaian culture to our German participants.



Visit to Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park & Mausoleum on Independence Day



Excursion Kakum National Park



Input and workshop
SDG 4 "Quality Education"



Input "Networking + marketing/PR" by John Owoo

Activities in the preparation, intermediate and follow-up phase

Both project encounters were accompanied by extensive preparation and evaluation activities in the preparation, intermediate and follow-up phases. These activities included:

- regular online meetings of the project team to plan all organisational and content-related matters of the meetings in Ghana and Germany,
- regular online meetings of the artistic directors,
- support of participants with organisational and content-related matters,
- preparation meetings, online and in person, with the participants before each project meeting,
- evaluation of each meeting using different evaluation methods,
- participants reports which reflected on certain key aspects of the project,
- evaluation meetings with the participants after the project meetings, sometimes accompanied by workshops with external speakers.



Input "Project management I + financing"

Kenzia Accra, Ghana

I really liked the way warm ups, energizers and breaks were included in the middle of every meeting. It was very important to me that we did something to energize our bodies because at some point everyone felt tired and slow, so it was a good idea to have warm ups, energizers and breaks during our meetings. I especially liked that we used more breaks and energizers in Germany, because we asked for that after the meeting in Ghana.



Warm-up and energizers



Input and workshop "Quality Education" by Gifty Wiafe

Project meeting in Germany

For the second project meeting, the participants came together at the Hackhauser Hof youth education centre in Solingen, Germany from 13–29 July 2024. An extensive programme with inputs, workshops, excursions and exchange formats awaited the participants at the second project encounter. The focus in Germany was again on exploring the topic of 'Quality Education' using theatre pedagogical methods and various theatrical approaches. The programme included workshops with cultural practitioners who presented various aspects of the topic from a German and Ghanaian perspective. The participants reflected on different global educational contexts in dialogue and with the help of various theatrical approaches and discussed the socio-economic, historical and political reasons for differences between the Ghanaian and German cultural areas. They looked at questions such as 'What does education mean for the individual, for a society and in a global context?'; 'Who can participate where and how?'; 'Can a general framework for high-quality education be defined?'; 'How can we communicate questions and topics that are relevant to us in a creative and exciting way?' Based on these questions, the participants, again accompanied by the two artistic directors, developed a public performance in Solingen that looked at the topic of 'Quality Education'. In addition to input from the artistic directors on various theatrical forms of expression, the programme included visits to different theatre performances in Düsseldorf and Cologne. As with the first project meeting, another focus of the encounter was the question of how young people can realise their own projects. The programme included interactive workshops on project management, social media, photography and visits to cultural education institutions. The programme was rounded off with programme items on culture, history and life in Germany with excursions to Cologne, Wuppertal and Düsseldorf. In addition to the official programme, there was plenty of room for informal exchange. This was reinforced by the shared accommodation in a youth education centre. The project meeting in Solingen concluded with a public performance by the participants in Solingen and a detailed project evaluation. After two intensive weeks, it was time for everyone involved to say goodbye to each other.



Visit to cologne

Bernard

Accra, Ghana

Also, while it was intriguing to know more about German culture, another highlight for me was the fact that both groups were industrious, thrifty and organized. Traveling to places like Cologne and trying new foods across the streets was quite amazing.

Düsseldorf
Dortmund
Wuppertal
Solingen
Köln
GERMANY



Input "Education through theatre" by Jonas Panhuysen (LAG Spiel und Theater NRW)



14 Visit NGO ROOTS & ROUTES cologne e.V. (RRCGN)



Visit of exhibition "That is colonial. westphalia's (in)visible heritage"



Workshop "How to make a video tutorial, camera, cutting, music" by Tjerk Löwer

Raheemah

Accra, Ghana

My highlight from the informal aspect is with the meet ups. For both Ghana and Germany it was great to meet each other and learn how to deal with each other. However, in Germany, it was a happy feeling to see each other again with the urge to share a lot that has happened through the time we were apart, like long time friends.



Input & workshop "Project management"



Public performance



Workshop "social media and photography" at the Dortmunder U



Theatre input "physical theatre"

Programm elements and focal points

- inputs and workshops on 'Quality Education',
- inputs and workshops on project management, financing, networking and public relations, workshops on different theatre methods and approaches,
- creation of three public theatre performances about 'Quality Education',
- visits of cultural and educational organisations institutions,
- workshop how to make your own video tutorial,
- inputs and discussion on postcolonial structures,
- daily warm-ups and reflections led by participants,
- visits and activities to learn about German and Ghanaian history and culture,
- transcultural exchange between Ghana and Germany.



Bonfire night



The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Importance of Quality Education

Johnson Kefome

Theatre for Social Change: Promoting Quality Education

Theatre for Social Change (TfSC) is an innovative Ghanaian non-profit organisation whose heart beats with a relentless pursuit: to empower, mobilize, and galvanize participation across Ghana. We aim to bridge gaps, ensuring that even the most vulnerable among us (those previously hindered by lack of information, access, self-confidence, discrimination, and stigma) can avail of essential services that foster sustainable health, education, economic growth, and child rights protection.

The journey towards this transformative impact is not solitary. We march forward in lockstep with a diverse spectrum of collaborators: the donor community, UN agencies, global developmental organizations, philanthropic foundations, civil societies, non-profits, the private sector, and all stakeholders who resonate with our purpose.

Our Vision
Communities resilient and informed, where every individual – be it child, girl, boy, adolescent, youth, woman, man, or parent – stands empowered with the confidence to shape and uplift their well-being and aspirations.

Our Vision

Our Mission
To invigorate and empower young people's and communities' aspiration to catalyze sustainable transformation in health, education, economic prospects, child protection and rights through harnessing the evocative power of interactive theatre and immersive participatory methods.

Our Mission

At TfSC we believe that education and social change cannot be achieved without the active participation of the individual, interpersonal relationship, supportive community and appropriate policies. Therefore, under our thematic area of education, we promote, encourage and mobilises resources and supports the participation of communities and volunteers in basic quality education delivery to enhance literacy, numeracy critical thinking and problem-solving through our workshops and interactive theatre performances in schools, faith based organization and communities.

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The UN Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations approved the 17 interrelated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 with the aim of advancing sustainable development and enhancing the quality of life for people everywhere. One of these 17 goals is SDG 4 'Quality Education', which seeks to guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone. It is well established that when individuals and groups irrespective of their race, gender age, socio-economic status and geographical location are offered quality education it enables them to gain knowledge and necessary skills required for the job opportunities for their socio-economic life. Again quality education ensures that gaps between difference social economic groups are bridged in order to promote social mobility and equality. It also enable people to make informed decision about health, environment and adopt healthy behaviours and seek healthcare service.

Quality Education in Ghana

In the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, Article 25 outlines the right to education for all citizens.

(1) All persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realization of that right—

- (a) basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all;*
- (b) secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational education, shall be made generally available and*



accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education;

(c) higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education;

(d) functional literacy shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible;

(e) the development of a system of schools with adequate facilities at all levels shall be actively pursued.

(2) Every person shall have the right, at his own expense, to establish and maintain a private school or schools at all levels and of such categories and in accordance with such conditions as may be provided by law.

Over the years governments have implemented educational programmes such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), the school feeding programme to basic public school. The capitation grant was introduced which was an amount of money per student enrolled in a basic school per year paid by the government to the schools in place of the levies paid by parents or guardians. There was also expansion of schools infrastructures such as E-block and ICT.

2017 the government in power expanded the gains made in the progressive free senior high education in Ghana by implementing the Free Senior High School policy. This policy ensured that all public Senior High Schools (SHS) in Ghana would be accessed freely by all who were places by the Computerized School Selection and Placement System (CSSPS). The policy took care of tuition fees, library fees, and provision of textbook, free access to boarding facilities, free provision of meals and coverage of examinations, science laboratory and utilities. For more information refer to the link [FSHS Secretariat](#).

Conclusion

The #CultureLAB International provided an opportunity for young people from Ghana and Germany to work together using interactive session, theatre base activities and experts talk to explore, develop, produce a play and performed it at public spaces in Ghana and Germany. During post drama discussion in Ghana its was agreed education should not be solely left in the hands of the teachers and government but also parents and guardians should make sure they have a good relationship with their children so that if anything is of concern to them they can easily open up to them.

Mateenah Accra, Ghana

One highlight from the content-related part of the exchange was the insightful discussions on post-colonial structures, where we explored the lingering effects of colonialism on education systems and social frameworks. The dialogue underscored the importance of integrating local perspectives in policy-making, offering a renewed understanding of how to champion contextualized quality education and inclusive project management.





Project out-comes: theatre performances

Project results

During the #CultureLAB International the ten participants developed and presented three public performances, two during the project encounter in Ghana and one in Germany. They created these plays discussing what they learned from the different inputs during the project and their own knowledge, experience and ideas. The intensively engaged with the different aspects of 'Quality Education' as listed in the sustainable development goals formulated by the UN and applied what they learned to the state of quality education in Germany and Ghana. In a collaborative process the participants decided on the issues and topics in relation to quality education they wanted to present to an audience and developed the theatrical expressions to do so.



Performance at local school, Ghana

of 14 years and their teachers.

Theatre approach and methods: Using the method of Forum Theatre the participants developed five short scenes with the support of the project's artistic directors.

Content: The play told the story of Fatima (Fati), a 14-year-old aspiring doctor, who struggles to balance her education with household responsibilities as the eldest daughter of busy petty traders, Mr. and Mrs. Mohammed. Despite her ambitions, she often misses school and performs poorly due to her overwhelming chores and childcare duties. While one teacher misunderstands her situation as laziness, another empathizes and seeks to help. However, when the teacher visits Fati's parents and attempts to discuss solutions with them, they refuse to cooperate and decide to take Fati out of school due to their belief that as a woman, her place is in the home.

SDG 4: The play addressed several issues that prevent young people, especially girls, from receiving quality education. It highlighted gender discrimination and the influence of traditional gender roles in Ghana. The story showed the pressure placed on girls to conform to traditional gender roles, where their worth is often measured by their ability to fulfil domestic duties rather than pursue their aspirations and education. The play also raised awareness for socioeconomic challenges and education inequality. The main protagonist's situation underscored the disparities in access to education, as her family's economic struggles prevented her academic success despite her aspirations. The story hinted at broader systemic issues within the educational system, where the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often overlooked or dismissed, perpetuating cycles of inequality.

Impact / audience reaction: After the performance members of the audience were asked to join the actors on stage, chose a scene they want to change and play the role of the character whose behaviour or actions they want to change in order to change the ending of the play. After this the participants split into smaller groups and engaged in a lively audience discussion with the students.

Place: The performance took place at a local junior high school, Tariya Islamic M/A 2 JHS, in Accra. The audience consisted of roughly 100 students, all around the age



Johanna, 26 Bielefeld, Germany

It was a very special experience, because we had the opportunity to talk to the students and got to know their perspective about quality education. They confirmed a lot of things we already talked about beforehand and I learned that the reason why a lot of children cannot go to school every day is because they have to work and support their families.

Public Performance Jamestown Community Center

Place: The second play that the participants developed, was performed in front of the Jamestown Community Center. The community center is situated in the middle of Jamestown, a lower-income area of Accra. In order to get an audience for their play, the participants

did a so-called mobilisation before the play, where they went into Jamestown in teams of two, one Ghanaian, one German, and invited people to come see the play. A lot of people followed their invitation, so that a large audience gathered in front of the community centre to watch the performance.

Theatre approach and methods: The play built up on the first play and added a traditional Ghanaian dance with live drumming.

Content: The play showed two parallel stories on stage: two girls aspire to become a doctor. One girl is supported in her education and her aspirations from her parents, whereas the other girl has no support from her family or her surroundings. Only the child with a family that supports her education was able to reach that goal. The other one, who got no support from her family, didn't stay in school and couldn't

complete her education. She ended up unemployed and sick and encountered the other protagonist as the doctor that treated her.

SDG 4: Since the play built up on the first play developed within the project, it also addressed similar topics. In addition to the aforementioned issues (socioeconomic challenges, education inequality, traditional gender roles) it stressed how education is tool for empowerment: The denial of education to one of the two main characters served as a stark reminder of the transformative power of education in breaking cycles of social and gender inequality and empowering individuals to pursue their dreams and contribute meaningfully to society. It also highlighted the importance of a supportive environment for a successful education.

Impact / audience reaction: After performance there was a post drama discussion in which the audience participated actively. The audience's reaction during and after the play showed that the issues depicted in the play resonated with the audience and that theatre is a suitable method discussing topics like 'Quality Education' and the issues connected to it.



Simon

Accra, Ghana

Our performance at the James Town community center was also a way, we educated the people in the community about what quality education is and the roles our parents and ourselves play in it to improve quality education. [...] I was happy to see a large number of people watch our play and to contribute actively in it. We brought up our own play concerning quality education which was used to educate people living in the community. Parents and students were both educated through the drama and we also had a post drama discussion about the drama and what quality education entails. [...] Even though different ideas were brought up by the audience during the discussion, we shared our opinions together and at the end of it, everyone understood the message we tried to convey to them.



Public Performance Solingen

Place: The performance took place in front of a local church, situated close to the city centre. Ahead of the performance the participant again did a mobilisation and invited people to their performance.

Theatre approach and methods: Because it couldn't be expected, that everybody in the audience spoke English, the working language of the project, well enough to follow the play, a lot of non-verbal forms of expression were used and the language used was kept simple.

Content: The play tells in 8 scenes the story of Luca, who struggles in school and can't find their "spark" to get the education they need. In each scene Luca is played by a different participant. We see how Luca struggles in school to follow the strict rules and how their creativity is killed by their teacher and parents. We see how expectations and demands from teachers and their parents paralyze them until they meet a supporting friend who encourages them to embrace their creativity. This scene leads to all actors/participants on stage presenting an individual statement about what they believe needs to be changed to make quality education available for everyone. The last scene sees all actors on stage breaking slowly free from the rules and embracing one's creativity in a playful dance scene.

SDG 4: This play looked at quality education from a German perspective, in particular at factors or reasons why not everybody in Germany has access to it. It showed how biases of teachers can lead to discrimination and thus a lack of access to quality education. The participants were able to create powerful images that highlight the pressure many young people face to do well in school and the importance of a supportive environment for a successful education. The performance also stressed the need for space for creativity and individuality in the educational system, so that all children can get the education they need.

Impact / Audience reaction: The performance and the lively post-drama discussion were well-attended. The feedback on the performance was very positive. The discussion showed that the issues depicted in the play affect many people and that there is a need to address the problems in the German education system.

Lina
Hildesheim, Germany

After the presentation we talked to the audience and asked them about their experiences in school. One woman was really touched by the scene where the teacher handed out marks, because she made bad experiences with teachers that graded unfair and unreasonable. An older man told us, that he couldn't be creative in school and now, at over 70, he started sculpting and discovered his talent for this. We were really touched by these stories and that the people could relate to the story we showed. I also had the feeling that we were really euphoric and proud of our group in the end, that we managed to create and show this presentation as a conclusion to our exchange project.





Insights into the artistic process

Building a trustful working atmosphere

Birte Heinecke

As artistic directors Grace and I created the theater workshops to build the ground for a rich collaboration and inspiring conversations, guiding the process along the poles of intercultural exchange, theatre and 'Quality Education'. We each brought in our expertises and experiences in theatre pedagogy to form a creative, reflective and trusting environment. In interviews, games, training and improvisational performative formats the participants engaged in play and built towards a common language and repertoire. The participants contributed their experiences and approaches from the beginning. One of my highlights was on the first day, when the participants told a story about a personal object, they were asked to bring along, to a partner. This led to a highly trusting and intimate atmosphere in the room. During the meeting in Ghana each participant facilitated at least once the daily Warm-Up and reflection, which both allowed the group to grow closer and to experience each other as facilitators and directors. The introduction of the three cards "veto", "responsibility" and "clarity" inspired by Maïke Plath invited the participants to raise awareness to their own needs and personal boundaries. Even though the physical cards were rarely pulled, it was helpful to refer to them when discussing group dynamics. An interesting situation arose, when one participant kept struggling with an exercise. This led to laughter by some of the other participants. Bringing awareness to that moment in the feedback round disclosed the variations in the perception of this situation: whether the laughter was with or at the person and whether this was supporting or discouraging. The discussion opened the door to become more aware of and speak about our interpretations of situations. Another highlight in the group building process was when we met in country-groups to open the space for questions that the participants were shy about asking in a discussion with the whole group. Three of the questions were written down and sent to the other group in a letter and answered respectively. These discussions were highly fruitful. They revealed that some questions could not be answered collectively and triggered further talks about sensitive issues.

The participants created the plays discussing what they learned from the inputs and drawing on their own knowledge, experiences and ideas. As artistic directors we gave space to the group to develop their workflow and stepped back into a supervising and mentoring role. While developing the plays, the participants discussed their own diverse aesthetic experiences and preferences. One issue that came up between the participants was the reproduction of stereotypes and also how one can represent a culture one does not belong to, for example if it was appropriate for a German participant to play the main character in one of the plays, a young Ghanaian girl. The second play built upon the first with some freshly learned theatrical

means as well as a traditional dance added in deliberately. The progress displayed the growing trust and experience of the group. In the process we had to be constantly creative around schedule changes and infrastructure. This led for example to a rehearsal at a beach restaurant, where we had to navigate between too much sun and too much noise. Even though challenging all participants and the team mastered towards a rewarding result.

Luise

Bochum, Germany

My highlight with regard to the framework was the interactive and communicative way in which the whole thing was organized. Everyone was addressed individually, and the heads of the project always looked at what the group needed at each time. When things got a bit sluggish, an energizer was done to get us going again. If the breaks were too short and we didn't have enough time, this was usually taken to heart after we mentioned it and taken into account in future.



Using Forum Theatre by Boal to talk about Quality Education

Grace Safoah Aryeetey

Working closely with the German artistic directors, we planned the schedule for the theatre workshops and identified the various theatre methods that were used to explore 'Quality Education'. In my engagement with the young people I used the method of Forum Theatre by Augusto Boal. In my opinion the technique stimulates dialogues, exchanges, learning, teaching, and pleasure. Theatre for Social Change (TfSC) as an organization also uses this innovative interactive theatre methodology because TfSC believes that real social change begins with individuals and communities reflecting on their own values, beliefs and practices to build knowledge and skills to develop confidence and assertiveness to enable them make informed choices and access services to influence desirable changes.

The participants took part in workshops on Forum Theatre development and together with keeping the inputs on 'Quality Education' in mind, they brainstormed on the relevant / personal issues affecting quality education in both countries which they want to highlight to

see a desired change as part of contributing to the achievement of the SDG 4. By guiding the participant through the Forum Theatre process they came up with a very real life story based on practical experience from an organization working on SDG 4 'Quality Education'. With this they decided and agreed on a theme for their play, arranged scenes from the story which they performed as a play. Each participant was encouraged to choose a suitable role as a character in the play considering the character role that suits them best. A series of rehearsals were performed for the perfection of the play. This play was performed during a school visit to a local school in Accra. The performance in the school was co-facilitated by a participant.

Successfully guiding the participants through all the theatre methods by all the three artistic directors on this project and having our school visit and public presentation performances was something that went very well. The massive audience participation highlighted that the content of all the performances were not only well understood, but relatable and relevant for the audience.



Felix
Bielefeld, Germany

As part of the work in Ghana we learned about Forum Theatre, and later about another technique called Real-time Composition. I had only really known classical theatre before, and it was very fascinating to learn about these other approaches. For how they utilize theatre for very different purposes, but especially because they allow the art to grow much more intuitively and organically, which creates unexpected and sometimes very beautiful results.

My role as an artistic director Hannah Löwer

was to facilitate a collective process that empowered each participant, while introducing aesthetic tools that helped them develop their creative potential.

In our performance in Solingen on 'Quality Education', the participants were active creators who developed scenes, researched topics, and built characters collaboratively. We used for example improvisation and performative theatre to build confidence and explore non-verbal forms of expression. Our content creation was collaborative, starting with theatre techniques, consulting experts, and making decisions through group discussions. When challenges arose – like a participant's mobility limitation – we adapted creatively, reassigning roles and preparing collaborative solutions.

The project culminated in a powerful performance that engaged city audiences and sparked meaningful discussions. The highlight was seeing the actors' proud faces, knowing they had created something meaningful together. Despite a packed schedule and limited rehearsal time, we created a theatrical experience that was a true journey of personal and collective discovery.

Merle, Kirchlengern, Germany

In terms of inputs, my highlight was Hannah's improv session in Solingen. Getting to know these methods was simply a lot of fun and during the performance of the small groups I really had the feeling that such an incredible amount of creativity had come together and found space.

As an artistic director, my role was to create a nurturing environment where participants could explore and express themselves through theatre. My aim was to build a supportive framework that allowed participants to play, experiment, and grow artistically. By establishing a safe space, I guided the creative journey through thought-provoking questions and diverse theatre methods. The goal





In dialogue...

In dialogue...

Johnson Kefome, Siemke Hanßen & Ute Handwerg

...with the tandem responsible for the project, consisting of Siemke Hanßen (BAG) and Johnson Yaw Kefome (TfSC).

The questions were asked by Ute Handwerg (BAG).

The #CultureLAB International has just come to an end. The year 2024 was particularly intense with the back-and-forth encounters in Ghana and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Could you please describe your current perspective on the project with three adjectives.

J.Y.K.: Collaborative, creative, cultural.

S.H.: Enriching, creative, challenging.

From the various evaluation rounds with the participants, we know what they take away from the project for their various life references and contexts.

What have you learned in the project that you can take with you in your work, including from the participants?

J.Y.K.: During this project I have learned the following; first - planning and flexibility: We had to change our project plan and shift to online activities due to the COVID-19 outbreak and delays in visa appointments. I've learned from this experience how crucial it is to blend meticulous preparation with adaptability. I can make sure that initiatives stay on course and continue to achieve their goals even in the face of uncertainty by being ready for unforeseen detours.

Second - empowerment of young people to take charge: I have personally witnessed the importance of enabling others to take charge of their job by observing the effects of young people designing and implementing their own projects. I will use the lessons I learned from this experience to help and trust the upcoming generation of leaders in our future joint endeavors.

Also - diversity: This project has taught me the richness that diversity brings to the table. When we embrace the unique perspectives and experiences of young people from different cultural backgrounds, we created a vibrant and inclusive project that celebrated our differences. I will strive to incorporate diverse perspectives and approaches in my future work.

Again - open communication: During the pandemic the project's problems, like as the move to online activities, required effective communication. I've discovered that establishing trust, resolving problems, and guaranteeing effective project outcomes all depend on keeping lines of communication open, honest and frequent.

Furthermore - the power of patience: I have discovered that perseverance and patience can eventually result in a successful project implementation, even in the face of unforeseen obstacles and delays. My ability to manage intricate projects with several stakeholders and deadlines will be much enhanced by this course.

Lastly - transparency: I've learned from this project how crucial transparency is to project management in all its facets. We established trust with stakeholders and made sure that everyone was aware of and on the same page by being open and honest about project plans, schedules, and difficulties. In order to promote cooperation, responsibility, and success, I will give transparency top priority in my future work.

S.H.: I think one of the main things I learned from the project is that sometimes less is more. I also learned to keep the time management of the programme schedule more flexible to account for the different perceptions of time in different cultures and to accommodate the different needs of everybody, in order to prevent stress and disappointments. The project also drove home the importance of flexibility, patience and clear communications. When working with young people and in



an international setting, there will always be changes that you'll need to adapt to while staying calm. Therefore, it is important to keep everybody updated, so that everybody has the same information. Within the project meetings it proved to be very helpful to give daily reminders of the schedule via whatsapp.

During the meeting in Ghana the importance of time for informal exchange and for daily reflections became clear. For future projects I would therefore recommend a shared accommodation for all participants.

Johnson, you are specialized in addressing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The #CultureLAB focused on SDG 4 (inclusive, equitable and quality education). Did the theater approach to SDG 4 succeed? What were the two most striking insights or observations for you?

J.Y.K.: Our theatre approach to unpacking the SDG4 was successful because the participants through the workshops and the theatre performances and interaction with the audience gained more insights into what can be done in order to make progress in ensuring that education is inclusive, equitable and high quality. The most two striking insights and observation for me are how students want to be creative and not only follow what has been prescribed by the curriculum or by colonial education and also how parents and caregivers can support and create



and enabling environment that is safe for learning.

Siemke, you were the one who held the content-related, organizational and financial threads together on the German side and with regard to the entire project. What particular challenges did you face along the way? How did you deal with them?

S.H.: One of the main challenges for me was balancing not only the many different content-related elements of the projects programme (theatre, project management, quality education, video tutorials and transcultural exchange), but also the different needs and interests of all the parties involved in the project, namely the two organisations (BAG, TfSC), the artistic directors, the participants and the donors. This proved to be quite challenging. What helped me to balance all the different aspects of the project was the extensive exchange with everybody involved in the project, especially with you and Johnson as the project creators and while not abolishing certain elements, focusing the aspects of the projects programme, which were favoured by the participants. That's why the projects focus shifted during the project's duration from project management and video tutorials to theatre and discussing quality education. Another challenge was the managing and monitoring of the project's finances. Since the project had been postponed several times for the reasons already mentioned, there were numerous changes to the project costs, while the budget remained unchanged. The costs for the different cost categories were constantly changing during the project's duration. Through the help of a close monitoring of the budget, some slight changes in the programme, some shifting between the different cost categories, we managed to stay within the original budget.

Siemke and Johnson, you had to make a lot of decisions together. How did you coordinate, what was essential for your cooperation and the basis for your communication?

J.Y.K.: Whenever we want to make any decision regarding the project we asked the participants about their inputs and also consult with you and when all inputs are collected then we use them to finalise any communication issue or material. Again our regular online meeting were useful for us to discuss important information for decision making.

S.H.: I think transparency, trust, open communication, respect and clear responsibilities were the basis for our successful communication and cooperation. The project was able to build on the existing cooperation between the BAG und TfSC and profit from the existing trust between the two organisations. So even though it was my first project with the TfSC I knew I could trust and rely on them. Me and Johnson especially were in a constant exchange not only with each other, but also with the other people involved in the project such as the artistic directors and the participants. There were regular online meetings

between the project team and constant communication via e-mail and messenger services such as Whatsapp, often daily. When we had to make decisions concerning the project we tried to balance the different interests and specifications from all involved parties, BAG, TfSC, the donors and the participants. All decisions were made mutually by BAG and TfSC, while taking the wishes and opinions of the participants into consideration as much as possible.

Was the #CultureLAB a project on an eye-to-eye level for your understanding of the work?

S.H.: In my opinion the project was conducted on an eye-to-eye level. Both organisations were mutually responsible for the planning and organisation of the project. This is reflected among other things in the equal representation in the project group. Both organizations were hosting one project meeting each and were responsible for the managing of all organisational and financial aspects of those meetings, with the support of the partner organisation. Decisions were always made together.

Theatre for Social Change (TfSC) and BAG Spiel & Theater (BAG) have been working together closely for many years and have carried out joint projects.

Please complete the following sentences...

TfSC stands for...

S.H.: ...using theatre to promote social change.
The cooperation with TfSC in the project was productive, collaborative and enriching.
The working principles of TfSC are characterized by collaboration, communication and creativity.

The BAG stands for...

J.Y.K.: ...providing opportunities for amateur theatre groups, individuals and professionals in the arts and cultural space to share how their work contributes to social justices, equality at the local, national, regional and international level. The cooperation with the BAG in the project was mutual and transparent.
The working principles of the BAG are characterized by open communication, transparency, collaborative and young people focussed.

What is the value of international theatre projects and international cooperation from your point of view?

J.Y.K.: It provides opportunity for learning about own and others culture and not seeing things in only from one perspective.

S.H.: In my opinion international theatre projects offer a unique chance for an exchange on the personal and professional level. They provide new perspectives, skills, networks, knowledge and solutions. Thea-



tre is a highly suitable means of negotiating political and social issues and entering into a shared exchange. International exchanges provide the chance for personal connections, exchanges and personal growth. In our interconnected world with its many challenges international exchanges is more important than ever. It is a powerful tool to focus on our similarities and reduce stereotypes and prejudices.

If you were to highlight the special characteristics of the North-South exchange, what would they be?

J.Y.K.: North and South exchange is characterised with issue of culture dynamics, power balance, transparency and trust.

S.H.: I think in North-South-exchanges there is often the danger of a power imbalance between partners due to differences in the access to financial and other resources and still existing (post)colonial structures. Thus, it is very important to reflect on these imbalances and find useful methods to minimize or abolish these imbalances. A big challenge is the visa problem. Acquiring visa for groups from the Global South is often very difficult and demands a lot of resources and preparation without a guarantee to actually getting visa for all members of a group or delegation. Since stereotypes and prejudices about countries and people from the Global South are still widespread, I believe that North-South projects are very important as they offer unique possibilities to create personal exchanges and showcase voices and perspectives that are often overlooked.

In a nutshell, what does a successful North-South project look like to you?

J.Y.K.: Where both countries see the value or the impact of the project as success based on their cultural context

S.H.: For me in a successful North-South project everybody involved, e.g. organisations, facilitators and participants, contribute their perspectives, skills and ideas equally. Prejudices and stereotypes should be abolished and not reinforced.

**And finally...
...are there any concrete plans for a continuation of the collaboration?**

J.Y.K.: Yes based on the feedback from the young people and the audience in Ghana and Germany I will like to propose that we make this as an annual programme and the thematic areas can be explored by the young people

S.H.: There are already several ideas for further collaborations and mutual projects. For 2026 the BAG is planning to invite a group of Ghanaian theatre educators and theatre makers to Germany for a professional exchange programme with a conference in Hannover. Furthermore, we want to build on this project and develop another youth exchange project that discusses the topics of the SDGs by the means of theatre.

Thank you very much for the conversation!



