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Developmental Disabilities and Social Skills

Social Skills Workshop Model for Developmentally Disabled
Youths

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<p>Tämän toiminnallisen lopputyön tarkoitus oli kehittää työpajamalli sosiaalisten taitojen tukemiseen ja kehittämiseen kehitysvammaisten nuorten parissa. Työpajamalli kehitettiin Lyhty ry:n Lamppu-koululle, joka on oppimisyksikkö peruskoulun käyneille kehitysvammaisille nuorille. Lamppu sijaitsee Helsingissä. Työpajan tarkoitus oli lisäksi tukea ja kehittää nuorten resursseja integraatioon ja normalisaatioon, sosiaalisia taitoja vahvistamalla. Tarve sosiaalisten taitojen harjoittamiselle havaittiin yhteistyössä Lampun kanssa.</p> <p>Metodit, joita työpajoissa käytettiin olivat psykodraama, sosiodraama ja dialogi. Työpajojen sisältö ja metodit perustuivat kehitysvammaisuutta koskevaan kirjallisuuteen.</p> <p>Kaksi työpajamallia, jotka tämän lopputyön puitteissa kehitettiin, ovat psyko- ja sosiodraama-työpaja ryhmäkäyttöön, sekä yksilö- tai pienryhmätyöpaja. Psykodraamaa ja sosiodraamaa käytettiin ryhmä-työpajoissa ja dialogia käytettiin henkilö-, tai pienryhmätyöpajoissa silloin, kun tarve henkilökohtaisemmalle keskustelulle havaittiin. Yksilö- ja/tai pienryhmätyöpajaa käytettiin myös draamatyöpajoissa opittujen asioiden tukemiseen. Työpajoja järjestettiin viikoittain, sisällytettynä osaksi Lampun lukujärjestystä, vuoden 2013 keväällä ja syksyllä. Osallistuminen työpajoihin oli vapaaehtoista.</p> <p>Joskin varmoja tuloksia työpajojen toimivuudesta ei saatu, epämuodollisten havaintojen perusteella joitakin positiivisia muutoksia oppilaiden käyttäytymisessä oli tapahtunut. Muutoksia havaittiin konfliktien hallinnassa, selviytymisstrategioissa, kommunikoinnissa sekä vuorovaikutuksessa. Oppilaiden palaute työpajoista oli myös enimmäkseen positiivista. Nämä tulokset aikaansäivät luottamusta työpajojen käytännöllisyydestä sosiaalisten taitojen harjoittamisessa ja tukemisessa, kun työpajoja käytetään systemaattisesti. Työpajat ovat edelleen osa Lampun lukujärjestystä.</p>	
Avainsanat	kehitysvammaisuus, integraatio, normalisaatio, psykodraama, sosiodraama, dialogi, Lyhty ry, Lamppu

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<p>The aim of this functional Bachelor's thesis was to develop a workshop model for supporting and training social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths. The workshop was developed for Lyhty ry's Lamppu school, a learning unit for developmentally disabled youths whom have completed comprehensive school. Lamppu is located in Helsinki, Finland. The purpose of the workshops is to additionally strengthen resources for integration and normalization through social skill training. The need for social skill training was recognized in co-operation with Lamppu.</p> <p>The methods utilized in the workshops included psychodrama, sociodrama and dialogue. The content and methods of the workshops was based on findings in literature related to developmental disability.</p> <p>The two workshop models developed include a drama workshop and a small-group counseling workshop. Psychodrama and sociodrama were used in group-drama workshops, whereas dialogue was used in individual or small-group workshops when a need for more personal counseling was recognized. The small-group workshops were also used to augment the group-drama workshops. The workshops were held on a weekly basis, as an integrated part of Lamppu's curriculum during the Spring and Autumn of 2013. Participation in the workshops was voluntary.</p> <p>Though definitive results were not obtained, informal observations of the students revealed some positive changes in their behavior. Changes in behavior were noted in areas of conflict management, coping strategies, communication and interaction. Student feedback from the workshops was also mostly positive. The results increased confidence in the benefits of the workshops as a viable tool for social skill training when used systematically. The social skill workshops remain a part of Lamppu school's curriculum.</p>	
Keywords	developmental disability, integration, normalisation, psychodrama, sociodrama, dialogue, Lyhty ry, Lamppu

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1 Introduction

The aim of this functional Bachelor's thesis is to present methods of developing and supporting social skills amongst developmentally disabled (DD) youths in the context of this thesis' working life partner, Lamppu school. Lamppu will be presented to the reader in the next chapter. The background literature on developmental disabilities presented in this thesis aims at exhibiting the need and relevance for intervention in regards to social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths. The method developed for supporting and developing social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths manifests in this thesis as a social skills workshop, which utilizes methods of psychodrama, sociodrama and dialogue. These concepts will be defined in the methods chapter of this thesis. The primary model of the social skill workshop is a drama workshop, which utilizes psychodrama and sociodrama and the secondary workshop model utilizes dialogue. Furthermore, literature on the learning and teaching processes in relation to developmentally disabled individuals was used to guide the planning and implementation of the social skill workshops. Thus, the social skill workshop method developed in conjunction with this thesis is evidence-based practice.

The social skill workshop method was developed in light of literature on developmental disabilities and additionally aims at enhancing chances of normalization and integration amongst developmentally disabled youths. It is hypothesized in this thesis, that successfully supporting and developing social skills will enhance the aforementioned chances of normalization and integration amongst developmentally disabled youths. Chapters 3 to 5 present background literature on developmental disabilities, characteristics of developmentally disabled individuals as learners, teaching individuals with DD and, more specifically, literature related to impaired social skills amongst the developmentally disabled. In chapter 7, the reader will be presented with example sessions and a reflection of two social skill workshops that took place in the autumn of 2013 with developmentally disabled youths from this thesis' working-life partner, Lamppu-school. The social skill workshop method further aims at complimenting and enhancing the quality of service provided by the working life partner, Lamppu.

Due to difficulties in setting measurable goals and both scientifically and ethically valid methods of measuring the development of social skills amongst the target group, results will be discussed in terms of the validity of the workshop method in supporting social skill acquisition and development in light of findings from the example workshops and the literature presented in this thesis. In the discussion chapter, the workshop method will be evaluated, critically analysed and recommendations for application, progress evaluation and further studies are given.

2 Working Life Partner and Target Group

At this stage, it is relevant to introduce the working life partner, Lamppu, to the reader in order to understand the usefulness of this thesis in regards to both Lamppu and its students in general. Lamppu is a part of an organization called Lyhty ry. As is stated on the website of Lyhty (Lyhty, 2012), Lyhty is a non-profit organization, founded in 1993, aimed at improving the well-being of the developmentally disabled, their families, close ones and society in general. More specifically, the unit for which the workshop model will be produced is a learning-unit for students with DD, whom have graduated from comprehensive school. The name of this learning unit is Lamppu. The students at Lamppu are between the ages of 16 and 25. As defined by UNESCO (n.d.) "“Youth” is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group.” Furthermore, UNESCO (n.d.) states on their website, that people between 15 and 24 are considered to be youths. Thus, the students at Lamppu are considered and referred to as youths in the context of this thesis.

The aim of Lamppu, as mentioned on their website (Lamppu, 2012), is to provide and support students with knowledge and skills required in everyday life as well as individual support in furthering and maintaining their resources for increasing their possibilities in education and/or employment in accordance with the students’ personal abilities. Also, individual skills and knowledge in everyday situations are supported through action-oriented learning. Hereby, the aim of this thesis, improving social skills and improving chances and resources for normalization and integration are in agreement with the aims of Lamppu, as social skills significantly affect the lives of the developmentally disabled, as will become evident from the literature presented in this thesis. Furthermore, as the workshops are action-oriented by means of psychodrama and sociodrama, the methods are also in accordance with the action-oriented learning approach of Lamppu. Students stay in Lamppu for a duration of five years.

The need for supporting social skills amongst the students at Lamppu was realized in co-operation with the staff from Lamppu, whom have noted that a considerable amount of their working time goes into managing conflicts between the students of

Lamppu and supporting their normative behaviour. For example, students would often get into arguments amongst each other and behave in ways that are not considered culturally normative. Thus, this thesis aims at providing a method, the social skill workshop, for the students to become more autonomous in managing conflicts and for establishing and supporting normative behaviour amongst the students. This is for the good of both the staff at Lamppu as well as its students. With the working life context now in mind, let us examine the facets of developmental disability in regards to social skills and the youths at Lamppu. Firstly, however, a definition of developmental disability is in order.

3 Defining Developmental Disabilities

3.1 Definitions of Developmental Disability

According to the Developmental Disabilities Association (DDA, 2013), developmental disability is a term used synonymously with the following terms: learning disability, cognitive disability, intellectual disability, mental retardation and mental handicap. For the sake of clarity, however, “developmental disability” or “DD” will be used as an umbrella term for the abovementioned terms in the context of this thesis. However, it is beneficial to present different definitions of developmental disability to the reader in order to understand the complex nature of developmental disabilities and the variation in the discourse on the topic.

Mental retardation (retardation mentalis), is defined in The International Classification of Diseases (ICD), compiled by the World Health Organization (2010), as *“A condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind, which is especially characterized by impairment of skills manifested during the developmental period, skills which contribute to the overall level of intelligence, i.e. cognitive, language, motor, and social abilities. Retardation can occur with or without any other mental or physical condition.”*

According to the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (AIDD, 2000), developmental disabilities are a result of mental or physical impairments or a combination of both. The aforementioned act also states that developmental disabilities

result in functional limitations in self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living and economic self-sufficiency.

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD, formerly known as the American Association on Mental Retardation), states that the term intellectual disability covers the same population of people previously diagnosed with mental retardation (AAIDD, 2013). The main point of difference between the definition of intellectual disability by AAIDD and the other, previously noted definitions becomes evident from the following quote from the AAIDD (2013): “Intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in **intellectual functioning** (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in **adaptive behaviour**, which covers a range of everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18”. This definition of intellectual disability differs from the previous definitions, in that it combines intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour in interaction with environmental demands. This means, that impairments in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour are only considered to disable an individual through their interaction with environmental demands (Kaski et al., 2001. p.21).

Hereby, it becomes evident that the terminology and basic content of these different definitions are closely interlinked, with only minute differences in overall content. Kavale et al. (2004) state that there is a lack of consensus on the definition of mental retardation, which is one explanation for the abundance of definitions. This is the justification for the use of one umbrella term, developmental disability, for the previously defined terms used in this thesis. The aim of this is to maintain coherence and intelligibility throughout this thesis.

3.2 Psychological Aspects of Developmental Disability

Developmentally disabled people have a higher risk of psychiatric disorders. The prevalence of psychiatric and behavioural disorders amongst the developmentally disabled population is 30-50%, which is 5-7-times higher than in non-disabled populations. Psychiatric disorders found amongst the developmentally disabled population include neurotic development, psychotic disorders, autistic disorders, behavioural disorders and personality disorders. Psychiatric disorders may be reactive by nature; provoked by environmental factors, such as psychic trauma, excessive challenges or stimuli and/or insufficient challenges or stimuli. Predispositions to psychiatric disorders include

negative life experiences, poor social skills, poor communication skills, motor and sensory disabilities as well as socioeconomic factors. Psychiatric disorders can manifest in psychological symptoms such as restlessness, anxiety, poor attention span, aggressive/violent behaviour, self-harm, depression and dysphoria. (Kaski et al., 2001; Koskentausta, 2006; Emerson & Hatton, 2007.)

Thus the high prevalence of psychiatric disorders amongst the developmentally disabled population becomes evident. The following table from Emerson and Hatton (2007) shows more precise statistics on psychiatric disorders and, more specifically, statistics on emotional and conduct disorders (highlighted), which are relevant to the topic of this thesis.

Table 1 Point prevalence of psychiatric disorders among children and adolescents with and without intellectual disabilities¹

	Point prevalence, %		Odds ratio (95% CI)
	With intellectual disability	Without intellectual disability	
Any psychiatric disorder	36.0	8.0	6.5 (5.4–7.7)***
Any emotional disorder	12.0	3.7	3.6 (2.8–4.6)***
Any anxiety disorder	11.4	3.2	3.9 (3.0–5.0)***
Separation anxiety	2.7	0.6	4.9 (2.9–8.3)***
Specific phobia	2.0	0.8	2.4 (1.4–4.3)**
Social phobia	0.9	0.3	3.3 (1.4–7.7)**
Panic disorder	0.2	0.2	1.0 (0.1–7.3)
Agoraphobia	0.2	0.1	1.7 (0.2–13.1)
Post-traumatic stress disorder	0.5	0.2	3.1 (0.9–10.2)
Obsessive–compulsive disorder	0.2	0.2	0.7 (0.1–5.1)
Generalised anxiety disorder	1.6	0.6	2.5 (1.3–4.9)**
Other anxiety disorder	4.4	0.9	4.8 (3.2–7.2)***
Any depressive disorder	1.4	0.9	1.7 (0.8–3.3)
Depressive episode	0.9	0.6	1.5 (0.7–3.4)
Other depressive episode	0.5	0.2	2.1 (0.7–7.0)
Hyperkinesis (ADHD)	8.3	0.9	8.4 (6.1–11.5)***
Any conduct disorder	20.5	4.3	5.7 (4.6–7.0)***
Oppositional defiant disorder	11.1	2.3	5.3 (4.1–6.9)***
Unsocialised conduct disorder	1.9	0.4	4.9 (2.8–8.5)***
Socialised conduct disorder	1.3	0.9	2.1 (1.2–3.8)**
Other conduct disorder	5.2	0.5	10.5 (7.0–15.7)***
Autistic-spectrum disorder	8.0	0.3	33.4 (22.3–50.2)***
Tic disorder	0.8	0.2	5.2 (2.0–13.5)**
Eating disorder	0.2	0.1	1.3 (0.2–9.4)
Emotional disorder + conduct disorder	4.4	0.8	5.8 (3.8–8.8)***
Conduct disorder + ADHD	5.8	0.6	9.4 (6.5–13.8)***
Emotional disorder + ADHD	1.3	0.1	9.8 (4.4–21.9)***
Emotional disorder + conduct disorder + ADHD	0.8	0.1	8.7 (3.2–23.9)***

*P < 0.05; **P < 0.01; ***P < 0.001.

ADHD, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

1. Those with missing data were excluded from analyses.

Figure 1. The prevalence of psychiatric disorders amongst disabled and non-disabled children (Emerson & Hatton, 2007).

The prevalence rates above should be viewed critically, as Kerker et al. (2004) state that accurate prevalence rates for mental health disorders among people with developmental disabilities are difficult to identify. This is due to the difficulty of diagnosing psychiatric disorders among individuals with developmental disabilities and a lack of confidence in previous studies (Kerker et al., 2004.) However, Kerker et al. (2004) do state that, despite inconsistencies in studies on the topic, some mental health conditions are more prevalent among people with developmental disabilities than the general population. Hereby, the prevalence rates from table 1. should be viewed as cautious approximations to guide this thesis.

3.3 Social Skills

As stated in the previous sub-chapter on the psychological aspects of developmental disabilities, poor social skills are a predisposition to psychiatric disorders. In this, social skills segment of this thesis; the term “social skills” is used as an umbrella term to depict several areas of functioning that affect social functioning amongst developmentally disabled individuals. The common denominator amongst the following concepts that are to be presented is that they all affect social functioning. Thus, as the aim of this thesis is to support social skills amongst the developmentally disabled, it is crucial to present these segments that make up social skills, to the reader. Furthermore, it should be clarified to the reader, that all of the following impairments and characteristics of impaired social skills are, to some extent, recognizable within students at Lamppu. Thus, it is important to understand what kind of behaviour and impairments are to be worked on within the social skill workshops.

3.3.1 Conduct and Emotional Disorders

Conduct and emotional disorders too, lack a consensus in definition (Kavale et al., 2004). The lack of consensus and precision creates vagueness, which impedes the reliability of definitions. However, it is important to include some of the definitions in order to understand the basic nature of the aforementioned disorders (Kavale et al., 2004).

According to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10, 2010), conduct disorders are characterized by dissocial, aggressive and defiant conduct. Behaviour linked to conduct disorders violates age-appropriate social expectations. Examples of behaviour linked to conduct disorders include fighting, bullying, cruelty to people or animals, stealing, repeated lying and unusually frequent and severe temper tantrums. Behaviour linked to conduct disorders may also be symptomatic of other, underlying psychiatric disorders. (ICD-10, 2010: F91.)

The definition of conduct disorder found in the Handbook of Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties (Kavale et al., 2004) is consistent with that found in the ICD-10 (2010). Behaviour that characterizes conduct disorder includes persistent patterns of violating basic rights of others and age-appropriate social rules. The symptoms include non-compliant, aggressive, destructive and dishonest behaviour. Emotional disorders are considered to underlie conduct disorders. (Kavale et al., 2004.)

As defined in the ICD-10 (2010: F92), mixed disorders of conduct and emotion are “A group of disorders characterized by the combination of persistently aggressive, dissocial or defiant behaviour with overt and marked symptoms of depression, anxiety or other emotional upsets.” Furthermore, according to Kavale et al. (2004), any definition of emotional disorders stresses that behaviour linked to emotional disorders meet the following three criteria: severity, frequency and chronicity. Forness and Knitzer (1992 cited in Kavale et al., 2004) proposed the following definition of emotional or behavioural disorder:

(i)

The term emotional or behavioral disorder means a disability characterized by behavioral or emotional responses in school programs so different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norm that the responses adversely affect educational performance, including academic, social, vocational, and personal skills. Such a disability

(A)

is more than a temporary, expected response to stressful events in the environment.

(B)

is consistently exhibited in two different settings, at least one of which is school-related; and

(C)

is unresponsive to direct intervention in general education, or the child's condition is such that general education interventions would be insufficient.

(ii)

Emotional and behavioral disorders can co-exist with other disabilities. (iii)

This category may include children or youth with schizophrenic disorders, affective disorder, anxiety disorder, or other sustained disorders of conduct or adjustment where they adversely affect educational performance in accordance with section (i). (Forness and Knitzer, 1992 cited in Kavale et al., 2004.)

Findings from Greenbaum et al. (1996 cited in Kavale et al., 2004) show that in a large group of people with emotional disorders, nearly two-thirds had a conduct disorder diagnosis and two-thirds of this group also had another co-morbid psychiatric diagnosis. As defined in the Oxford Dictionaries, co-morbid means "the simultaneous presence of two chronic diseases or conditions in a patient" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). According to Bax et al. (2010 cited in Vinck-Baroody & Major, 2011, p. 626), comorbidity is common amongst the developmentally disabled, and that "The boundaries between these complex disorders can at times be blurry, and often multiple conditions are interrelated and co-occurring."

Thus, due to the lack of consensus in definitions and the complex nature of developmental disability in general, it becomes evident that simple and comprehensive definitions of the terms and concepts linked to this topic are challenging to define for the reader. With the above definitions of conduct and emotional disorders in mind, let us now examine emotion regulation and self-regulation amongst the developmentally disabled.

3.3.2 Emotion regulation

Emotion regulation controls the presence and/or intensity of emotions to facilitate responses that are contextually appropriate and beneficial in a specific situation. Emotion

regulation, as a process, begins with the identification of the situation/emotion, then continues by directing attention to the situation/emotion and then evaluating the situation, which ultimately leads to a behavioural response. (Gross & Thompson, 2007 cited in McClure et al., 2009.)

Emotion dysregulation, on the other hand, “refers to deficits in one’s ability to recognize, understand and accept emotions, engage in goal-directed behaviours while experiencing negative emotions, modulate the intensity and/ or duration of emotional responses through a variety of contextually appropriate methods, and/or willingly experience negative emotions while pursuing meaningful personal goals” (Gratz & Roemer, 2004 cited in McClure et al., 2009).

Self-regulation, a component of emotion regulation, is reported to be an area of difficulty among those with developmental disabilities (Gilmore et al., 2003). Self-regulation is defined as the ability/capacity of individuals to manage their own learning and behaviour (Butler, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001 cited in Gilmore et al., 2003). An important component of self-regulation in relation to the topic of this thesis is impulse control (Friedman & Scholnick, 1997 cited in Gilmore et al., 2003). According to McClure et al. (2009), self-regulation overlaps with emotion regulation. Individuals with developmental disabilities may be susceptible to having difficulty with being aware of their emotions, understanding their emotions and emotional experiences, as well as problems with communicating their emotions to others. There may also be “an increased tendency to rigidly adhere to a specific self-regulatory response (e.g., aggression or self-injurious behaviours) that may provide short-term relief but also involves significant long-term consequences.” (McClure et al., 2009). According to Benson & Fuchs (1999 cited in McClure et al., 2009), developmentally disabled people have a limited array of coping mechanisms at their disposal when emotionally aroused.

As stated by Nader-Grosbois (2011), self-regulation and emotion regulation impact cognitive and socio-emotional abilities amongst people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Emotion regulation, as defined by Nader-Grosbois, is the process in which an individual assesses, controls and modifies his or her emotional responses to reach a wanted goal, or to express his or her emotions in a socially adequate way. Furthermore, emotions affect the way in which a person communicates socially, how they relate to others, socialization and social sharing (Nader-Grosbois, 2011).

The complex nature of self- and emotion regulation becomes evident from the following quote from Nader-Grosbois (2011): "...emotions in children with ASD indirectly influence the development of self-regulation through their impact on sensory, motor, social, cognitive, and language or communicative processes. Not only do these latter processes directly affect the development of self-regulatory behavior (through the tools they provide for self-regulation), but self-regulation provides individuals with the capacity to control their emotions." Therefore, it becomes evident that poor emotion regulation has a very high impact on several areas of functioning. Although the above-mentioned study focuses on the socio-emotional abilities of people with ASD in particular, it should be mentioned, that this does not exclude people with different forms of developmental disabilities, as co-morbidity is common in the population of people with developmental disabilities (Bax et al., 2010 cited in Vinck-Baroody & Major, 2011).

The high incidence of comorbidity also becomes evident in Wehman & Sutherland (2013). Out of students with emotion and behavioral disorders (EBD), 25-30% also have characteristics of learning disabilities and more than 80% have academic and behaviour problems (Webber & Plots, 2008, cited in Wehman & Sutherland, 2013, 424). As comorbidity increases the risk of poor school and post-school performance and impairs social interaction, it is crucial to acknowledge comorbidity in order to provide adequate intervention and treatment. (Wehman & Sutherland, 2013.)

As stated in Wehman & Sutherland (2013), the most important challenge for youths with emotion and behavioral disorders (EBD) is the ability to control their behavior. Especially controlling impulses to do "unusual or bizarre things" (Wehman & Sutherland, 2013: 423). Inappropriate behavior is commonly a reaction to stressful or anxious situations, which is usually viewed negatively by peers and adults. Problem behavior often necessitates a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) in order to provide appropriate interventions. (Wehman & Sutherland, 2013.) The basic content of a psychosocial functional ability assessment will be presented to the reader later on in this chapter.

3.3.3 Functional Ability and Psychosocial Functioning

Functional ability is made up of several components, and its' construction is a complex process, which is hard to define with shared, collectively accepted terminology. Terminology used in defining functional ability is context-based. The human body creates the

basis for all functioning, such as meaningful tasks at an individual level, which is then affected by external, environmental, societal, cultural and technological factors. According to Kaski et al. (2001), a multidimensional approach is needed when determining the components that affect functional ability. Biological components are only a part of the process. Individual and environmental factors need to be taken into account in addition to biological components. (Kaski et al., 2001.)

Psychosocial functional ability is based on the interaction between several different factors. Psychosocial functional ability consists partly of personal attributes (cognitive and emotional resources, physical and psychological factors), partly the interaction between the environment and the individual (participation, social roles, situational help and support) and partly from external factors (operational environment, its physical attributes and rules of conduct). Thus, functional ability is a term that depicts these relationships. In functional ability, the skills/abilities, feelings, needs and aspirations of an individual meet the physical and social circumstances, expectations and demands of the environment. (Seppälä & Rajaniemi, 2012.)

The psychosocial functional ability assessment (FBA) of developmentally disabled individuals consists of two parts. The first part of the assessment consists of the evaluation of an individual's overall functional ability in their living and operational environment. This includes physical ability to function, articulacy, hygiene and cleanliness, living and home maintenance, working ability, social skills, social relationships, sensitivity, impulsivity, irritability, aggressive/violent behaviour, anxiousness, mood, psychotic symptoms and deviant behaviour. The second part of the assessment consists of collecting information on the nature and frequency of symptoms and problems an individual is portraying. The results of these types of assessments are then interpreted by comparing the symptoms and problems of an individual to their overall psychosocial functioning and emotional disorders. Particularly close attention is paid to the occurrence and prevalence of different combinations of the above variables. (Ojanen & Seppälä, 1996.)

Thus, it becomes evident that there are several aspects that affect social skills amongst the developmentally disabled. Psychological aspects, conduct and emotional disorders, self- and emotion regulation are all areas that affect socio-emotional functioning in developmentally disabled people, which in turn affects the social skills of an individual. All of the abovementioned traits and impairments are, to some extent, recognizable in the

body of students at Lamppu, which is why they have been included in this thesis. Due to anonymity and ethical validity, however, the youths from Lamppu will not be described in further detail, so as to make sure that students will not be able to be recognized from descriptions.

4 Normalization and Integration

The aim of this thesis is to support and develop social skills and social functioning amongst developmentally disabled youths, which in turn aims at supporting the normalization and integration of students within Lamppu and into mainstream society during and after their studies at Lamppu. Hopefully, by developing and supporting the ability of students to function in a culturally and contextually normative way, their process of normalization and integration will become easier.

4.1 Normalization

Normalization is a term that refers to supporting the developmentally disabled to adapt to and to get accustomed to societal norms. Perhaps even more importantly, however, normalization supports the notion that society and its culture should strive to tolerate difference and to accommodate the developmentally disabled. Thus, normalization is a two-way process, in which society and its cultural context are ready to accommodate and appreciate difference and to provide the prerequisites for the well being of developmentally disabled individuals. (Peltonen & Puupponen 2000, 136 cited in Paavola, 2006.)

The purpose of normalization is also to provide equal opportunity, responsibility, freedom of choice/speech and human rights to both the disabled and mainstream society (Lehtinen&Pirttimaa, 2005 cited in Paavola, 2006). Culturally normative means should be utilized among the developmentally disabled in order to establish and support culturally normative personal behavior. Atypical environments and services are not preferred, as affiliating solely with “atypical persons” and segregating people due to illness or disability, for example, is considered disadvantageous to the development of an individual. (Paavola, 2006.)

Normalization in relation to developmentally disabled individuals promotes deinstitutionalization. According to Landesman and Butterfield (1987), all supporters of the normalization movement view large institutions as “inherently degrading” (Center on Human Policy, 1979; Ferleger & Boyd, 1979 cited in Landesman & Butterfield, 1987). An example of utilizing culturally normative means to support culturally normative behavior is community placement. Advocates and opponents of normalization agree, that living in the community “promotes a better quality of life and safeguards human rights” (Landesman & Butterfield, 1987). Critics of normalization argue, however, that appropriate training and support should be given to developmentally disabled individuals prior to community placement. (Landesman & Butterfield, 1987.)

Normalization is divided into eight different components, which can be used to examine the normalcy of lifestyle and environments that developmentally disabled people are entitled to: Normalcy of daily rhythm, normalcy of weekly rhythm, normalcy of yearly rhythm, normalcy of experiences throughout lifespan, normalcy of respect for individuality and right to self-determination, normalcy of sexual models, normalcy of economic models/rights and normalcy of environment. In order to utilize the principles of normalization correctly, it is important that the effects of culturally normative customs and habits in relation to the development and maturity of an individual are understood. Furthermore, the aforementioned principles need to be applied accordingly in rehabilitation/habilitation, service structures and legislation for normalization to be effective. Normalcy is contractual and differs, contextually, according to culture and time. A fulfilling life can be lead with lacking means, if it is allowed. However, in regards to social interaction and cohabitation, it is not purposeful to accept behaviour that is irresponsible, negligent and/or disruptive. (Moberg, 1998.)

4.2 Integration

According to the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD, 1994), social integration is a broad and ambiguous topic. This complex idea can be defined in a multitude of different ways. For example, to some it is a positive goal that represents equal opportunity for all. To others, it implies “an unwanted imposition of conformity” (UNRISD, 1994). In relation to this thesis, however, “the widely held view” (UNRISD, 1994) that social integration is a positive goal in itself is embraced. Hereby,

social integration in the context of this thesis should be understood as “promoting harmonious interaction and solidarity at all levels of society.” (UNRISD, 1994).

As a process, integration has different stages, which are physical integration, functional integration, psychological and social integration and societal integration (Moberg, 1998). Physical integration means that the developmentally disabled are placed in a normal environment, with other people. It is in this environment, that functional integration takes place, as disabled and non-disabled people function together in the same environment. Social integration is actualized, when developmentally disabled individuals feel accepted and respected as individuals, regardless of their differences, within their social environments. Societal integration allows developmentally disabled individuals to feel accepted and valued within a society, in which they feel capable of being responsible for their own and societal matters. (Kuparinen 1995, 45-46. Cited in Paavola, 2006.)

Supporters of the most progressive school of thought on integration (full inclusion) are of the opinion that ideally all students, both developmentally disabled and “normally” developed students, would attend the same schools (Moberg, 1998). In Finland, integration of developmentally disabled people into mainstream education has been slow to develop. Segregation of special education and regular education has been common in Finland and the number of special education classes and groups have increased in the past decades. It is estimated that only a quarter of integrated students remain integrated in mainstream education. (Naukkarinen et al., 2010.) Although the majority of students complete comprehensive school in special education classes, they are commonly situated, physically (physical integration), within regular school institutions (Moberg, 1998).

According to Moberg (1998), real, realistic and attainable integration is social by nature in educational contexts, and in adulthood it is social and societal. In a Nordic context, integration stems from aspirations of societal equity and a democratic idea of man. As Moberg explains, it is not purposeful to go too far in the ideology of integration, as full integration (inclusion) especially in an educational setting, for example, is problematic due to lacking prerequisites for integration. However, Moberg outlines the preconditions for the positive development of integration: The respect of each person as an individual, the opportunity for each individual to make choices concerning their own lives; the

right to self-determination, the provision of equal opportunity, the right to be valued and the right to participation. (Moberg, 1998.)

In regards to the social skill workshops, integration and normalization are supported by finding socially adequate ways of expressing oneself and by finding ways of dealing with problematic situations in culturally normative ways. As stated by Moberg (1998,) it is not purposeful in regards to normalization to accept irresponsible, negligent or disruptive behaviour. This notion should be extended to be relevant in terms of integration too, so as to try to work on unfavourable behaviour in the workshops to support normalization and integration. As will become evident in the presentation of the example workshop later on in chapter 6, such negligent or disruptive behaviour that can be addressed with the workshop method is bullying. If students can be taught to express their negative feelings or emotions in a constructive way, rather than bullying for example, the process of normalization and integration should hypothetically be easier.

5 Project Planning

In order to plan meaningful activities and contents for the social skill workshops, it is vitally important to understand some of the basics of learning and teaching in relation to developmentally disabled individuals. It would not be purposeful to plan workshops without understanding some of the limitations to the learning processes of developmentally disabled individuals and some considerations as to how they are best taught. Thus, this chapter will examine learning and teaching in relation to individuals with DD.

5.1 On Learning

As has become evident from the findings in the literature presented above, developmental disability affects many facets in the life of developmentally disabled individuals: Developmentally disabled individuals have a significantly lower IQ than non-disabled individuals and limited functioning in at least two of the following areas of adaptive behaviour: Communication, self-maintenance, independent living, social skills, cooperative functioning, self-regulation, impulse control, health and safety, ability to learn and ability to work. (Ikonen, 1998.)

In relation to learning, more specifically, it is estimated that developmentally disabled people have weaknesses in two areas that affect learning: Structural weaknesses and process-related weaknesses. Structural weaknesses refer to weakness in memory, attention and perception. Weakness in processes refers to more active cognitive processes, such as recapitulation, memorization, memory retrieval and meta-memory. Developmentally disabled individuals have been observed to use abnormal strategies in information transfer and processing. The functioning of the central nervous system in developmentally disabled people is also slower, which is another factor that impairs the ability to learn. (Ikonen, 1998, 101.)

Theoretical research on the learning processes of developmentally disabled individuals has been substantial, comprising of thousands of studies in the past decades (Ikonen, 1998, 101). In Finland, the research on this topic has mostly been based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development. However, as the aim of this paper is to present ways of supporting social skills amongst the developmentally disabled, it is not purposeful to examine the theories of learning in more depth, but rather to present the crucial findings on learning processes that have emerged from theoretical research that can be used in supporting socially and culturally normative behaviour amongst the developmentally disabled. (Ikonen, 1998). The following summary of characteristics connected to the learning abilities of developmentally disabled individuals is based on findings from several Finnish and international studies (Adapted from Ikonen, 1998, 102).

1. Developmentally disabled individuals have poorer performance than non-disabled individuals.
2. Although an individual with DD is taught learning strategies, their performance is poorer in comparison to chronological and mental age cohorts.
3. Any structured curricula or learning strategy improves the performance in learning and memory functioning of individuals with DD in comparison to performance of developmentally disabled control group whom do not partake in said curricula or strategy.
4. Positive reinforcement improves the performance of individuals with DD.

Furthermore, research suggest that developmentally disabled individuals have the following differences in cognitive development in comparison to non-disabled individuals:

1. A smaller memory capacity or less efficient working memory than non-disabled individuals.
2. A smaller and/or more disorganized knowledge base.
3. A tendency to use less, simpler and more passive methods of processing information.
4. A tendency to use poorer and less flexible processes to control their own thinking (metacognition). (Ikonen, 1998, 102.)

As for behaviours that restrict learning, developmentally disabled individuals may display any of the following: passivity, hyperactivity, self-harm, aggressiveness towards others and contact problems. In relation to such behavioural problems, the origin of the unwanted behaviour should be, if possible, determined. This means determining whether the behaviour stems from personal and/or internal factors, or environmental and/or situational factors. The unwanted behaviour may be, for instance, a normal reaction to environmental factors, or a way for the developmentally disabled individual to communicate their emotions or feeling unwell. (Ikonen, 1998.)

5.2 On Teaching

As Bowman (2012) states, the best practices for teaching developmentally disabled individuals are numerous and each individual is unique in respect to learning. Findings from Bowman are in agreement with those of Ikonen (1998), in that developmentally disabled individuals tend to be slower at learning. An important aspect of teaching the developmentally disabled is to understand how an individual learns best. It is crucial to observe and take the time to listen to an individual in order to understand whether he or she is a visual, auditory, verbal or tactile learner. It is also advised to experiment with different styles of teaching in order to identify what works best. Also, using different styles of teaching can augment learning. (Bowman, 2012.) For example, the social skill workshops accommodate different learning styles by including discussion (auditory) and role-playing (tactile/concrete doing) as methods of teaching.

In relation to the factors that impair the learning of developmentally disabled individuals, the findings from Bowman (2012) are concurrent with those of Ikonen (1998) in regards to poor memory retention and attention span of individuals with DD. Bowman presents some crucial elements that should be included in the teaching of developmentally disabled individuals to support their learning. In relation to poor memory retention,

Bowman advises the use of repetition and frequent practice, as retention can be increased through frequent reinforcement of skills. Bowman also advises the use of reinforcement and repetition for learners with poor attention spans. Furthermore, in order to keep the attention of learners with a poor attention span, it is important to structure brief and uncomplicated learning tasks for the students. The focus of learning situations should be on learning one thing at a time. It is also crucial for the teacher to be observant and to recognize when a learner has reached his or her limit. (Bowman, 2012.)

People with DD usually have problems with abstract thinking and learning, so teaching should focus on concrete or tactile methods. A practical approach is thus recommended when teaching individuals with DD. Furthermore; people with developmental disabilities tend to have difficulties with transferring knowledge from one context to another. In light of this problem of transferring the information to another context, the teacher or instructor can help learners by relating the knowledge/information to other topics or contexts. Discussing different applications for the information in different contexts may help, as people with DD have problems in making generalizations and transferring existing knowledge to different contexts. New information should thus be tied to prior knowledge to make it more meaningful to the student. Furthermore, all learning and examples used should be applicable to real life - the life of the student, to make it more meaningful and comprehensible. In relation to the applicability of learning to real life, using materials that are appropriate in accordance with the age and developmental stage of the individual in question supports this. (Bowman, 2012.)

Thus, it becomes evident that there are a great number of factors to consider in relation to teaching developmentally disabled individuals. The individual, as a unique learner, should be understood and known thoroughly in order to provide appropriate teaching and support. This includes understanding the learning abilities of the individual, his or her ideal learning style/method, and what is purposeful for him or her to learn and be taught. Learning goals should be age- and developmentally appropriate, with relevance and purpose in relation to the life of the individual. Goals should be challenging enough, but not overly challenging. It is advisable to manage learning goals by taking small steps toward accomplishing them. (Bowman, 2012.)

An evaluation of 81 studies on classroom organization and behaviour management in the context of special education (Simonsen et al., 2008 Cited in Wehman & Sutherland,

2013, 426) presents some recommended practices in classroom management. These include maximizing classroom structure and predictability, providing feedback on expectations, actively engaging students in observable ways, using consistent/transparent strategies of acknowledging appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Though the social skill workshops developed on the basis of this thesis will not be traditional classroom situations as such, these recommendations for practice give valuable guides for the structure and content of the workshops.

Findings have shown that due to the challenges students with emotion and behaviour disorders pose to teaching, teachers may respond by lowering their expectations toward these students. This can result in providing these students with fewer opportunities to respond in the classroom, delivering less feedback and positive reinforcement and diverting their attention from these students. Confrontation and negative exchanges are also common between students with emotion and behavioural disorders and their teachers, which may negatively affect the students learning. (Sutherland, Conroy, Abrams & Vo, 2010; Sutherland & Oswald, 2005; Kauffman, 2005, cited in Wehman & Sutherland, 2013, 426). Recognizing these common pitfalls in teaching is important, in order to keep them in mind when planning and implementing the social skill workshops. The characteristics of the learners are also important to keep in mind in order to plan useful and purposeful material for the workshops.

6 Methods and Implementation

In this chapter, the methods for implementing the social skill workshops will be overviewed. The reason for using several methods within the context of the workshops becomes evident from the previous chapters. Each person, developmentally disabled or not, is a unique individual, with differing character traits, personality and social and cognitive abilities. Some individuals thrive in social situations, whereas others prefer solitude to group situations. As stated in the previous chapter on learning and teaching, methods of learning and teaching need to be in accordance with the abilities and preferences of the individual. Furthermore, communication and social skills are areas commonly impaired amongst people with DD, as seen in the definitions of developmental disability in chapter 3. Hereby, it was necessary to use different methods for constructing the workshops in order to account for the individual traits of the partakers. It should be further clarified, that psychodrama and sociodrama are used as primary methods of implementation in the workshops, but dialogue and the common third will

be used to augment the workshops by utilizing them in individual or small-group workshops. Dialogue and the common third can also be used whenever an opportunity arises for dialogical conversations in the context of Lamppu, for example when a student expresses a will to discuss something that might be bothering them.

6.1 Dialogue

According to the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), dialogue is a process of open and direct conversation, in which the aim is to find mutual understanding: A dialogical conversation should create an atmosphere in which the situation at hand can be observed together by both parties partaking in the dialogue in a reciprocal manner. In dialogue, it is accepted that people have differing points of view and that not only one of these points of view can present the whole truth about anything: There is not a single, communal reality, but rather everyone's own unique and individual perception of reality. (THL, 2012.) Dialogue aims at constructing a mutual understanding of reality between different parties in the dialogue, which they could not achieve alone (Mönkkönen, 2002).

In order to achieve dialogue, there are prerequisites that should be met. Isaacs (1999) speaks of a "container" that needs to be built before dialogue can be achieved. The following principles, as mentioned by Isaacs (1999), are some of the prerequisites for building a safe container for dialogue: listening, respecting, suspending and voicing. Jones (2007) writes about the importance of listening in relation to dialogue as follows: "...by listening deeply we put ourselves in touch with a larger whole – people's words carry not just an immediate meaning but a whole context and connections." From this, it can be concluded that in order to achieve dialogue, all parties must truly be listened to in order to see the bigger picture in respect to the situation at hand.

The notion of respect is also invaluable in the success of dialogue. Respect in this context incorporates the understanding and acceptance that each person has a restricted, yet unique point of view and that by listening to others something new can be learnt (Kupias, 2007). According to an article by THL (2012), a professional who respects his or her client understands that they, the professional, cannot know what the client needs on the clients behalf. Thus, it becomes evident that attentive listening is closely linked to respect in the process of dialogue.

With the term “suspension” Isaacs (1999) refers to the notion that one should state openly his/her opinions, certainties, judgments and thinking, so it can be seen and taken into account by the participants in the dialogue. Suspension helps in being aware of thoughts and feelings that are personal, not “...objective facts about the world.” (Jones, 2007). According to Isaacs (1999), suspension allows a participant of dialogue to question the “certainties” he or she may have, and thus to take other points of view (certainties) into account.

Voicing refers to the process of expressing ones thoughts in a dialogical setting. According to Jones (2007) “It means listening carefully so as to choose what to say and what not to say in the moment”. Thus, it becomes evident that voicing does not only include speaking, but also listening to others, as only through listening closely can one know what needs to be said. The following quote from Jones (2007) sums up the importance of voicing: “In dialogue, speech is used to create a common pool of meaning together.”

Mönkkönen (2002), views dialogue as a communication tool and a co-operative relationship in client work in the social sector. Although the aim of dialogue is to find a mutual, shared understanding of reality between the participants, Shotter (1993, cited in Mönkkönen 2002) states that in dialogue, a true, shared understanding can only happen momentarily; in spontaneous situations. Although a shared understanding may be hard to establish, the process in itself is still important. In dialogue, the participants test, assess, question and interpret what the other is communicating. Through this interaction, the participants are reconstructing and re-evaluating themselves as well as determining and re-evaluating their relationship with the other participant. (Mönkkönen, 2002.)

Hereby, it becomes evident that although dialogue may not always reach its desired outcome - a mutual understanding, the process in itself is valuable. It should also be mentioned that as developmentally disabled people often have problems with communication and social skills, dialogue could become more challenging. Consequently, additional methods of support are in order for communicating with people with DD in regards to supporting their social skills. The workshops will utilize the common third concept for improving communication.

6.2 The Common Third

The common third concept in the context of the emotion workshops is a method for establishing rapport as well as a tool for initiating dialogue. Firstly, it is important to define rapport and the common third concepts to the reader. Rapport, as defined in Oxford Dictionaries (2013), is “a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other’s feelings or ideas and communicate well”. As for the concept of common third, it is defined by Cameron et al. (2011) as follows: “An important concept of social pedagogy is that of the common third - a mutual focus and the medium in which relationships are formed. Sometimes these are creative activities, sometimes more everyday tasks and sometimes just playing and having fun together.”

The common third is thus a method of actively creating opportunities for shared experiences; it aims at finding common ground in which we can share thoughts and feelings (Bird & Eichsteller, 2011). Common third also contains the implications of equality and respect, with an emphasis on eliminating “unequal power relations” (Hatton, 2012). This notion of equality in the concept of common third is eloquently presented in the following citation: “To be sharing something, to have something in common, implies in principle to be equal, to be two (or more) individuals on equal terms, with equal rights and dignity...” (Husen, 1996: 231, translated by Aabro, 2004 cited in Hatton, 2012, 2). Thus, by finding shared activities and common ground, establishing rapport and a respectful partnership should hopefully become easier. This in turn will most likely provide a fruitful environment for dialogue and shared understandings on the topics addressed in the workshops. The one-on-one emotion workshops should thus provide time and opportunities to find such activities that can be shared, from which the working relationship could benefit through promoting equality, respect and the eradication of unequal power relations.

6.3 Psychodrama and Sociodrama

“Sociodrama and psychodrama are like opposite sides of the same coin” (Propper, n.d., 1). Psychodrama aims at enacting and re-enacting situations of past concerns in order to explore the possible reasons for social and psychological problems at an indi-

vidual level. This means that psychodrama, as opposed to sociodrama, focuses on the experiences and problems of an individual, whereas sociodrama focuses on similar problems, but in a larger group context, i.e. communal or group problems. Thus, the fundamental difference between psychodrama and sociodrama is the types of roles that are explored: “While psychodrama uses as the basis of action the personal roles and life story of an individual, sociodrama gives us an opportunity to explore the roles that we have in common.” (Propper, n.d.). Psychodrama and sociodrama aim to clarify issues, encouraging communication, improving physical and emotional well-being as well as promoting skill development. Furthermore, essential goals include providing an insight into, and understanding of human relationships, appropriate expressions of emotions and experimenting with behaviours and attitudes in a supportive environment. Both psychodrama and sociodrama are based on Moreno’s theories of spontaneity and creativity, and role theory. (Hyppö, 2008; Konopik & Cheung, 2013; Propper, n.d..)

According to Moreno, a person should be engaged as completely as possible in interaction. Thus, interaction between the professional and client should not be limited solely to thinking and talking, especially when developmentally disabled clients are in question. Thinking and talking are cognitive activities, and as developmental disability is closely linked to cognitive impairment, behavioural and emotional engagement is necessary in order to enhance the efficacy of intervention. In role-play, the individual is engaged behaviourally and emotionally, which means that “...more of the sensory modalities are stimulated, and memory for therapeutic change is enhanced” (Hurley et al., 1998; Razza & Tomazulo, 2005; Tomasulo, 1998 cited in Tomasulo & Razza, 2011, 24). (Tomasulo & Razza, 2011, 24.)

According to Avrahami (2003 cited in Konopik & Cheung, 2013, 9), psychodrama “enhances problem-solving insight and facilitates personal growth on cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels...”. Psychodrama provides a context; role-play, in which habitual patterns of reacting to problems can be observed and in which alternative approaches for responding to these problems can be discovered in a safe and supportive setting. Empirical studies present findings, that psychodrama is an effective utility for education and social work among diverse groups of clients - developmentally disabled people included. (Konopik & Cheung, 2013, 9.) As psychodrama and sociodrama are closely related, it is hypothesized in the context of this thesis, that sociodrama is also an effective utility for education and social work.

According to Hyppönen (2008, 110), sociodrama aims to support problem solving, decision-making, increasing understanding and teaching the use of new behavioural models at a group level. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory suggests that sociodramatic play enhances self-regulation and the development of cognitive, social and emotional development in young children (1978 cited in Elias & Berk, 2002, 216-217). As developmental disability, by definition, is "A condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind..." (ICD-10, 2010) it is hypothesized in this thesis, that psychodrama and sociodrama support self-regulation and social skills among developmentally disabled youths, and will be used as a psychoeducational tool in the social skill workshops.

6.3.1 Methods of Psychodrama and Sociodrama

The methods and interventions of psychodrama and sociodrama that will be used in the emotion workshops are role presentation and/or role interview, role reversal, mirroring, spotlight and the aquarium. *Role presentation* is usually used as a warm-up activity, wherein the protagonist and/or other actors are asked to present his or her role to the other members of the group. This helps in establishing spontaneity and becoming familiar with the role that is going to be acted out. The role interview can be a part of the warm-up process, as a part of the role presentation. *In role interview*, the protagonist is asked questions about his or her role in order to gain more insight in to the role. Role interview can also be used during the role-play, when the facilitator "freezes" the scene and asks questions from the protagonist as a means of deepening insight into the role. *In role reversal*, the protagonist changes to another role and speaks, acts and feels from the perspective of the other role. Role reversal enables the protagonist to see him- or herself from the perspective of another and also enables the protagonist to appreciate the views and feelings of another person. *In mirroring*, the protagonist "steps out of the situation" in order to gain a different perspective on the situation. The protagonist then chooses another member of the group, an auxiliary, to stand in his or her place. With a new perspective, the protagonist may then enter the scene again, with new insight as to how to proceed in the "scene". (Propper, n.d..)

The *spotlight method* is used by the facilitator in order to draw attention to a specific occurrence in the role-play. The facilitator can also use the spotlight to "freeze" the scene as a means of giving input or suggestions to the actors in the role-play. For example, the facilitator may use the spotlight to freeze the scene, and to say for example

“I think we need a good listener in the scene now. Could someone from the audience be this kind of listener?” (Hyppönen, 2008, 127). Finally, *the aquarium* provides the group an opportunity to reflect on what is happening in the role-play. Inside the “aquarium”, are the actors of the role-play and the other group members are outside the “aquarium” as active audience members. Inside the aquarium, the actors can either act out the role-play or discuss it. Outside the aquarium, the other group members can intervene in the role-play by asking questions and making comments and/or wishes in regards to the role-play taking place. (Hyppönen, 2008.)

As for the structure of psychodrama and sociodrama sessions, they both consist of the same basic elements: Warm-up, enactment and sharing. Firstly, warm-up is crucial for establishing spontaneity, interaction amongst group members and a relaxed atmosphere in order to get people in the right mindset for role-play. Warm-up can consist of play-like activities, organizing the workspace or “stage” and relaxing exercises. The warm-up stage should use at least a third of the time allocated for the session/workshop. Secondly, the enactment stage is self-explanatory: This is when the role-play is enacted and the abovementioned methods are utilized. Finally, the sharing stage is for analysing and processing the content of the role-play within the group. The sharing stage is crucial for understanding and internalizing the content that was presented in the role-play. At this stage, the facilitator can help in transferring the knowledge and content of the role-play into a different context. (Hyppönen, 2008; Propper, n.d.). Although this is the basic structure of psychodrama and sociodrama sessions, Tomasulo & Razza (2011) suggest a few modifications for the sessions when used with developmentally disabled target groups.

Due to the cognitive limitations that are typically found amongst developmentally disabled individuals, Tomasulo & Razza (2011) have suggested modifications in the psychodrama model for individuals with DD. Typically, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, psychodrama and sociodrama sessions consist of the following three stages: (1) warmup, (2) enactment, and (3) sharing (Tomasulo, 1998; Razza & Tomasulo, 2005 cited in Tomasulo & Razza, 2011, 24). The modification of the stages of psychodrama for people with developmental disabilities, however, consists of the following four stages: (1) orientation, (2) warmup and sharing, (3) enactment, and (4) affirmation (Tomasulo, 2000 cited in Tomasulo & Razza, 2011, 24). This session structure will be used in the emotion workshops, so it is beneficial to define it.

The aim of the orientation stage is to support communication amongst developmentally disabled peers. Individuals with DD are often accustomed to not being listened to and continue talking whether or not they are being listened to. Due to this, many individuals with DD have problems in listening to others, especially when the other person talking is a peer. Furthermore, developmentally disabled people "...have learned to devalue their peers (and themselves) and tend to talk over each other, clamouring for the facilitator's attention." (Tomasulo & Razza, 2011, 25). Thus, the orientation stage aims at changing that pattern by using purposeful and constructive interruption.

According to Tomasulo & Razza, the orientation stage functions as follows:

When one member is speaking, the facilitator interrupts and asks him or her to indicate who is listening. The facilitator then asks the member to choose another member to check whether the other member heard his or her statement. We call this cognitive networking. If the listener heard the communication, the facilitator then has an opportunity to reinforce the listener verbally for attending to the peer and to reinforce the sender for communicating clearly and being aware of who was listening. (2011, 25.)

Thus, reinforcing attentive listening and clear communication supports communicative interaction. Good interaction is essential for psychodrama, as it is essentially role-play: a dialogical process. The orientation stage facilitates interaction amongst developmentally disabled peers. (Tomasulo & Razza, 2011.)

In the second, warm-up and sharing stage, members of the group voice their own concerns and ideas they would like to address in the role-play session. At this stage, the content of the group is chosen and a protagonist for the play is selected: i.e. what the role-play will be about and who will act in it. After the warm-up and sharing stage comes the third, enactment stage. At this stage, role-playing is used to facilitate interaction between the participants in the group and between the facilitator and members of the group. The chosen topic or content for the role-play is enacted after which comes the final, affirmation stage. (Tomasulo & Razza, 2011.)

After the enactment, group members are asked to reflect on the role-play that took place and encouraged to tell what they thought was good about it and what was good about the way in which the protagonist acted. This stage aims at reinforcing self-disclosure, self-reflection, increased self-awareness and possible behavioural changes

that stem from trying out a new role. Members are also encouraged to share their own personal experiences related to the chosen topic and the facilitator should then affirm these experiences. Initially, the facilitator does all the affirmation, but members of the group are encouraged to affirm each others' experiences and opinions, which "...further encourages members to attend to each other and increase each member's value in the eyes of his or her peers." (Tomasulo & Razza, 2011, 28). Thus, this final stage aims at providing an encouraging opportunity for group members to help, reinforce and support each other.

The following is a summary of the methods that will be used during the sessions:

METHOD	PURPOSE
Role Presentation & Role Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting to know and explain the role • Establish spontaneity • Facilitator can ask questions to aid role-play • Clarification of a situation
Role Reversal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen insight into roles • View roles from the "outside" • Understand how others might view you • Understand the feelings of others in a situation
Mirroring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining a new perspective on role and situation • Deepen insight • Allow time to think about the situation
Spotlight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw attention to certain aspect of role-play • Facilitator can "freeze" scene to ask questions, guide role-play, give ideas, conduct role interview and clarify situations
Aquarium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience input • Reflection & Discussion

Figure 2. Methods of psychodrama and sociodrama and their purpose.

It should be mentioned to the reader, that in the context of the social skill workshops, psychodrama and sociodrama are used interchangeably. The justification for this becomes evident from the previous definitions of the aforementioned concepts. As the only difference between them is the sort of roles they address, they will be used in accordance with the topics and themes that arise in the workshops. If, for example, a student wants to address bullying during the workshops and act as the protagonist, this would be considered psychodrama, as the topic stems from a student's personal experiences. The workshop may, however, be sociodrama at the same time, if the topic is familiar to other students. In this case, the workshop becomes sociodrama, as the theme may address issues in the lives of more than one student.

The following diagram illustrates the abovementioned processes of psychodrama and sociodrama as a hypothesized cycle of experiential learning: (Adapted from Blatner, 1973; Valve-Mäntylä, 1992 cited in Hyppönen, 2008, 116)

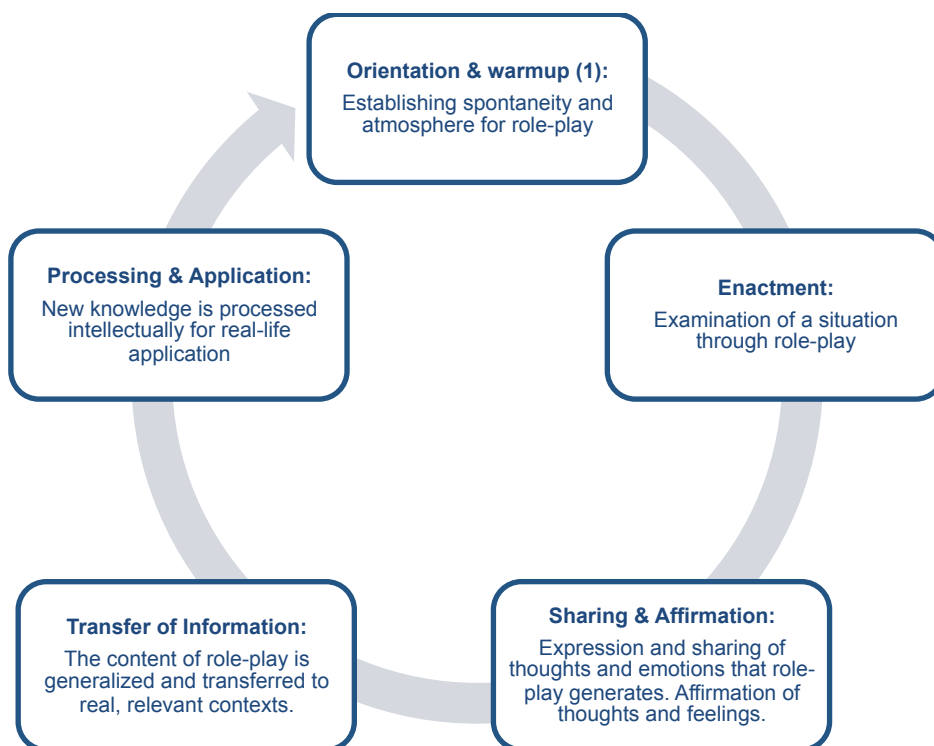


Figure 3. Hypothesized process of experiential learning through the social skill workshops. (Adapted from Blatner, 1973; Valve-Mäntylä, 1992 cited in Hyppönen, 2008, 116)

7 Social Skill Workshops – Example Sessions

In this chapter, the content of two drama workshops from the autumn of 2013 will be presented as examples of this working method used with developmentally disabled youths and as an example of the impaired social skills, which justifies the need and relevance of this functional thesis. The general content and structure of one small-group counselling session will also be presented to the reader. At the time of the drama workshop, the students were already familiar with the workshop as a working method and the type of content usually addressed in them. The information presented in this chapter is based on notes taken during the workshops. Furthermore, the content was written down more thoroughly directly after the workshops to increase accuracy of data.

The day before the drama workshop, one of the students from Lamppu approached me and wanted to talk about something. The student told me they wanted to address bullying in the following day's workshop. The student told me that they had been bullied in the past and how bad it had felt. The student wanted to make sure that the other students from Lamppu understood how bad bullying feels and that it should not be tolerated in any circumstances. I commended the student on the enthusiasm they had for the topic and promised that we could address this topic in the workshop. The student left the office, seemingly relieved and thankful. Finally, it should be mentioned to the reader, that the ambiguous nature of this portion of the text is for ensuring the anonymity of the students, so as to not disclose any descriptive or revealing information.

7.1 A Psycho- and Sociodrama Workshop – Workshop Model 1.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, typical psychodrama and sociodrama sessions are divided into warmup, enactment and sharing stages. The suggested modification of session structure for individuals with DD consists of orientation, warmup and sharing, enactment and affirmation. (Tomasulo & Razza, 2011.) As the allocated time for drama workshops at Lamppu is approximately 90 minutes, the aforementioned stages are divided into three 30-minute segments as follows:

1. Orientation, warmup and sharing (30 minutes)
2. Enactment (30 minutes)
3. Affirmation (30 minutes)

Let us now examine the three-abovementioned stages of psychodrama and sociodrama in the context of the aforesaid workshop that took place in the autumn of 2013.

7.1.1 Orientation, Warmup and Sharing

As mentioned in chapter 4 on learning and teaching, structure and predictability are important factors in accommodating learning in developmentally disabled individuals (Simonsen et al., 2008 Cited in Wehman & Sutherland, 2013, 426). Thus, the first 30-minute stage of the workshops is dedicated to orientation, warmup and sharing. This is how the workshops are always started, and something the students can expect, predict and look forward to at the beginning of every workshop.

The orientation stage begins with the whole group and myself (the facilitator) sitting down in a circle and sharing our current feelings, thoughts and possible grievances. As each member of the group is speaking, careful attention is being paid to the attentiveness of the students. Should there be students that are not paying attention to the speaker, the speaker can ask for someone to repeat what he or she has said. If it turns out there were peers whom were not listening, the speaker can repeat him/herself until heard by the entire group. This stage is important in achieving a respectful atmosphere amongst the students, in which every student feels that his or her voice and opinions matter. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Tomasulo & Razza (2011) are of the opinion that this stage supports communication amongst developmentally disabled peers.

In the instance of the session that is now being used as an example of the workshop method, there were several students who were not paying attention to speakers during the orientation circle. As I noticed that some students were not paying attention to the person speaking, I interrupted the speaker and asked them if they felt like they were being listened to. Usually, the speaker had not noticed that they were not being listened to, so I prompted them to pay close attention as they started to speak again. After this, I urged the speaker to check whether their peers had listened to them by asking for a short summary from a listener. If a student had been listening, they were reinforced and commended on being attentive. After this, listening and then summarizing the content became a sort of game to the students. Almost everyone was paying extremely close attention to the current speaker and then wanted to show how well they

had listened. This was reinforced by the facilitator, and the importance of listening was transferred to all instances of communication; not just the workshop. In this instance, the level of attentiveness amongst the students clearly improved during the orientation stage. After everyone had shared their thoughts and feelings it was my turn as the facilitator to share my thoughts and feelings. At the time of the workshop, I was tired and stressed, which I disclosed to the students in an honest fashion. With this, I hoped to communicate to the students, that the circle is an area of trust and equality, in which the facilitator and students are the same. After orientation, we moved onto the warmup and sharing stage.

The purpose of the warmup stage is to establish spontaneity and a positive atmosphere through techniques of drama. Methods used in the warmup stage included physical, vocal and mental warmup exercises. The warmup stage, in the instance of the workshop being used as an example, consisted of warmup exercises the students were already familiar with from previous workshops. The reason for this is to enhance learning by making the structure of the workshop as predictable as possible. (Tomasulo & Razza, 2011.)

After the warmup exercises, it was time to begin with the sharing stage. The group was asked to stand in a circle for the topic of the workshop to be discussed. Although typically the topic for the workshop would be decided upon as a group, in this instance I had already promised the student whom had visited my office that we could address bullying in the workshop. Thus, as the facilitator, I asked the student in question to present the topic for “today’s” workshop. Bullying was a familiar topic to most of the students. According to the students, several had experienced bullying at some stage in their lives. Students were asked to share their feelings and thoughts on the topic. It was clear that students did not condone bullying, but there was uncertainty as to how it should be dealt with. This was something the students wanted to address in the workshop.

The selected topic for the workshop was thus about bullying and how to deal with it when it occurs. We further clarified the setting of the enactment as a scene that would take place in a schoolyard, during recess. Apart from this, it was up to the imagination of the students to create a scene in which bullying would occur. The role of the protagonist was, however, presented by one of the students and then interviewed in order to

give an idea of the scene before enacting it. Finally, it was assured that everyone was comfortable with the selection of the topic before enactment.

At this stage, we had gone through the first 30 minutes of the workshop. All of the students had communicated their thoughts and feelings to the group and listened to the thoughts and feelings of others. The warmup stage included fun and play-like activities that established spontaneity, creativity and a relaxed atmosphere. The group members had also voiced their experiences, expectations and opinions on the topic for the day. All of the abovementioned phases are typical and important characteristics in the initial stages of psychodrama and sociodrama sessions. (Hyppönen, 2008.)

7.1.2 Enactment Stage

After the first 30 minutes of the workshop it was time to enact the chosen topic for the day. The student who had asked for the topic of bullying was chosen as the first protagonist for the first enactment of bullying. Another student had volunteered as the bully, so our first scene was ready to be acted out.

The first enactment of the bullying scene started with the bully commenting on the appearance of the protagonist and the protagonist's mother in a derogatory manner. The protagonist was clearly offended, not only in the role-play, but offended in general. So, as the facilitator, it was time to "freeze" the play. I clarified to the student acting the role of the protagonist that this was all fictional and that they should not take the play personally. The protagonist understood this, and assured me that they were ready to continue the role-play.

After the scene continued, the bully took a hold of the protagonist and pushed them against the wall. The protagonist looked astounded and very uncomfortable. It was once again time to freeze the play. A role reversal was suggested to the actors. I wanted the bully to understand how it would feel to be as the victim in such a situation. The bully was willing to switch roles, but the protagonist was not. The protagonist was adamant in that they would never act in such a way and thus did not want to take the role of the bully. Consequently, as the role reversal did not happen, I interviewed the protagonist in order for the bully to hear what it feels like to be the victim of such bullying. Furthermore, I asked the students not to use physical contact in the scene, as it was not necessary and to assure that the role-play would be safe. It was then time to con-

tinue the play once more. The bully continued to “assault” the protagonist verbally, but the protagonist was not responding anymore at this stage. The momentum of the enactment had diminished, so it was time to end the scene with thanking the actors and then applauding them for the scene we had witnessed.

After the first scene, we went through what had happened in the scene with the whole group. Most students had found the enactment entertaining and amusing. I stressed to the group at this stage, that although it might be amusing as a fictional play, bullying is no laughing matter. Students agreed with this. As I asked the students if they were happy with the play, most said that they were happy with how it played out. One student, however, said that it would have been nice to see the scene end in a more positive way. I asked the other students, the audience, on their opinion about this comment. Everyone agreed: It would be nice to see the role-play end on a positive note. Thus, I asked the students on their ideas as to how a resolution could be achieved in such a circumstance. One student suggested that a negotiator might be able to achieve a truce between the bully and the protagonist. This was thought to be a good idea amongst the group, so I suggested that maybe the next enactment could include a negotiator if the two actors would not be able to solve the scene on their own. We were now ready for the next enactment of our scene after discussing the events of the first scene.

After choosing our next protagonist and bully for the second enactment of the bullying scene, it was time to begin the role-play. The play started with very similar name-calling than the previous play. It was rather obvious that the actors of the second scene got their inspiration from the previous enactment. The bully cornered the protagonist in a very similar fashion than in the first scene, without the physical contact, however. Once the bully cornered the protagonist, the scene was frozen. The group was asked for ideas on how to solve the dispute before their eyes. The student whom had the idea of a negotiator entering the scene wanted to enter the role-play as said negotiator. The scene continued. The negotiator entered the scene as a person acting as a peer of the bully and the protagonist.

A dialogue started once the negotiator entered the scene. The negotiator asked the bully to stop bullying and questioned the motives for the bullying. The bully could not, however, think of why they were bullying the protagonist, so it was time to freeze the

scene again. The audience were asked for ideas on why a person might bully someone. The idea that we included in the scene was that the protagonist was better at school than the bully, and thus the bully was jealous. We now had a motive for the bullying: Jealousy. The scene continued. The bully explained that they were jealous of the protagonist. The negotiator thought for a while, condemned the bully's actions and then asked the bully to leave and to leave the protagonist alone. The scene ended.

We discussed the events that took place in the second enactment within the group. Students thought the second scene was better than the first scene, in that there was a happier ending. I questioned the group if the end of the scene could have been even better. The students could not think of ways for the scene to end in a better way. I suggested, that it might have been even better if the protagonist and bully had settled the scene by achieving a truce, not only leaving the scene with the issue being unsolved. After this, one student shouted: "The bully should apologize!". Peers were of the same opinion. We now had an idea to further improve the conclusion of the next and final enactment of our bullying scene.

The final enactment of the bullying scene started with events that were very similar to those that had occurred in the previous two enactments. The scene started with verbal bullying and soon after the bully had once again cornered the protagonist. The major difference between the last and the two previous enactments was that the protagonist was more vocal while being bullied. The protagonist politely asked the bully to stop and used reasoning to argue the pleas for the bully to stop: "I haven't done anything to you! I'm innocent! Please stop!" It was once again time to introduce the negotiator in the scene. Only this time, instead of the facilitator freezing the scene, it was a student from the audience that interrupted the role-play and suggested that a negotiator would enter the scene. I urged the student who had said this to enter the scene as the negotiator. So we continued the scene.

The negotiator entered the scene with a sense of authority. It turned out, that this time the negotiator was a teacher from the school. The teacher demanded that the bully would stop at once. The negotiator, who was a teacher in this scene, asked the bully to explain the reasons for bullying the protagonist. Once the bully had explained their motives for the bullying, the negotiator stated: "That's no excuse to treat another person like that... Could you please apologize for your actions?". The bully went on to apolo-

gize for bullying the protagonist and said that they would never do it again. Our negotiator suggested that the two would now shake hands as a gesture of peace. The bully and protagonist shook hands. The scene ended and it was applauded. It was now time for the affirmation and sharing stage; to discuss and reflect on the events that the group had witnessed in the three enactments of our bullying scene.

7.1.3 Affirmation and Sharing

The final stage, affirmation and sharing, is perhaps the most important in regards to the workshops. In the affirmation and sharing stage, students are asked to share their emotions and thoughts evoked by the play. Through discussion, students reflect on the events and analyse the content of the role-play. Different students may have different thoughts and interpretations of the play, which can offer different perspectives on assessing the play for students. By sharing their own thoughts and ideas on the play, students are better able to establish a mutual understanding on the topic. During the final stage, the facilitator should help the group in transferring the information from the play to another context and to help students in making generalizations about the topic, as these are often difficult tasks for developmentally disabled individuals due to structure or process related weaknesses in development. The sharing stage also provides an opportunity for the students to use and practice their memory retrieval and ability to recapitulate, as they are forced to use their memory and ability to summarise when asked about the enactments. (Hyppönen, 2008; Ikonen, 1998; Tomasulo & Razza, 2011.)

After our enactments on bullying, the group was asked to sit down in a similar circle as at the beginning of the workshop and to share their thoughts and feelings on the enactments. As the facilitator, I started by asking the group open-ended questions on the enactments, so as to not lead the answers of the students in any particular direction. This proved to be difficult, as most of the students said very simple things, such as “they were good”, or “it was funny” when asked about their opinions on the plays. I had to use more precise questions in order to get more in-depth answers. This proved to be more fruitful, as students were asked to clarify and rationalize their answers.

As students were asked why they thought the play was good, some said it was good because it was funny, some said it was good because it showed how to act in such situations and some said it was good because they thought it gave them an opportunity

to practice solving such issues as the one dealt with in the play. Some students thought the play was sad and depressing and said that they wanted to enact something happier next time. As the facilitator, I affirmed the thoughts of the students and elaborated on their thoughts. For example, I said that I too had found some aspects of the enactments amusing, but further clarified that bullying was no laughing matter when it really happens. As for the comment of the play showing ways of dealing with bullying, I asked the students to recap what ways of dealing with bullying were evident in the role-plays. One student mentioned walking away, one mentioned conversation and another mentioned getting a negotiator to intervene as ways of dealing with bullying. These were all affirmed and reinforced as valid ways of dealing with bullying. The thought of the play being sad and depressing was also affirmed. I agreed, that the topic is sad, but explained that I thought it is better to practice dealing with imaginary bullying rather than a real case of bullying: That we could learn from the role-plays and that it was important to learn from the enactments.

It was also explained to the students, that the way bullying should be dealt with depends on the situation. I clarified, that if for example the bully is of no apparent threat, talking might be the best way to approach the situation. If, however, the bullying is physical, it might be better to walk or run away. After this, one student said that in the case of running away, it might be a good idea to run for help. Other students agreed: Getting help is a good idea. The role of the negotiator was also noted as a key element in solving the case. The role of the negotiator was transferred into the context of Lamp-pu. I reminded the students, that quite often my colleagues or I are asked to intervene in cases of bullying in our school. I also mentioned, that the negotiator did not necessarily have to be one of the staff members in the future. I explained this by commenting on what I had witnessed during the plays: The students had acted the role of the negotiator themselves, so they had the skills to be a negotiator outside of the context of our workshop too. With this, I hoped to reinforce the students' belief in their own skills and abilities in dealing with bullying. It was mentioned, however, that in more serious circumstances it is important to tell someone, preferably a member of staff, about the bullying and to not keep it as a secret.

Finally, after going through the enactment with the group, the students were asked about how they currently felt. Most students said they felt good and more energetic than at the beginning of the class. Honesty and constructive criticism was also asked

from the students in order to improve future sessions. Most students thought it had been a good workshop. One student said that they thought it was important to address such issues, even though it might not be so fun. One student said the workshop had been challenging, but fun nonetheless. The students were also asked if the enactments were bothering or troubling them, as bullying can be a very delicate subject, especially if one has experienced it in the past. It was also clarified to the students, that the bullying was fictional and that it should not be taken personally, as one of the students (from the first enactment) seemingly mistook the bullying in the role-play as real bullying. The students assured that they were not troubled by the enactments. At this stage, students had had a chance to voice their thoughts and feelings on the workshop and we had analysed the content of the enactments in a thorough manner. Our 90-minute session was at its end.

7.2 Small-group Workshop Session – Workshop Model 2.

The small-group social skill workshop that will be reviewed in this portion of this thesis also took place in the autumn of 2013. This workshop session hosted three students. The participants whom took part in this session had also participated in the drama workshop session that was presented to the reader earlier in this chapter. Members of the staff at Lamppu suggested a small-group session to be organized, as the aforementioned three students were involved in a case of bullying at Lamppu, which the students were unable to solve amongst themselves. Thus, the small-group workshop proved an appropriate medium for the students to address the case of bullying and, hopefully, solve it.

The small-group session was organized in a small, private area of the school, so as to ensure privacy whilst dealing with content possibly delicate by nature. It was made clear to the students that the purpose of the session was not to judge and put blame on individuals, but rather to ensure that the students could put aside their differences and to get along harmoniously for their own sake, and for the sake of the Lamppu community, as it is not constructive to have recurrent confrontations at anyone's school or workplace. Furthermore, it was emphasized that it would be good if the session would result in a truce between the parties of the case of bullying.

As the facilitator, I began the conversation by telling the students what I had heard about the case of bullying from the students in the small-group session themselves prior to the session, other students and staff from Lamppu. Once I had told the stu-

dents what I had heard about the case, I started by asking the alleged victim of the bullying to tell their take on the bullying: What had happened and who was involved. As the first student started speaking and telling their side of the story, other students interrupted this student and began to claim their statements were false. I urged these students to listen patiently and told that they would have their turn to recapitulate the occurrence in due time. The students begrudgingly agreed and continued to listen. Once the first students had told their side of the story, it was time for the next student to voice their take on the case. And this continued until each student had voiced his or her interpretation of the case.

Once each student had recounted the incident, I asked the victim of the bullying to tell what they felt like; the feelings the bullying evoked. The student told they felt sad about the bullying. I asked the other members of the group, whether they could relate to these feelings of sadness in cases of bullying. Furthermore, I asked the other students if they had ever been bullied in the past. The students said they too had in fact been bullied and that it had not been nice. Thusly, I asked why the students would do such a thing to another person if they themselves knew how bad it feels to be the victim of bullying. Next, the students were asked about what they think should be done in regards to this case of bullying. One student whom had allegedly and admittedly partaken in the bullying said they wanted to apologize. The other members of the group wanted to apologize too. This was surprising, as the victim of the bullying also wanted to apologize. I tried to convince the victim that they had no reason to apologize, but the student was adamant in wanting to apologize. Thus, all of the students apologized and they seemed happy and eager to continue as friends.

Before ending the session, the students were asked to explain the most important elements of our conversation in their own words. The students said things, such as “bullying is not good” and “I’m sorry”. The recapitulations were very basic, but the content was what was important. We further reviewed the content gone through in the session with myself, as the facilitator, repeating and reinforcing the key elements from the session. Before we had ended the session, the students began arguing amongst themselves. Although I was sitting right next to the students, I had failed to notice anything that would, in “normal” circumstances, escalate into an argument. I asked the students to explain what had started the argument, but the explanations were not clear, nor were they related to the previous case of bullying. One student said: “I don’t know”, when I

asked what they were arguing about. I asked the students, that if they do not know why they are arguing, should they be arguing at all. The students agreed with this and once more apologized from each other. It was time to review the content of the session once more before ending the session.

7.3 Reflection on Workshops and Literary Connections

Through the examination of the workshops presented previously, many connections to literature presented in this thesis can be found. There is evidence in the presentation of the workshops of connections to literature in regards to lacking social skills, cognitive abilities and the learning abilities of developmentally disabled individuals. These connections will be examined in this sub-chapter. The methods of supporting the learning of the students will also be reviewed.

The examination of the workshops reveals aspects of impaired intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour amongst the students at Lamppu. The inability of the students to solve problems and an apparent lack of basic social and communicative skills becomes evident from the descriptions of the workshops. For example, the orientation stage in the first workshop exemplifies poor social and communicative skills amongst the students, as many of the students did not listen to their peers as they were sharing their feelings in the circle at the beginning of the workshop. Poor communication skills and a lack of common courtesy was evident in the second, small-group session as well, as students did not always listen to their peers and spoke atop of each other. This might also be an indicator of poor attention spans, which is a common trait amongst developmentally disabled individuals. It was common for the students to not engage listeners in eye contact while speaking, which also depicts a lack of communicative abilities. As for problem solving, it became evident from the first workshop that many of the students relied heavily on input from the facilitator in order to solve the bullying situations. The role-plays were often “frozen”, as it seemed that the students were unable to proceed with the scenes. (AAIDD, 2013; Ikonen, 1998; Kaski et. al., 2001; Nader-Grosbois, 2011.)

Evidence of impaired self-regulation is also evident in the workshops. Impaired self-regulation is exemplified through the ability of students to pay attention to the role-plays

and their peers as they spoke. Students often lost focus during the workshops, which showed as restlessness, an inability to pay attention and as talking amongst each other whilst the play was being enacted or a peer was speaking. The connection of self-regulation to the ability to manage one's own learning is exemplified through the afore-said inability to pay attention and to listen. As students lost focus during the role-plays or discussions, they were not receiving information, which in turn affected their ability to learn. Thus, students often had to be encouraged and reminded to listen and pay attention during discussions and role-plays during the workshops so as to increase their chances of receiving the information, which might then have resulted in increased chances of learning. (Butler, 2002; Zimmerman, 2001 cited in Gilmore et. Al. 2003.)

The methods of supporting the learning process of the students also become evident from the examination of the first workshop. Continuous feedback was given to the students during and after the role-plays; in the enactment, affirmation and sharing stages. The content of the enactments was reviewed directly after each scene in order to reinforce both good and less favourable conduct. Memory retrieval and recapitulation were also supported in the first workshop by consistently going through the content of each role-play directly after the enactment, as the information was still fresh in the minds of the students. By asking the students to recapitulate the scenes, they were forced to use their memory and then process the information once again. This also exemplifies the use of repetition in supporting the learning of the students. The transfer of information is also evident in the presentation of the workshop, as the content from the bullying scenes was transferred to the context of Lamppu-school. It was mentioned to the students, that in cases of bullying at Lamppu, the students could use the role of the negotiator to solve conflicts. Thus, it becomes evident that the workshop applied methods of reinforcement, information transfer and repetition to support the learning of the students. The content of the workshop was also applicable to the lives of the students, as cases of bullying are common, if not daily, at Lamppu. The structure of the workshop was familiar to the students, which also supports learning, as the workshops are predictable and thus more facilitative to learning. (Bowman, 2012; Ikonen, 1998; Simonsen et al., 2008 Cited in Wehman & Sutherland, 2013, 426.)

Lastly, the presence of the common third and dialogue can also be seen in the workshop method. In the first workshop, drama provided a medium in which the group had a mutual focus and in which relationships could be established and strengthened. Drama

provided an opportunity, a common ground, for thoughts, feelings and experiences to be shared. The common third, drama, supplied a “container” in the first workshop, (Isaacs, 1999) in which dialogue was facilitated. The establishment of dialogue was facilitated in both workshop sessions through supporting the students in communicating amongst each other in a respectful manner. In both workshops, every student was treated equally and given a chance to be heard and appreciated. The thoughts and opinions of the students were taken into account and listened to, in order to “...create a common pool of meaning together.” (Jones, 2007). (Bird & Eichsteller, 2011; Cameron et al., 2011; Husen, 1996: 231, translated by Aabro, 2004 cited in Hatton, 2012: 2.)

Thus, it becomes evident that there is a strong link between literary findings and the behaviour of the students in the social skill workshops. What is most important, however, is that the students found ways of addressing the bullying themselves. The most important task of the facilitator was to facilitate an opportunity for the students to find resources within themselves to deal with the problems presented to them by bullying. Though the facilitator had a large role in the outcome of the role-plays and guiding discussions, the means and solutions of addressing the bullying stemmed from the students themselves. The facilitator merely supported the students in reaching the solutions.

It becomes evident, that there is a need for the workshop method in regards to the students at Lamppu and that the workshop method presents a valid resource for developing and supporting social skills amongst developmentally disabled individuals. However, it is crucial that the workshop method is utilized in a thorough and systematic manner for maximum efficacy. Thus, in the next chapter the reader will be presented with recommendations for application of the workshop method for use with developmentally disabled youths.

8 Recommendations for Application

In this chapter, the reader will be presented with some ideas for the application of the social skill workshops. These include choosing the preferred model of workshop method (i.e. drama workshop or small-group workshop), recommended themes for workshops, workshop frequency and the evaluation of the workshop results.

An important thing to remember in regards to utilizing the workshop method amongst developmentally disabled youths, is that youths with DD are weaker in all areas of learning in comparison to non-disabled youths: They are slower to learn and remember less than their non-disabled peers. (Ikonen, 1998, 11.) In light of this, it is important to remember that developmentally disabled people need more time for learning, clarity and predictability in lesson structure, positive reinforcement, repetition and frequent practice for teaching to be as effective as possible. Furthermore, individual learning styles should be facilitated and the content of teaching should be relevant to the students. (Bowman, 2012; Ikonen, 1998; Simonsen et al., 2008 Cited in Wehman & Sutherland, 2013, 426.)

The social skill workshops may also be used in an infrequent manner, as a fun activity for developmentally disabled people, or as a systematic tool for supporting and training social skills. The preferred mode of utilization should be in accordance with the resources that can be committed to the working method, as it can be time consuming and requires careful planning when used correctly. As has become evident from the literature, however, a long-term approach to the social skill workshop may be more fruitful in achieving results amongst developmentally disabled people. As stated by Hyppönen (2008, 118), sociodrama requires that the facilitator has genuine interest in using means of sociodrama for client work, is interested in supporting the co-operation between group members and is committed to establishing spontaneity and creativity within the group. As for the small-group workshops, the facilitator should be a patient and clear communicator, with a genuine interest in listening to the group members. Finally, the social skill workshops can be used in a variety of settings, such as day activity centres, schools and vocational centres for the developmentally disabled. With these facets in mind, let us have a look at recommendations for utilizing the social skill workshops with the developmentally disabled.

8.1 Addressing a Need

Initially, it is recommended that the need of an individual to participate in the social skill workshops be evaluated. At this stage, it is suggested that a worker who knows the individual in question thoroughly assesses the social skills and abilities of the individual to partake in the workshops. Discussions and small-group sessions may be used in the beginning to evaluate the skills of an individual and a psychosocial functional ability assessment (FBA) may prove a more detailed way to evaluate the skills of an individual. The hopes and wishes of the individual in question also need to be heard and taken into consideration. Furthermore, also socially skilled individuals may benefit from the workshops as they may provide a forum for further practicing social skills with peers.

8.2 Which type of workshop for which learner?

Here, the reader will be presented with a brief, general outline of recommendations for choosing a preferred method of partaking in the social skill workshops. However, it is also possible and in fact recommended, if there are enough resources, to utilize both workshop methods to compliment and augment each other.

8.2.1 Psychodrama and Sociodrama Workshops

The psychodrama and sociodrama workshops are recommended for people that enjoy creative and expressive activities, appreciate social situations and manage in cooperative tasks. However, the drama workshop method may provide a good means of practicing teamwork and social settings/skills for people whom are not naturally inclined to partake in social situations. People, who are “hands-on” learners: that learn best by doing and hearing/talking (auditory) about a subject are also likely to benefit from the drama workshop. People who have poor communication abilities are more likely to benefit from the tactile, action-oriented approach of the drama workshop rather than the small-group discussion workshops. It should be mentioned, however, that psychodrama and sociodrama do not require creative talent or other special skills from the participant and that participation as an observant is as valuable as more active participation (Hyppönen, 2008, 117).

8.2.2 Individual or Small-Group Workshops

Individuals who prefer to work alone, do not enjoy creative and/or expressive activities such as drama and do not enjoy crowds are possibly better suited to work on social skills individually or in small groups. Also people who enjoy conversations and are verbally apt are likely to benefit from individual or small-group workshop sessions. People whom have poor or negative self-images may also benefit from individual or small-group workshops, as Kaski et al. (2001, 223) state that conversation (dialogue) is a useful tool in strengthening the self-image and self-knowledge of developmentally disabled youths.

8.3 Recommended Themes for Workshops

The themes that can be addressed in the social skill workshops are numerous, as is the topic of social skills in general. Culturally normative behaviour, impulse control, self-regulation, emotion regulation and conflict management are examples of larger areas of social skills that may be addressed in the workshops. For example, the first example workshop from chapter 7 included conflict management and normative behaviour in regards to bullying as a theme. Depending on the abilities of the participants, it may be necessary to start from very basic social skill exercises and to divide learning goals into very small segments. Some ideas, topics and themes that may be addressed in social skill workshops are included in the following list:

Basic Social Skills:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to others • Establishing eye-contact • Turn taking • Common courtesy • Normative behaviour • Deviant behaviour
Emotions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing emotions • Recognizing emotions and their origin • How to deal with negative emotions • Understanding emotions
Dealing with Misfortune and Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with losses • Losing and being a good winner • Positive thinking through adversity • Importance of peer support • Knowing where to get help • Crisis situations
Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with conflicts • Conflict management and resolution • Negotiating skills • How to avoid conflicts • How to minimize damage

Figure 4. Suggested topics and themes for social skill workshops.

8.4 Workshop Frequency and Duration

As became evident from the chapter on the learning traits of developmentally disabled individuals, the frequency of lessons, amount of practice, amount of repetition and reinforcement all affect the learning process of individuals with DD. Also, the predictability and familiarity of the teaching affects learning. Thus, it is advised that the social skill workshops would take place on a regular basis, at regular times and in a familiar location suitable for the chosen model of the workshop method. The duration of the workshop sessions should also follow a regular routine. Through systematic usage of the social skill workshop method and frequent practice of skills, it is more likely that the workshop will yield positive results. At Lamppu, the workshops take place on a weekly basis, as an integrated part of the curriculum.

As all individuals learn at different rates, it is not purposeful to set a definite amount of times or a deadline for the social skill workshops. As an on-going process, the workshops provide a valid way to support and develop the social skills of a developmentally disabled individual. A realistic approach is to use systematic training and systematic evaluation in addressing the efficacy of the workshop and the development of participants.

An important notion of lifelong learning in relation to developmentally disabled individuals, referred to in the following citation as intellectually disabled (ID), comes from Bowman:

Lifelong learning is a concept in wide acceptance today. This concept holds that formal childhood classroom learning cannot be sustained throughout adult life in this rapidly changing society. Learning is a lifelong process, which enhances individuals and makes them more employable as the world of work continually changes. Nowhere is this more applicable than in the lives of those with ID. If formal education is a less than adequate preparation for life for most people with ID, it is really during post public education where the opportunity for real learning occurs. A lifelong learning approach is vital to success and should encompass all areas of learning-vocational, recreational, social, and educational. (Bowman, 2012, 793)

From this abovementioned citation, it can be gathered that developmentally disabled individuals do indeed require a lot of time for learning to take place. From this quotation, it becomes evident, that for developmentally disabled individuals especially, learning should be a lifelong process. Thus, it is recommended that the social skill workshop would be as long a process as possible, in order to accommodate the notion of lifelong learning.

8.5 Recommendations for the Evaluation of Workshop Efficacy

Though it is not necessary to use evaluation when using the social skill workshop methods, it may be helpful in recognizing the efficacy of the workshops. If applied, it is recommended that the evaluation of the development of social skills amongst the target group is systematic in order to recognize the efficacy of the workshop and the progress of individuals. Evaluation may be based on staff observations, interviews with the person in question and a psychosocial functional ability assessment (FBA), which was presented to the reader in chapter 3. It is recommended, that the psychosocial functional ability assessment be conducted prior to starting the workshops in order to be able to compare results during and after workshop implementation. Furthermore, the small-group workshop method may prove a good tool for assessing the progress of individuals by means of discussing content that has been addressed in previous workshops.

Though the workshop method may be used in a non-systematic, one-off type of tool for working on social skills, it is recommended that it be used in a systematic and thorough manner in order to maximize efficacy. As learning is a slower process amongst developmentally disabled individuals in comparison to non-disabled individuals, the workshop may take several weeks, months or even years to yield results. Thus, an on-going approach is suggested in utilizing this method. Furthermore, regular evaluation of progress is suggested. It is recommended, in light of literature, that the workshops start with very simple and basic learning tasks, such as basic social skills (i.e. common courtesy), and move on to more difficult and challenging topics with time. Frequent practice and repetition is more likely to yield positive results than infrequent, non-systematic training, so adhering to a rigid structure and a consistent schedule is recommended.

8.6 Application at Lamppu

The social skill workshop method at Lamppu will hopefully remain as an integrated part of the curriculum for the students in the future. As Lamppu provides a five-year period of education for its students, at best, the social skill workshop will be a five-year period for students to practice and develop their social skills. The psychodrama and socio-drama workshops will take place on a weekly basis, as a continual process. For most students, the individual and small-group sessions will be applied less systematically,

organized when a need is noticed. For some students, however, the individual and small-group workshop is also organized on a weekly basis, as an on-going process. Hopefully through training, the students from the individual and small-group workshops can partake in the larger, psychodrama and sociodrama workshops.

More emphasis will be put on making the workshops more systematic, especially in relation to evaluation. The utilization of the psychosocial functional ability assessment is considered in order to make results more noticeable. Also, the use of the individual and small-group workshop method will be re-evaluated and considerations for more systematic use are in order. Verbal feedback from students and staff has been mostly positive in regards to the workshops, and hopefully through systematic evaluation positive results will be become evident.

9 Results and Conclusions

As the aim of this thesis was to present and develop a method for supporting and developing social skills, normalization and integration amongst developmentally disabled youths in the context of Lamppu, it is in order to assess how the social skill workshop addresses this challenge. The adequacy and validity of the social skill workshop method in regards to supporting and developing social skills will be discussed in this chapter by reflecting on the workshop method in light of literature, personal observations and a self-evaluation.

From the workshop examples used in this thesis, the relevance of the topic for this thesis became evident. The impaired abilities and resources that are tied to the umbrella term of social skills become evident from the examples presented in the example workshop sessions. Lacking communication, cognition, learning, problem solving, conflict management and self-regulation are all exemplified in the depiction of the aforesaid workshops. More importantly, however, the example workshops reveal that the workshops enabled and supported the students to find solutions to problems, such as bullying, amongst themselves. Though the facilitator had a large role in establishing a solution and/or truce in the cases of bullying, it was, in the end, the students whom the solutions stemmed from. In the case of the first, drama workshop example, the ideas and content from the workshop were transferred into a real-life context for the students: i.e. generalized. With enough practice, repetition and reinforcement, the students will hopefully be able to utilize the content learnt in the workshops in real-life settings, without or with less support from a facilitator or other outsiders.

As the literature and information on the characteristics of developmentally disabled people as learners have been taken into consideration when developing the workshops, the workshops are able to accommodate different kinds of learning styles and allow a mix of different methods to be used simultaneously. Thusly, the workshops accommodate different kinds of learners at the same time without segregating them due to limitations in learning. For example, the drama workshop used as an example in chapter 7 utilized learning by doing (tactile, experiential, action-oriented, visual) and discussions (auditory) as methods of teaching. Furthermore, the content and information of the workshops was frequently recapitulated, repeated, practiced and transferred into different contexts to maximize the opportunity for learning.

As for the aim of the social skill workshops in addressing the need for supporting and developing social skills, the flexibility of the workshop method allows a large variety of different topics to be handled within the context of the workshops. Basic social skills, such as respect, listening, common courtesy and eye contact whilst talking are supported and developed in every workshop. In both instances of the example workshops, these basic social skills were addressed and supported through supporting peer-to-peer communication. This is exemplified in both workshops, as the facilitator urged students to wait patiently for their turn to speak, listen to their peers and to engage them in eye contact when speaking, for example. In addition to basic social skill being addressed, the actual topic for the workshops can vary, depending on what the students want to address in the workshop and what is purposeful for them to be taught in regards to their needs and wants. Though the example workshops only deal with bullying, the possibilities for application are vast, as became evident in the previous chapter on the recommendations for application of the workshop method.

As for normalization, the workshop can be seen as a utility for supporting it. Normalization aims at supporting and establishing culturally normative behaviour (Paavola, 2006), which is also an aim of the workshop method. For example, the workshop session aimed at finding and reinforcing adequate and culturally normative behaviour in the case of bullying. Bullying is not considered culturally normative behaviour, which was stressed during the workshop to the students as bullying was condemned. As Landesman & Butterfield (1987) state in regards to normalization, appropriate training and support should be given to developmentally disabled individuals prior to community placement. Although the training given to the students in the workshops is not for community placement per se, it can be viewed as a tool for establishing and supporting the resources for normalization amongst the students in a more general sense.

The workshop method also supports integration amongst the students, in the sense that it accommodates different kinds of learners in the same setting. As the workshops facilitate different learning styles and students without discrimination, the workshops can be seen as supporting physical integration. Through acting together in cooperation, as in the case of the first example workshop on solving bullying, the integration then becomes functional. As mentioned in chapter 4, on integration, integration is social when an individual feels accepted and respected in their social environments.

Thus, the workshops can be seen as promoting social integration amongst the students, as the advocacy for acceptance and respect are key elements in the peer-to-peer communication during the workshops. (Moberg, 1998.)

Findings from literature support the adequacy of the workshop methodology used in the social skills workshop. A study conducted by Elias & Berk (2001) tested Vygotsky's assumption, that sociodramatic play supports self-regulation, cognitive, social and emotional development amongst children. The study concluded, that sociodramatic play was seen as helpful especially for children who are impulsive and are behind their peers in the development of self-regulation. These findings are used to validate the social skill workshop method as a possible a tool for improving and supporting self-regulation, social, cognitive, social and emotional development amongst developmentally disabled youths. Furthermore, Tomasulo & Razza (2011, 29) state that studies over the past 20 years have yielded promising results on the use of psychodrama as a therapeutic tool amongst developmentally disabled people. Thus, it becomes evident that the social skill workshop is further validated as a viable method for supporting and developing social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths.

In addition to the abovementioned literary findings that support the notion that the social skill workshop could be a valid tool for supporting and developing social skills amongst developmentally disabled people, feedback from the students from Lamppu has been mostly positive. Students have reported that the workshops are fun, challenging and the content addressed in them is important. From a personal perspective, I am quite positive that this method has already yielded some positive results, at least in terms of awareness, and that systematic use will yield more positive results in the future. For accurate results on the efficacy of the workshop method, however, more careful attention should be paid on documenting the workshops and the possible developments amongst the students. Student feedback could have been structured and regular, in order to take the target group's ideas for improvement into consideration. The content of the workshops and the utilization of both the small-group and the psychodrama and sociodrama workshops in parallel could have been planned in more detail. In my opinion, the workshop method does provide a valid way to support and develop social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths at Lamppu, but the utilization of this method needs to be systematic and carefully planned in order to be efficacious and for the results to be noticeable.

The social skill workshop thus presents a valid way to address social skills amongst the youths at Lamppu. However, as this method is flexible and allows for a large variety of topics to be addressed and facilitates different types of learners, it is possible that these workshop models are used in different contexts, as seen in Elias & Berk's (2001) example of sociodrama being used amongst children. The target group need not be developmentally disabled or youths, for that matter, but in regards to supporting and developing social skills, the workshop is quite specific to developmentally disabled youths. With selecting different topics and themes to be addressed, however, the workshop method can be utilized across a variety of target groups and settings, such as day-cares, schools, vocational places and other institutions across different age-demographics. It is important, though, that the content and theme chosen is relevant to the target group and realistic in regards to their abilities. Thus, the social skill workshop is not only valuable for use at Lamppu, but possibly for other institutions as well. It is largely up to the facilitator to plan meaningful content and activities for the workshops. The social skill workshop as it is, however, is quite specific to developmentally disabled youths as it has been designed for them in particular.

If the social skill workshop method is used systematically, as suggested, the workshop may help the working life partner, Lamppu, in the sense that it enhances the quality of life of its students through supporting and developing their social skills, which in turn may help the workers at Lamppu, through decreasing the amount of working time used for solving and helping the students solve issues related to social skills, such as bullying, for example. Thus, the workshop method presents an opportunity for the positive development of this thesis' working life partner, Lamppu.

10 Discussion

The topic for this functional Bachelor's thesis, social skills amongst developmentally disabled populations, was a topic that proved to present a considerable amount of literature when researching it for this thesis. The numerous differences in terminology and definitions, however, made the research process time consuming. A general lack of consensus in definitions made interpretation of literature difficult. However, the literature presented in this thesis is quite up to date and extensive, which adds to the reliability of the information presented in this thesis. Literature on developmentally disabled youths, specifically, was scarce, so findings from developmental disabilities in general were often generalized into the context of youths with DD. Literature on dialogue, psychodrama and sociodrama in relation to developmental disabilities was also rather scarce, which suggests that they might not have been researched that extensively in tandem. The use of these methods for supporting and developing social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths was even scarcer. Thus, the acquisition of background literature for this thesis was difficult and time consuming, but I feel that the literature in this thesis is valid, up to date and relevant to this thesis' topic.

The topic was very interesting, but it presented many challenges along the way. Firstly, it was difficult to set a definite scope for the topic of this thesis, so it felt at times like the topic was too broad. Social skills in itself is a very large concept, that holds within it many aspects. Then, to define a method for supporting and developing such a large concept as social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths seemed daunting. The vastness of the topic is justified, however, as the social skill workshops were designed to be applicable to as many people as possible, regardless of the type or level of disability or limitations in learning. By narrowing the scope of this thesis down too much, the applicability of the workshop method may have been limited. At this stage, I am rather satisfied in that I believe that this workshop method may provide a valid tool for supporting and developing the social skills of youths with DD.

As for the social skill workshops, I am satisfied with the methods and literary connections they withhold, but I would have liked to be able to use, study and perfect the method more than was possible due to time constraints. This is partly due to the fact, that most developmentally disabled youths would benefit from a lifelong learning approach, which this thesis did not have the scope for. Secondly, my own personal organization and time management was slightly disorganized and unrealistic in regards to

the sheer size of the chosen topic. It would have been nice to be able to present positive and accurate results about the positive development of social skills amongst the students at Lamppu, but this would have been very difficult task, which might have necessitated gathering further material, possibly enough for another Bachelor's thesis. Furthermore, more detailed and invasive research on the students would have posed more ethical considerations for this thesis. Weisstub et al. (1997) state that developmentally disabled people constitute a vulnerable population and that they present many challenges in regards to research, such as their impaired decision-making capacity. Weisstub et al. (1997) further state, that competency assessments should take place when researching developmentally disabled individuals. Due to these factors, it was more realistic to focus on developing a method for supporting and developing social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths, rather than to attempt to research and measure the social skill acquisition and development of developmentally disabled youths. This could, however, be a very interesting topic for further research: To research if the social skill workshops do indeed help in supporting and developing the social skills of developmentally disabled youths.

As for my own role in this thesis, I cannot say that it was easy to remain completely objective, especially due to the fact that during the time of writing this thesis I was employed at Lamppu as one of the teachers. This means, that the students and their skills and abilities became very familiar to me, so I could not approach this thesis from a completely objective point of view. In this regard, I consider myself slightly biased towards Lamppu and its students, so I feel it would not have been appropriate to use them as test subject for this thesis more so than was necessary in developing the workshop method. However, the fact that I was employed at Lamppu does mean that I have the chance of utilizing the workshops in my future work at Lamppu. Hereby, the social skill workshops will have a future at Lamppu and I will have the opportunity to develop it with time. Thus, hopefully, the social skill workshops will yield positive results in regards to the social skills of the students at Lamppu.

Though in general, I am pleased with the end result of the social skills workshop methods, I feel like the individual and small-group workshop method should have been planned and executed more carefully. Though I believe it is also a valid method for supporting and developing social skills amongst youths with DD, the value of the meth-

od does not quite translate into this thesis. I believe that dialogical conversation may have profound benefits in social skill acquisition, but this was hard to justify by means of scientific background literature and due to lacking testing and documenting on my behalf. Thus, it seems the individual and small-group workshop is slightly disconnected from the thesis. Even so, I do believe it holds promise in supporting and developing social skills amongst developmentally disabled youths.

I also feel that the process of researching, writing and implementing this thesis has been a great opportunity for my personal professional development. The practical, hands-on approach of the social skill workshops depict my personality as a social services professional and my fondness of creative and expressive activities in the context of social work. Through the workshops I have had the opportunity to facilitate thus far, I have had a great deal of fun with the clients in developing the social skill workshops.

Though the social skill workshops may plainly seem like psychodrama and sociodrama masqueraded under the name of “social skill workshops”, I believe it is the application of those methods in the social skill acquisition of developmentally disabled youths that makes it something more than just psychodrama and sociodrama. The added elements of dialogue and the common third make it sociopedagogically sound, which were elements that were not come across during the research for this thesis.

Though this thesis may not present a lot of new or profound information for the social service industry in Finland, I do believe that it adequately addresses the topic of supporting and developing social skills amongst the youths at Lamppu. Hopefully, with systematic use, the social skill workshops will also support the normalization and integration of students within Lamppu. From a societal point of view, if the social skill workshops do indeed support and develop social skill acquisition of the youths at Lamppu, then it is entirely possible that their normalization and integration into mainstream society will become easier, as the students internalize culturally normative ways of behaving, for example. This, however, is something that may take years of practice and training: Lifelong learning.

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