

EFTA-TIC Meeting of Trainers, Krakow, Poland, Oct 2nd – 4th, 2009. A brief report.

The recent EFTA-TIC trainers' conference in Krakow was the fifth in the series. It continued the tradition now well established by previous events in Barcelona, Florence, Rhodes and Toulouse of small-scale but high standard learning events where teachers and trainers can share their latest thinking and give each other feedback.

The purpose is to provide a platform for learning and exchange between teacher-practitioner-researchers using concurrent small interactional workshops as the principal medium. These are linked together by short plenaries where brief workshop reports are given. The scale of the event is such that it is possible to network and meet most of the participants over the course of the weekend if wished.

There are relatively few contexts in which trainers have the opportunity to interact with their peers and this is the key rationale for this EFTA-TIC series which has become a regular feature of the EFTA calendar in each of the two years between Congresses.

Krakow was attended by 80 delegates from 32 Institutes in 20 countries.

The host was Bogdan de Barbaro of the Department of Family Therapy in the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. Barbara Josefik and other colleagues assisted him. They created a context of welcome, a very smooth operation and the facilities in Collegium Medicum Didactic Conference Centre were excellent.

The opening session featured a videotaped interview with the renowned Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman who is now based in Leeds in the UK. This was a collaborative venture which involved various colleagues in three countries including Allan Holmgren, Peter Stratton, Helga Hanks, Paolo Bertrando and Rodolfo de Bernart. Some were interviewers, some editors and some brought audiovisual skills to bear on the material. The result was a provocative and intellectually stimulating opening presentation entitled 'Liquid Modernity' which highlighted some of Bauman's key ideas and established some themes which resonated through the conference. It is hoped to make the transcript of the interview available on the EFTA-TIC website in the near future and possibly the full video in due course.

Bauman's work and thinking reflected the theme of the meeting "Issues of Family Therapy Training in an Unpredictable World. A summary of his career and ideas may be accessed here <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003/apr/05/society>

Rodolfo de Bernart and his colleagues in Florence and Naples prepared a short YouTube video illustrating the power of the new social networking media. It is called 'The Liquid Communication' and can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Bvr3myfLPU>

A short and arbitrary selection of some of the workshop titles will give a flavour of some of the topics explored:

- The Ethnical Importance of Unpredictability for Systemic Therapy and Training. (France)
- Between Necessity and a Free-Mind - Improvising in Family Therapy. (Israel)
- Is a Family Therapist a Psychotherapist? Teachers' Dilemma. (Poland)
- The Ethno-Systemic-Narrative Approach Applied to Families Belonging to Different Cultures. (Italy)
- What to Do When the Broader Social Context Pertains to the Illusion of Control? Systems, Psychodrama and Process Work Techniques that Embrace Unpredictability. (Bulgaria)
- I Wish S/he Didn't Show Up...! - Exploring Irritations about Trainees through Identifying Personal Emotional Triggers. (Romania)

Two important additions to the programme were “Further Developments in the Concept and Reality of a European Masters Degree in Family Therapy” presented by Jim Sheehan of Ireland and Per Jensen of Norway and a workshop looking at the outcome measures developed in the SCORE research project. Peter Stratton and Helga Hanks of Leeds Family Therapy and Research Centre presented it.

The social programme included a dinner hosted by the Vice-Marshall of Krakow. It was clear from his words the significance which he attributed to this group choosing to visit the city. It was also clear from this occasion how important it is to local pioneers like Bogdan that their efforts are supported by professional colleagues. This underscores the power of these events as ways to validate local initiatives and give them a form of international recognition.

We were taken on a tour of the labyrinthine salt mines of Wieliczka. This is a UNESCO World Heritage site where mining for salt has taken place over nine centuries. There are over 200 km of tunnels and many caverns including an underground cathedral. The local organisers also kindly provided a tour of the medieval city of Krakow.

A feedback session was held on Sunday to collate the various responses. In brief summary the merits of the design of the event were mentioned with an acknowledgement that it is emerging as a tradition for trainers. It was described as ‘like coming home’ and as the ‘only’ event specifically for FT trainers and therefore very important.

The key organisational role played by Kyriaki Polychroni was widely recognized. It was generally agreed that the conference had all of the necessary ingredients for a successful professional meeting and learning experience: generous hosts – Bogdan & Co., a committed organiser – Kyriaki, a relevant theme with an accompanying guru – Bauman, excellent facilities, an interesting location and enthusiastic presenters and participants. It maintained a high standard.

The location of the next trainers’ meeting will be decided by the incoming EFTA-TIC board which will be elected at the Congress in Paris in October 2010. Offers from potential host institutes are welcomed by the current board. Other EFTA-TIC board members who participated in the planning and running of this event were Mony Elkaim, Nevena Calovska Hertzog and myself.

Phil Kearney (Dublin.)