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Improving the social inclusion of young people through the cooperation of theatre and sports

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Susanna Hyväri, Marja Lindholm
& Niko Nummela (eds.)

IMPROVING THE SOCIAL INCLUSION
OF YOUNG PEOPLE
THROUGH THE COOPERATION
OF THEATRE AND SPORTS

PARTICIPATORY SPORTY THEATRE

FACTS AND FIGURES

The aim was to promote the social inclusion of young people ages 15–25 through physical expression and theatre-based methods. Young people were at the heart of the activities, from planning to implementation with support from theatre and sports professionals throughout the process. Activities were organised in Rovaniemi, Oulu, the Kainuu region and the Helsinki metropolitan area. Group activities with young people were implemented in three settings: in open recreational groups, for existing groups or classes in schools, and in closed project groups. Sports and theatre-based methods were used in the activities to enable emotional processing and self-expression. The project was coordinated by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Other project partners were Kainuun Liikunta ry, Kajaani City Theatre, Loisto setlementti ry, Q-teatteri ry and WAU ry. The project was funded by the European Social Fund.

AIMS

SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

*ACTION IS
IN YOUR HANDS!*

USE OF SPORTS AND THEATRE-BASED ACTIVITIES IN YOUTH SOCIAL WORK

EXPRESS YOURSELF!

CREATING NETWORKS FOR PROFESSIONALS

*TOGETHER WE CAN
ACHIEVE MORE!*

OUTCOMES

836
YOUNG PEOPLE REACHED

59
PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIE

85
GROUPS AROUND FINLAND

7
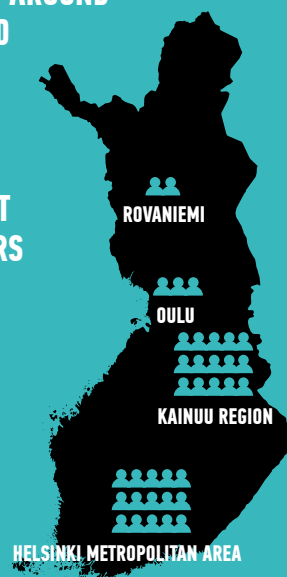PERFORMANCE PRODUCTIONS

38
COOPERATING ORGANISATIONS

35
PROJECT WORKERS

EXPERIENCE OF BEING HEARD

PROCESSING EXPERIENCES THROUGH MOVEMENT AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

POSSIBILITIES TO INFLUENCE ONE'S OWN LIFE

ROVANIEMI

OULU

KAINUU REGION

HELSINKI METROPOLITAN AREA

ABSTRACT

**Susanna Hyväri,
Marja Lindholm &
Niko Nummela (ed.)**

This publication introduces the project Participatory sporty theatre and discusses many new leads regarding the current challenges and solutions available for improving the social inclusion of young people. The authors comprise professional theatre and sports people who participated in the project as well as experts in questions of youth participation. The book contains three sections.

The first section sheds light on the key premises and goals of the project. It discusses the national-level project network and the local activities to improve the inclusion of young people. On the one hand, improving the inclusion of young people has required that professionals in theatre and sports come together across sectoral boundaries to develop a multitude of means for self-expression. On the other hand, it has meant that, over the years, the project has developed a versatile national network of competences and expertise. In addition, issues pertaining to the inclusion of young people are studied from the perspectives of the theoretical concept of social inclusion as well as legislation.

The second section of the book introduces workshops, groups and productions in the fields of theatre and sports, carried out in different parts of Finland using action-based methods. The reader is able to construct a manifold, concrete picture of the youth groups and collaborating parties involved in the work. In addition, this section assesses implementations of participatory activities for young people and discusses issues that require improvement.

The third section of the book focuses on a closer presentation of the action-based exercises used in the project. This section on methods is intended for professionals as well as other parties working with young people, and it can be read as an independent piece. The professionals in theatre and sports who worked in the project also worked in the writing of the third section.

Key words: young people, social inclusion, self-expression, theatre, sports, multidisciplinary working mode

TIIVISTELMÄ
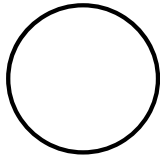
sallistuvan ja liikunnallinen teatteri -hanketta käsittelevässä julkaisussa tuodaan esille uusia avauksia nuorten osallisuuden vahvistamisen ajankohtaisiin haasteisiin ja niiden ratkaisumahdollisuuksiin. Julkaisun kirjoittajia ovat hanketoimintaan osallistuneet teatteri- ja liikunta-alan ammattilaiset ja nuorten osallisuuden kysymyksiin perehtyneet asiantuntijat. Teos jakautuu kolmeen eri osioon.

Kokoomateoksen ensimmäinen osa avaa hankkeen keskeisiä lähtökohtia ja tavoitteita. Siinä kuvataan hankkeen valtakunnallista verkostoa ja nuorten osallisuutta kehittävän toiminnan paikallisia toteutuksia. Nuorten osallisuuden vahvistaminen on tarkoittanut yhtäältä teatteri- ja liikunta-alan ammattilaisten moniammatillista yhteistyötä erilaisten itseilmaisun keinojen kehittämisessä. Toisaalta kyse on ollut hankkeessa syntyneen valtakunnallisen verkoston monipuolisesta ja vuosia kestäneestä osaamisen ja asiantuntemuksen kehittämisestä. Nuorten osallisuuden kysymyksiä tarkastellaan myös lainsäädöllisestä ja osallisuuden käsitteen näkökulmasta.

Toinen teoksen osa tuo esiin eri puolilla Suomea toteutettuja teatteri- ja liikunta-alan toiminnallisia menetelmiä hyödyntäviä työpajoja, ryhmiä ja produktioita. Lukijalle syntyy monipuolinen ja havainnollinen käsitys siitä, minkälaisten nuorten ryhmien kanssa on työskennelty ja keitä yhteistyötahoja on ollut mukana toiminnassa. Nuoria osallistavan toiminnan toteutuksia myös arvioidaan ja pohditaan kehittämistä vaativia seikkoja.

Teoksen kolmas osa keskittyy tarkemmin hankkeessa käytettyjen toiminnallisten harjoitusten esittelyyn. Tätä osaa voivat hyödyntää nuorten parissa työskentelevät ammattilaiset ja muut toimijat. Menetelmällistä osaa voi lukea itsenäisenä osiona. Kolmannen osan toteutuksessa ovat olleen mukana projektissa työskennelleet teatteri- ja liikuta-alan ammattilaiset.

Asiasanat: nuoret, osallisuus, itseilmaisu, teatteri, liikunta, moniammatillisuus

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FOREWORD

The promotion of young people's social inclusion is one of the aims of the Finnish government and the European Union. One of the objectives stated in the government's youth policy programme is that all children and young people should have access to at least one recreational activity of personal interest. Belonging in a community increases the sense of inclusion. Everyone has the need to be seen and heard. The Participatory Sporty Theatre project introduced young people to a new form of self-expression, helped them identify new personal strengths and promoted a sense of inclusion in the participants.

Sports, play and games help participants learn interaction skills and consideration for others. Bodily activity and movement increase a person's sense of agency. Well-planned physical activities strengthen children and young people's sense of self and have a positive influence on their social relationships and physical well-being.

The greatest asset of theatre and artistic expression is the fact that they are highly engaging and not limited to words and language. They promote responsibility, help participants produce and understand ideas, experience joy and attachment, and increase interaction and a sense of community. The articles in this publication show how young people found new sides of themselves and developed a sense of trust and inclusion in their group. In their feedback, students said that they had developed courage to act in a group in ways that were new to them.

Inclusion promotes possibilities for young people to influence and manage their own lives. Young people's inclusion must be supported in order to enable their voices to be genuinely heard, including at the societal level. It is also important to examine on whose terms society is built and services are produced. Influencing opportunities increase young people's confidence and sense of self-worth. A connection with self and other people and opportunities to express oneself can make life rich and meaningful.

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Regional Artist, Children and Young People's Culture and Arts
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PART 1
PREMISES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

Niko Nummela

THE PARTICIPATORY SPORTY THEATRE PROJECT – DESCRIPTION OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture (Heinonen et al. 2018) have issued recommendations on measures to promote recreational activities for children and young people. Schools can also support young people to find recreational activities of personal interest. The Youth Barometer 2017 (Pekkarinen & Myllyniemi 2017) highlights the importance of competence development outside school activities for young people. Such competencies include social skills, the ability to understand diversity, critical reasoning skills, and societal influencing skills.

Recently the trend has shifted from remedial action to preventive action to support children and young people's development. This view is supported by a report of the National Agency for Education (Nikander et al. 2017, 6), which forecasts that the focus of social work will shift from remedial practice to supporting well-being. The competence requirements for social work with customers describe competencies and activities in culture and sports, including in work with young people. The final report of a working group appointed to address inequality issues (Prime Minister's Office 2018, 54) also highlights the role of recreational and culture activities in well-being promotion and the prevention of social segregation.

In the Participatory Sporty Theatre project1, the aim was to promote young people's social inclusion and self-expression by sports and theatre-based methods.

Activities were organised in multidisciplinary cooperation in Rovaniemi, Oulu, the Kainuu region and the Helsinki metropolitan area. Other partners in the multidisciplinary project team were Kainuun Liikunta ry, Kajaani City Theatre, Loisto setlementti ry, Q-teatteri ry and WAU ry. The project was coordinated by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences.

Groups of theatre and sports professionals implemented group activities for young people ages 15–25 in three settings: open recreational groups, existing groups and classes in schools, and closed groups. The activities were aimed at encouraging young people to enjoy theatre and sports both as active participants and as spectators. The work was based on drama techniques that enable self-expression and the processing of emotions. Expressive methods can help to highlight issues that are important to young people and create dialogue between participants (Ruusunen 2005, 54).

This article describes the implementation of the national project, the methods used in the activities with young people, successes and challenges encountered during the project, and the practical prerequisites for creating a safe and encouraging environment for young people. In addition, multidisciplinary and inter-organisational collaboration is discussed. The article is based on the comments and experiences of professionals who worked with young people in the project, and observations made based on workshops organised for young people. The material includes project workers' written evaluations of groups, memoranda on meeting and workshops, and surveys carried out with project workers and stakeholder representatives.

Goal: young people's social inclusion and multidisciplinary cooperation

The main objective of the Participatory Sporty Theatre was to support young people's social inclusion and self-expression through performing arts and sports-based methods (see Figure 1). For example, one drama group for ninth-graders explored life choices and freedom. This and other encounters between professionals and young people are discussed in the articles *Express yourself, understand others – How to express oneself in a group?, Development of self-expression in a drama group for ninth-graders and Reikä kuplassa – young people's voices.*

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1   The activities started in November 2016 and concluded in June 2019. The ESF-funded project was financed by the North Ostrobothnia ELY Centre.

The second objective was to increase multidisciplinary cooperation in theatre, sports and social work with young people. The purpose of combining different disciplines was to create new and creative solutions for the prevention of young people's social segregation. These themes are discussed in the article *Theatre and sports: a multidisciplinary approach to working with young people*. The *Applied theatre as a tool of social inclusion* examines the possibilities of applied theatre and practitioners' roles in multidisciplinary work.

The third objective was to create new cross-sectoral networks. Figure 5 describes the implementing organisations and the networks established during the project. In total, 38 organisations contributed to the project. The project activities reached 59 youth work professionals, who were involved in group activities or were given training in methods that promote the participation of young people.

Collaborative networks

Multidisciplinary teamwork; theatre, sports and youth social work

Social inclusion of young people
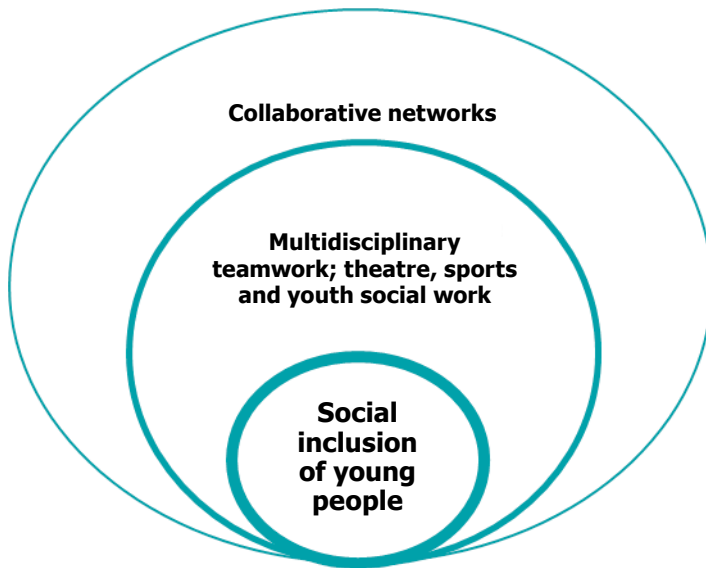
FIGURE 1. Objectives of the Participatory Sporty Theatre project.

Group activities aimed at young people

This chapter provides an overview of the implementation, planning and evaluation of group activities aimed at young people. The target group was young people ages 15–25, and activities were organised both at schools and in recreational settings. The group activities were aimed at strengthening young people's self-confidence, encouraging self-expression, group formation, peer support, enjoyment and a sense of safety in the activities. For example, in activities organised for a group

of ninth-graders, the aim was to support the young people's motivation to finish school and inspire them to continue onto further opportunities. The methods included e.g. self-reflection based on interaction and contact exercises. Recognition of emotions was practised through bodily awareness and verbalisation exercises. Improvisation exercises were carried out with groups that were involved in longer-term activities. In some groups, the activities started with the participants watching a theatre performance, which was then discussed in the group. The groups practised writing scenes and characters. Both school groups and open recreational groups prepared performances. In addition, the groups practised circus skills and did memory exercises and played problem-solving games.

Each group was led by a multidisciplinary team of theatre, sports and youth work professionals. The instructors' task was to create a safe environment to allow everyone to get their voices heard. In addition, the instructors gave "impulses", participated in the exercises and steered the group forward according to the participants' interests.

The multidisciplinary team and the members' competencies are described in the next chapter. The instructors fostered young people's inclusion through respectful and considerate engagement and by asking them to share their skills. According to the instructors' observations, the activity encouraged young people to work in a group. The young people took responsibility for their actions, each other and themselves. It was noted that trust and a sense of community increased throughout the activity, and the instructors also mentioned that openness and "letting go" increased. The groups worked well together, and participants were able to step out of their comfort zones. The instructors felt that they too had learnt about themselves and their practices as group instructors.

One observation was that it would be advisable to start the group activity with low-threshold exercises, such as relaxation and mind association exercises, and give plenty of time for each situation. The exercises can then become more demanding as trust builds within the group. "Demanding" can mean different things, as one instructor noted: *On one hand, the level depends on the group and its members: some groups found the relaxation exercises more demanding where traditional relaxation exercises are concerned, which involve being still, resting and concentrating on breathing and the body, because some of the young people found it too challenging to relax in the same space with new people."*

The young people's comments suggested that they appreciated the instructors' respectful attitudes, style of instruction and ability to interact with people in an authentic way. They also praised the instructors' ability to listen, and felt that they

had been able to have input in the contents of the activity. The participants found the group activity refreshing and enjoyable. They felt that they were able to have fun instead of having to behave sensibly all the time. Some young people felt that their confidence and self-belief had improved, and they were more confident in a group. Interaction exercises were also found useful, as they taught the participants new group skills. One memorable aspect was practising in front of classmates and getting used to performing without nerves.

Cooperation with organisations was started by contacting them directly or via the project workers' own contacts. Before the group activities started, the instructors had a meeting with the teacher or another professional who worked with the young people to discuss the objectives and common rules. In addition, an orientation event was organised for the participating young people before the group activity started. The participants' wishes about the activities were heard at the start of the activity and throughout. The aim was to get ideas from the young people so that the activities would reflect their preferences, as described by one of the instructors: *"We gave them a range of topics to choose from for the next sessions; more specifically, they chose the themes, and us instructors planned each session accordingly."*

The group activities were evaluated from the point of view of the young people, professionals and stakeholders. An action plan, implementation plan and evaluation were drawn up for each group. The evaluation questions included e.g. *"How did the young people participate in the activity?"* and *"In what ways were the inclusion and independence of young people supported in the activities?"* The group instructors conducted a final evaluation for each group, including topics such as the young people's enthusiasm, what worked and what didn't work, what could have been done differently, etc. All plans and evaluations were posted on a shared online platform to disseminate the knowledge and experiences accumulated.

The activities reached 836 young people in 85 groups across the country. Of these, 39 groups were implemented in schools. A total of 29 groups which were open to all were organised. There were 17 prearranged closed groups. (See Figure 2). Fifteen of the recreational open groups were cancelled due to a low number of participants. The groups met 8.2 times per week on average (median 5). The groups met 1–59 times and the sessions lasted 1–6 hours. The longevity of the group activities was influenced by the group's aims and permanence. For example, frequent and long-term activities were appropriate with school groups and those working on a performance. Shorter-term activities were suitable for e.g. workshops.

39	29	17
School group	Recreational open group	Closed group
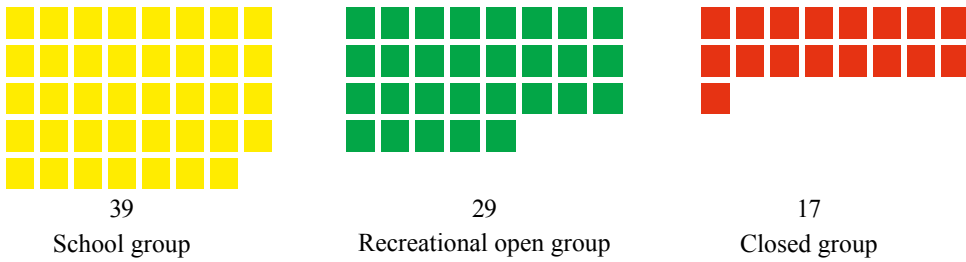
FIGURE 2. Implemented groups, the number of squares represents the number of groups.

Collaboration across disciplinary boundaries

A multidisciplinary team with members from the theatre, sports and youth work sectors worked on the project. The multidisciplinary approach was aimed at creating new and creative solutions for improving young people's quality of life and preventing social segregation. The projects workers' skills complemented each other, and the multidisciplinary approach provides a range of "tools" for working with young people. In the future, cross-sectoral working modes are expected to increase, and the multidisciplinary approach therefore also responds to future competence needs.

The project workers included 35 people from six organisations in Rovaniemi (WAU), Oulu (WAU), Kainuu (Kainuun Liikunta, Kajaani City Theatre) and the Helsinki metropolitan area (Diak, Loisto setlementti, Q-teatteri and WAU). See Figure 3.
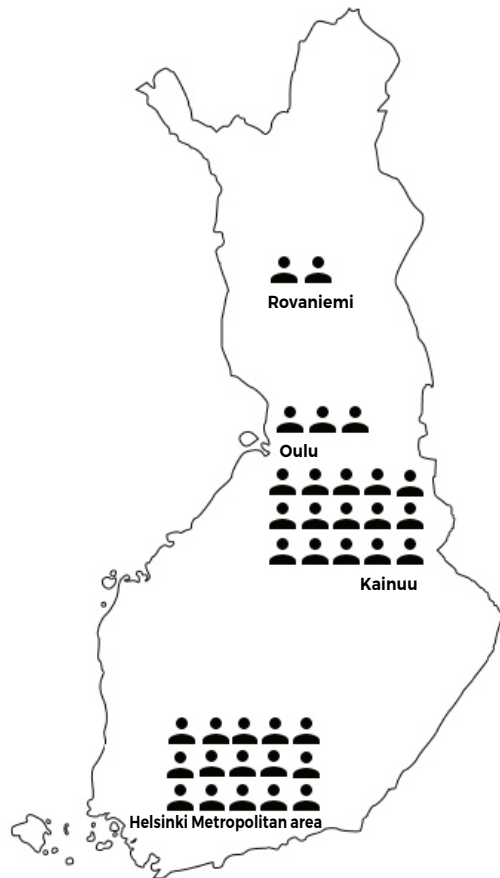
FIGURE 3. Project personnel by location.

The project team met in workshops to learn from each other and develop knowledge across disciplinary boundaries. The participants trained each other and discussed the shared objectives. One project worker noted: *"I got lots of good, new ideas for working with young people. It was great to hear about experiences in other cities and it helped to clarify my understanding of the project as a whole."* A coaching service was organised for the project workers, which offered peer support and opportunities to build a consensus on the project activities and best practices. The project organisation is described in Figure 4.
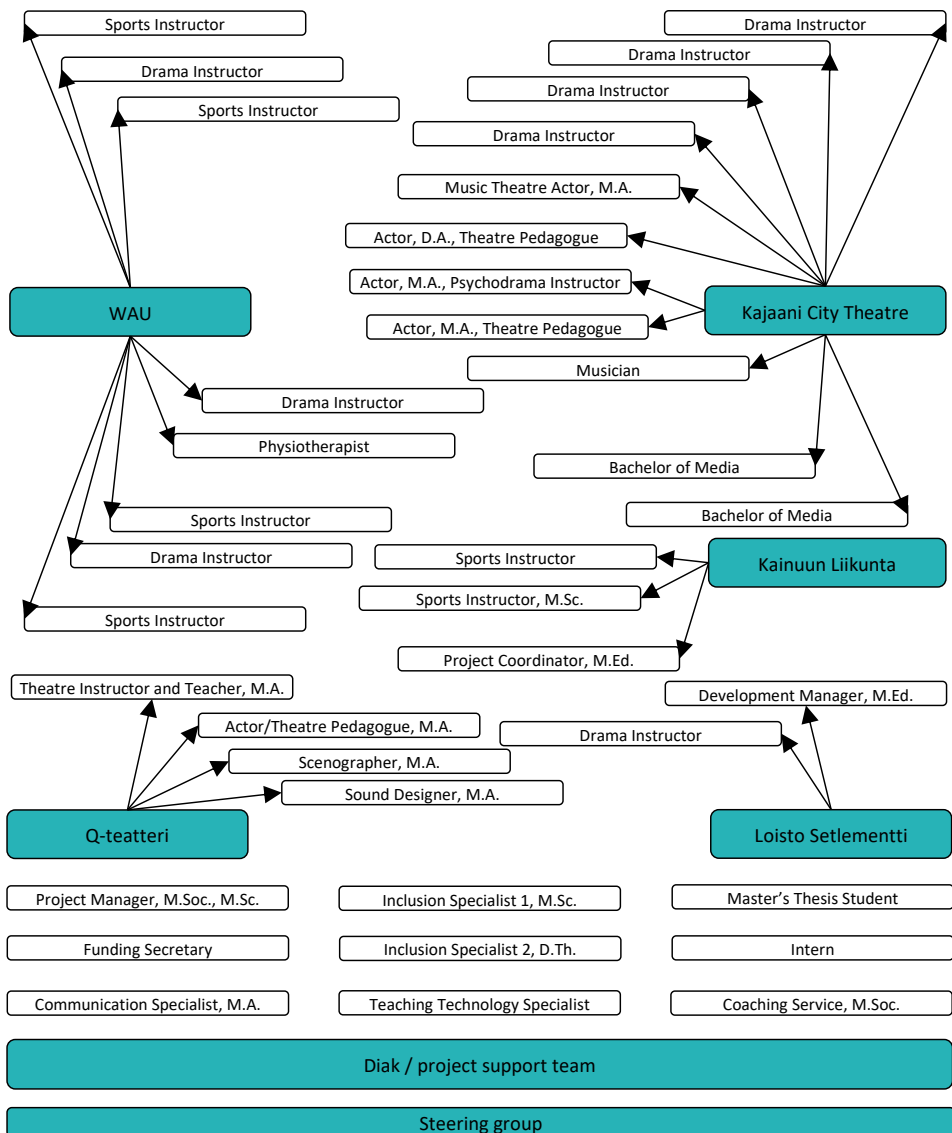
FIGURE 4. Project organisation.

Cooperation between operators working with young people was key to reaching participants. The cooperation networks were formed from project workers' contacts and through project seminars. These involved brainstorming sessions on regional cooperation, and seminar participants were able to agree on collaborations with the project workers. This proved a good way of recruiting new partners to the project. Figure 5 describes the networks established during the project.
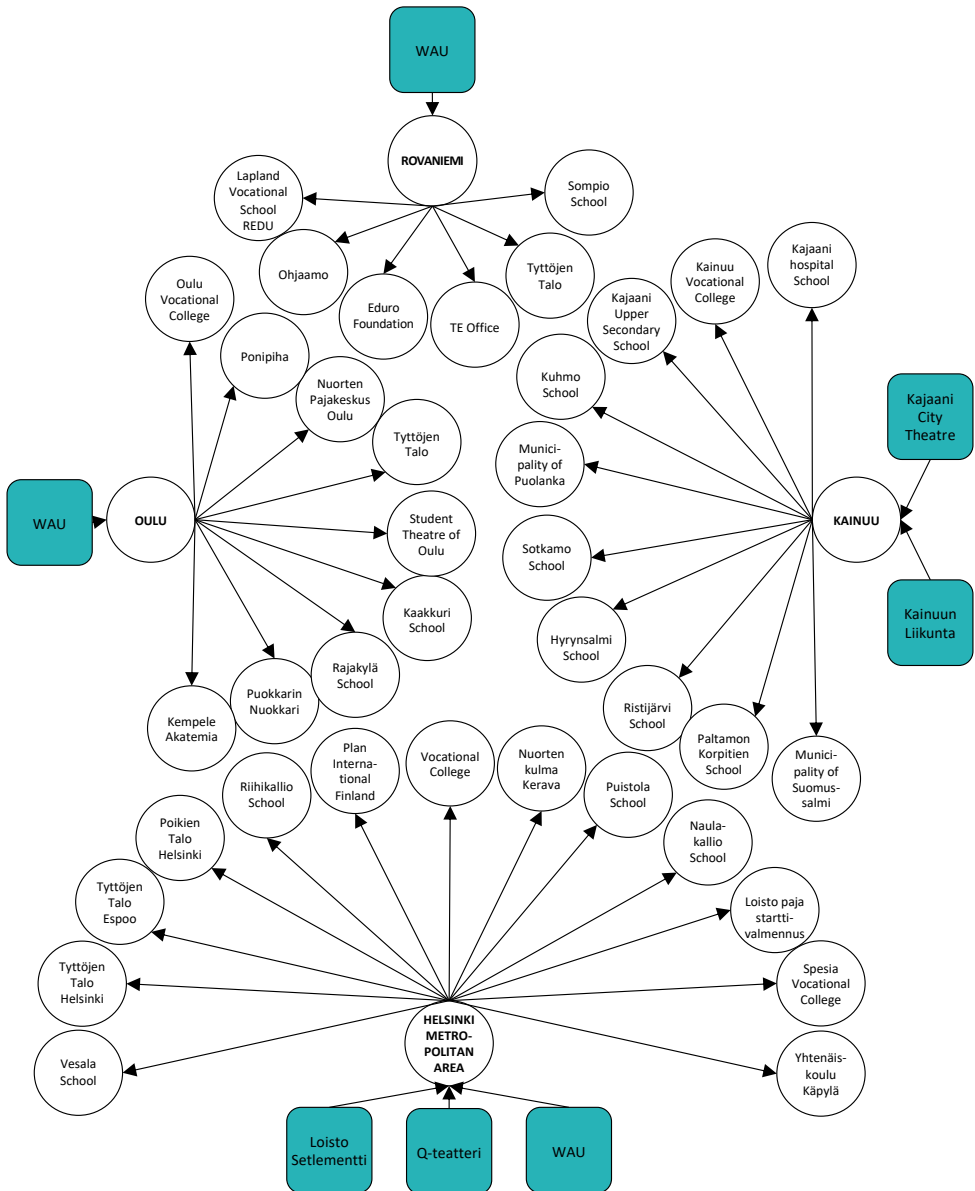
FIGURE 5. Networks established during the activities.

Supporting young people's self-expression

"Thank you for a great collaboration! The inclusion and self-expression classes for young people have strengthened cooperation in the group and had a positive impact on the students!

The main aim of the project was to support young people's social inclusion and self-expression. Cooperation with schools was key to the project's success and helped reach a number of student groups. The professionals were able to get on with the plans when they did not have to spend time on finding participants. Activities for students were tailored to their wishes to some extent, which led to productive discussions and promoted trust between the young people and the professionals.

Sufficient preparatory work before starting the group activity provided certainty to the practice. For example, the objectives and any special needs of the student group were discussed with the teacher. Clear objectives, shared rules and scheduling with the group also facilitated the work, and the project workers were able to focus their energy and attention to working with the young people.

Feedback from teachers was positive, and young people discovered new sides of themselves during the activities. Teachers' enthusiasm about the group activity made the work easier, and some teachers said that it gave them new tools for their teaching practice. Successful group activities also promoted trust among the partners, which facilitated access to numerous student groups.

Self-expression classes as part of school activities proved a good way of recruiting young people to recreational after-school groups. Young people can be reached best by going where they are. Fostering young people's social inclusion in a school environment is also preventive work and helps to reduce future problems.

Based on the feedback, recreational groups working on a performance or production were well received and attracted participants. A clear shared aim was conducive to success and made the marketing of the activity easier. Based on the instructors' observations, there were signs of empowerment in the young people over the course of the production process. The combination of performing arts and sports gave new insights into group instruction. It also increased awareness about each discipline's rationale. Feedback from the professionals highlighted the effectiveness of working in pairs, the mixing of skill sets and learning from each other. The multidisciplinary approach and working in pairs were conducive to professional development. Nevertheless, finding a common consensus required the professionals to have an open mind, time and willingness to throw themselves

into a new situation. On the other hand, working in multidisciplinary pairs also required patience.

A crisis situation developed in one group. The young people felt that their views had not been heard and they did not have enough say in the decision-making. The situation could have led to the activity being cancelled, or in mistrust between the young people and the instructors. Ultimately, the ability to listen and accept criticism led to a consensus. In other words, the acceptance and processing of negative feelings was one form of success. One professional noted that working with young people had helped them understand how challenging some young people's life circumstances are.

Shared aims and values were conducive to success. A genuine willingness to engage with young people also translated into openness from their part. One key principle was young people's inclusion in the planning and implementation of the activity. Successful outcomes included young people's openness and courage to act, and, as one commenter noted, *"the quiet and shy ones were encouraged to participate, and hyperactive kids were able to work in a team."* Experiences from the intensive period at the start of group activity were also positive. In the early stages, groups met several times a week, which helped to promote group formation and foster trust between the instructors and young people.

National workshops organised for the operators enabled project workers to come together and learn from each other: "The *[workshop]day was useful even just for the fact that, when the project is being implemented around the country, I feel that it is important to find channels for sharing the knowledge and experience accumulated in the work. That, if anything, promotes professionalism. We were able to verbalise our understanding of the challenges and achievements through the action-based approach, discussions and examples."* The joint workshops also provided concrete tools for working with young people.

Regional seminars featured action-based workshops for youth work professionals and volunteers, and opportunities to share experiences about methods that are suitable for working with young people. Feedback on the seminar highlighted the following positives: *"A fantastic action-based package!"* and *"Great activities, effective group assignments, I learnt something new!"* The seminars also strengthened regional cooperation between the operators, as noted by a seminar guest: "More events like these, please. Collaboration across sectoral boundaries." Seminar participants and project workers had agreed on further collaborations, such as organising group activities for school groups.

Challenges of project work

There were challenges, especially at the start of the activities, in reaching young people to participate in the recreational open groups. The activities were initially advertised on an "open doors" basis, i.e. anyone could join. The idea was that the content of the activities would evolve according to the participants' wishes. In some locations, however, it proved an ineffective way to reach young people, since the content was not clearly communicated. In addition, the threshold of joining a new activity where they don't know anyone can be high for young people.

Some open groups had to be cancelled because of the lack of participants. Group activities were also advertised under themes, such as "a sporty video workshop". These also did not achieve the intended result, and participant numbers were low. Recreational groups were not always a good use of resources, since some groups had to be cancelled, or there were only a handful of participants. Cancellations also affected project workers' schedules. After the launch stage, activities were targeted at schools and after-school groups, which enabled young people to be reached better.

The marketing message of the activities was somewhat abstract, and it was challenging to concretise the activities. Young people were consulted on how the marketing and communications could be improved. There was criticism about the project title "Osallistava ja liikunnallinen teatteri" (Participatory Sporty Theatre") both from young people and professionals. Young people thought that they would have to act or do sports, which could deter them from getting involved. Professionals criticised the unsual wording, since theatre by definition involves physical activity. Some young people commented, "adults marketing young people's activities to other adults". Direct contact was found to be a good way to reach young people and get them involved. It was particularly useful for the recreational open groups. Groups which were organised towards the latter stage of the project helped to concretise the marketing and ways of reaching young people.

During the project, it became evident that some of the young people had mental health and substance abuse issues or neurological disorders. Large groups which included young people with special needs were sometimes challenging. Issues manifested themselves as anxiety, restlessness and withdrawal. These situations required a sensitive approach and the ability to engage the young person according to their ability. It was therefore justified to have two or three instructors per group to ensure that all participants could be given equal attention. Additional training on working with young people with special needs was organised for project workers.

Work in schools was highlighted in feedback on successful activities. Collaboration in schools was productive, but it also presented some challenges. In some school groups, these were related to students' established roles, which could prevent them from "letting themselves go" in the group activity. In one class, participants were distracted by a crisis situation. In some school groups, language barriers and cultural differences could lead to misunderstandings and presented additional challenges for the instructors.

Lack of time and inadequate research into the group's backgrounds with the teacher also affected working with the group, since each group has its own rules and culture. It is recommended that common rules, responsibilities and legal liabilities are discussed with the teacher at the start of the collaboration and whenever the need arises. There should also be clear limits to ensure, for example, that instructors do not end up teaching vocational subjects. With some teachers, not enough time was allocated to debriefing and feedback. The experiences showed that discussions with the teacher before the start of the group activity facilitated the work with young people. Regular meetings with the teacher were a good way to find a common understanding.

In some school groups, the objectives – group formation and the development of self-expression – were not achieved. Some young people withdrew and objected to the activity from the start, and found the group activities childish. In retrospect, this may have been influenced by unclear task allocation between the teacher and the project workers. For example, it should have been agreed in advance what to do with young people who did not want to participate, and what level of participation was expected. The objectives and aims of the activity may have been unclear to some young people. According to the instructors, clearer definition of the objectives and common rules at the start could have prevented misunderstandings.

The participants found the ESF's follow-up form difficult to complete. They were also confused by the personal questions about their family situation or minority status. According to the project workers, completing the forms at the start of the activity is not conducive to a relaxed atmosphere, which would be vital when starting a group activity. In other words, the challenge is how to combine the administrative requirements with a relaxed and fun activity. A sample form was shown to the participants to make it easier to collect information. In addition, the method and timing of information gathering were taken into account in the planning stage. In one group, the project manager visited at the start of the activity to collect the participants' information, which enabled the group instructors to concentrate on working and spending time with the group.

An instruction video on information gathering was produced, which could be used with e.g. larger student groups.

Learning and combining new practices and methods always takes time. Combining youth social work, theatre and sports is not a simple task. Theatre and sports people have different educational backgrounds, orientations, terminologies and approaches, which all influence how they work with groups. Bringing all these elements together required time, mutual respect and flexibility from each sector.

Differences between the human resources of the participating organisations posed challenges in collaborative tasks such as planning and the implementation of the group activity. High turnover of workers was also a challenge. There were some part-time project workers who left the project, for example, to move to a full-time position. Recruitment and orientation of new personnel took time. National workshops for project workers were important from the point of view of collaboration and shared learning. New workers were not able to attend all workshops to share ideas and get new tools. The resource balance between the operators should be taken into account in the planning stage.

Improving social inclusion
through the cooperation of theatre and sports

The importance of recreational activities to young people's development and well-being was discussed in the introduction. Collaborations in school settings can also help to promote young people's access to recreational activities. They can inspire some youngsters to get involved in theatre or sports, or discover new sides of themselves. The presence of a familiar adult can help to reduce the threshold to participation. In addition, sessions organised in school settings supported team spirit and encouraged youngsters to connect with each other. These interaction skills can also be used in other contexts. For example, young people's motivation and participation in group activity can be promoted by practical training as part of the school curriculum, in which young people will benefit from having practised interaction skills. The interaction exercises therefore provide the basis for the group activities. It means that the group activity also supports other aims instead of being a completely separate activity.

One of the benefits of multidisciplinary working is shared learning. However, combining youth social work with theatre and sports takes time. Since the project involved professionals from different sectors, it was only natural that learning about each other's practices took time. Effective multidisciplinary working requires trust, open dialogue, close cooperation, a commitment to a new kind of

working culture, and its management. In a national project, the harmonisation of activities, the establishment of practices and the organisation of meetings for the project team require a lot of resources. Establishing a project organisation takes a long time relative to the duration of the project itself. Therefore a longer duration would increase the effective working time of the project – for example, the time spent with young people. It is important that the project workers are committed to the project's aims and work methods. At the start of the project, a consensus is developed about the aims, approaches and required resources.

Collaboration with organisations such as schools and NGOs is central to reaching young people. In the early stages of the project, the open groups failed to reach young people as well as expected; a number of groups had to be cancelled due to low participant numbers, and decisions had to be made about what to do if there were only one or two participants. In contrast, groups that were established in collaboration with stakeholder groups were often successful. It is recommended that activities be brought to young people in existing settings such as schools, and integrated into everyday activities. However, it is also important to offer empowering activities to young people who do not attend school or hobbies, although preventive work is also important.

The new models developed during the activity became part of the organisations' operations; for example, WAU will be organising trainings that promote interaction and teamwork through sports and self-expression exercises. Kajaani City Theatre has established Kulttura, a cultural centre for children and young people, which will continue regional collaboration with e.g. local authorities and organise activities such as action-based workshops for children and young people. The Kainuun Liikunta sports association and Kajaani City Theatre organise training modules. Their aim is to strengthen the competencies of professionals who work with young people in theatre and circus activities. A new international project titled *Express yourself! – Inclusive grouping in schools* is aimed at supporting self-expression and grouping among young people in vocational institutions.

The successes of the Participatory Sporty Theatre project were also underpinned by the common aim of supporting young people's social inclusion and self-expression. Effective multidisciplinary working requires both individual and organisational level commitment and systematic approaches. Active interaction with other operators is essential, as noted by one stakeholder representative: *"Together we can achieve more."*

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Susanna Hyväri, Marja Lindholm & Piia Tilsala

THEATRE AND SPORTS: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Demand for multidisciplinary development of the cultural, sports and social service sectors is expected to increase in the future. The working group on the future of the social service sector forecasts a shift towards a network-based approach that requires multidisciplinary collaboration (Nikander, Juntunen, Homberg & Tuominen-Thuesen 2017). The focus will shift from remedial measures to prevention and welfare promotion, which places further importance on networking skills. Networks and networking usually involve operators who have something in common – for example, they all work with young people. Loosely speaking, networking can involve collaborations, information sharing and getting to know one another. Network-based working, on the other hand, is about concrete collaboration. Multidisciplinarity refers to professionals from different sectors working as part of a network or a close team. Teams are characterised by a common goal, performance targets, shared responsibilities, a complementary set of skills, and commitment.

In the Participatory Sporty Theatre project, professionals from the theatre and sports sectors worked together to lead peer groups for young people and develop their practices in line with the future trend identified by the working group. In multidisciplinary projects, it is essential that participants' diverse skills are used and leveraged. This facilitates departure from existing routines

and thought processes, which helps to foster new ideas and approaches as well as shared learning.

Work pairs and teams who commit to the project learn a new, multidisciplinary working culture, in which the sharing of skills and knowledge is an essential feature. They require trust, openness and mutual appreciation of each other's competencies. Most importantly, a multidisciplinary team and its leadership require space and time to explore what multidisciplinarity means in their own practice. For example, joint workshops, team meetings and work supervision can serve as forums in which a multidisciplinary team can develop a shared understanding of multidisciplinarity, get support and share best practices. At their best, such forums can highlight the possibilities of multidisciplinarity as well as the challenges it may present. A broad share   d understanding provides opportunities for reflecting on one's own practice, which is conducive to professional development as well as conflict resolution (e.g. Ollila 2014; Pärnä 2012).

In practice, multidisciplinary work highlights the ways in which workers who represent different sectors can have different competencies as well as different approaches and working culture – there can even be differences in professional language. Developing these practices requires new types of networking skills and attitudes from the workers (Hulkkonen 2016; Perälä, Halme & Nykänen 2012). As boundaries between sectors become more blurred, expertise is not strictly about an individual's characteristics or skills; rather, it is the outcome of multidisciplinary interaction. In projects that innovate new approaches where there are no existing models or solutions, a shared understanding has to be developed on working practices and the formation of the knowledge base (cf. Hakkarainen, Lallimo & Toikka 2012).

This article examines the meaning of multidisciplinarity in various contexts and discourses, and what aims have been set for multidisciplinarity collaboration. The aim is to describe how professionals from different sectors who worked in the Participatory Sporty Theatre project have experienced the opportunities of multidisciplinary working, and what challenges or problems they perceive in terms of the utilisation and consolidation of different professional skill sets and the commitment to the project aims by professionals representing different sectors.

Multidisciplinarity and multidisciplinary collaboration

In Finland, recent legislative updates place emphasis on multidisciplinarity and cross-sectoral practices. National strategies and programmes support the consoli-

dation of services and the development of cross-sectoral collaboration. In service development, cross-sectoral multidisciplinarity is seen as the starting point which enables a customer-focused approach and the development of service concepts through integration (e.g. the health and social care reform i.a.; Social Welfare Act 1301/2014; Health Care Act 1326/2010). Multidisciplinary cooperation is a new way of working that is based on gaining new insights and knowledge, and collaborations between professionals from different sectors. It requires a new, coordinational approach to leadership (Perälä, Halme & Nykänen 2012). In particular, the coordination of diverse skill sets and methods of different sectors is needed when working with hard-to-reach young people who are at risk of marginalisation, as was the case in the Participatory Sporty Theatre project.

Multidisciplinary collaboration has become an umbrella term which has various definitions depending on the author's orientation and the practical context (Isoherranen 2012, 19–23). Multidisciplinarity can be seen as a related concept to multisectoral collaboration, although the latter emphasises collaboration between sectors or industries. In other words, it is not just about different types of professional groups working together in the same sector.

Multidisciplinary collaboration can be defined as the coordination of different groups' skill sets and knowledge in a joint activity. It is a form of postmodern professionalism, which is about professionals' ability to reflect and develop expertise in a multidisciplinary context. Commitment to a goal-oriented collaboration and joint decision-making is central to this approach. In addition to joint activities, shared goals and trust are essential (Pärnä 2012, 49–50).

Multidisciplinarity as a concept encompasses both individuals and communities. In an individual, multidisciplinarity refers to competencies that are centred around general workplace competencies such as attitudes, decision-making and problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills and goal-oriented learning skills. A community produces the competencies expected of it through its members (Katajamäki 2010, 24–25).

In multidisciplinary working, each professional should contribute their expertise towards the common goal. An essential aspect is how workers can demonstrate and justify their own expertise and professional competencies (Isoherranen, Rekola & Nurminen 2008, 14–15). For example, practices and task allocation can be based on the skill sets of different individuals. Multidisciplinarity requires joint analysis of practices and crossing vocational context boundaries (Pärnä 2012, 4–6; Katisko, Kolkka & Vuokila-Oikkonen 2014, 11–13). Multidisciplinary working requires collaborative structures including a supportive leadership culture, re-

sources, training, common goals, familiarity with each other, interaction skills, definitions on task allocation, and awareness of one's own expertise. Collaborative processes that produce multidisciplinarity are essential (Eloranta & Kuusela 2011, 4–12).

In effective multidisciplinary collaboration, the contributors know what should be done and how. They each have sufficient skills and knowledge. They share and are willing to learn from each other. Key elements of multidisciplinary collaboration are a customer-focused approach, the gathering of knowledge and new insights to serve the team, an interactive approach to cooperation, working across boundaries, and awareness about networks and leveraging them. A holistic customer orientation is central. If there are gaps in knowledge, the group or team members must be willing to seek help from external experts. (Kontio, 2010). This type of regenerative work culture and competence-sharing requires a reflective approach and the ability to analyse competencies, as well as resources and good support, especially at the start.

Multidisciplinarity can be perceived as a threat to one's own professional identity. Individuals may fear that the importance of their own professional insight could diminish. It is important that each professional's competence should be defined and strengthened. This way, everyone can contribute to the community's competencies. In particular, silent knowledge of experienced workers can help to strengthen the competencies of a multidisciplinary team, but it requires the team members to trust each other. (Kupias & Salo 2014, 231–247).

In a worst case scenario, multidisciplinary working can lead to competition or conflicts between professionals. In this case, a customer-focused approach is not possible. Problems may arise from insufficient time spent on determining the shared aims, or unclear or unequal roles. Other issues include the lack of shared tools and models, ineffective flow of information, or some contributors being excluded. It means that individuals' competencies are not recognised or valued. Professional competencies could be eroded, and an individual's role as an expert is diminished. Work is not being led with a goal-oriented approach, and not enough attention is paid to ensuring trust between individuals or organisations. The work becomes ineffective, and quality suffers (e.g. Isoherranen 2004, 35–37).

When starting multidisciplinary collaboration, it is important that the professionals are willing and enthusiastic about the collaboration, and that it is led in a goal-oriented and participatory way. Professionals from different disciplines come together at the interfaces and cross boundaries. Working at the boundaries is about negotiating between one's own discipline and its justification on one

hand, and the requirements of the collaboration on the other hand. It may have a competitive aspect, but usually it is about negotiation and redefining a common ground and personal positions. Multidisciplinary collaboration develops through concrete actions and inter-professional relations that support flexibility, goodwill and trust (e.g. Pärnä 2012, 133–152). It requires recognition of the need for customer-focused collaboration and willingness to collaborate, and is aimed at fostering dialogue with other professionals as well as customers. It is important to concretise the aims of multidisciplinary working, and the dimensions of these aims. Shared processes can facilitate new insights and professional practices. They can nurture courage to work in a way that centres the customer's needs, and thus support a customer-focused approach. Collaboration produces added value and outputs that cannot be achieved by any single individual. The mandate for multidisciplinary working can thus be seen to arise from the customer relationship (Pärnä 2012, 215–220).

In multidisciplinary working, trust is not a purely rational concept; it involves emotions, experiences, values, ability to work together, conscientiousness, honesty, loyalty, hope and belief in the common good (Ilmonen & Jokinen 2000, 12). In effective multidisciplinary teams, the professionals support and trust one another. They motivate and produce social capital that supports the members' well-being (Isoherranen 2012, 5). Reciprocity, trust and mutual respect ensure that team members are willing to listen to one another. Trust and reliability are closely linked to the experience of kept promises. This, in combination with a trust in abilities, openness and intent, leads to what is known as trust capital. Trust capital facilitates flexibility and better tolerance of conflicts, which are inevitable in multidisciplinary collaboration (Kupias & Salo 2014, 174–179).

Experiences of multidisciplinarity

The following section discusses findings on the material obtained in a focus group interview in spring 2018. [1] The interview participants were members of one team of theatre and sports professionals who were involved in the project. The interviews were aimed at probing the experiences of project workers from different sectors about the project, the competencies it had required, definitions of multidisciplinarity, and descriptions of collaborations between different disciplines.

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[1] The interview quotes are from interview transcripts collected by Piia Tilsala for her master's thesis in spring 2018. For this article, themes were selected from the interview material which illuminate how the participants had analysed and defined the concept of multidisciplinarity.

Multidisciplinarity as coordination of competencies

The selected team interview probed how the interviewees understood the concept of multidisciplinarity and how they had realised it in the project. The first responses are primarily about analysis based on the interviewees' prior work experience.

I: What does multidisciplinarity mean to you?

R1: I have spent years working with girls in a multidisciplinary team, and for me it means that we do the same work but use different tools and methods, and we share them and there are channels and ways to share them, and what happens when we work together is that not everyone will explain, so we also have situations where we can discuss them. But it's about working towards the same goals from different professional starting points.

R2: I could add that with my work history, I see multidisciplinarity in the same way in that we have a goal which... one concrete example is a theatre production, but I am personally in charge of the instruction side, and then I'll have a sound designer and lighting designer and maybe others who bring their specific expertise to the common goal... we all understand intuitively and share the goal we are working towards, and we give our full professional effort to the goal.

R3: Different work methods. As you said, everything is based on having a common goal. I can't put it into words, but you kind of have to strip back some of your own stuff, and give and take.

One key theme that arose in the discussion is the common goal to which the multidisciplinary team is committed. In addition to a common goal, working in a multidisciplinary team is about sharing and combining different types of competencies and work methods of different disciplines. It facilitates the leveraging of competencies from different disciplines, shared learning and the sharing of silent knowledge towards a common goal.

Collaboration and competence sharing

The project was aimed at increasing social inclusion of vulnerable young people who are at risk of social exclusion The project did not have a specific criteria for identifying or defining the target group. Based on discussions, it was decided that

it would be undesirable to give the impression of the participants as a homogeneous group of marginalised young people. On the other hand, it should be noted that there was no clear consensus about the target group. The professionals were able to invite a diverse range of young people and groups to participate in the activities. The following section discusses how the project target group should be defined and understood. It also explores how restrictive definitions of social exclusion or marginalisation can be avoided when defining the target group. One solution was to focus on the challenges relating to young people's self-expression. A second solution was for the work to be based on the holistic concept of human being.

> *R2: I'm thinking about the target group, so my thoughts are veering towards, if you think about it from the target group's perspective, which is one of the important questions before this project, whether the target group... what exactly it means. I feel that it has been a question mark that creates some degree of unclarity, but if we assume that the target group is people who characteristically participate less, then based on my experience I think it means, broadly speaking and if I were to guess, people whose self-expression is somewhat blocked, in which case it is always about both the body and the mind, so you can't separate them.*

It appears that the conception of multidisciplinarity shifts over the course of the conversation from the coordination of competencies and tasks towards a focus on dialogue and joint competencies. A multidisciplinary orientation requires experimenting, i.e. openness and ideation of collaborative approaches. It also involves exploring together what competencies are needed when working with a given group of young people.

> *R1: And regarding our target group, if we try different methods... or thinking about some of the traditional... so this project combines theatre and sports as the name says, it's the core idea, so both of them are probably disciplines that... require their own experts, so that we can work out how to do it together, and do we combine them or what, so that needs investigating, because it can't be that someone just represents something, so in my mind it is already justified that we need skilled people, or professionals, experts in a multidisciplinary sense.*

> *And also opportunities to find ways of reaching, if someone hasn't worked much with a target group like this, it requires methods, so when someone has expertise*

in their own field, whether it's theatre or sports, so in this project it's about experimenting with ways to look at things together in a productive way, in a different way, and make it easier and reduce the barrier to grasp and come out and do things for these people who find it difficult to express themselves or have mental blocks in terms of body, interaction and other stuff both within themselves and in terms of connecting with other people

The target group is defined and its characteristics are considered through two perspectives. Firstly, the aim of the project requires theatre and sports professionals to work together. On the other hand, the difficulty of defining the target group, and the perceived challenges relating to the group, suggest that close cooperation between disciplines, working in pairs and peer learning are important and beneficial. The target group included young people who had not actively sought out theatre or sports activities or participated in other recreational activity. Therefore, one challenge for the professionals was to reduce the threshold of participation, and motivate and encourage young people to get involved.

When working with a group of young people, the group's characteristics must be taken into account. Youngsters may have prejudices or loaded experiences about professional operators and activities that are targeted at them. The interviewees felt that working in pairs reduced pressure on an individual professional working alone with a group. Working in pairs also enables them to observe how the group process develops and what support needs the group may have. And by working together, professionals can learn new models and methods from each other's disciplines.

R3: I'm thinking that, considering the title, it would be stupid to have someone from just sports or just theatre, because the group members (young people) will also get a different insight when they know that there's a theatre professional or a sports professional, because for some, theatre might be a very distant idea, or even just the word sports might sound horrible to them. So the group members could also... like if someone is into theatre, then they can feel safe there when they know that it also includes theatre and not just some gymnastics guy. And it's a learning experience to see what others do. And what Jaana said, it's actually good that this is being done in pairs, so when one instructs, the other one can observe the group, because all groups will meet more than once.

Competence requirements in multidisciplinary work

When working with young people, prior work experience can enable the activity to be designed to the specific needs of the young people selected for the target group. The interviewed professionals had previously worked with young people, but they didn't always feel that they had adequate skills to work with young people who have considerable special needs. It was felt that theatre and sports professionals should be supported by, at least, youth work professionals.

> *R3: So, what R2 said, because they have worked with this group, and R1 has worked here at the Girls House, so that already creates... if they were all just theatre people who have only worked with adults and not bring their skills to this group and project, then we would be in trouble. So perhaps we would then also need someone who works at the Girls House, or who has has worked with young people. And I did say, when we were at the Boys House, if I had been there with someone for the first time, it would have been, like, okay, what do we do. In a way, although I have worked with young people and taught at hospital school and at different schools, but it's different, it's such a different world. I didn't even know about the Boys House and the Girls House before this project, so if they didn't have their expertise, then I would say we would need another person, like a youth worker.*

Competencies acquired through education and work experience are utilised in work with young people. One identified problem was that working with vulnerable and "sensitive" young people needs specific competencies that not everyone has. The challenges and special needs of young people led to questions about professional boundaries and responsibility: what level of knowledge and skills are needed from the professionals, and how in-depth should the knowledge be. One option is to supplement one's own competencies by consulting experts from other fields. In fact, the concept of multidisciplinarity begins to broaden to encompass advice sought from other professional networks according to the target group's needs. This means that instead of being strictly about the internal work of a team or pair, multidisciplinary working is flexible and scalable according to the needs of the group.

> *R2: I don't know whether the project needs someone specifically on the field, but I have sometimes thought about a therapist's perspective... because I am a pedagogue by training, I have a degree in heducation, and when I meet a young person who is in a vulnerable situation, it's a huge responsibility, and you want*

to take that responsibility and be as supportive to the young person as possible, it's not that I feel that I don't have the ability, but in this world it kind of feels like I would need more knowledge about it all, so in a way I am lucky in that I can consult a trauma therapist via other projects and that kind of thing, but it's really valuable information and I feel that... it's not going to go wrong in the sense that you can't do anything because you don't know what the other person has, but I would point out that it feels a bit irresponsible to just wing it with people who are in a very vulnerable situation. I mean, the thought of it feels irresponsible to me. I think that maybe developmental psychology, that kind of insight is needed.

The members of the multidisciplinary team interpret professional boundaries and the interfaces of competence areas in different ways. They ask how in-depth their competencies should be when working with young people who need special support. They also wonder to what extent can short trainings or consultation opportunities supplement the skill sets of theatre and sports professionals. In addition, there is a question about abilities and knowledge gained in previous projects for dealing with young people's situations. Young people's needs must be recognised and taken seriously. If a professional has concerns about a young person, for example, if they may need therapy, the professional should find out whether the young person is already a service user, and if not, refer them to the appropriate service. This means that knowledge about services available to young people is also needed. According to the professionals, it would have been necessary to anticipate special needs or characteristics the young people may have before starting the project activity.

R1: I haven't really thought that I need more skills or a new professional team. Maybe I'm kind of in the middle, because I have my work experience from here and my own support networks that I can consult, and I have learnt a lot even though I don't myself... I have been on some short courses on trauma or violent behaviour and that kind of thing, so I'm not that... I don't feel out of depth.

I see the therapy aspect as a process, so in a way it's something that a project like this can't really offer, but of course it's good to have knowledge about those things, so that if someone doesn't know this field which involves people who have very specific needs, so when as an instructor you notice that someone is panicking, you kind of wonder what should I do, how should I direct. Just the knowledge of it. So obviously that's... it's probably something that I have no knowledge

of. Whether we should have examined that aspect in some respects, do some kind of mapping, perhaps in our meetings or in each location, whether that should have been included in some way, to check whether everyone knows and whether it's possible... I don't know.

R2: I'm also thinking about better awareness, if this type of project was to be repeated, if someone is coordinating it, I would hope that they would think about it and take this target group seriously.

R3: It was kind of missing when we started the project, for example, other people attended meetings, and we planned the activity, so when the target group includes people who are very vulnerable, it's about awareness, or if we had had some kind of training about where we can refer... so, what kinds of people are you really able to deal with in this project, and that the instructor can't be just anybody. That's my opinion, you can't just send someone there. So maybe some kind of joint introduction for the whole project.

The role of educational background in multidisciplinary working

Diverse educational backgrounds and work experiences can enrich multidisciplinary collaboration. On one hand, the professionals highlight the fact that preconceptions about the rationales and competencies of other disciplines may inform team members' ideas about each other's work, competencies and goals. On the other hand, the interview material strongly suggest that competencies acquired through formal education are trusted when working with young people with special needs. Empirical knowledge is also valued and seen to bring confidence to working and dealing with young people.

The following section contains discussion about how the approaches of different disciplines could be brought together. The topic is exercises designed for various youth groups. The aims of the exercises vary by discipline, and there is discussion about how they could be consolidated towards a common goal. At its best, a skill set underpinned by different educational backgrounds facilitates a needs-based and inclusive activity with young people who need special support.

I: How do you see the educational differences between the disciplines?

R3: One thing that is jarring for me is how everyone says about sports, that we do exercises in order to get fit, because we are also different and see things dif-

ferently. The fact that sports people are seen as goal-oriented. I haven't personally had any problems in mixing it up in groups, because there are different groups.

R1: So we kind of had a common heading under which we do different exercises, experiment and explore it in different ways to... Because from this perspective it's like, oh, it can be done like that as well.

R2: It's obvious that we have clear differences in terms of our educational backgrounds. I don't know if there are differences in terms of aims, but again, the people who come under the education or teaching of the target group... it's obvious that if you have pedagogical training, it's a different thing altogether, but in terms of the needs... if we're talking about concrete stuff, in concrete terms it can be realised best if the group's needs are such that... in terms of us three instructors, that everyone's strongest competence is relevant from some perspective.

It also appears that professionals working in the project are expected to have a range of competencies when working in the project settings. The discussion highlights the fact that project workers were expected to teach topics such as contents of practical nursing degrees as part of the project activity. This challenges the practitioners to reflect on their personal competencies and boundaries.

R2: For example, you had this one group that included practical nursing students. They were about to start practical training in a kindergarten and they needed games which were easy to lead with kids, and then on the other hand they had a need to explore what being an instructor means, because when language skills are still lacking, it leads to uncertainty, so those were two very clear needs, so someone gave a brilliant answer and said this and this game, and what to take into account when leading these games, and the two others were more about how to feel comfortable as an instructor.

Development of multidisciplinarity in work with young people

In the interview, practitioners from different disciplines who worked in the project described their experience of multidisciplinary working with young people who need special support. The project has facilitated the development of diverse collaboration between disciplines over a number of years, which was supported by work supervision organised by the project.

It appears that open interaction, familiarity and mutual trust help to identify interfaces between competencies and build a new kind of multi-sectoral working culture (cf. Pärnä 2012; Kupias & Salo 2014).

The creation of multidisciplinary work methods and networks in work with young people requires a change in the established working culture (cf. Hulkkonen 2016). Open dialogue between different disciplines is needed. Young people must also be heard and engaged in development.

Reflective expertise and recognition of personal competencies help to understand limitations and development needs in personal competence (Karvinen-Niinikoski 2005). This enables practitioners to see the value of each other's competencies and the importance of shared competence in working towards common aims. Personal competence and the competence of a multidisciplinary team are always relative to something. In this project, competencies were examined relative to the needs and personal resources of young people who need special support. One clear challenge identified from the interviews was that, when starting the activity, the team should have taken a moment to consider what competencies it had, what types of groups it was ready to instruct, and which types of young people's special needs it had the competencies to respond to.

During the project activity, the work of the multidisciplinary teams and pairs could differ from the practitioners' everyday work both in terms of work management and resourcing. The experiences suggest that the management of a multidisciplinary team will require enhanced ability to coordinate different types of educational backgrounds, working cultures and methods (cf. Perälä, Halme & Nykänen 2012). It is important that management and supervisors be familiar with the key principles and requirements of multidisciplinary working. It is also important to understand how the work of practitioners with diverse professional backgrounds are supported within organisations and collaborative networks. In addition, multidisciplinary working and goal-setting are made easier when customers' needs and wishes are enquired at the start of the activity. The special needs and personal resources of participating youngsters can be probed best by involving them in the planning of the activity.

From the point of view of establishing multidisciplinarity and trust, it was important for practitioners from different disciplines to engage in concrete cooperation both at the local and national levels (cf. Eloranta & Kuusela 2011). They planned, implemented and evaluated the group activities, learnt about methods and practices of practitioners who attended workshops around Finland, and had access to peer support in challenging situations. The experiences suggest that

multidisciplinary working skills and orientation that supports the inclusion of the customer should be emphasised as competence objectives and in practical training in all educational programmes that prepare students for working with young people, and especially in the area of preventing of marginalisation.

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Jari Helminen

PROMOTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S INCLUSION: THE OBJECTIVES

"I didn't feel like doing anything.
I couldn't be bothered to start from the beginning,
because I wouldn't succeed." (Aalto 2018, A15)

There has been talk of "being stuck at home" and the "lost" youth. The above quote is from an article in which a young man called Aleksi talks about his life situation. He had given up because he felt that he was not able to finish anything. In the article, Alex says that he did not know what he wanted (Aalto 2018, A15).

The aim of the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project was to support young people's social inclusion and self-expression. Young people were supported to process their experiences and views, have positive experiences of succeeding, and build their self-confidence. The role of the adult instructors was to create a safe environment in which young people could be encouraged to share their experiences and views (Nummela in this publication).

In this text, I examine how the social inclusion of young people was promoted in the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project based on the articles of this publication. Based on legislation, I propose that the consideration and promotion of young people's social inclusion are not optional; they are requirements for all practitioners who work with children and young people. I conclude by discussing the possibilities and challenges of preventive work involving young people based on the *Programme to address child and family services* (LAPE, 2016–2019).

Legislation makes the promotion of children and young people's social inclusion mandatory

All citizens should have equal opportunities to participation and inclusion. The Participatory Sporty Theatre project was aimed at young people ages 15–25. The participants were supported in analysing solutions relating to themselves and their lives and encouraged to participate in community and group activities (Nummela in this publication).

There has been a concerted effort to promote the social inclusion of children and young people since the early 2000s (Heinonen 2016, 252). Legislation requires practitioners who work with children and young people to promote their social inclusion.

The promotion of the social inclusion of children and young people is based on the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 12 states, "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child" (A 60/1991). The right of the child to express their views in matters affecting the child is also set out in the *Constitution of Finland* (L 731/1999, section 6).

The new *Act on Early Childhood Education and Care* was passed in summer 2018 (540/2018). According to the act, when planning, implementing and evaluating early childhood education and care, the child's views and wishes must be enquired and taken into consideration, taking into account his or her age and development (L 540/2018, 20§, 23§). The requirements set out in the national early childhood education and care plan place emphasis on child-centred, child-inclusive pedagogy (National Agency for Education 2016).

According to the *Basic Education Act* (628/1998), education shall promote pupils' prerequisites for participating in education and otherwise developing themselves during their lives (section 2). The *Student Welfare Act* (1287/2013) states that student welfare services must promote children and young people's learning, health, welfare and inclusion, and work to prevent problems (section 2).

One of the objectives of the *Youth Act* (1285/2016) is to promote young people's social inclusion and influencing opportunities, and their ability and prerequisites to participate in society (section 2). Outreach youth work should promote young people's development, independence, social inclusion and other aspects of life management, and their access to education and the job market (L 1285/2016, section 10).

In child protection, the guiding principle is the child's best interest (Heinonen 2016, 243). The *Child Welfare Act* (417/2007) states that, when assessing the

child's best interest, attention must be paid to how the alternative measures and solutions safeguard the child's opportunities to participation and ability to express his or her view in matters affecting the child (section 4, section 20).

The social inclusion of the child requires that he or she has access to information about child welfare measures, and that he or she is listened to and able to influence decisions made by child welfare services (Etene 2017, 10, 16–17; Heinonen 2016, 252).

The promotion of children and young people's inclusion is incorporated into all legislation relating to children and young people. The *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project was aimed at supporting young people's growth, development and social inclusion. The activities were implemented in young people's everyday settings such as school. Young people were involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project activities and productions. The starting points of the project can be seen as relevant to proactive and preventive youth work (see Act 1285/2016, section 2).

What is social inclusion?

The title of the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project led the implementers to explore the meanings of the concepts "participation", "social inclusion" and "inclusivity". According to Jaana Taskinen and Leila Hellman-Eronen (in this publication), projects that are aimed at promoting inclusion should carefully determine what kind of inclusion and participation is being sought and how. They explored the concept of inclusion during the *Reikä kuplassa* production, which was implemented as part of the project, by analysing its antonyms, e.g. indifference, segregation and marginalisation.

Inclusion is a multifaceted concept. It is rooted in a person's engagement with society, community or group. It it about the perception of membership. Inclusion means opportunities to participate and contribute to a common understanding. It is about influencing matters affecting society, community or group (see Kiilakoski & Gretschel 2012, 5; Nivala 2008, 166–172; Rouvinen-Wilenius 2014, 51; Sirviö 2010, 131–133; Särkelä-Kukko 2014, 49).

Reikä kuplassa and other productions of the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project were planned and implemented as a group. In the productions, young people's engagement in the group was supported by the fact that they were able to participate as themselves, i.e. they were accepted "as they were". Commitment to the group was strengthened when the group and the activity were perceived as interesting (Taskinen & Hellman-Eronen in this publication).

In addition to engagement with society, communities or groups, inclusion has been described as a combination of hearing and being heard, doing things together, and shared experiences and trust (Jämsén & Pyykkönen 2014, 9; Särkelä-Kukko 2014, 35). According to Tomi Kiilakoski (2008), children and young people should be seen as agents who have justified views about matters affecting themselves and about their life circumstances. Children and young people should be listened to and heard (Kiilakoski 2008, 10).

In the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project, commitment to the group was strengthened when the members' views and ideas were heard, and they were taken into account and accepted (Taskinen & Hellman-Eronen in this publication). When the group atmosphere was permissive and conducive to self-expression, young people were able to talk about their life situations and even highly personal matters, such as feelings of exhaustion (see Kettunen in this publication). The development of young people's self-expression went hand in hand with a desire to participate in the group's activities. Doing things together towards a common goal gave joy to the group members. (See Aalto in this publication).

> *"At first, we mostly just hung out.*
> *We talked about everything."*
> *(Aalto 2018, A16)*

An open and accepting atmosphere fosters courage to participate in the group and share personal views and experiences. The experience of inclusion also requires time and space. In the beginning of this article, I quoted Aleksi. When Aleksi began to think about his next steps in life, he needed a personal coach to do so. The threshold for exploring the next steps in a group setting was too high for Aleksi. Participation through personal coaching also took time, space and informal chats, or 'hanging out', as Aleksi says (Aalto 2018, A15–A16).

What does inclusion promotion mean in practice?

Arja Jämsén and Anne Pyykkönen (2014) write about "inclusion in one's own life". They describe it as personal commitment, self-directed action, influence over matters affecting one's own life, and taking responsibility for the consequences (Jämsén & Pyykkönen 2014, 9; see also Isola et al. 2017; Kiilakoski 2008, 13–14; Rouvinen-Wilenius 2014, 67; Särkelä-Kukko 2014, 36).

"The goals are personal, but it's generally about finding strengths and the ability to participate in society. …I quickly got the impression that Aleksi has abilities and artistic talent to do all sorts of things."
(Aalto 2018, A16)

Aleksi found his life circumstances challenging and worked with a personal coach, Iiris, to analyse the foundations and paths of his life. As quoted above, Iiris says that they worked together to find strengths and opportunities to participate in society (Aalto 2018, A16). The aim was to promote Aleksi's "inclusion in his own life", to use the phrase coined by Arja Jämsén and Anne Pyykkö, and his inclusion in society.

People who work with children and young people use the phrase "positive recognition". It means focusing on the strengths, personal resources and successes of children and young people, instead of problems and risks. It is an approach that focuses on action-based change. The aim is to support a person's social capabilities and engagement with society, communities and groups (Häkli, Kallio & Korkiamäki 2015, 9–35). The undertone of the comments of Aleksi and Iiris when they describe their work also resembles "positive recognition". In the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project, the adult instructors valued the young people, their views and ideas were taken into account, and they were encouraged to share their competencies (Nummela in this publication). The activity was based on "positive recognition and acceptance".

Drawings that depict inclusion often feature stairs or ladders. They describe the step-by-step process of how inclusion is strengthened. On the bottom step, the person has hardly any or no opportunities to participate and influence. As they progress up the steps, their inclusion and influencing opportunities increase.

Harry Shier (2001) has proposed a five-stage model for children's participation. It is based on Article 12 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The five stages are: 1) children are listened to, 2) children are supported in expressing their views, 3) children's views are taken into account, 4) children are involved in decision-making processes, and 5) children share power and responsibility for decision-making (Shier 2001).

In the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project, the activity was focused on the inclusion of young people. Their participation can be described a holistic. Young people were encouraged to express themselves. They were listened to. Inspiration for productions was drawn from young people's own experiences and views. Activities

that were based on the young people's ideas and interests were supported. The adult instructors adapted the activity based on suggestions from the young people. Young people were involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the activity. Hearing the young people's ideas and their acceptance and inclusion in the productions strengthened young people›s willingness to commit to a common goal, for example, in the Reikä kuplassa production (Taskinen & Hellman-Eronen in this publication).

Is young people's social inclusion realised in services?

Carried out every two years, the School Health Promotion Study is a comprehensive study that surveys children and young people in basic education, upper secondary education and vocational institutions. The findings of the study show that students' opportunities of participation and influencing in schools have developed positively in the 21st century (Luopa, Kivimäki, Matikka, Vilkki, Jokela, Laukkarinen & Paananen 2014, 73; see Kouluterveyskyselyn aikasarjat 2006–2017). However, the modes of participation available to children and young people are often too predetermined, for example, in services provided by local authorities (Kiili 2011, 195; Ministry of Education and Culture 2011, 7, 94–95; see Kiilakoski & Gretschel 2012, 20–21).

In the rapporteur's report for the *Programme to address child and family services (LAPE,* see Ministry of Social Affairs and Health i.a.), Aulikki Kananoja and Kristiina Ruuskanen (2018) state that a number of stakeholders have expressed the need to increase the inclusion of children and young people in services. Children and young people should be seen as the agents of the activity, rather than its subjects (see Kananoja & Ruuskanen 2018, 30).

In addition to the rapporteur's report mentioned above, there was a further report commissioned from four authors for the LAPE programme. The joint report examines how services and the service culture should be reformed. The authors emphasise the importance of developing work that takes place at interfaces. Interfaces refer to the coordination of services. For example, young people's coping abilities could be supported by enhancing the bridges between basic and upper secondary education and developing the associated welfare services, such as student welfare. Ohjaamo services for young people (see Ohjaamo i.a.) should be developed into a concept that features elements from different areas such as mental health promotion, career advice and services to support employment outcomes. In addition, the authors recommend that outreach and on-the-ground services as

well as digital services be developed (Heinonen, Ikonen, Kaivosoja & Reina 2018, 31, 37, 79, 85–87, see Kananoja & Ruuskanen, 2018, 58).

Youth work organised by local authorities is fundamentally preventive by nature and designed to supplement and serve other service offerings, such as recreational activities. Youth work practices should be flexible according to young people's needs, since their circumstances differ in terms of financial resources, welfare, social capabilities and life skills. Family and friends, everyday safety, hobbies, opportunities to study, learn and train for a job are resources that help equip young people to build a good life. Youth work should provide opportunities for self-led activities for young people (Aaltonen 2011, 17–18; Kurikka & Mattila 1999, 10–13; see Ministry of Education and Culture i.a.).

The *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project also created opportunities for self-led activities. The project workers organised activities for young people in their own settings, such as schools. Young people were supported by the instructors in exploring choices relating to e.g. education, employment and relationships. The focus was on the current and the future. (see Aalto and Kettunen in this publication). The *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project responded to the interfacing challenge described above. Practitioners from the cultural, sports and education sectors worked with young people to serve their interest.

Young people in groups and activities

The operational hubs of the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project were young people's groups implemented in the Helsinki metropolitan area, Kainuu region, Oulu and Rovaniemi. Adult instructors supported young people in exploring self-expression and exercises that promoted participation by arts and sports-based methods (Nummela in this publication). The groups designed, implemented and evaluated a production (e.g. *Reikä kuplassa* and *Red Riding Hood*) with directors, who were professionals from the culture and sports sectors.

The groups gave young people opportunities to agree on common rules and resolve problems (see Kettunen in this publication). Young people's inclusion required the adults to be able to take into account and respect their views and give opportunities for agency. In the groups, young people were able to talk about their experiences and views and listen to others. They had opportunities to learn and get to know themselves and other group members. When young people felt that they were being listened to and their views were taken into account, their commitment to the group and sense of inclusion were strengthened. Working together led

to experiences of joy and success. These experiences can be seen as conducive to a sense of capability and ability to cope in different situations.

The groups of the *Participatory Sporty Theatre* project served as arenas for young people's participation and shared inclusion. Aleksi, who was introduced previously, also found this arena with support from his coach. He decided to go back to school.

> *"School feels nice, and I don't have much left.*
> *I've become interested in fields that require degree education,*
> *at either a university of applied sciences or a university.*
> *It no longer feels impossible to me."*
> *(Aalto 2018, A16)*

Young people's participation and inclusion should be supported in a range of different ways, for example, by personal coaches and supervised groups. They should have access to a range of participation and inclusion opportunities and modes of activity, such as groups that foster self-expression through performing arts and sports.

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PART 2
INCLUSION THROUGH
SELF-EXPRESSION

Karoliina Kuvaja & Helka-Maria Kinnunen

APPLIED THEATRE
AS A TOOL OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

n this article, we examine instructor practice and work methods of applied theatre. We discuss the concepts of applied theatre and what opportunities it provides for the development of social skills. We explore how an applied theatre instructor can promote the project's aims by encouraging creativity and play in group activity.

Applied theatre is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of practices and methods that are aimed at promoting inclusion and dramatic expression. The objectives can range from group formation and motivation of the participants to societal activation or the development of a theatre performance. Applied theatre can offer approaches towards a group-specific goal, or it can itself be the goal and activity. There are often a number of objectives at play (e.g. Honkakoski 2017; Nicholson 2014; Kallio 2012).

The sub-project in Kainuu was coordinated by Kajaani City Theatre and implemented in cooperation with the Kainuun Liikunta sports association. The project organised workshops and clubs for young people ages 15–29. Activities were organised in cooperation with schools, vocational institutions, youth services and occupational rehabilitation services. Theatre and sports practitioners worked together, and each workshop and club was led by a pair consisting of a theatre pedagogue and a sports instructor. A musician was also involved in most cases. Kajaani City Theatre organised training for sports instructors and theatre pedagogues who worked in sub-projects in northern Finland, provided orientation in theatre work

to project workers, and organised additional training weekends to support the project activity. In addition, the theatre and Kainuun Liikunta organised dissemination events; one on the topic of loneliness experienced by young people, and a second one to introduce youth work operators to tools which had been found effective in the project.

What does applied theatre mean?

Theatre is about play and imagination. It is a convention in which rituals, repetition and rules create a play that both imitates and creates reality (Honkakoski 2017, 74). Role playing, acting and stories form the foundation of applied theatre. By living the stories, participants can get closer to another person's perspective and develop empathy (Aaltola & Keto 2018, 40). Roles and stories provide safety, which enables participants to act in ways that are different from their everyday behaviour. Applied theatre can enable participants to accumulate silent knowledge and empathy skills, and enrich their self-perception. The following section discusses some of the key concepts of applied theatre that were relevant in the project.

Applied theatre brings drama play to everyday contexts at the interface of life and art. Even difficult matters that cannot be addressed in everyday settings can be processed in the context of art. Applied theatre comprises myriad communal and artistic approaches, such as story or forum theatre, devising, community theatre, and methods relating to drama education, such as process drama (e.g. Owens & Barber 2002). It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of the methods of applied theatre, since communal artistic activities continually generate and combine new forms and phenomena (e.g. Koskenniemi 2007).

In group activity based on applied theatre, it is important to provide a space for joint activity. The aim is to create a space in which all group members can freely express what they are and want to be. It requires trust-building, and trust takes time to build. The basis for the time and space requirement is provided by the drama contract. The contract defines what types of work methods will be used, what genre of drama will be applied, and how the participants will communicate (Heikkinen 2004, 90).

Applied theatre, drama education and performing arts balance between imitation of reality (mimesis) and lived-through reality. To achieve the right balance, applied theatre requires dramatic play as a source of energy that guides the process of learning through drama (Heikkinen 2004, 76). The participants have a clear framework and rules for the activity. Participants know that they are playing in a fictional, created setting. Theatre pedagogues, instructors and facilitators should be

able to delay resolution and performance-oriented instruction, and tolerate unprecedented situations that create uncertainty (e.g. Untamala 2014).

The participants' creativity can be unleashed best in an atmosphere of mutual trust, which the instructor can promote by giving exercises according to the group's abilities. Mutual trust requires from the instructor the ability to listen to the group and identify its needs (Aalto 2000, 74). Group dynamic refers to the internal forces of the group that arise from interactions between its members (Kopakkala 2005, 37). The group acts in ways which cannot be predicted from the behaviours and abilities of its individual members. Applied drama exercises and other experiential tools can influence the group dynamic and enable the members to evolve in their roles within the group (Kopakkala 2005, 115).

The facilitator as an applied theatre instructor

In the project, applied theatre was used as the basis of theatre pedagogues' work in the combined sports and theatre-based activity. Drama exercises were given equal weighting with sports exercises. The theatre pedagogues were qualified drama instructors and theatre pedagogues who had studied drama and had the artistic and pedagogical capabilities to instruct a group.

Drama instructors are multi-skilled applied theatre practitioners. The first drama instructor degree programme started in 1992 in Turku, followed by another programme in Helsinki in 1995. The programme founder and its leading force was dramatist Marja Louhija. An additional programme delivered in Finnish was organised in Kokkola, but both the Kokkola and Helsinki programmes were cancelled during 2010–2015 due to cuts in UAS provision. The drama instructor programme originally had a drama education function, which has evolved to serve societal, community-specific and communicational needs through drama-based solutions. Drama-based methods can be used, for example, in education, research and development, youth work and special education, public engagement and community-based development (Louhija 2015, 12–13). The theatre pedagogue master's degree programme was launched by the Theatre Academy in 1997, and it can be completed by BA-level arts graduates to obtain a broad-based teacher qualification.

In the theatre context, instructors are directors who work according to the objectives, plans and aims of the artistic director. In applied theatre, however, the title 'director' can be too restrictive. A facilitator is an applied theatre instructor who "feeds" and steers the participants to take control of the activity.

The facilitator provides and sets the conditions within which the participants act and create the activity. Facilitation is about guiding and facilitating group processes by participatory methods that support participation for all members of the group.

The aims of the Participatory Sporty Theatre project and the orientation of its instructor feature some aspects of sociocultural activation. Sociocultural activation is a movement in social pedagogy that encompasses a range of approaches aimed at social and cultural activation and, specifically, motivating participation (e.g. Kurki 2000). In workshops that combine theatre and sports, the methods of applied theatre are important tools for the theatre pedagogue: group instruction, the ability to listen to the group and act according to its needs, and aspects from artistic work, such as imagination, play and embodied presence.

In the context of this project, artistic methods refer to the strengthening of the embodied experience and its role in the exercises. For group instructors, these methods include e.g. delayed resolution and verbalisation, and consciously strengthening one's own bodily presence. In the participants, a strengthened bodily presence can mean increased mutual trust, active participation and positive changes relating to the experience of self (Untamala 2014, 40–45).

Preparing the activity – questions and answers

In this chapter, Helka-Maria Kinnunen interviews the other author, project facilitator Karoliina Kuvaja.

Helka-Maria Kinnunen (H-M): How do you start the group activity?

Karoliina Kuvaja (K): I usually ask the participants to stand in a circle. That's the first task. The aim is to create an equally distributed circle in which all participants can look each other in the eye by just turning their head. The result can be an uneven polygon or oval, or there can be big gaps around the instructor. I observe and encourage the participants to reassess their positions in the circle. Once the circle has been formed, I greet everyone and look at each participant in turn. Sometimes

I just look at each participant before I say my greeting. I try to look everyone in the eye. My own gaze can steer that of the participants. I feel that it gives the participants space to look at one another.

H-M: So the circle formation starts the inclusion process?

K: The circle formation is a situation in which I as the facilitator can watch, listen and sense the group dynamic. Although the first task, the circle formation, doesn't take long (from 30 seconds to one minute), it communicates a lot of silent information. For example, who withdraws away from the circle, who is a leader, who orders or asks another participant to move, who refuses to move when asked. Once the circle has been formed, the eye-contact round can also reveal a lot: who will look you in the eye, who avoids eye contact, what kind of eye contact people give.

H-M: Describe the aims of the circle exercise for me. What are its benefits to the facilitator and the participants?

K: As a facilitator, I can create a mood with my presence, for example, by using rhythm, words and eye contact. The circle exercise is the first moment when the group comes together. Even if the group has worked together for a while, each session is a new meeting, and the circle exercise is always the first moment of coming together. Breathing together, the rhythm and connection of the group facilitate playing together. The first meeting is like an unspoken drama contract that can inform the activity that follows.

As a facilitator, I hope that by starting the group activity by connecting and having a moment of calm, I can enable the participants to explore their experience of being in the group. The circle formation exercise can be very challenging. Even just taking an equal position in the circle can feel intimidating for people who usually avoid groups and social situations.

H-M: Is it always successful?

K: There are occasions when, as the instructor, I can't get a group to respond to my input or subtle instruction. Sometimes it doesn't go according to plans or textbooks. Applied theatre facilitation and creative group activity are about living in the moment. I ask myself: Where is this group right now? What does this group need in this moment? What could benefit this group right now?

H-M: Does it mean that the facilitator should be willing to adapt the plans?

K: In applied theatre group activities, the group and its needs are the priority. I feel that the facilitator is first and foremost there to serve the group. The facilitator's task is to listen and sense the group, and be mindful of the group's needs in a given moment. If I have planned to start with a calm circle exercise, I might change my mind and lead a more energetic play exercise, if the group feels ready for it. Play can release tension and enable participants to relax, which helps to create a shared space and connection.

Three examples of applied theatre

This section describes examples of successful group activities implemented by applied theatre methods in the project. The participants' identities have been erased for privacy reasons.

Encouraging and inspiring activity

In activities requiring creativity and self-expression, fear of exposure can be an obstacle. In bodily and playful exercises, participants show personal sides of themselves that they may not reveal in everyday contexts. On the other hand, participants may find these types of exercises childish and embarrassing. The instructor should be aware of the group's fears and insecurities when facilitating applied theatre-based group activities. The group works well together when each member is able to express themselves according to their ability without the fear of failure, and when the instructor gives them challenges that are inspiring and suitable for all members. If the group members are forced to do tasks and exercises that they are not ready to do, the experience can be unpleasant.

In one community, there were doubts about the project activity. In the first meeting, the local instructors emphasised repeatedly the special needs, withdrawing nature and insecurities of the group in question. There was a sense of doubt towards the project activity. We tried to reassure the instructors by explaining the professional backgrounds of the project instructors and what opportunities expression-oriented group activities can offer. We then agreed on starting the activity. Just before the start of our five-day workshop, the community requested that it be shortened due to scheduling conflicts. The instructors requested that the workshop would be limited to one day only to see whether the activity could go ahead. We agreed to the request.

At the workshop, we were met by approximately ten young people and the instructors we had already met. We approached the group in the same way as we always do, by introducing tasks and gentle warm-up exercises. Throughout the day,

the group became more and more active in each play and game. At the end of the day, the instructors asked us to come back the next day.

The second day was successful, and we had a discussion with the coordinating instructor. They praised the activity and said that other instructors and the young people had also given good feedback. The instructor then explained that a previous theatre workshop had traumatised the participating group and especially the instructors, since each participant had been made to perform on their own without much preparation. The instructors had feared that all applied theatre activities would be similar. They told us that our workshop had been easy and fun. Each participant had been given the choice as to how much they wanted to perform without being forced to do anything. The coordinating instructor expressed their regret that our workshop was cut short because of the instructors' doubts.

Changes in group dynamic

Applied theatre and other action-based tools enable the group dynamic and group roles to evolve (Kopakkala 2005, 115). An activity that differs from everyday activities can encourage participants who otherwise tend to withdraw. On the other hand, applied theatre can be a good way to balance the group and give everyone an equal status.

In one community, one of the participants had anger management issues. The group instructors warned us before the workshop both in person and by email. The participant in question had assumed a leader's role in the group and verbally controlled the others. For example, if the participant was not interested in a group activity, they could persuade others to withdraw from the activity verbally or by leading by example.

Our workshop was organised into three-hour sessions across five days. At the halfway point, we discussed the participant with the project instructors and wondered who the person was, as none of the participants had behaved negatively in the group. We gave the group creative exercises and tasks that allowed the participants to express themselves. It is possible that in an equal situation in which the group worked with new instructors while their local instructors were present, the participant had no need to control or terrorise the group.

The most important observation about the participant in question was made when the five-day long workshop had just finished. The participant was given a retrospective detention due to negative behaviour in another activity. The punishment angered the participant and they lost control. They threw chairs and other stuff around, slammed doors and shouted. The aggression management issues

became clear to the temporary group instructor in that moment. However, it was important that the participant had been able to participate in the five-day workshop in the same way as others without issues. The participant was able to play in the group as an equal member without a negative identity.

In another community, the workshop had close to 40 participants. After a joint assembly, we divided the participants into smaller teams. The teams were introduced to circus activities, video production and creative expression. At the end of each day, the whole group came together once more. The week went very positively. For example, the teams prepared short films, which were viewed on the last day during a coffee session organised for the whole group. After that, discussions were held in small teams. In their feedback, the young people said that they had enjoyed working in a group, spending time together and learning new things. They also complimented the instructors' professionalism, enthusiastic attitude, the interest they showed towards the young people, and their general "niceness".

At the end of the last day, we thanked the local coordinator for the workshop opportunity. They told us that the group had given only positive feedback about the workshop. Some participants, who had previously had panic attack symptoms, had praised the workshop and said that they had been able to take part in the group activity without any issues. The fear of being in a large group had turned into relief. By doing suitable, less demanding exercises, the participants had felt safe and able to participate in all activities.

Applied theatre as a tool of social inclusion

Applied theatre exercises enable participants to depart from their usual group roles through play, imagining and role playing. The exercises and tasks allow them to explore their selves, embodiment and awareness, and learn new things about themselves. Easy exercises allow participants to casually perform in front of a group and experience visibility. This type of workshop activity can give participants positive group experiences. participants to casually perform in front of a group and experience visibility. This type of workshop activity can give participants positive group experiences. The tasks facilitate care-free fun and play. The methods of applied theatre and theatre pedagogy emphasise departure from a performance-focused behaviour towards a carefree and enjoyable activity. Games, play and bodily exercises are designed to help participants achieve a state in which everyone can bring their full selves to life, participate and be seen as an equal member of the group in a safe setting.

However, the instructors' professional competence is vital. An experienced instructor can accidentally cross the group's safety boundaries and give tasks for which the participants are not ready. Resolving the doubts and insecurities created by such experiences can be a challenge. The instructor must be vigilant about the group's readiness and what types of exercises can be done with it.
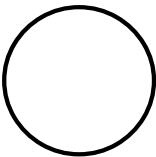
At its best, applied theatre can give participants positive learning experiences about themselves and the group. They can turn from a withdrawing person into an enthusiast, and feel equal with someone they have previously perceived as a threat.

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Jaana Taskinen & Leila Hellman-Eronen

REIKÄ KUPLASSA [THE HOLE IN THE BUBBLE] – YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES – VIEWS ON PARTICIPATION IN THEATRE PRODUCTION AND GROUP FORMATION

O n the Participatory Sporty Theatre project, the implementing organisations (Q-teatteri ry, Loisto setlementti ry and WAU ry in the Helsinki metropolitan area) organised workshop activities with a number of communities. The partner organisations included schools, vocational institutions and organisations that offer low-threshold recreational and support services for young people.1. Collaboration with the operators also led to the *Reikä kuplassa [The Hole in the Bubble]* production, which is discussed in this article. The production team included theatre director and pedagogue Jaana Taskinen from Q-teatteri, theatre instructor Leila Hellman-Eronen from Loisto Setlementti, and theatre instructor Maria Myllykangas from WAU ry. Topics relating to inclusion were introduced in all groups, and ways to strengthen inclusive experience were also explored in various ways.

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1   School groups were organised in Tuusula, Vesala, Käpylä, Naulakallio and Puistola, and groups in vocational institutions were organised in Spesia Järvenpää and several units of Stadin Ammattiopisto in Helsinki. Recreational activities were organised in cooperation with the Plan Matkalla project, Loisto setlementti ry (Poikien Talo and Tyttöjen Talo organisations in Helsinki and Espoo, the Silmu family service, the Loistopaja workshop for young people) and Nuorten Kulma in Kerava.

The majority of young people participated via the regular activities of a partner organisation or by referral from an external organisation.

However, the project plan specified that one open group should be established in the Helsinki metropolitan area, and that it would device a theatre performance. It was not known in the planning stage whether there would be participants for an activity that demands such close commitment. It became clear during the project that activities that are based on voluntary participation were least able to attract participants. Many of the voluntary groups had to be cancelled due to the lack of participants. In this article, two instructors reflect on the experiences of the *Purkutuomio* group which was set up during the project. We describe factors which helped the grouping process of a voluntary group and contributed to the implementation of the production which explored topics raised by the young people themselves, as envisaged in the project plan. The Purkutuomio group process was unique in the sense that the community was formed during the activity. How can people who don't know each other engage and commit to an activity they are not familiar with or obliged to attend? What facilitates commitment and helps the group achieve a common goal? What types of experiences about the group did the young people have, and what were the factors that helped them feel that they belonged in the group?

The material for the *Reikä kuplassa* production was produced in cooperation with the participants. The topics arose from the young people's own lives, observations and challenges. In audience feedback (Jaako, 2018), the performance was seen to explore difficult topics: *anxiety, fear, loss of home, and hurtful words were the overarching themes in the young people's play. These heavy themes were also explored with a lighter touch.*

As instructors, we were surprised how willing the young people were to explore even topics that were personally challenging. In this article, we discuss the factors that enabled them to talk about their personal issues, and how these issues became assets instead of obstacles during the production. An article on participatory school as a tool of preventing social segregation (Poikkeus, et al. 2013, 113) calls for educators to develop awareness about mechanisms that help young people engage, encourage them to participate and motivate them to strive, set goals and believe in their abilities. In this article, we respond to that call and describe mechanisms that promoted these objectives and increased a sense of inclusion in the *Reikä kuplassa* process.

What is social inclusion?

In many ESF-funded projects throughout the 21st century, inclusion and its promotion have been prominent aims. Inclusion projects targeted at young people have, in particular, been linked to the promotion of participating opportunities for young people, as well as preventing young people's social segregation. Inclusion has been seen as a form of citizenship as well as the opposite of exclusion, social segregation and disadvantage, according to social pedagogues Sanna Ryynänen and Elina Nivala, who have studied social inclusion (2013, 13). The myriad definitions have led to confusion about the concept: for some, especially those in the youth work sector, inclusion promotion meant developing opportunities for participation and influencing, whereas for some others, especially those working in social care, the concept refers to the prevention of segregation, especially in the context of missing out on education and labour market participation. Ryynänen and Nivala (2013, 14) criticise the fact that the concept of social inclusion is often interpreted too narrowly: for example, societal engagement is limited to the kind which necessarily requires a labour market status that is underpinned by education.

Nivala and Ryynänen (2013, 15) ask whether the talk of inclusion and participation in the public sector is just positive rhetoric. In other words, is it about using commendable words, rather than genuinely concentrating – and having the time and willingness to concentrate – on exploring the true significance of the proposed inclusion from the point of view of processes and the people that they seek to include. When a number of goals that are difficult to verify are collected under the same "goal umbrella", from expression of opinions to finding a place of study, it merely serves to muddy the waters.

There have also been attempts to define inclusion by assigning antonyms to it, such as indifference, exclusion and alienation. The strongest one of these is alienation, which, in a general context, means losing connection to oneself, the environment and society (Nivala & Ryynänen 2013, 19). Antonyms help to define the type and magnitude of the problem. They help to analyse the impact on the individual's life: even the narrower definition of indifference communicates a sense of irrelevance of the environment to self, lack of interest in community matters, and unwillingness to influence or contribute to the matters. Antonyms help to clarify what inclusion is not. However, they are not adequate, for example, for teachers who are working to promote inclusion in a group in a concrete way. In inclusion promotion projects, the project personnel should draw up careful definitions of

what kind of inclusion and participation the project seeks to increase, and plan the measures accordingly.

In research, inclusion is often defined as specific kind of participation; participation is the broad concept, and only specific forms of participation that meet certain criteria are considered as inclusion. One example of this conception is a definition proposed by Viirkorpi (1993, 22–24): "inclusion means ability to influence matters through personal commitment, and taking responsibility for the consequences". Elina Nivala and Sanna Ryynänen (2013, 26) describe inclusion as a relationship that is based on three dimensions: Social inclusion happens when an individual

- is part of society (belongs)
- contributes to society (participates)
- perceives themselves as part of society (experiences belonging).

This definition is similar to the holistic conception of human being proposed by Lauri Rauhala (2005, 31) which states that an individual is an embodied, conscious and situational being. People function in a space-time continuum (belong) and their actions are informed by emotions (participate or do not participate). People experience the world and its phenomena through their bodily actions and assign meanings to them (experience belonging). In order to ask how a person experiences inclusion, we must examine each of these dimensions. In addition, we should examine the individual in relation to others, since inclusion does not exist without a community.

The examination of the process of the Purkutuomio group is interesting in this sense, since the community did not exist previously. No one assumed that this particular group of young people wanted to belong in this community, or forced them to participate. They themselves wanted to belong in the community and participate in the activity. Why did the group evolve into a working community, and what made the activity attractive to the participants? The members of the Purkutuomio group are themselves experts in how the grouping happened. Their experiences are concrete observations about inclusion. The interview carried out with the performers one week after the performance was recorded, and thus their own voices about the process can be heard. In the quotations, all participants are assigned the letter N (*näyttelijä*, actor) to ensure anonymity. We wanted to use the interviews to highlight what the young people themselves felt that made the community and activity meaningful. We all recognised that we are, in a way, auto-

matically members of numerous communities through our families, home towns, nationalities, etc. However, they do not automatically translate into an emotional connection that creates a genuine sense of belonging. According to the young people, inclusion is about more than being a part of a community. It is something more immediate, more real, something emotional.

Emotions and embodiment

Emotional processing is part of the basic education curriculum under emotional skills development. Nevertheless, the way feelings are discussed in schools is often limited to conceptual ideas and information. This was the experience of many group members. In reality, emotional skills are exactly that – skills. And like any other skills, emotional skills can also be practised. People can explore their emotions and influence the way in which they form. The emotional pathways of the human brain can be retrained. For example, in learnt fear, the learning and memory mechanism work 'incorrectly'. Emotional retraining is needed to correct the problem. For example, oversensitive and incorrect emotional pathways have to be calmed down before retraining is possible. Knowing that the situation is fictional (an exercise) is helpful in itself. Reliving emotions in a safe environment helps the emotional brain to realise that traumatic memories can also be associated with a sense of safety. Overcoming fear or any other disruptive emotion is an active learning event, in which the person learns to control a hyperactive amygdala by activating the cortex and the orbitofrontal cortex (Jalovaara 2006, 32). The dissemination of this kind of information to young people who participate in exercises is important. For example, the participants of the Purkutuomio group also recognised negative feelings that arose from public performance and social situations. This was taken into account, and the exercises included experimenting with techniques that can be used to influence emotions.

> *Of course you're nervous to begin with, but at some point you're just able to let go of the fear. So you might be nervous at first, but when you perform in front of an audience you might not be nervous at all, and it's just really exciting. It becom a proud moment when you look at the audience. (N, 2018)*

Emotions and embodiment are integrally linked. Emotions are created in the body, and bodily actions influence our emotions. Embodiment is an integral part of theatre, since the body is the actor's instrument. In this project, physicality was particularly emphasised. This premise automatically prompted the participants to

observe and explore their own embodiment and bodily self-consciousness. Since the young people had verbalised feelings of nervousness and discomfort relating to social situations and having to be in the centre of attention, the primary aim was to facilitate experiences of presence and safety through bodily exercises. The exercises were designed to spark participants' curiosity towards their own bodies and physicality, explore how their body works, and practise physical contact with others. The physical and dramatic exercises were designed to facilitate a range of experiences about one's self, even new experiences, in a permissive environment. They were based on a set of exercises developed by dance and movement therapist Jenni Urpilainen (Taskinen & Urpilainen 2018, 17) and the observation that, as curiosity about one's own body grows, the person becomes more familiar with their body, develops a more accepting relationship with it, and thus develops a sense of safety in being in their own body. Connection with the self is strengthened. In other words, experiences of capability, courage, touching and being touched were not just physical experiences, but they translated into a holistic experience of the self. Performance exercises gave the participants courage to enjoy being watched.

In this way, the very things that felt challenging at first became sources of enjoyment. The participants felt that when they observed changes (e.g. relating to nervousness or fear) in themselves, it also resonated to other areas of life outside the theatre. They believed that a concrete experience of something different also benefits them in other areas of life:

> I learnt so much about myself... there was a task with pieces of paper, how other people see you and how you see others, they were really good. I have understood stuff about myself, and knowing yourself better is always a plus, it helps you in other areas of life. (N, 2018)

> It worked for me because there were loads of expression exercises, so lots of things that I can use in my own life. (N, 2018)

> The same, I've realised that I can do things and kind of express myself even though I'm a bit (laughs). (N, 2018)

We are all "a bit..", we all have our challenges that we may or may not be able to deal with. In inclusion promotion projects, it is important to listen to these challenges and explore them. In our experience, increasing self-confidence is about increasing awareness of the self. The instructor's task is to create a safe space in

which the participants can open up to explore themselves. When it happens in a group, it enables them to observe differences between their own feelings and those of others. It leads to interest and inclusion. It could be said that inclusion starts from understanding one's self.

Experience

Inclusion requires a relationship with a group, a community. Each group is comprised of individuals, and an individual cannot be forced to perceive the group as meaningful to themselves. In addition, many of the participants in the Purkutuomio group had experiences which made them feel that no one was genuinely interested in them and, for example, in schools, grouping was enforced by an external party (e.g. a teacher). A genuine connection requires genuine interest in other members of the community. One way to increase interest is to have exercises that are centred on exploring one's own experience. Discussion after the exercises and sharing the experiences are as important as the exercises themselves. They provide insights that other group members can reflect on and perhaps relate to.

Artistic creation always starts from an individual's perception. Even if the aim of an artwork is to depict something that is shared by a community, each participant contributes based on their own perceptions. How do I see the world and its details, and how can I communicate that observation to others. In this sense, the first step of artistic creation is to focus on the *individual's experience*. This was also our starting point in the Purkutuomio group, and in our view it is the only effective starting point for any group that is aiming to create art. Only through personal participation can each individual open the dimension from which the exercise speaks to them. Their experience allows them to approach another person with a genuine question: how did it make you feel? It also enables them to practise communicating their experience to others, either verbally or by other means. It is important that the instructor recognises that two participants can have opposite experiences of the same exercise. For example, a trust exercise can feel like a fantastic major personal milestone for one participant, whereas another participant experiences fear and a sense of failure. The instructor cannot know in advance how each participant will experience the exercise. Therefore the instructor should be able to use their experience to anticipate all possible outcomes. The instructor should first lead the exercise, and then discuss it with the participants and ask how they experienced it. The resulting discussion or artistic work opens up an opportunity for getting more information about the other person and share one's own experience with the group. Enjoyment of theatre work is based on exactly that: your

experience is interesting. From the instructor's point of view, it is highly productive if the experiences are different, as they give multiple perspectives to the topic. This provides the basis for the activity. Theatre is about collaboration in which a community is built around shared experiences.

The production of the Purkutuomio group first took shape around performance as an experience and the associated challenges. This evolved into sharing of experiences and individual observations about the structures of the mind and factors that influence oneself, especially those factors that inhibit creativity and spontaneity. The participants also made observations about society and how they experienced their membership in society. Many participants described their participation in the production as meaningful, and they saw the group as important.

Commitment and intrinsic motivation

The process of social segregation and the related factors in a school environment have been examined based on the concept of engagement (Poikkeus, et al. 2013, 113). Engagement requires students to perceive the activity and learning as personally meaningful and enjoyable, and to have a sense of belonging and acceptance in the group. Engagement can be divided into two sub-concepts: *commitment* and *belonging*. Commitment is related to the individual's actions and how well they carry personal responsibility for their attendance, school work and adherence to rules. Belonging is emotional, it's about how much, at the emotional level, the individual feels that they are part of the community and see themselves as its meaningful member. Engagement, commitment and belonging were prominent topics in the Purkutuomio group.

> *I realised what it means to commit to something: it's about what you put into it when you're there. So you're mentally committed to the process. Because as a person, in life, I have always run away from everything, so this has kind of gently taught me to approach, because the more you approach your fear, the more you get out of it. (N, 2018)*

The interviews show that the process was meaningful to the participants. The meaningfulness came from the participant's understanding of the importance of their own commitment and contribution:

> *I've learnt that wherever you have to go, it can feel good if you're ready to work for it...it's given me that kind of courage. (N, 2018)*

The group members agreed that merely turning up does not constitute participation. Or at least, it does not lead to the same experience of inclusion as when they "mentally commit to the process". We interpret this to mean something that is related to the triggering of intrinsic motivation and working from that motivation. Motivation is a mechanism consisting of factors that encourage and inform behaviour. It can arise from external factors (encouragement and reward), or internal ones. The word motivation is derived from the word motive, and both motive and emotion stem from the Latin word movere, to move (Taskinen 2013, 55, see also Sydänmaanlakka 2006). This aptly describes the power of emotions in people's lives; they trigger motivation and literally move us towards our goal.

> *One day we did this exercise, and the way others reacted to it, it kind of really opened my eyes and helped me see that you yourself are creating the environment in a given moment. So, if I'm like this, the others react in the same way towards me, but if I'm like this, it changes. That thought kind of became concrete or crystallised in my head. (N, 2018)*

Intrinsic motivation is strengthened when the activity gives pleasure and memories of the activity are created. This chain reaction enforces the individual's *desire* to seek enjoyment from the activity and their *courage* to take risks and reach for more. Intrinsic motivation creates a meaningful internal reward mechanism, which does not necessarily require a great deal of external reward, as the individual gets enjoyment from the activity itself. Intrinsic motivation nurtures commitment to the activity. Young people who participated in the production described the intrinsic motivation process as "mental commitment" and insights gained from the exercises. The interviews also highlight other factors of commitment, in particular, openness and courage to discuss even difficult matters:

> *When people opened up, it came from that. Thinking about the first times, and the way everyone just went for it, I was like, wow, this is amazing, damn. So all I can say is, wow. I went outside and said to myself, wow, this kind of group, all I can say is respect to someone who has the courage to do that. (N, 2018)*

A conversational learning environment supports inclusion and engagement with the group (Poikkeus. et al. 2013, 118). It is a good idea to question what kind of conversation is conducive to inclusion, when the aim is to foster a sense of belonging in a particular group. Does it matter what the conversation topics are? During the

group engagement stage, one important factor appears to be that each member can get involved 'as they are' and talk about themselves to the others. Contrary to what is commonly believed, revealing one's own fears and nervousness are actually the first steps towards commitment. It was also evident in this group:

> *And when you notice that others aren't as perfect as they might seem, so you think, oh, you've got problems too, me too, so everyone kind of says, I have those as well, I've experienced something similar. So you're kind of able to reveal more about yourself when you can relate. (N, 2018)*

Performing in front of others and opening up about personal thoughts and life circumstances were triggers for intrinsic motivation and engagement with the group. The participants wanted to get involved in the group, because they found the activity and other participants interesting. As the activity became more established, commitment also evolved into a strong sense of belonging:

> *And then, if you think about it the other way, what am I doing here, I'm not here just for myself, I'm trying to give a good performance and kind of engage others and say, come and try this, this is so much fun, and let me show you what I have learnt and discovered. (N, 2018)*

Examination of the process of the Purkutuomio group shows that commitment is a multi-stage process that comprises both engagement on one hand and the observation and testing of the commitment – one's own and that of the group – on the other hand. Once grouping has happened, the participants feel that they belong in the group and want to support its activity and existence. The instructors must be aware of the process, so that the participants are not left to support it on their own, as that could lead to stress and withdrawal from the group, activity and other members.

Purkutuomio presents: Reikä kuplassa

Background to the process

The production process lasted from November 2017 until March 2018, and there were 52 practice sessions in total. The production team included seven young people, three project workers with theatre qualifications, and two other theatre professionals, sound designer Jani Orbinski and visual designer Tomi Flyckt. In this

chapter, we discuss observations that are primarily related to the creation of a successful artwork.

The project concluded in a performance and was preceded by an introductory drama course of ten sessions, which was attended by 15 young people. The introductory workshops were open to all, and participants could just pop in to see what it was about. This was followed by the project, which culminated in a performance. The twofold process was planned carefully in advance and described in the project plan. The idea of the twofold approach was that participants are not able to commit if they do not know what they are committing to. In other words, they were given the opportunity to first familiarise themselves with the subject. Since the project involved theatre work and performing, the first topic was acting exercises. Therefore, in the marketing of the trial group, the focus was on experimentation and introduction to acting and performing. All who were interested in performing or scared/nervous about performing were welcome to join and find out more about the subject. They were the types of participants we sought and found through various networks; a very heterogeneous crowd from the 15–25 age group, as was specified for the project. Seven of them wanted to become involved in the production.

Creating the production world

Good planning is key to the success of a theatre production process. The instructors should have a good idea about what leading such a process entails (devising and processing the material, time use, expertise, space, etc.) and a good plan for how and when these elements should be introduced in the process. When the material is created with the performers, not everything can be anticipated, but the process cannot start from the question: what would you like to do? The instructor should know what they are aiming for and what types of exercises can help to achieve the aims. This was also found to be a good approach in this group:

The activity and content were described clearly, and it worked for me. (N, 2018)

The whole is constructed from smaller pieces to facilitate concentration and avoid asking for too much in one go. The interview material suggests that the instructors were able to create space in which the participants were able to immerse themselves in the tasks:

I realised that you can relax here, and then just went for it. In other places it can be really difficult to let go of yourself if someone just says, let go. You need the right space and mood. Human power. (N, 2018)

It was easy to relax here, because we had instructions, and then we just did it. (N, 2018)

The instructor should guide participants out of their comfort zones while ensuring that they are supported in doing so. One participant had a vivid memory about an exercise that was introduced during the first rehearsals:

The contact thing was really difficult, because it was one of the first times, and it was our first exercise and session, so when we were supposed to sit there and stare someone in the eye, it was like, aaaaa! (N, 2018)

The participants saw the exercise as a departure from their comfort zone, and when they were able to let themselves go and do it, it revealed something beautiful in them. Everyone felt the power of the exercise emanating from the stage to the audience, and the exercise was adopted as the opening scene of the performance. This production decision was supported by everyone. The way in which the participants were guided out of their comfort zones was seen as a good thing overall. The participants felt that it could be recommended for others, too:

In a way, this kind of project could be really good for people who are really shy. I feel like this project has got so much out of me. I feel that it's been really good for me, like when someone says, look at the audience, it's somehow therapeutic. (N, 2018)

The ethos of trying new things underpinned the whole process. The instructor was constantly mindful of the fact that the process was aimed at creating a performance, and that all exercises were part of the production in one way or another. The repertoire included grouping exercises, trust exercises, script brainstorming, voice exercises, visual design, acting exercises such as confidence-building, technical acting skills, finding a personal expression, and producing material.

We practised by just writing something without any aims. (N, 2018)

Everything started from zero. There were no existing worlds or text for the actors to work on, where the instructor's only task would be to assess whether the actor succeeds in bringing a character from a play to life. Our process was the opposite of that: we took a newspaper and started cutting out interesting sentences:

> When we started developing characters, at first I didn't have a clue what I was doing, I just started cutting, the instruction was just "cut". (N, 2018)

The sentences evolved into scripts and characters. They ultimately created the high-rise setting of the play. But in the beginning, the aim is to keep creating to get an idea about the process. Sometimes the exercises brought epiphanies to the participants:

> It was a great exercise where we thought, whatever the text was, you had to play a certain character, like a clown, or depressed, even if the text was just all rosy. (N, 2018)

When the material began to evolve into themes, further exercises were introduced to process them:

> At some point we had to write about a side we wanted to explore. And then we practised the voice and reading from the text. So we wrote them mostly for that purpose and started from there. (N, 2018)

In a process that leads to a performance production, it is essential that ideas are taken into account and taken forward. The participants also saw this as important:

> But one thing that made me stay, some of my own ideas that I had helped to develop or brainstorm at the start, like the residents in the windows, so when you saw that someone took your ideas and was like, this is a good idea. And not like, oh, nice idea, but let's do this instead. So you kind of had your own input and wanted to see where it goes. (N, 2018)

When a young person commits to the exercise, the instructor must not ignore them. The recognition, acceptance and inclusion of a young person's idea enables them to have a sense of belonging towards the common goal. My ideas are heard

and they are part of the whole. It means I am contributing to a communal process. And because I am contributing my ideas, I should commit.   Our observations and feedback suggest that these factors foster inclusion. But inclusion does not happen automatically. The common method of producing a play from an existing text does not automatically give the young person a sense of belonging as a member of the production team, but it doesn't mean that it couldn't. No method can guarantee or eliminate the possibility of inclusion. Inclusion can only be guaranteed by the instructors' understanding and listening to the merbers of group, and sufficient professional skills in art creation. Nevertheless, belonging in the group and experience of the process leave an impression on young people's minds, both in good and bad. In the Purkutuomio group, many of the participants had previous experience of participating in a theatre production:

> I had some experience from other projects with other groups. I had bad experiences, I have to say really bad experiences from before, and I had decided that I wouldn't get involved in theatre again, because I had such bad memories, but this was a positive surprise. (N, 2018)

> In primary school I was in a bigger play, and again in secondary school, but somehow they left me feeling awkward, so I was like, this is not gonna work, even though it had always been my dream. So it took like ten years before I had the courage to try again, because I had felt so strongly that no, no more. (N, 2018)

> I had also done something in primary school, I really liked the group formation process, this resembled that a lot. But when we did the play, we did it from paper and didn't write it ourselves, so that was a bad experience. This has really made up for it. (N, 2018)

The comments suggests that participation does not automatically translate into *inclusion*. Quite the opposite. Therefore attention should be paid to what processes should be planned and implemented, and how. When preparing a theatre production, the planning and implementation of the process should be evaluated both in terms of the artistic activity and the outcome of the group process. In chapter 3, we describe the goal-setting and concrete implementation of the Purkutuomio group from the point of view of the group process.

An audience member's experience of the performance

The production premièred on 4 March 2018. Communication specialist Ville Jaako from Diaconia University of Applied Sciences wrote a blog post about the performance:

> *The foyer of Q-teatteri is filling up with people who have come to see the Reikä kuplassa production of Purkutuomio. People mingle and chat: there's a group of giggling girls, and grown-ups chat around a table. There aren't enough seats for everyone. The crowd is here to see a youth production that explores difficult topics through participatory sporty theatre.*
>
> *Music booms behind the curtain; the performance is about to start. Theatre smoke fills the air, and people rustle their programmes impatiently. It's almost the top of the hour.*
>
> *The curtain opens, and the audience is let in to the Puoli-Q auditorium. The floor is covered with crumpled newspapers, rucksacks, planks with sharp nails – pillars are plastered with posters and brown paper. The place looks like an unfinished basement renovation. At the edge of the stage, an abstract painting is covered in a riot of colours.*
>
> *Audience members take their seats and wait in silence. The lights go down, and the space descends into darkness as if a light has gone out in a deep cave. A slim spotlight hits the stage and illuminates a young woman holding a violin. She begins playing a melancholic melody that captures the audience. Actors take to the stage and begin walking slowly towards the audience. The smoke machine floods the air with a cloud of smoke that surrounds the actors like fog. All of sudden, the ceiling emergency lights come on, and an alarm blasts in the basement. Darkness and silence descend again. (Jaako, 2018)*

Jaako describes the main character, a young student called Pilvi, whose building is about to be blasted to the ground because the antagonist, a rich landowner, has decided to build a skyscraper in order to force the tenants to pay 210% more in rent. Jaako (2018) describes the events of the play:

> *One resident after another wonders how they will be able to pay their rent. The landowner's answer is simple: get a job. Pilvi does her best to solve the situation,*

but the youngster can't carry the burden. In the end, she collapses onto the floor of an emergency shelter.

According to Jaako's (2018) viewing experience, the topics explored in the production are important but difficult: *"Nobody wants to hear that they are stupid or embarrassing. Or that they are ruining the night for everyone else. Or that they have never succeeded in anything."* These are the themes that the young people wanted to bring to the performance. They also wanted to explore how hurtful words are lodged in the memory and create a negative atmosphere that impacts everything the person tries to do. The harsh, increasingly demanding world does not offer any help – on the contrary, it exacerbates desperation. The viewer was clearly able to see this world. Jaako (2018) describes the elements used in the performance to communicate the message:

> *The performance plays with silence and cacophony. Light and darkness. Dance and movement represent a healing power, and finally the crushed Pilvi is lifted from the void, as the chorus sings "Sun särkyä anna mä en" by Johanna Kurkela.*

Factors that supported the success of the Purkutuomio group

Group instruction is a process

A good group brings out the group members' best sides and supports everyone in expressing themselves 'as they are' (Aalto 2000, 17). The group itself allows its members either to thrive or deflate (Johnstone 1996, 25). This chapter examines the group activity in relation to group formation and engagement through artistic activity. The group was formed in order to create an artistic work, a joint performance. The exercises were geared towards generating and rehearsing the performance material, but they were also accompanied by a simultaneous process that enabled the group members to connect with each other.

We reflect on the process of the *Purkutuomio* group against the five stages of grouping according to Bruce Tuckman (1965, 63), and, in particular, the role of instruction. The essential question is how to create a well functioning group that enables its members to develop, instead of destroying them. How can it be influenced through instruction? Tuckman's group development model has five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. The instructor

should take into account that each group develops through this arc, from forming through adjourning and ultimately coming apart. This is especially relevant when a group is formed around a specific task.

The instructor plays a meaningful role throughout the group's development arc. The instructor can and should support both the group and its individual members. This happens throughout the development arc, and the instructor's roles can vary through the stages. It is essential that the instructor recognises the stages and the specific needs relating to each stage. People form experiences of grouping throughout our lives, and our early grouping experiences influence us whenever we join a new group. In other words, no one joins a group from a blank state. Group members have expectations as well as prejudices about groups and group instructors. In this production there were three instructors, and the group thus had the opportunity to connect with three different types of instructor personalities. We were able to compare and share observations about the progress of the process, which enhanced our ability to support the group and address the group members' needs. A well functioning group is not just any collection of people that comes together in the same space at the same time; a group has a shared objective and motivation to work towards that common goal. In our group, the goal – a theatre production – was established in advance and supported throughout the group's development arc.

Group instruction as a tool of supporting grouping and commitment

The instructors had agreed on the following task allocation: Jaana Taskinen had lead responsibility for instruction relating to the theatre production, and Maria Myllykangas and Leila Hellman-Eronen had a shared group instructor responsibility supporting Jaana and the group.

We agreed on a clear objective at the outset, which was to produce a performance with the group. As we defined the objective, in order to facilitate creativity in the joint process, we left the production genre open: it could be a theatre production, a short video presentation, or something different altogether. The aim was to give the process an aim, while keeping the people-oriented primary objective absolutely clear: getting to know one's self and others.

> *I feel that the early autumn, when we did impro and had fun, and we became a group, so if the grouping hadn't happened, I wouldn't have been able to cope. There's no point doing it if there's no team spirit. (N, 2018)*

In the early grouping stage, it is vital that the instructors are able to lead the exercises confidently. If the instructor feels insecure, the insecurity can rub off on the participants and create unnecessary tension and feelings of unsafety, which can inhibit a relaxed and fun atmosphere. The interview material shows that a sense of fun was an important factor of engagement for many group members:

> *When I attended the first sessions, I realised it was fun, so I wanted to take part in the performance. (N, 2018)*

We committed to the work together, and each member committed based on their personal resources and previous experiences of participation. Commitment led to a sense of belonging and intrinsic motivation towards participation. It allowed us to work towards a more crystallised objective. As instructors, we supported commitment by starting each session with exercises that allowed the participants to experiment, create, challenge themselves and observe their actions. In the process, themes that arose from the exercises were selected as building blocks for the production. We carried responsibility for the common goal as we worked on the material. We also ensured that the exercises were both fun and productive. This was noted by the young actors:

> *Philosophically speaking, we started doing it with a really chill vibe, and when we started building the performance and got a bit stressed, and you (instructors) still maintained a balance and took us forward in creating the performance, but it was still chill, chill, chill. (N, 2018)*

Maria and Leila instructed the group from within it by participating in the exercises as equal participants alongside the group members. In this context, equality means that, although the group members knew Maria, Leila and Jaana as professionals, Jaana instructed Maria and Leila in the same way as the group members. Through their own participation and 'letting go', Maria and Leila aimed to lower the threshold for the young people so that they could let go and experiment, create, make suggestions and come up with ideas. Jaana had a more conventional theatre director role; she led the sessions and communicated her observations with an enthusiastic and accepting attitude. She also kept notes of the ideas, details, dialogue, characters, performance methods and dynamics. In this way, the group members had continuous positive feedback from the instructor as they got involved and let go, had fun and experimented. They were able to experience that

all activity has value: it produces skills, epiphanies and insights – material that could be incorporated into the world of the performance.

> *(instructors')... job was to turn them (improvisations) into something that made sense. So it became a whole. So when I did the impro character, I didn't know that I was doing a play character, it was just off the cuff. (N, 2018)*

The activity was intentionally designed to be fun and playful, as it supported the instructors' aim of creating a safe space for the activity. At this stage of group work, a common practice is to establish a set of rules called a drama contract (see Heikkinen, 2010). A drama contract is a method used in self-expression education and when working with children and young people using theatre-based methods. The contract is drafted with the group members, and its aim is to foster commitment and create a safe framework of reference for the activity. The contract is often drawn up in writing, but it is possible to define a safe space without 'spelling it out' in a written document. Threshold to participation can be lowered through exercises that are free of pressure, permissive and non-shaming, inspiring and based on play. They help to create an interactive setting that is respectful, permissive and accommodating. The instructor's own conduct is highly influential. And when there are three instructors, their interaction also provides an example in all situations. The instructors' interactions are revealed through communication, and they give an example to all group members. A space that is perceived as safe is a prerequisite to trust and motivation to act in the group's best interest, which promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion.

From ideas and material to shared responsibilities

The group process includes a storming stage, during which participants challenge ideas and are able to voice their opinions that differ from the group consensus. This promotes emotional-level commitment, especially if the instructor can successfully support participants through this stage despite being challenged. If the instructor is unable to support the group in this stage, the group members can lose motivation, which is detrimental to the group as a whole. By showing acceptance and trust in the members, the instructor can support the group through the storming stage, which is conducive to openness, trust-building, acceptance of differences, and togetherness. If storming is accepted, it will strengthen the group instead of threatening its existence. When an individual experiences failure, it does not mean that they are rejected by others as a weak member:

And also the fact that when we became such a tight group, and others supported you if something went wrong, so it was like, it doesn't matter, you'll get it next time. You didn't have too much responsibility. (N, 2018)

Responsibility can become a stress factor in a group. We felt it was important to not assign too much responsibility to group members. We assigned responsibility according to what we had learnt about the group members' life circumstances, abilities and capacity to participate, and responsibility was shared. Maria and Leila performed with the group members and took more responsibility for the roles as and when needed.

The storming stage can therefore be seen as a platform for ideation and material creation. Anything is possible, and no one's ideas are fundamentally more valid than the next person's. In the storming stage, ideas are not locked down, everything is open to discussion. It means that a member's commitment to the group can also evolve, and nobody is expected to do more than what they are capable of in a given session.

Internal rules of the group and role definition

That was also important, we were able to have fun while working. (N, 2018)

It was hard work but so much fun. (N, 2018)

As group members discover and develop their intrinsic motivation to work in the group's best interest and towards a common goal, they become more eager to have responsibility. When trust in the group is strong, responsibilities can be assigned and shared. Shared responsibility leads to the formulation of common rules and practices. They include e.g. punctuality and participation in rehearsals, respect and encouragement of other group members, and ensuring the continuity of the activity.

The process becomes repetitive at this stage of the group arc and the production process. Repetition can easily become a problem if it starts to put stress on the group. The group moves from the ideas-focused storming stage to decision-making, agreement and practising what has been agreed. It is important to understand that at this stage, the aim is to keep the arc of the group alive. In our production process it meant, for example, that the instructors avoided locking down the pro-

duction genre too early in the process. Repetitive work requires presence, the ability to let go and practise repeatedly. Instructors should consciously try to introduce playful, lighter elements.

All aspects of the production must be designed well, while recognising that not everything can be anticipated. It is important that major structural components are not left to chance. Throughout the rehearsal period, we had access to a real theatre space and support from professional sound and lighting designers. We we able to schedule the rehearsals in this context, and contact was maintained via a WhatsApp group between rehearsal sessions. In group meetings, the participants were able to discuss a range of themes, organise informal rehearsal sessions and other get-togethers, and support each other through various challenges that were communicated in the group.

One of the key rules of the group was attendance at rehearsals. Absences and high turnover of group members were perceived as the biggest problems based on experience from other groups. This is natural, because if a member is frequently absent, it creates problems when the activity requires participation by all members. Nevertheless, before the start of the group process, it is a good idea to agree how to proceed if someone is absent.

In this process, we prepared for absences by having Leila and Maria as cast members so that they could stand in for actors who were absent and ensure that the rehearsals could proceed as planned. In a project targeted at young people who may have major obstacles that prevent them from participating, it was expected that these challenges could become apparent in the process, too. Some of the young people who committed to the group were occasionally prevented from attending for reasons related to their personal resources and challenging life situations. Other group members showed some degree of concern over the progress of the production and how they would cope if one of the members were to leave the production. It should be noted that in this type of situation, other group members can feel that their responsibilities are unbalanced, and they may question the commitment and participation of the absent member. As instructors, we sought to build trust among the group members in believing that we would be able to work towards our goal by calming the situation, by showing acceptance, and by supporting the absent members' inclusion. Together we came up with alternative ways to perform the roles of any absent members: for example, by shooting video, recording voice and using recordings. As instructors, we never assigned additional responsibilities to group members; we assumed them ourselves, for example, by

increasing Maria's and Leila's share of the performance. The fact that we had three instructors was beneficial here as well.

We also wanted to foster acceptance of differences in the group by not rejecting absent members and instead accepting their participation according to their abilities. The experience that no one would be left out and everyone was important promoted a sense of togetherness and ability to overcome challenges.

> *It was important that we didn't have too much responsibility, but you wanted to do your bit because of the others. And sometimes, if you hadn't been there for a while, you felt anxious and didn't want to go back, but everyone was like, it doesn't matter, come back, so that also helped you to come back. It made you believe in yourself and helped you come back each time. (N, 2018)*

This is highly significant from the point of view of both the group process and the process of each individual. The instructor must be able to overcome their personal concern about the progress of the process and not assign blame on absent participants. Absent members should be given space to open up about the reasons that have prevented them from attending the group. In our group, when a member who had been absent had the courage to share some very personal challenges, and they were heard and accepted, a deep sense of humanity was able to develop in the participants and permeate the group's activity, and in the end all members who had joined the group at the start were able to take part in the performance.

The group's reflections

The adjourning stage involves strong emotions: separation anxiety, sorrow, relief, gratitude, joy. The process of the Purkutuomio group concluded with a performance as planned, and after that we had a handful of preagreed meetings. We met one week after the last performance to talk about our feelings and what the process had meant. One of the topics was respect. As instructors, we all agreed that the group members had respected one another almost exceptionally well, considering how recently we had got to know each other. We asked them why they thought that was, and got these answers:

> *It's kind of a domino reaction, when someone decides to open up, others get encouragement, and there's respect. You didn't want all the work and everyone's efforts and what they had given to the performance, you didn't want to let them down and ruin what had been created. (N, 2018)*

According to our experience as instructors, lack of respect and appreciation is the single biggest factor that can undermine the process. This is especially the case in groups whose participants have previously experienced a lack of respect towards their own ideas and way of being in their everyday community settings. Lack of respect may even have been a crucial factor in the formation of their identity and actions. Lack of respect, which is regrettably common in our society, can prevent an individual from developing into their authentic self, because their interests have not been seen, heard and understood – on the contrary, they may have been bullied and denigrated because of their preferences. There is a sense that young people who display sensitivity to arts (i.e. are drawn to the arts) should have access to dedicated classes so that those who see arts as pointless stay away with their comments. In this way, students who are interested in arts could enjoy making art, explore their own talents and be in the presence of other artistically minded people who appreciate and respect them. Young people who are insecure often reject everything that is new and unfamiliar. The rejection is often loud and as denigrating as possible. It can undermine the trust that is needed in self-exploration through art. This is an unresolved problem recognised by all of us instructors who have worked with large school groups. In the debriefing discussion after the performance, one of the instructors expressed a thought that summarises many years' experience of working with young theatre enthusiasts:

> *This showed once again that, I often feel that people who start doing theatre and who are body-minded or drawn to the arts, or interested in exploring themselves, the world and their actions, that those people are sensitive and intelligent, so that was evident in this group as well. Not thinking about stereotypes, but if you think about a school class, not everyone is the same, so you can't always have these discussions. And also the fact that, even though no one knew each other, and still we were able to talk and respect each other like this. (O, 2018)*

As instructors, we shared the experience that the process had been successful and meaningful to all participants, across all of the stages and aspects of the process. The final discussion was an important opportunity to verbalise the process and give thanks to one another. We believe that discussing the process together reinforced the sense of inclusion experienced by the merbers of the group. They had been involved and participated, and more importantly, they had created and made visible, they had received and given feedback, they had succeeded and finished

something they had planned and implemented together. One of the participants summarised the process as follows:

> A worker from the Boyd House signed me up, and I'm really grateful, because there's a great bunch of people here. Part of a family. (N, 2018)

Thoughts on the meaning of a group and participation

Inclusion demands visibility, the experience of becoming visible to one's self and others:

> *I have finally learnt that you don't have to mull over things on your own, you can let them out. It's easier for others to help and support you when they see you. (N, 2018)*

Naturally, it requires other people, since an individual cannot grow without the mirror of other people. Inclusion requires experiences of acting in a safe group. In other words, it requires spaces in which young people can come together in an authentic way. It also requires competent adults who are interested in young people's experiences and able to support safe group formation. For the Purkutuomio group, this space was a theatre, but it could be any recreational group or space. However, it requires a group instructor who actively makes space and opportunities for encounters. The instructor should have knowledge-based emotional skills and the ability and courage to explore emotions and how they present in young people.

In our experience, the instructor must understand that the adult also has to show courage in order to enable young people to open up. In this way, they can lead by example, which resonates with the participants:

> *And the fact that the group was always open. That's a big thing, because it's a play that deals with big stuff and has a lot of social criticism. Talking about mental health, own voice and the voices of others, and what people think, so it couldn't have happened if it had been like, put your cards on the table, so I think that was really good. It's like, this is me, what do you think, damn, this is who I am, can we turn this into something. I thought that was pretty great. (N, 2018)*

If a young person is willing to make issues visible, adults should not hide behind a lack of ability or be afraid of letting go themselves. The instructor must understand what they are doing and why. They must understand that each person is an individual whose body is imprinted by memories from previous experiences. The

more intimate the exercise is, and the more courage it requires, the more vigilant the instructor needs to be with regard to safety. However, it does not mean that such exercises should be skipped. Quite the opposite. Any exercises that involve tensions must be explored. Nevertheless, the instructor has a responsibility to explain the exercises. They cannot keep introducing exercises without recognising the reason and purpose of doing them. Exercises should be explained (why do we do it, what requires attention) and discussed (create space for exploring the feelings they generate). No one can experience something on other person's behalf, or reproduce their exact personal experience for others. Nevertheless, the exercise instructor must understand what the aim is. Their personal experience can help participants understand their own experiences. This happens through dialogue: by sharing the personal experience and giving the other person an opportunity to share theirs. For example, the instructor can share their experience by describing how it made them feel. This allows participants to relate to the instructor's experience or notice how their own experience differed. The instructor can also share their observations about what they saw when the participant did the exercise. This enables the participant to reflect on their experience relative to the instructor's observations. The important thing is that the experience is shared and discussed in one way or another. This was also highlighted in the group feedback:

> *The fact that we discussed all sorts of stuff in the autumn. Thinking about my primary school experiences, we didn't really have any preparation, we weren't given any tools, like, have these. That 'letting go' means this. We didn't discuss anything, it was like, go and do this, and you're like, ok. Here we had lots of preparation. And when you (the instructor) said before the performance, enjoy, then because we had that preparation, we were able to enjoy and get joy out it, like, hey, I did all this. (N, 2018)*

There is a lot of talk about young people's ability to self-direct their learning. The ability to work in an independent and self-directed way is introduced early in basic education. However, a child or young person's belief in their own abilities does not happen by itself. It requires an understanding of why something is done, and an articulated experience of how they felt when they did it. This promotes self-awareness and, over time, intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is essential to a person's ability to engage independently in assignments and join the dots between causes and consequences. Several of the Purkutuomio group members were very critical of their own performance at the start of the process, even ones who had

discovered an interest in performing arts a long time ago. Past negative experiences and feedback, and current life circumstances and/or other personal issues undermined their belief in themselves and their abilities. In this case, it is essential that a competent teacher or instructor is present and able to lead the individual to have healing experiences and discover their personal resources so that they can experience genuine inclusion. Another contributing and supportive factor is a safe group that has enough permanent members to evolved into an authentic group. For many young people, self-directedness without support structures can mean exclusion from participation. There is a real risk that a young person is left without any help, when something in their life prevents them from finding meaning in an ambiguous or new environment. Experiences of inclusion are gained in groups and communities, and they are influenced by prior experiences. If a person's experience is that no one will help and they won't be able to seek help, they stop trying. It is essential for educators like us who are involved in inclusivity projects to see the wisdom of the words in the following feedback comment:

> *It crystallises this idea that we all had lots of responsibility, but no one was left alone, so I really started to reflect on my previous experience, and I feel that there I had been left pretty much alone to work out my character, whereas here the whole group helped me get it. (N, 2018)*

When a school, recreational group or any educational environment helps the individual to understand something about themselves through a positive experience, the individual can start applying that insight in broader contexts:

> *And it has put my life into a new perspective, like what I'm doing in my life right now, and why do I do it if they don't make me happy, and why is it difficult. So it's like, what does it mean to take responsibility for these things, and give time and make time. That kind of stuff. So I'm now in front of a bigger mountain called life, and what do I do now. This gave me some small tools, and I'm going to work on them. I don't know if I'll carry on with theatre, but I want to do something that is expressive. (N, 2018)*

Finally, we asked the participants whether they would recommend this type of theatre-based activity for others. The answer:

I think that this is for everyone, because it's good for people to let go, and especially people who live in Finland. Everyone who wants more playfulness in their lives and ways of doing things. (N, 2018)

Reality itself is a drama contract: we accept certain conditions and question others. Should we be more playful in the way we decide how we live and create our realities?

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Anna-Kaisa Kettunen

DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-EXPRESSION IN A DRAMA GROUP FOR NINTH-GRADERS

n spring 2018, WAU Ry, one of the implementers of the Participatory Sporty Theatre project, organised a collaboration with a voluntary drama group for ninth-graders at Rajakylä School in Oulu. WAU is a non-profit Finnish association that organises free, low-threshold weekly sports clubs at schools in over 40 towns and cities. There are already 400 WAU! clubs, and further ones are added on a yearly basis according to demand and capacity (Heli Hietala, personal communication 1 November 2018).

A representative of WAU contacted the drama group in late 2017. The idea was to launch the collaboration in spring 2018. It was agreed with the group instructor that, if the students were interested, the activity could last through spring with the aim of producing a performance for the closing day ceremony. Since the purpose of the group was to support self-expression and creativity, it was decided that the performance would be produced based on a script developed by the group members themselves.

This article describes the work process, the preparation of the performance, and thoughts, experiences and issues raised during the process. The description can be used as an example for other similar projects to determine what should be taken into account during the planning and communication process between instructors and students.

Drama work, concepts and aims

Self-expression refers to the way people express their personal opinions and emotions and the ability to create drama. Self-expression encompasses both verbal and non-verbal expression: speech, tone and body language. Self-expression exercises can develop self-expression, and they can also be useful as tools to develop expression in personal everyday contexts.

Drama work refers to work with young people that is aimed at developing self-expression and bodily expression. According to Hannu Heikkinen (2002), the purpose of drama education is to develop students' teamwork skills and performance skills, and generally encourage self-expression. Drama work allows participants to learn about themselves, social interaction, a specific topic or phenomenon, and theatre and drama as a discipline. Creating together fosters team spirit and individual expression.

The classes were based on devised theatre, in which the produced performance originates from within a group. Marjo-Riitta Ventola and Micke Rehnlund (2005) describe devised theatre as group-led creation of a performance. The starting points vary: the group can work on a specific topic or use their imagination, newspaper articles or other materials as a source of inspiration. The group chooses the subject and determines the direction of the process.

The drama group's primary aim was to create an engaging and fun performance for the spring closing day ceremony. Early on in the process, we began mapping themes and topics that the group members found interesting and which could be worked into the performance by devised theatre methods, including improvised scenes and creative writing. The goal of creating a fun and engaging performance was kept in mind throughout the process.

The second goal was the development of self-expression: by trying out new forms of expression, developing stage confidence, and experiencing a successful performance. The instructors' goal was to monitor the development in the students' expression while instructing and supporting the group.

Working with the drama group

Each year, the drama group produces a performance for the school closing ceremony, and everyone felt that creating a play together was a natural choice. The spring schedule was planned so that the first sessions were about getting to know each other and exploring interesting topics for the performance, and after that, the group started working on the production with the instructors' assistance.

The drama group met in weekly 90-minute sessions, which were held on Friday mornings. The group had a total of 16 sessions organised by the project team in the spring. The group had 17 students. During the first sessions, the group decided how the WAU instructors would participate in the classes.

Instructors Anna-Kaisa Kettunen and Teemu Syrjälä planned the contents and structure of the spring sessions based on the students' wishes. The instructors were assisted during the sessions by diaconia and social work student Anniina Ervasti, who also planned and led a few sessions with the group. The teacher had an advisory role, as their work commitments in the spring meant that they could not attend the sessions.

The members of the drama group knew each other well before the project team joined the activity, and therefore grouping exercises were not needed. The young people expressed themselves and their opinions fluently. Although they expressed their opinions and thoughts confidently and openly, the instructors monitored throughout the process whether their boldness could be transferred onto the stage and into the content of the production.

Drama work took place in a regular classroom, which meant that any physical exercises that require plenty of space could not be done. Due to space and time restrictions, equipment was also kept to a minimum, and the exercises were designed so that they could be done in a classroom. The students' varied capabilities for drama work were also taken into account in the planning. They had different levels of experience and ability to commit, and therefore a low threshold for participation was needed. Fro example, the students were able to participate in improvisation scenes without speaking. For many students, non-verbal expression was significantly easier than verbal expression, because they did not have to "invent" as much content. Nevertheless, students usually participated verbally as well.

The focus of drama work was on developing bolder expression both in a verbal and bodily sense. Each session started with warm-up and dance exercises, which were followed by self-expression exercises to work on the content and structure of the performance. Each session concluded with a short relaxation exercise. Yoga mats were available in the classroom, and these were used during the relaxation exercise and end-of-session feedback. Soft balls were sometimes used in the warm-up games, and notes were made during scene exercises and brainstorming. No other equipment was needed apart from props that were used in the final performance.

The instructors had planned that the students would develop the theme and content of the performance themselves, and create the work through exercises over the course of the spring. The theme of the performance was discussed early on in

the process, and the students selected life choices and freedom as their topic. The group members defined freedom as follows: in their experience, they had the freedom to make choices in their lives and do what they wanted. The theme was interesting and suitable to the whole group.

Life situations that involve choice were explored through improvised exercises. The students and instructors discussed what types of choices they could encounter – in education, work, relationships, etc. – and the students then turned them into scenes by acting and writing. Creative writing was also used in a session during which the students chose characters and wrote monologues for them around the life choice theme. Characters and links between scenes began to take shape as planned.

Problems in the creative process

The instructors felt that it was clear that the improvised scenes and other material would lead to a performance, and the instructions given to the students emphasised that the aim was to produce a performance. However, it became apparent that the aim had not been communicated clearly, when the teacher contacted the instructors late in the spring. The teacher told us that everyone wondered when the rehearsals would start.

The students no longer felt that the chosen theme was a good idea for the performance. The instructors had a long discussion with the group, and it turned out that before the start of the project, the group had already developed an idea about a contemporary or adapted version of Red Riding Hood. The teacher and the students had not told the instructors about the idea, although one of the students had mentioned Red Riding Hood during one of the theme brainstorming sessions. Other students had not supported the suggestion; they had said that they had moved on from that idea. The instructors were left with the impression that Red Riding Hood was the idea of one student, and that the others were not keen on it.

Upon finding out that the group had worked on the Red Riding Hood idea the previous autumn, the instructors decided to abandon the new theme and start working on the students' original idea. Some of the scenes developed during the spring were incorporated into the contemporary Red Riding Hood story so as not to abandon all of the previous work. For example, in the play, Red Riding Hood muses about applying for higher education and has a chat about careers with the woodcutter.

Because the problem with the theme didn't arise until there were only a few sessions left, the instructors had to make quick decisions about the content of the

performance. They wrote a basic structure for the play before the next session, and the students then worked out the scenes based on the scenes developed during the spring. The roles were assigned, and the remaining sessions focused on rehearsals.

Despite the slight panic, the script took shape very quickly. The students chose their own roles and wrote dialogue with others who were in the same scene. The previously worked characters and scenes were surprisingly easy to integrate into the world of Red Riding Hood.

Building the performance

The students were fully committed to rehearsing the performance. They learnt their lines quickly, organised the props and came up with costume ideas. Once the group moved onto the stage, they were able to concentrate on movement and voice control, since the structure of the performance was fairly clear to everyone. During some rehearsals, the students did great improvisation with their roles and came up with new lines, most of which ended up in the final performance.

On the day, the performance went fantastically well. The audience loved it, the students remembered their lines and the structure of the performance, and were able to relax into their roles almost as well as they had done in the rehearsals. Despite their nerves, with assistance from the teacher and the project intern, the students were able to bring a great performance on stage.

Group members' experiences

Feedback collected in discussions at the end of the processes was very positive in the main. The students said that it had felt easier to come to school knowing that the drama classes offered concrete and planned activity. The teacher confirmed that punctuality and absence rate on these classes had improved considerably. The students said that the morning classes were a great start to the day, although some found it difficult to concentrate early in the day. The exercises had built their confidence, and they had developed trust in the instructors over the course of the spring. The group members had given an enthusiastic welcome to the instructors, and they praised the action-based approach. They enjoyed the exercises and being able to produce the content themselves. Each class ended with a brief feedback session, which allowed the students to discuss how the exercises had felt. They often felt that they had been able to do things and discuss properly – they liked the fact that they "didn't have to just sit around". Some of the exercises, especially dance-based and bodily exercises, raised questions about their necessity. However, "why do we do this" is a productive question in this type of work, and we had

many good discussions, for example, about the importance of bodily awareness. The students criticised the classroom, which was seen as too small for this type of work. On the whole, the students felt that the performance, stage work and role allocation had been successful. They felt that they had learnt something new, and praised the timely scheduling and "an encouraging and fantastic" atmosphere.

Instructors' view

The work itself mostly went well. Although the sessions were the first class on Friday mornings, the students were fairly punctual and had good energy in all exercises. Although motivation and concentration levels sometimes varied, in the end-of-session feedback it was clear that everyone enjoyed the sessions. The teacher told us that punctuality and attendance rates on Friday mornings improved considerably with some students.

The instructors felt that the work got off to a good start, the students were enthusiastic about the exercises and gave honest feedback. Sessions in the early spring appeared to go well, and the performance envisaged by the instructors was developed systematically. It was therefore a surprise when the teacher told us that the students were panicking about the lack of rehearsals. The misunderstanding about the aims of the work understandably caused concern and nerves, but as soon as we returned to the original Red Riding Hood idea, the group calmed down and became more motivated.

The students were open about their lives and opinions, for example, they told us straight away if they did not like any of the exercises. Many students talked about events in their own lives and admitted if their work was affected by tiredness. The discussions were always very familiar, and everyone was able to speak plainly – another reason why the instructors were surprised that the students were not able to express their concerns sooner. Perhaps the drama group members had previously not had as much responsibility over the content of the performance and were thus unable to express critical thoughts about the instructors' work. On the other hand, in their feedback the students said they had trusted the instructors, so probably they believed that the instructors knew how and when they would start rehearsing the performance, although unfortunately they appeared to have been unsure about it for quite a while.

The instructors reflected on their communication with the group a great deal, as both felt that the original goal of creating a script from a chosen theme was communicated clearly and reiterated during the exercises. Nevertheless, communication should have been clearer to emphasise that the exercises and writings were

meant to be the building blocks of the final performance. The instructors felt that they had communicated this clearly in each session, but perhaps the aim could have been made clearer to the drama group by working the material into a script from the outset. The session structure was nevertheless effective, and the performance was produced successfully despite the surprises.

The group achieved its aim, even though the original plan had to be reworked in the spring. The main thing was that the students themselves felt that they had succeeded in developing their self-expression and confidence.

Conclusions

Overall, the students worked well as a group and with the instructors. Their self-expression developed both on stage and in rehearsal situations. It was important for many students to be able to express what they wanted from their role – many of them gained confidence in verbalising their thoughts. In addition, many students developed their voice and felt that they had learnt something new during the course.

Many young people are probably unfamiliar with the devised theatre method, i.e. group-led production, and it is advisable to pay attention to communication in similar future groups. It is a good idea to explain why each exercise is being done, and what the material will be used for. After each session, it is advisable to go over the current situation of the production: what has been achieved, and what will be done next. In this way, young people get a better idea about the fact that the idea work done during the sessions is really part of the production and meant to carry it forward.

Young people have the ability to produce a script from their own starting points, and as long as they are heard during the process, all parties can be happy with the end result. At the Rajakylä school, the ideas and writings of the drama group evolved into a working concept with the instructors' assistance. The students' aim was to create a personal, engaging and fun performance for the closing day ceremony. They achieved this aim successfully. This type of work can be recommended for practitioners who work with secondary school ages. Drama work requires clear plans and schedules as well as effective communication between the group and instructors, especially about the aims and methods. When communication works well, the drama group has a safe environment in which to produce text and express their thoughts about the structure of the performance, and the instructors can steer the activity to support the production.

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Jorma Aalto

EXPRESS YOURSELF, UNDERSTAND OTHERS – HOW TO EXPRESS YOURSELF IN A GROUP?

n this article, I discuss the importance of grouping as a factor to the group's activity and members' abilities and possibilities for self-expression. I examine the potential effects of grouping, and whether the development of personal self-expression can also strengthen a person's status as a group member.

Pekka Mommo (2013) wrote a news article about a campaign of the Keuda Vocational College in Tuusula, which was aimed at promoting grouping among students. According to the article, the campaign was successful, as it helped to reduce the drop-out rate among students at the college. The "Amikset" campaign is still active today. It seeks to reduce the negative and undervalued reputation of vocational colleges.

As part of the Participatory Sporty Theatre project, my work pair, sports instructor Tuomas Kosunen and I led three groups in the 2017–2018 school year with three groups of vocational college students who had started that year at a new school with new classmates. The groups includes two VALMA (preparatory education for vocational training) groups from the Lapland Vocational School REDU, and one TELMA group (independent life coaching). Each VALMA group had just over 20 students, and the TELMA group had seven students.

Our work with the groups started in September right after the start of the school year, and it concluded in May at the end of the school year. Our work approach was workshop-based, and the workshop contents were designed according

to teachers' requests. The workshops were part of an optional social skills module, which is aimed at developing teamwork and interaction skills. The module attracts students who wish to develop their social skills. Our aim was to first facilitate grouping, and then enable the students to learn to work in a group and develop their self-expression. At the end of the year, we collected feedback from the students, and I interviewed one of the teachers of the VALMA and TELMA groups.

What do grouping and self-expression mean?

According to social researcher Katja Korhonen (2018), grouping is a process that is underpinned by familiarity, interaction, trust and enjoyment. One of the purposes of the grouping process is for the members to get to know each other, so that every member feels comfortable and safe in the group. This helps to make the group activity as fluent as possible. In a well-formed group, learning is easier, which can help prevent social exclusion. Päivi Haanpää (2016) writes that, according to one established definition, a group becomes a group when its members have a shared goal, interaction, and an understanding of who belongs in that group. Groups can have agreed rules and practices. In order to engage all members to work towards the common goal and adhere to the common rules, the grouping process must be given enough time and attention.

All of us express ourselves continually, but how aware are we of our self-expression? The way in which we express ourselves is our way to tell other people about ourselves. Expression is our voice, whether it is verbal, bodily or some other form of expression. Reetta Vehkalahti (2006, 35) has crystallised the idea in *Leikkivä teatteri* as follows: "When a person understands their self, they are also able to understand others." Self-expression can be difficult for people with low self-esteem who feel insecure in the company of others. For example, if a young person is too scared or unable to express themselves in the way they would like, their connection with other people is one-sided and superficial.

Self-expression and grouping are skills that can be practised. Some people learn to express themselves well already as children, which may reduce their risk of social exclusion in later life. Not everyone has opportunities to learn self-expression in early life, but it does not mean that they cannot practise the skill later, at any stage of their lives. It may require more work if the person has always suffered from low self-esteem, but in an ideal situation grouping and the self-expression learning process can go hand in hand. This was the case with the VALMA and TELMA groups. The students were not familiar with each other, and they felt a need to develop their self-expression skills.

An individual can learn to work in a group, and as a result, the group can also help the individual. When we have the means to express ourselves in a diverse way and are able to work in a well-formed group, we understand that we are a part of others. Therefore we do not need to seek attention to ourselves, because the attention we give to the group encompasses ourselves. The grouping process can help individuals understand that they are not outsiders even if the attention is not on them. A group is about working together. A group is formed when its members have a common goal. And even when we are each studying towards our personal development, each member is still working towards a shared goal. Simply put, if we help others, they can help us when we need help. Practising self-expression skills is an opportunity for others to get to know us, and an opportunity for us to learn about ourselves. We can learn to recognise and accept feelings and thoughts that may have been previously difficult to process. And when we can do it in a group that feels safe, we realise that we are not alone with our issues. Even just hearing that another person has similar experiences or thoughts can help us understand our self.

An ineffective grouping process can prevent individuals from understanding that the group's actions also support their own goals. If such an individual has poor self-expression skills and low self-esteem, they can become a "disruptor" who creates challenges for all group members. A disruptor does not give space for others, because they do not see its importance. A disruptor who has not learnt self-expression skills expresses themselves in ways they have learnt by copying other people. They want to express themselves but feel unable to do so. Someone might get all attention by behaving negatively, which can seem like a good way to get noticed. This type of situation is difficult to escape, because departing from that kind of behaviour without guidance can feel like a return to the previous self: a person whom no one notices.

Working with the VALMA and TELMA groups

In autumn 2017, my colleague and I were invited to the Lapland Vocational School to instruct VALMA and TELMA groups. The teacher had seen our project and spotted an opportunity to address a resource gap in the way social and interaction skills were – or were not – taught in schools and colleges. The teacher was concerned about the fact that few programmes made an effort to support the grouping process of new students.

Our first aim was to foster a team spirit among the students and lower the threshold to learning and spending time together. We then began to explore

self-expression through various expression, group and improvisation exercises. We adapted the activities to the groups' needs as and when we recognised areas that needed additional practice. In addition to supporting group activity, one of our main aims was to help students accept their self-expression 'as is' and teach them how to use it. The idea was to encourage them to participate even if they were nervous, and practise social skills outside of their comfort zones.

The workshop classes included games, play and exercises designed to provide low-threshold encounters. The third part of this publication contains examples of the exercises. We started with encounters, at first with just eye contact, and then challenged ourselves towards more diverse, bodily and verbal expression.

After a few sessions, one of the boys asked why we were playing these games. Just before the question his friend had gone to sit on the side as he did not want to participate. I asked the boy: "What is usually the first thing that happens when we encounter someone?" He guessed that it was eye contact. I explained that some of us might be nervous about eye contact, and by practising it we find that it is nothing to be afraid of. I explained that the purpose of the exercise was to encourage the participants to express themselves in a good way. The boy went up to his friend and, just as my colleague and I thought that he did not want to take part, he pulled his friend up and encouraged him to join the exercise. Encouragement from a peer is always more effective than when it comes from an adult instructor.

Our last session with the VALMA group was attended by youngsters who were visiting a VALMA open day. Because it was our last time, we wanted to have a relaxed session, and the participants were able to request their favourite exercises, such as dodgeball, wink murderer (our version during the year was "tongue murderer", in which you "kill" by showing your tongue instead of winking), king's keys, I am a tree.

The students were happy to play the games as they knew each other and the exercises, which also helped the visitors to relax and get involved. The importance of the group activity was already showing in the newcomers by the time of the last exercise, which was vampire, a type of contact and group exercise. One of the participants is the vampire who tries to catch another person and make them "It". At the start of the game, the vampire stands in the middle of a circle and chooses a "victim". The vampire starts to walk slowly towards the victim, hands forward, and making vampire-like sounds if they wish. If they manage to touch the victim on the shoulder before the victim is saved, the victim becomes the vampire, and the previous vampire joins the circle. The victim can be saved by a ball which represents garlic. The garlic ball is passed around in the circle, and the aim is to get

it to the victim before the vampire reaches them. The exercise creates nice excitement as the vampire proceeds towards the victim, and others try to pass the saving device to them. The players usually get excited and begin to work as a group and laugh together without realising it. This also happened with the visiting students. They became more and more involved, and in the last exercise, an outsider would not have been able to pick them out of the group.

Not all exercises are designed to give an individual a voice, but they will nevertheless get a sense of inclusion during an activity in which all members are on the same level. This type of exercise is designed to help the participants work as a group in which everyone works towards a common goal. If someone fails in something, for example drops the ball in the vampire exercise, it is a good idea to teach the group to encourage them and learn to "fail" together.

In improvisation exercises, the group members learn that there is no such thing as failure. In theatre, improvisation refers to an unplanned performance. The exercises can be spontaneous improvisation i.e. with no preparation, or briefly prepared improvisation (Vehkalahti. 2006, 145).

Improvisation exercises help participants learn that there are no wrong answers, as long as the things we say come from our own desire to express things that way. Improvisation exercises also help participants find their own expression. One of the main rules of improvisation is, "do not think too much," which means accepting one's own thoughts. If you think too much about what you are going to say, you may not be able to get the 'right' words out.

With the VALMA and TELMA group, we started from bodily improvisations such as the statue exercise, in which participants learn to express themselves through their bodies. These were followed by verbal exercises and story exercises. I encouraged each participant to do the exercise in their own way. By immersing themselves in improvisation, participants can achieve a state where they no longer wonder what others think about them. This is especially important when helping people with low self-esteem to learn self-expression.

Student feedback

In the last session, we discussed the past year and whether the students had found our activities beneficial from the point of view of the group and themselves as individuals. In addition, in May 2018 the project organised a stakeholder event, which was attended by students from the VALMA groups to share their experiences from the social skills module. Visitors and project workers had an opportunity to interview the students.

Naturally, the first question was whether the students had found the activity useful and whether they would recommend it to new students. All of the students agreed that the activity had been important to their group, and that they would recommend it to other new students. Some students said that it had given them courage to do things they would not even have considered when they started their studies in the autumn. The activity had taught them new ways to express themselves and work together in a group in a more coherent and confident manner. Just the fact that so many of these students attended the event showed that change had taken place. Young people, who had previously been scared of social situations, wanted to attend an event where they knew they would be interviewed in front of an audience.

In a feedback discussion at the school, the participants said that they first had doubts, as the activity seemed like children's games. One girl then said that perhaps playfulness is what is missing from so many young people today, as everything has become a bit too serious. They also highlighted one reason why many of the young people who participate in our activity find self-expression so challenging: if they are not used to expressing themselves, they can be prone to thinking "what if I fail", or "what do the others think of me". They felt that our activity helped them understand that such thoughts are usually just that – thoughts in their own minds. Once they get to know the other group members and get the confidence to express their thoughts, they may find that other members are thinking the exact same thing, rather than forming opinions about others.

Another point on which the students agreed was that this kind of activity should start much earlier. One girl with an immigrant background described a challenge that is often faced by people who have always been shy. They have got used to being the quiet ones since the first days of school, and to them any group situation means withdrawal. When they finish basic education and become students, all of a sudden they have to be active and social, and learning social and interaction skills can be a challenge, especially if they have to learn them without help.

The interviewed teacher of the VALMA and TELMA groups had noticed that students' social skills had deteriorated from year to year. The teacher noted that many students need help even with everyday tasks. According to the teacher, social media reinforces these attitudes, because they have less face-to-face contact outside school. The teacher expressed concern about young people's self-esteem and said that young people do not believe in their own coping ability. Schools should concentrate more efforts on promoting the grouping process, because it also influences learning motivation.

The teacher was happy with the activity we had organised for the VALMA and TELMA groups over the course of the year, and had recommended the workshops to all programmes of the vocational college. If not as a year-long activity, then at least at the start of studies to support the grouping process. The teacher had enjoyed seeing students doing things together and hearing their laughter during the self-expression exercises. The teacher had noticed the effect in the groups in the way all members were included and taken into consideration by their peers. They also believed that the relaxing effect of the workshops had improved the learning atmosphere in general. When young people had engaged in a fun activity which they had not anticipated, and performed in front of other people which would have been unthinkable to them at the start of the year, they also found it easier to encounter people in everyday settings.

I share this observation. Students always greeted us with a smile, and the longer they attended the sessions, the more eager they were to return. By spring, students who had not wanted to speak during the first sessions were happily involved in the improvisation exercises and encouraged each other.

One important aspect was the teacher's participation in all our exercises. The students were encouraged when they saw the teacher get involved, instead of watching from the sides when other people instructed the group, or nipping out for a coffee break. By being part of the instructed group, the teacher was at the same level with the students. It meant that the teacher was momentarily one of them, and the relationship with the group became closer.

My observations about the grouping process

As a theatre instructor, I have worked with all kinds of groups: young children and schoolchildren, teenagers, young adults, adults and older people. Although each of us is different as an individual, and everyone has their own background which has moulded our self-expression a certain way, I believe that one of the greatest – if not the greatest – factors is a group. At home, people can let themselves go and sing in the shower or perform movie scenes in front of the mirror. People can write poems for the desk drawer, or paint artworks in the garage. But when we have to use our voices, bodies, pens or paintbrushes with other people present, it becomes a new challenge. Our expression is our means to be part of a group, and if we don't have the ability or confidence to use it, we become excluded.

When I earlier referred to a disruptor, I did not mean that the individual has chosen that role. A disruptor is someone who disrupts other group members, because they cannot see any other way to act. I worked as an afternoon club in-

structor for a number of years, and in that setting one can really see how group situations change people's behaviour. Children who are disruptive in the presence of other kids, and who seek attention from others and instructors in all kinds of ways they can think of, are often calm and friendly towards the instructors – having previously thrown insults at them – when others are not present. One parent whose child was frequently disruptive in group situations told me that the child is aware of the fact, but is unable to leave the role they had assumed in the group, as they were scared of being excluded and not being noticed. If a child who behaves in that way is not taught other ways to express themselves, the challenge becomes greater year after year.

Each of us sometimes yearns attention, and if we see that bad, disruptive behaviour is the best way to get attention, we might use it even if it does not feel good. If a person does not have other means to express themselves and does not want to be disruptive, they might adopt a quiet role, which does not feel good either, because it leads to a sense of exclusion.

Can the grouping process help solve challenges that arise in a group? Joining a new group is always a challenge, regardless of any existing roles. The grouping process can help the group realise that they are working towards a common goal. No one has to be alone; everyone can get help from other group members or the instructor. That is exactly what happened with the VALMA and TELMA groups: the joint activity in the workshops of the social skills module made the group closer in general, and the teacher who participated in the activity also developed a closer relationship with the group by joining in the activity as one of them.

Self-expression exercises can offer a way for the group members to get to know each other over time and learn to work together. At the same time, they realise that the pressure experienced by an individual group member to cope and succeed does not have to be a challenge that cannot be overcome. A diverse set of self-expression skills can help people participate in a group in a constructive way and interact positively with the other members.

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PART 3

A SELECTION
OF EXERCISES
FOR WORKING WITH
YOUNG PEOPLE

TO THE READER

In the Participatory Sporty Theatre project, group activities were aimed at promoting young people's social inclusion. Action-based exercises that draw from theatre and sports were used with the groups. This section describes some of the exercises used in the project activities. Some of the exercises are basic drama and sports exercises, and some others were adapted from existing exercises for the project.

The exercises can be used in various contexts and with all kinds of groups. The implementation of the exercises is described here. It is recommended that the exercise instructor should be an experienced group instructor and have a good understanding of the aims of these activities. Points which should be taken into account when doing these activities are discussed in the articles of this publication.

The first exercises are intended as grouping exercises and "ice-breakers". They are followed by a set of exercises on self-awareness, encountering others and emotional exploration. The last exercises include games and play designed to develop teamwork skills, and some easy improvisation exercises.

The aim of each method or exercise, the recommended group size, duration, number of instructors and recommended competence as well as equipment and space requirements are described in the figures below.

AIM	GROUP SIZE	TIME	NO. OF INSTRUCTORS, SKILL RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUPPLIES	SUPPLIES AND FACILITIES

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1 GROUPING AND GETTINGSTARTED

THUMBS

🎯 ICE-BREAKER AND INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE

👥 5 >   🕐 APPROX. 5 MINUTES   👨‍🏫 1 INSTRUCTOR

Stand in a circle and place your right hand, palm facing down, close to the next person. Make a fist with your left hand, turning the thumb down, and place it under the palm of the person standing to your left. The instructor counts 1–2–3, and on three, everyone tries to catch the thumb of the person standing on their right hand side and at the same time tries to pull the left hand thumb down away from the other person's palm. Repeat a few times. Swap hands.

AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO…

🎯 A RELAXED GROUPING AND GETTING-TO-KNOW EXERCISE

👥 1–20   🕐 APPROX. 10–20 MINUTES   👨‍🏫 1 INSTRUCTOR

Each participant says one thing about themselves that they believe could make them unique among the group members. For example: "Am I the only one who has been to Australia three times?" or "Am I the only one who hates chocolate?" If there are others who have the same characteristic, the person has to come up with a new thing until they find something that makes them unique. The things can be anything they can think of, and the exercise is meant to be fun. Alternatively, the phrase can be: "I have never…" The instructor also participates and makes sure that everyone gets a turn and only one speaks at a time.

EVOLUTION

🎯 A FUN GROUPING AND WARM-UP EXERCISE   👥 5 >

🕐 15–30 MINUTES   👨‍🏫 1 INSTRUCTOR   🏠 A SPACE THAT ALLOWS FREE MOVEMENT

At the start of the game, everyone is an amoeba and tries to express through movement a given species. The levels are as follows: amoeba–cricket–hare–gorilla–human. The aim is to get to the human level, at which point the game is completed. When two participants represent the same species, they compete by playing rock– paper– scissors. The winner gets to evolve, and the loser drops down one level. The game continues until everyone has reached the human level. Species can be added and changed.

THE NAME GAME

🎯 ETTING GO, LOSING NERVES AND GROUPING   👥 6–50

⏱ 15 MINUTES   🧑‍🏫 2–3 INSTRUCTORS WITH EXPERIENCE OF GROUP INSTRUCTION

📦 PIECES OF PAPER, PENS AND A LARGE SPACE

The participants are divided into two groups. Everyone writes their name on a piece of paper. The instructor writes a few made-up names, especially if there are not many participants. The notes are then removed, for example, to a corridor.

One member from both teams collects one note, returns to the group and reads the name aloud. If the participant's group has a person of that name, they 'win' one note, and the next member fetches another note. If the group doesn't have anyone with that name, the participant mimes an animal until the others guess it right. One of the members can then fetch another note, and the remaining members mimic the animal in the meantime. Continue until everyone has collected a note.

The game ends when all the participants have been identified. If one team gets all the names before the other team, they can be given another round to introduce themselves and mime their favourite animal. The other team can repeat the same exercise when they have finished.

"VOMIT BUCKET" CATCH

🎯 A FUN WARM-UP EXERCISE

👥 5–50   ⏱ 5–10 MINUTES   🧑‍🏫 1 INSTRUCTOR

One participant is selected as 'It'. When the It catches another person, that person has to form a 'vomit bucket' with their hands. The caught person is saved when another person comes and audibly 'vomits' in the bucket. The instructor says when another person becomes 'It'.

2 PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS

MUSICAL CHAIRS BY EYE CONTACT

⊙ CONTACT, PLAY AND LAUGHTER

👥 7–15　　🕐 10–15 MINUTES　　🧑‍🏫 1 INSTRUCTOR　　🗄 CHAIRS AND TAPE

The exercise requires chairs placed in a circle and tape for marking places on the floor. The number of chairs is one less than the number of participants. One of the participants stands in the middle, watches the group and tries to get a seat. The sitting participants try to get eye contact with another person sitting in the circle. Participants use eye contact to communicate silently that they will swap places so that the standing person cannot get to either seat. All sitting participants should move around as much as possible so that multiple people are swapping places simultaneously. If the standing person manages to sit down, the person who lost the seat becomes the chaser.

30 SECONDS IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE

⊙ PUBLIC PERFORMANCE AND OBSERVATION EXERCISE

👥 5–25　　🕐 10–30 MINUTES

🧑‍🏫 1–3 INSTRUCTORS, EXPERIENCE OF THIS TYPE OF EXERCISE　　🗄 CHAIRS AND TAPE

Suitable for groups whose members already know one another. The idea is to give an experience of being seen and of watching and observing others. The exercise should be repeated a few times if possible and by switching pairs. This way, the performer can try performing with and without a plan.

Everyone writes their name on a piece of paper. The notes are mixed up, each participant picks one note to get a pair. The pair's name is not revealed at this stage. The group forms an audience. Each participant goes in front of the audience and performs for 30 seconds however they want, as long as they tell their name at some point. The audience member who has picked that person's name observes them. When the 30 seconds has passed, the observer reveals themselves and describes their observations, i.e. gives feedback. When everyone has performed and received comments from their pair, the group discusses what thoughts and feelings performing publicly had raised.

3 EMBODIMENT

CONSCIOUS WALKING

🎯 **INTRODUCTION TO BODILY EXPRESSION AND NON-VERBAL EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS**

👥 **1–30**   🕐 **10–15 MINUTES**   🧑‍🏫 **1 INSTRUCTOR**

📦 **A LARGE SPACE THAT ALLOWS FREE MOVEMENT**

The participants walk around randomly and focus on their own walking without taking contact with others. At first, the participants should find a rhythm and walking style to suit them, and they will return to this mode between each feeling.

The instructor gives them a feeling, for example "angry". The instructor should verbalise the exercise, for example, by saying: "You are livid, everything irritates you, someone has really messed up or made you angry (give examples of things that can inspire the feeling of anger). How does anger affect your walking? How does the rhythm change? How heavy is your step? What happens to your posture? Where in your body do you feel the anger, is it in your head, chest, hands, bottoms of your feet? Focus on that part of your body for a moment and emphasise it in your walk." Let the participants carry on for a moment and ask them to switch back to their neutral walking mode.

Repeat the exercise using different types of feelings, e.g. angry, scared, in love, stressed, happy, busy. Discuss the exercise when you have finished. Most participants want to describe where they feel each emotion. It is also a good way to see how emotions affect people physically in different ways.

A STORY OF THREE PICTURES

🎯 **TEAM WORK AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION, COMBINING SOUND AND IMAGE**

👥 **3 >**   🕐 **15–45 MINUTES**   🧑‍🏫 **1 INSTRUCTOR FOR A SMALL TEAM**

📦 **PICTURE CARDS, VIDEO AND SOUND RECORDING + EDITING EQUIPMENT**

The implementation requires a camera and pictures or cards as material. Divide the participants into teams of 3 to 5. Spread out the cards and images. Each team chooses three pictures to create a story of three pictures. The team decides the order of the pictures to create the start, middle and end of the story. Each team films the three pictures to create a video clip. The duration of each picture can be different. When the material has been filmed, the team designs and records a soundtrack.
 The video and sound are then edited together.

CONTACT IMPROVISATION WITH A STICK

🎯 **INTRODUCTION TO EMBODIMENT, MOVEMENT AND LISTENING**

👥 **2–10, EVEN NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS**   ⏱ **10–15 MINUTES**

🧑‍🏫 **1 INSTRUCTOR**   🎲 **ONE EXERCISE STICK PER TEAM, MUSIC**

The group is divided into pairs, and each pair gets an exercise stick. The exercise can be done with or without music. In each pair, one member moves the stick towards the other one, who tries to avoid the stick. The idea is to offer an impulse that can be avoided, and not to hit or touch! The avoiding player follows the stick's movement while trying to avoid touching it.   The movement can be slow especially at the start, and the speed can then be varied once the participants get used to the exercise. The pairs swap roles. The pairs can also swap halfway the exercise to that the avoiding player takes control of the stick.

4 TEAMWORK

KNOT

🎯 **TEAM WORK AND PROBLEM-SOLVING**   👥 **5–10**

⏱ **5–10 MINUTES**   🧑‍🏫 **1 INSTRUCTOR**

The instructor asks the participant to stand close together and lift their right hand up. Each participant then uses their left hand to grab someone else's right hand. When there are no empty hands left, the participants try to open the knot without letting go of each other's hands. The knot opens into one or several rings formed by the participants.

DRAMA-BASED BASKETBALL

TEAM SKILLS, PLAYING WITHOUT COMPETITION, PLAYFULNESS AND ROLE PLAY

5–25   **45–60 MINUTES**

2–3, EXPERIENCE OF DRAMA-BASED METHODS

A GYM AND BASKETBALLS

Start by explaining the purpose of the exercise. Instead of a regular basketball game, the idea is to explore the game through drama and get used to handling the ball.

Start with a soft ball with everyone standing in a circle. Take eye contact with another person and say a word as you throw the ball to them. The catcher associates another word from the first one and throws it to the next person, and so forth. When everyone has held the ball once or twice, switch to a basketball. Play with the ball.

Give everyone a basketball and ask them to move the ball around the room and bounce it at their own pace in between tasks, which are given by the instructor. Then everyone can shout out tasks, for example, throwing the ball in pairs, a ball-rolling competition, throwing the ball over the shoulder or towards the basket. Next, the ball becomes a "drama ball". The participants are asked to handle the ball as if it were hot, heavy, fragile, secret, a source of pride, a bomb, under water, or in a weightless space, etc.

The contact improvisation exercise is done in pairs. Each pair places the ball between their backs. The pairs move around or do mirroring exercises. The pairs can take turns to suggest what to do next.

Finally, the group is divided into two teams. Ask them to come up with a name for the team and each player, and choose a theme music for the team. The teams should be given about five minutes to come up with their suggestions. Ask one person from each team to introduce and call each player one at a time. A player from the other team can be the DJ who turns the music on and off. The spectating team cheers and claps as the other players come out. This experience helps participants understand the importance of respecting what other people are doing, see the impact of a spectator and understand that the acting person feels safer when the spectators are engaged in the performance.

When both teams have been introduced, go through the basic rules of basketball. Play the game using different moods and roles: in slow motion, praising others enthusiastically, in love, as little children, as older people, etc. Agree a time limit for each role, e.g. five baskets.

SWIM TUBE GAME

🎯 LOOSENING UP   👥 4–20   🕐 10–15 MINUTES

🧑‍🏫 2–3 INSTRUCTORS   📦 SWIM TUBES AND A BALLOON

Split the swim tube in half for the game. Divide the group into two teams. Create a court by using existing boundaries such as walls and lines drawn onto the floor, and make sure that the court is clear of obstacles, and that spectators and other players stand safely off the court. Two players from each team use the tubes to bounce the balloon to the goal line, e.g. the opposite wall. Each set of pairs plays for one minute. The game can finish at e.g. ten goals or after a certain time.

MOVING TO MUSIC

🎯 CREATING A CHOREOGRAPHY TOGETHER   👥 2–30   🕐 20–30 MINUTES

🧑‍🏫 2–3 INSTRUCTORS   📦 AUDIO EQUIPMENT AND MUSIC

Start by teaching the group an easy "choreography". You can talk about movement instead of dance, if it is more appropriate for the group. Demonstrate the choreography: eight steps forward, clap your hands on the last step. Eight steps back, clap your hands on the last step. Four steps forward, clap your hands on the last step; four steps back, clap your hands on the last step; Two steps forward, clap your hands on the last step; two steps back, clap your hands on the last step; Four steps around, clap your hands on the last step. When the participants have learnt the choreography and tried it with music, divided them into groups of 3–6 and ask them to create their own choreography. The choreography can include anything: movement, sounds, positions – separately or at the same time. Give the group complete freedom over the choreography. Let the groups practise their choreographies, and ask them to perform them for the others.

5

IMPROVISATION

LATE FOR WORK

🎯 **IMPROVISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-EXPRESSION**

👥 **4–20**   ⏱ **5–10 MINUTES**   🧑‍🏫 **1 INSTRUCTOR**

Roles: a boss, an employee who is late for work, and 1–3 additional employees. Ask the group to decide what kind of workplace it is. The employee who is late leaves the room. The boss and the other employees come up with 3–5 reasons why the other person is late. The boss calls the employee into the room and starts to interrogate why they are late. The other employees stand behind the boss's back and mime each reason, and the late employee tries to guess them. The boss can ask the employee questions to give hints, if they can't guess the reason. The boss can occasionally turn around, and the other employees explain why they are standing in that position or doing whatever they are doing, without revealing the reason.

WAITER, THERE'S A...IN MY SOUP

🎯 **IMPROVISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-EXPRESSION**   👥 **4–20**

⏱ **5–15 MINUTES**   🧑‍🏫 **1 INSTRUCTOR**   📦 **A TABLE AND A CHAIR**

One participant plays a customer who arrives in a restaurant. The customer orders food, e.g. soup. The customer calls the waiter and comes up with something strange they have found in their soup. The waiter comes up with an explanation. The group members take turns to play the waiter with each customer, and then another member takes the customer role. The object found in the soup could be e.g. a phone, a pen, a coin, etc.

THE WORLD'S WORST

🎯 **IMPROVISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-EXPRESSION**

👥 **3–20**   ⏱ **5–15 MINUTES**   🧑‍🏫 **1 INSTRUCTOR**

The group chooses a profession. Each member acts a short "scene" and performs how they are "the world's worst" of that profession.

THE 'YEAH' GAME

🎯 IMPROVISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-EXPRESSION

👥 3–20   🕐 5–10 MINUTES   🧑‍🏫 1 INSTRUCTOR

The game is based on "follow the leader" i.e. free movement. One of the participants starts to do a movement, and the others shout "yeah" and start copying the movement. Continue until another participant takes the lead and others shout "yeah" and start copying them.

I AM A TREE

🎯 IMPROVISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-EXPRESSION

👥 3–20   🕐 5–10 MINUTES   🧑‍🏫 1 INSTRUCTOR

One of the participants stands in the middle of the group and says, "I am a tree." The others join the "scene" one at a time and say what they are acting, e.g. "I am a squirrel sitting in a tree", or "I am a cone being eaten by the squirrel". When there are at least two additional actors, the "tree" decides which one should stay, e.g. "the squirrel stays". The others leave the scene and start creating a new scene around the "squirrel". The initiator of each scene decides who stays. Make it clear that there are no right or wrong answers, and everyone can act out the first thing that comes to mind from the centre of the scene.

TREASURE HUNT

🎯 TRUST AND LETTING-GO EXERCISE   👥 6–26   🕐 1–35 MINUTES

🧑‍🏫 2–3 INSTRUCTORS   📦 A SELECTION OF OBJECTS AND SCARFS FOR BLINDFOLDS

Divide the group into smaller teams and place a selection of objects in the centre of the room. Each team sends one blindfolded team member to collect an object from the pile. The blindfolded member has a support person who shouts instructions. For example, "to the left", "go straight", "no problem". The blindfolded person must be guided throughout the journey!

When all objects have been collected, the team with the most objects wins. Give the teams approx. five minutes to come up with ten uses for one of the objects. The team stands in front of the audience and demonstrates the uses. Encourage all participants to take part in the presentation, or at least in the invention process. Tell them that the ideas can be funny and absurd. The demonstration situation can be e.g. a trade fair.

YEAH!

YEAH!

COMPOUND WORD GAME

🎯 **REDUCING SELF-CRITICISM, DEVELOPING REACTION SPEED, AND ACCEPTING MISTAKES**

👥 **3—8**   🕐 **5—10 MINUTES**   🧑‍🏫 **2—3 SUPERVISORS**

Ask the group to stand or sit in a circle. The first participant says a compound word, e.g. "flower box". The person to their left comes up with another compound word in which the first part is the latter part of the first compound word, e.g. "box cart". The next person to the left comes up with another compound word, "e.g. cartwheel". And so on. If a participant can't think of a compound word, they can use the first word. You can emphasise that the words don't have to be proper compound words, and that the game is about reacting quickly. In a more difficult version, the group can clap their hands to create a rhythm, so that the reaction time becomes shorter.

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"I THINK that this is for everyone, because it's good for people to let go, and especially people who live in Finland. Everyone who wants more playfulness in their lives and ways of doing things." – Feedback on group activity

The experience of inclusion and life's meaningfulness comes from interacting with other people. A communal experience and sense of belonging can also benefit people in other areas of life. The youth groups of the Participatory Sporty Theatre project combined culture and sports in an informal setting. This publication describes how the young participants were able to discover new sides and strengths of themselves and get engaged in the group activities. The groups were coordinated by theatre and sports professionals, and the activities were centred around action, self-expression and interpersonal encounters.

The publication is aimed at youth work professionals and anyone with an interest in promoting youth participation. It also features action-based exercises that can be used in youth work settings to support group forming, or as improvisation and emotional expression exercises.

The publication is the final report of the Participatory Sporty Theatre project. The project ran from 2016 to 2019 and was coordinated by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Other participating organisations were Kainuun Liikunta ry, Kajaani City Theatre, Loisto setlementti ry, Q-teatteri ry and WAU ry. The project received funding from the European Social Fund.