

PARTICIPANT INTERACTION PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AT THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH SCHOOL



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Our idea is to maximize the use of the International Research School resources which emerge under the conditions of international communication (children and adults from different countries and cultures), multipositioning of the School's program participants (students, tutors, delegation leaders, guest specialists, the organizing committee).

Whereas the central component of the School is the work in research and project groups, a separate interaction program is of great importance in order to create overall productivity and positive environment.

The International Research School is a rapidly developing educational project which contains the instruments to monitor social, educational and developing effects. It creates an opportunity to constantly perfect all the elements of the program including the participants interaction program.

The program is designed with the following stages:

- 1) introductory training to break the ice, to grasp the natural cultural communication barriers and the ways to overcome them, to create positive attitude to communication and to increase the value of intercultural communication;
- 2) daily evening programs ("Ending of the day") to reflect on the day in different social groups (project groups or delegations);
- 3) workshops on the hosting region traditions to introduce the guests to its culture;
- 4) national cultures night ("Cultural Evening") to raise the value of each culture's originality and to encourage interaction;
- 5) sports program consisting of morning workouts with national games of physical skill offered by the delegations and evening sports programs with team games;
- 6) "School Finale" program and rituals to encourage interpersonal communication between people of different cultures and



to increase the value of continuing to communicate after the project.

These elements were formed at the first Schools and continue to exist while developing constantly. So, by the 10th School the idea to build up a whole meaningful evening reflection program line which would start at the first training session and lead to a comprehended School finale was proposed. At the 10th and 11th Schools different metaphors were chosen, and a semantic outline of such programs was formed. Before this, each night of the program had its own format and a separate content emphasis. With the development of the program the format diversity remained intact, but the base line cohesion as a unified metaphor was amplified. For two years the School ended in a motor ship voyage to the unique Yakutian natural object – the Lena Pillars. The progression towards them was chosen for a symbolic interaction program unification. At the 10th School making a common map from different parts by people of different nationalities and moving on it to reach a common goal became such an image. At the 11th School the image of a ship and its movement along the river

became a symbol to plan and track project groups progress from the start to the finish.

In addition, all these progress images were formed into a “Matryoshka doll”: of the overall School program and inside each of the project groups separately. Each group discussed and marked the progress of its ship (outlined project/research stages realization) on a route map they created themselves. The groups were able to see each other’s progressions, compare them





with each other and the overall School progress. This allowed us to amplify the interaction program unification, and, also, to increase its value in enhancing the reflective component of the team project work. Moreover, it freed time for new evening programs.

At the 11th School the tutors were offered to increase role division inside their groups. A list of roles for the participants to distribute among themselves as permanent or changing daily was offered. There were such roles as a reporter (short notice for publication about what had happened in the group), a photographer (fixation and display of the life and events in the group

in a common digital space), a recorder (the one who marks the group's progression on the map), and, also, the roles necessary for the group to function – someone to quickly organize the participants, to attend an aspect of a specific task etc. In this aspect the work on organizing teamwork was methodologically supervised and reinforced, which is especially important under the conditions of limited time, plurality of tasks and their realization intensity. An efficient group is not a group where everyone does everything, but a group where role and task division mechanisms exist, and the roles are assigned together.

The “open space” format was a novelty of the 11th School. There were two nights when anyone (a participant, a tutor, a delegation leader, a member of the organizing committee) could offer a workshop for the common open space. The idea was to encourage initiative and self-actualization, to increase diversity and openness of the School's content program formation by the participants themselves for collaboration. The participants were given an opportunity to offer any activity they wanted to put into





effect with other interested participants. A time and a place within the School were selected and the willing participants inscribed their offers for everyone to see and choose. 10 workshops were conducted in one evening at the same time. This format aimed to encourage initiative and to create more opportunities for the participants to choose an activity for interaction based on the set algorithms of self-organization. It complemented and strengthened the effects of the overall School program and the interaction program in general.

The intergroup interaction formats amplification allowed us to achieve (along with a significant increase in the number of participants) greater intensity, productivity, communication pithiness between participant from different countries and to increase the involvement of people of all social positions – participants, tutors, delegation leaders, organizing committee – in the program.

