



The *Diavers* method *

Evelien van Asperen ©

The *Diavers* method was developed by Evelien van Asperen, as a result of her doctoral research into bottlenecks in intercultural communication (2003). This research demonstrates that a dominant definition of culture exists. This definition is often the cause of problems surrounding interculturalization and leads to paradoxical situations. This intercultural paradox causes dilemmas, circular arguments and power struggles. This evokes fear and uncertainty, which in turn interferes with communication.

Knowledge of other cultural customs and traditions provides a broader view of the world, but it does not solve the problem of clashing values. Communication skills contribute to good meetings. But in order to deal with problems we need supracultural values, such as human rights. The *Diavers* method focuses on attitude, dialogue and justice, rather than on cultural difference.

The method utilizes an analytical framework of views on diversity, which supports the explanation of the intercultural paradox, how circular arguments, power struggles and the us-them communication pattern can be broken. The framework imposes critical (self-) reflection and facilitates the analysis of interactions, policy and problems in society and the workplace. The method is suitable for everyone. Some may learn to adopt a more open or modest position, while others can learn to set limits.

Participants frequently practice applying the analysis framework with the aid of various working methods, such as joint analysis of case studies, blanks exercise, role playing, a communication game and many more. There is extensive discussion as a result of an assignment on human rights. Besides learning from teachers, students also learn a lot from each other by exchanging experiences. Part of this is a practice in speaking invitingly and in giving and receiving constructive feedback. In other words, the *Diavers* method deals with intercultural communication and policy on a basis of a human rights approach in the area of society building and international co-operation.

* [The name *Diavers* is derived by combining a number of (Dutch) words and concepts, namely diversity di(a)vers; dialogue; current events: dia (=day)vers(=D) fresh); and transparent: a dia(=D) a transparency, or the transparent and positive of the “negative” of a photograph, a metaphor for clear and constructive communication. The name *Diavers* was created from a creative thought and creativity is one of the essences of the *Diavers method*.]