

Empowering learners against conspiracy theory

Example of use of the Allo-Tolerance Toolbox

The link between conspiracy theory and radicalism has been scientifically established by Dutch researchers in a survey published in the Social Psychological & Personality Science journal “Political Extremism Predicts Belief in Conspiracy Theories”. Conspiracy is also considered as a stepping stone to Jihadist radicalisation that offers a vision of the world inspired by victimism, of a Muslim world that would be the victim of a plot by the Western world to enslave Muslims or to create a third world war. French sociologist Gérald Bronner states that radicalisation is an incremental process, a staircase with small first steps. The conspiracy theory is very attractive. There is a re enchantment effect when you are offered a behind-the-scenes look: it is much more exciting than the dull news. Knowing "what's really going on" gives the impression of being smarter than others. It also makes it possible to put in coherence a whole series of incoherent events. But with the Internet, the information market has deregulated: any information can now be placed in the public space. It is the law of the strongest that applies, meaning that those who are motivated to impose their opinion win the battle for visibility. And the most motivated are the believers, the activists and the radicalised, because radicality is an indicator of motivation. The result is that we make a confusion between the visibility of a point of view and its representativeness.

The Allo-Tolerance Toolbox can be used to build a global awareness action by using a succession of available tools.

1st Tool Social media Conspiracy Theories

A case study about the consequences of conspiracy theory within a group



The screenshot displays the 'Toolbox' interface. At the top, there is a search bar with 'Google Recherche personnalisée' and a printer icon. The main content area is titled 'Social media conspiracy theories' and includes a 'Case study' button. Below this, there are three columns of information:

- KIND OF EDUCATION:** Basic education, evening school courses.
- DEFINITION OF THE LEARNER:** Adults (from 16 to 99), Mixed-gender group, Several nationalities (participants with German as the first or second language).
- DESCRIPTION OF THE GROUP:** Very small groups because of the inhomogeneous composition of the group and the individual learning plans (6-10 learners).

To the right of these columns is a word cloud image. Below the main content, there is a section titled 'DEFINITION OF STARTING SITUATION' which describes a participant's increasing intolerance and focus on conspiracy theories. A 'KEYWORDS' section lists: Conspiracy, Conspiration, Racism, Far right wing, Far left wing.

Through an example teachers or trainers can evaluate how conspiracy theories are modifying individual and collective behaviours. They can exchange about situations they may have lived, involving any kind of radicalism or conspiracy.

Toolbox

Anglais


Recherche personnalisée

2 min.

Counteracting conspiracy theory Learning resource

Analysis of conspiracy rhetoric. Preparation for immediate reaction to conspiracy opinions formulated in an educational environment.

PROPOSAL FOR USE	TARGET GROUP	PEDAGOGICAL METHOD
Action and reaction in case of radicalisation	Teachers, trainers and educators	Simulation



2nd Tool Counteracting Conspiracy Theories

Teachers and trainers will analyse conspiracy theories and prepare to react accordingly through role plays

OBJECTIVES

- Understanding the rhetoric of conspiracy theories.
- Preparing to react when learners use conspiracy arguments.

DESCRIPTION

- Facing conspiracy theories in class
 - Participants share concrete experiences from the classroom. Examples are written down on the blackboard.
 - They try to organise the list of examples: is it possible, and if so, in what way, to categorise them? There are several possibilities: are the conspiracies organised by minorities, or by people in power? How can conspiracies be categorised according to the position of the enemy (outside, within, above, below)? Etc.
 - Participants create a list of situations in which conspiracy words/phrases emerge.
 - Participants share and exchange their ideas on the above topics.
- Analysis of conspiracy mechanisms.
 - Groups of 3-4 teachers are created. Each group chooses a conspiracy example, analyses its structure, and presents their findings to the whole group. They can use computers for their research. The next step is the determination of a common scheme.
- How to react to conspiracy theories?
 - Open discussion on the difficulties related to fighting conspiracies (cf. refuting conspiracy theory). What can be done in the classroom? The proposed guidelines are distributed, participants are reminded that the idea is to carry on with a discussion ruled by logic and common sense. A basic common agreement should be formed: the need to raise doubts in the mind of the learner.
- Role playing
 - Organisation of two successive role plays corresponding to two different cases.
 - After a terrorist attack, a learner says that "the attack was probably an operation organised by the United States to undermine the culture and image of Islam, with the aim of joining European nations against Islam. It is likely that Israel's security agents are involved."
 - Based on a case selected by the group, in the analysis phase, or on an unsatisfactory situation experienced by one of the participants.
 - Each role (learner/teacher) is played by a group of 2-3 teachers. The others observe and take notes.
 - For each case, an exchange of roles is performed, the same teachers playing alternatively

TYPE
Method

PEDAGOGICAL MODALITIES
Use in group

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
12-20

DURATION
3h

COST
None

CREATORS
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DATE OF CREATION
2017

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LANGUAGE(S) AVAILABLE
English
Portuguese, Portugal
Slovenian
French
German
Romanian
Spanish
Italian
Dutch



3rd Tool

Activity to implement with learners: 2 options



Fake News



Information Analysis Protocol

Toolbox

Anglais


Recherche personnalisée

4 min.

Fake news Learning resource

Familiarise students with criteria used to assess the credibility of news, help them distinguish between facts, information and opinions.

PROPOSAL FOR USE	TARGET GROUP	PEDAGOGICAL METHOD
Prevention of radicalisation	Age 15-25	Exercise Game



OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate the credibility and reliability of websites.
- Rate sites by applying the criteria.
- Evaluate sources, including social media.
- Develop students' media literacy skills.

DESCRIPTION

- Ask students what sites they usually visit and why. Ask them if they know whether the sites are reliable or not and what criteria they use if any.
- Set students in groups and ask them to negotiate and write down their group criteria in selecting sites (when they have to do research for a school project); after that give them the following questions to consider whenever they use a site and tell them to think twice if their answer is no.
 - Who created the site?
 - Do they have expertise?

TYPE
Awareness module
Debate

PEDAGOGICAL MODALITIES
Collaborative activity
Use in group

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
12-24

DURATION
3h

Toolbox

Anglais

Recherche personnalisée

2 min.

Information analysis protocol Learning resource

Learners elaborate a protocol to follow so as not to be deceived by information from the web whatever the issuer: radio, television, traditional press, online press, social networks...

PROPOSAL FOR USE	TARGET GROUP	PEDAGOGICAL METHOD
Prevention of radicalisation	Age 15-25	Moderated discussion



OBJECTIVES

- Empowering learners regarding their access to information.
- Analysing what we are searching for with information.
- Building a critical approach towards information.

DESCRIPTION

The activity is performed in 4 steps. The trainer does not initially introduce any contents: they do not mention conspiracy theories, or enter into discussions about what is (supposed to be) true or false. They ask questions, introduce interesting examples, help learners to keep track of what is being said and support them to formalise their work.

- Group discussion about the use of the Internet. Each participant gives examples. Uses are listed on a blackboard.
- Group discussion about information. The trainer asks questions to encourage and stimulate discussion. Can we categorise information? What are the possible categories?

TYPE
Awareness module

PEDAGOGICAL MODALITIES
Collaborative activity

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
8-16

DURATION
3-4h

COST
None

CREATORS

With "Fake News" activity, learners write down criteria they use in selecting sites and compare them with a set of questions provided by the trainer. By using "Information analysis protocol" we take another angle: the teacher is not saying what is true or false, but s/he helps learners to think about their use of information and to determine their own criteria of trust regarding their access to information.