

EEVA TIMONEN-KALLIO (ed.)

**TOWARDS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**  
**– Friskie Programme as a professional method for**  
**guidance**



TURUN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU  
TURKU UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES



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## FOREWORD

The transition process for young people from education to working life and independent living as an active citizen is becoming complex. Postmodern society offers plenty of opportunities and even tailor-made training for young people, but there are young people who face difficulties in finding their own pathway to employment in this diversity of requirements. The importance of vocational qualifications and the individual's ability to choose the right pathway to working life is becoming more and more important. Young people need support and guidance to analyze and become aware of their future goals and interests.

In the Friskie-EU Project (2003–2006) the target for research and development work is to strengthen vocational institutions' pedagogical and counselling practices and, in order to gain this, create a new kind of learning material. As a concrete result of the project **THE FRISKIE PROGRAMME** has been tested and developed over a three year period. The Friskie programme covers a workbook, a user's manual which helps to benefit the workbook in cooperative learning, a portfolio and an evaluation order and this handbook, which illustrates the main principles that underpin the Friskie Programme framework.

The primary aim of this third Friskie publication "Towards Active Citizenship" is to present the completed Friskie programme and to reflect how Friskie programme is understood in the context of theoretical and practical development needs among project partners.

The project has shown that young people across the Europe share many of the challenges associated with approaching responsible adulthood. It makes perfect sense for the researchers and professionals who are given the responsibility of making this transition as smooth as possible to work together.

I would like to thank you all for your contribution.

Turku, Finland 17.06.2006  
Eeva Timonen-Kallio  
Friskie-EU-project research coordinator

# **FRISKIE PROGRAMME – PROMOTING INCLUSION AND RECIPROCAL LEARNING IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

**Eeva Timonen-Kallio**

Guidance and counselling exist as administrative terms and professional practices, but concepts are not truly analysed and theoretically reflected in school welfare or school counselling research. Psychological orientation and special need education is apparent and both disciplines have a solid foundations in vocational schools practices. This means that challenges for example in integration process and dissimilarity are interpreted as an individual (psychological) problem not a resource for reflecting intentions and interests. The Friskie programme itself - with three comprehensive sections: from education to work, responsible adulthood and active citizenship - is a concrete example of a new pedagogical approach to facilitate social pedagogical guidance and to deal with needs for guided participation of young people threatened with exclusion.

The aim of this chapter is to examine how social pedagogical knowledge basis and theory are implemented in the Friskie programme and what might be the nature of professionalism when working by the programme. My challenging final aim of this article is also to have a look and peep what social pedagogy, special needs education and guidance may have in common and what these branches may offer to strengthen theory and work orientation behind the Friskie programme.

A pupil means here a young learner and a professional worker relates to a teacher, a mentor, a facilitator, a social educator, a social worker, a career advisor, social pedagogies in different kinds of learning environments and settings in schools and in youth work.

## **Why the Friskie programme?**

It has been said that modern society is fundamentally an educational society, in which the social status of an individual is basically determined by education. As a consequence of educational society making a positive contribution to society it is becoming more complex for some groups of young people. The risk of dropping out from vocational training is increasing, in addition learning difficulties and lack of motivation are becoming more prevalent among students. To be able to transfer from school to working life and thus to an independent adult life, young people need to complete vocational qualifications (see Timonen-Kallio 2005.)

Exclusion from education does not only reduce an individual's opportunities of integrating into the employment system of society but society's demand for a high level of proficiency also sets new knowledge and skill requirements for citizens outside working life. School produces the academic and the social skills, which an individual needs as a

member of society. Education is also not only the door to working life *but also to participation and individual coping and life management* (Hämäläinen 1996.)

‘Social inclusion’ as a concept gives a much broader approach than only entering the labour market and extending the tasks for teaching in vocational training. Social inclusion is the process by which efforts are made to ensure that everyone, regardless of their experiences and circumstances, can achieve their potential in life. To achieve inclusion, income and employment are necessary but not sufficient. An inclusive society is also characterized by a striving for reduced inequality, a balance between individuals’ rights and duties and increased social cohesion. Social inclusion is ‘ensuring that all have access to the main opportunities available to the majority’ (<http://www.social-exclusion-housing.com>.)

The Finnish research (Hämäläinen-Luukkainen, 2004) gives a brief look to problems and challenges in current schools. The clearest signs of problems in schools were seen to be absenteeism, poor school achievements and problem behaviour. Special concern was directed towards the quiet, withdrawing and depressed young people who, being “invisible and inaudible”, didn’t get as much attention as the others. Central issues during the transitional stage from comprehensive school to vocational training were seen to be the lack of motivation concerning school work and future planning, unrealistic plans for further studies and the lack of a backup plan. Problems at the transitional stage do not emerge suddenly but can be seen well in advance. The young people’s development processes were seen to be individual. For some it was too early to choose a career, which increased the risk of making wrong and forced choices. Building up the young person’s school motivation and self esteem were seen to be of vital importance. It was also seen important to give the young people support and a feeling of security, which came from e.g. clear limits, at home as well as at school. The research also emphasised early intervention even on the smallest of problems. The presence of school social workers and special education was seen as important, though inadequate at present. Cooperation between comprehensive schools and second level education (vocational institutes and upper secondary schools) was seen to be very different both quantitatively and qualitatively. The research results showed that it is possible to secure a fluent transitional stage. The results also raised a question of who takes responsibility for students in danger of dropping out.

In this social and political context, it is absolutely necessary to make the transition as smooth as possible and find new pedagogical solutions for the integration problems of under-achieved groups in schools and to encourage them to commit themselves to education, seeking employment and other citizenship responsibilities. In diversity requirements of risk society the concept of “social pacification” from Ulrich Beck illustrates the importance to build new kinds of experience circles and social arenas *to tranquillize* and to constrict one’s identity to learn competencies that are required in risk society (see Paakkunainen 2006.) How should schools learning environments and pedagogical/educational practices change so that the individual study, career and activation plans

promote pupils' personal goals as well as ensuring that the plans are socially just and realistic? How to offer pupils opportunities *to form* their citizenship? The Friskie programme is developed partly to fulfill this need.

### **The Friskie programme at a glance**

The programme is aimed at answering the educational needs of young people who find it hard to meet the requirements of vocational education. These young people often lack social skills and the experience of interaction with other people in working life, with employers and work colleagues. The objectives of the Friskie programme are to allow young people to learn social skills that are necessary for independent living, working life and for participation in post-modern society. The concrete goal is to support pupils to make choices that improve their lives and lead to responsible adulthood and active citizenship. The starting point is to recognize and respect the different levels of knowledge and through this offer more alternative possibilities for learning to enable every pupil to progress and achieve.

The basic educational idea in the **Friskie programme** is to combine group activities and cooperative learning with individual assignments and shared reflections to facilitate learning and personal growing. The Friskie programme as a learning material is targeted to preparatory vocational studies, periods of practising, youth career guidance, in workshops etc.

*Social skills* is a term which consists of four factors: domestic skills, social manners, problem solving skills and communication skills. These social skills are learnt in daily life and living and acting together with others. All these social skills are included and operationalized as assignments and learning tasks in three core sections and themes in the Friskie workbook.

### **The Friskie workbook**

The Friskie workbook has three core sections and themes: **“From education to work”**, **“Responsible adulthood”** and **“Active citizenship”**. Each theme has the same educational structure to foster the learning process and evaluation. In the user's manual there are tips and hints for a professional worker to deal with the relevant workbook sheets and examples of ways to activate and involve pupils (exhibitions, projects, role-play, stories etc.) to build a learning environment. Some of the learning assignments are defined as objectives, which allow the worker a fair amount of freedom and flexibility to be creative in adapting current assignments with/for the group.

The **“From education to work”** theme aims to practice the pupils' group social skills and to get them to perceive a realistic vision of becoming employed. On a personal level the goal is, that the pupil starts thinking as a professional employee by using phrases



such as: I want, I am able to and I have required professional skills, I know my background and my own personality, I have enough knowledge. Sections in workbook relating to this theme include

- dealing expectations for working life,
- looking for a job,
- applying for a job,
- qualifications and training and
- rules in working life.

The **“Responsible adulthood”** theme aims to practice the pupils’ group social skills and to get them to perceive a realistic vision of adulthood and independent living. Here, the workbook sections and the assignments deal with following issues:

- a pupil’s own social network and the support from it in possible difficulties
- questions relating to independent life and living, accommodation, budgeting etc.
- health and well-being and the effect that different choices may have affect on this, for example alcohol, sexual behaviour.

The objective of the group assignments is that the pupils start thinking about the variety of choices that they have in different situations and discuss together where they can get help, guidance and support for making these decisions. One of the group assignments is to consider what the school’s social welfare services and other experts provide. The motto is that everyone faces situations in their life when they may need help and that it is universally acceptable to get professional help and support.

The **“Active citizenship”** theme aims to practice pupils’ citizenship skills in the school community, volunteer work, leisure time activities, cultural activities etc. The pupils start considering what “a good life” means to different people and of which elements are important for different people. As a group assignment the pupils should think of positive contribution to society and reflect “how can I help” in the framework of youth culture and young people’s lifestyle/styles. The group should also discuss the use of the social services and income support. The pupils should know their rights to use social services and to get income support but on the other hand they should also understand their responsibilities as services users and as active citizens. Dealing with this theme in group sessions relates to issues of active citizenship and volunteer work as well as to questions of responsibility for legitimate and non-legitimate care demands within a family (an alcoholic mother/father, looking after younger siblings, living in immigrant family, mental health problems). It should be discussed in the group where help and advice could be offered. The pupil may find that s/he is not the only person who has had these experiences. Topics in the workbook relating to this theme include:

- caring
- voluntary work

- youth life style
- youth in society – positive contribution
- social benefits – own responsibility.

The Friskie learning material can be use beneficially in many different ways in lessons in schools; activities and guidance whilst working with young people, but there is also an opportunity to use the whole Friskie programme as a structured learning process (see more <http://www.friskie-eu.fi>). Using the material in this sense it is more structured and benefits the evaluation process. As a matter of fact the structure for evaluation is an educational map for a professional worker.

Co-operation with the voluntary organisations and other parties is beneficial, because by this co-operation one can build different kinds of non-traditional learning environments and service-learning projects, where pupils can practice their social skills. Partnership work can provide pupils with new opportunities for meaningful activities in a real-life context, where they could meet challenges and feel that they are really needed.

### **The Friskie portfolio as a document for accredited learning**

Portfolios are widely used in many contexts to demonstrate talents, abilities, competencies, achievements and potential. The portfolio is a document of a pupil's individual achievements and part of their personal pathway. The meaning of the Friskie portfolio is that it shows evidence of increasing knowledge and development in a pupil's social skills. The Friskie portfolio contains multiple tools for empowering and assessing: individual goals, self evaluation, peer review and mentor's feedback and summary. The portfolio evaluation values and makes different kinds of knowledge visible. Mentor's evaluation, which comes close to an individual guidance, when enough time is invested, closes the individual learning process. Also this identity work can be documented in the portfolio. In guided individual encountering it is safe to develop these issues further and discuss caring responsibilities, friends and other important people and practical living skills and knowing one's rights. These issues have a greater positive or negative influence on the pupil's chance of succeeding.

It is important to emphasise that special needs that the pupil may have or specific learning difficulties should not be mentioned in the portfolio as individual starting points for learning. This is because the basis for the Friskie programme lies in *inclusion* and thus different strengths and experiences of life in the group are (raw) material for *reciprocal learning*. This is how social skills can be learnt – “to get along with everybody”. Dissimilarity in the group is a resource. Both pupils and professional worker(s) are *impressed*.

The Friskie Portfolio has a content and structure, which has been constructed and defined in such a way that it assists and supports the professional worker in compiling the learning process, different parts of evaluation and learning products/outcomes. The programme summary (form in material) collects the totality of the programme evalua-

tion and by this document study points for a pupil can be given. By following the evaluation order and making learning more visible, the Friskie programme can become a part of the official assessment and accredited learning. The Friskie portfolio documents the progress of a pupil's increasing learning. The various models for evaluation make mentors *available* for a pupil, which is in parallel to various models for *encountering* and *empowering*

The final aim of dealing with all these three sections is more profound learning outcomes, by means of which a young person will become less dependent on other persons and their decisions and discover her/his own (professional) goals and visions for their future. In other words a young person builds up consciously his/hers personal know-how and social competence as an active young citizen.

### **The role of a professional worker**

The work with the Friskie material is an active, creative and experiential process. Young people are the most important persons in the activity and planning process and the material reflects this. The expectations, awareness, needs and the situation of young people is the starting point for the whole programme. Therefore it is important to explore the expectations and to listen to the young people. It is important to have a positive and supportive approach in working with the group. The material stresses learning and involvement and inclusion processes. Working with the programme will make a pupil's background, interests, achievements (certificates) more tangible. The learning products and outcomes, which are completed as a part of formal and informal learning experiences, may be included in the portfolio. The assignments need to be adapted in order to make them the right size and suitably challenging for the group. There are a lot of different possibilities to do this. This is a main task for a professional worker – his/her imagination and creativity is a crucial point.

With the help of the Friskie learning material it can be identified what pupils already know and what should be learned. The principle is to present positive achievements, which raise the self-awareness of a young person and help to prepare them for new challenges. The final aim of the programme is profound learning, by the means of which a young person will become less dependent on other persons and their decisions. In other words a young person builds up consciously his/hers personal know-how and social competences – skills for life.

The knowledge that is learned is gathered individually or/and in a group depending on which is the most appropriate method. In group work and discussions with a group a pupil's personal interpretation and experience can be brought out to shared experience and interpretations of current life situations. There is space for personal and group counselling, which becomes during a course process more like peer mentoring. This will strengthen togetherness for pupils with the same life situations and create an empowering atmosphere in a group.

The tasks for a professional worker are as follows:

- ✓ to process pupil's individual "raw" experiences to conscious learning
- ✓ to control and monitor the tasks which will be carried out
- ✓ to provide maximum support in assisting pupils to cope with the learning assignments
- ✓ to motivate the pupils to share the ownership of the assessment
- ✓ to make - even the smallest - progress and achievements visible to the pupils
- ✓ to encourage peer mentoring
- ✓ to maintain inner cohesion of the group
- ✓ to maintain a continual dialogue
- ✓ to encourage individual pupils to approach areas of responsibilities that lie beyond their current capabilities
- ✓ to take the responsibility for the various components in portfolio evaluation
- ✓ to facilitate possibilities for encountering and participation

### **The Friskie programme in socio pedagogical perspective**

As I mentioned the Friskie programme is a flexible method and it can be used beneficially in many different ways in lessons in schools, activities and guidance whilst working with young people. Counselling has references to identity work and subjectivity as well to 'self-techniques'. The material stresses learning and involvement and inclusion processes. The question is what knowledge basis gives a professional worker the competency to utilize the Friskie material as a goal-orientated professional method? Where to discover a solid frame of reference to understand and reflect many elements and approaches behind the educational/pedagogical tasks and responsibilities in the Friskie programme? What discipline and concepts offer theoretical guidance and support to cope in multi-professional cooperation at schools?

Social pedagogy in the mode of thought and action contributes to social identity, social subjectivity, social ability to act, life management and participation of people excluded socially or threatened with exclusion (Hämäläinen 1996, 139.) The prevention and easing of the social exclusion of young people from the social pedagogical point of view is an attempt to find an alternative way to understand the changing of societies and the social and personal problems among people. Using the concept of social pedagogy as a basis, there can be seen an effort to transform a vocational training program to break the alarming circle of exclusion from education and working life (Hämäläinen 1996.)

The aim of social pedagogical work is to activate a pupil's resources by means of which they can influence themselves and their studying and learning environment in school as well as master daily routines and take responsibility as independently as possible. The aim is that pupils can feel that they are seriously considered to be choosing, influencing and being responsible in relation to their own life, school community and society. Naturally the degree of the pupil's independent action has to be reflected in relation to

his/her capacity to understand and analyze his/hers intentions and interests. During this process self awareness and social identity is developing.

The crucial process in the work is the emancipation process and the supportive peer group, which can be regarded as the aim and means of the work. Then the emancipation process is seen as the young person's release from conditions, which hinder him/her from acting and thinking independently. Such conditions are considered to be current and historical conditions defined by natural, external conditions, and inherent and adopted properties of the individual personality. Thus emancipation must be understood as a process of releasing a young person from dependencies, injustices and being badly off as well as psychic constraints, emotional barriers and internal authorities (Jämsen 2000.)

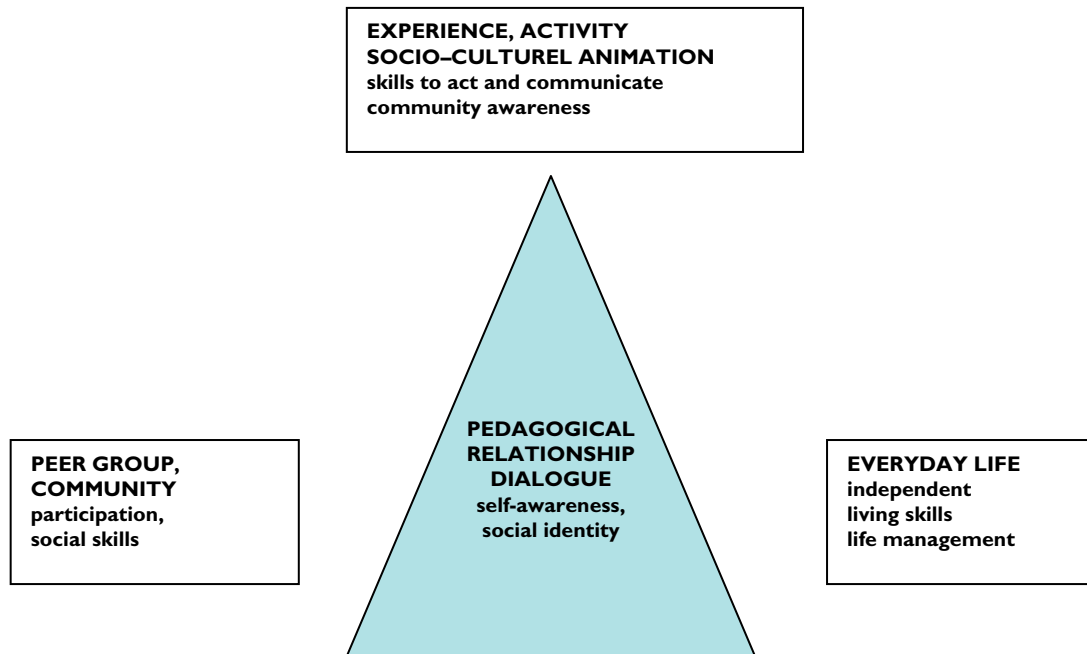
Socio-cultural animation is seen as part of social pedagogy as its method. There are several essential structural factors in socio-cultural animation. In the beginning, the most important is *doing*, i.e. how the group and the activities are organized. Activities raise a participants' awareness so that they are not only being busy but experiencing learning. *Participants* are those who create action. They are real and responsible. The time span with which to obtain change depends on the interaction in the project. *Institutions* are backers of activities which are adapted and new institutional relations and networks are created. *Social relation* consists of the internal relations of the group and its relation to those outside. It is a real group where the uniqueness and dignity of the individual is recognized. On the other hand, spontaneity and voluntariness become emphasized in social relation. A chosen *strategy* directs the way means are adapted to goals. It is essential that there is confidence in the possibility of change throughout the animation process. Inevitable conflicts and tensions are the dynamics of change. The *philosophy* behind activities includes an unbroken dialogue between practice and theory (Jämsen 2000.)

In vocational schools socio-cultural animation means to facilitate community development and to offer opportunities for responsibilities. There is a need to strengthen the community of pupils and professional workers, develop empowering learning environments and service-learning projects in voluntary work and hobby circles may create growing possibilities and arenas for new life styles and action for a pupil's own initiative. These voluntary based actions are valuable and show positive contribution to society.

Using the Friskie material should reflect that the pupils are the key persons in the assessment and planning process. Professional worker's social pedagogical expertise extends to guidance skills as well as evaluation and assessment competencies i.e. listening to the pupil and utilizing her/his potential. This could only be possible through pedagogical relationship.

There is no common theory of social pedagogy but different approaches to the concept. There is, in fact, a multitude of traditions of social pedagogy having different philosophical starting points and practical aims. Interpretations of the concept vary from coun-

try to country in theory and practice (Gustavsson & Hermansson & Hämäläinen 2003.) According to my interpretation, in socio pedagogical perspective there are four key elements, which are beneficial in illuminating the content of educative and guidance work by the Friskie programme. These elements - working environments - are: group and community, experience/activity/socio cultural animation, every day life and -as a core element- pedagogical relationship and dialogue. The following figure shows basic elements behind the Friskie programme and which social skills are linked to them.



**Figure 1.** Elements of social pedagogical mode of thought and action in the Friskie programme

Social pedagogical way of working comes close to special needs education and student guidance and counselling. Research on special needs education in segregated institutions contributes to a wider understanding of problems in social pedagogical frame of reference (Madsen 2003). Social pedagogy and special needs education have a common final objective to integrate and promote inclusion. According to Komonen & Hämäläinen (2003, 30) principles and educative goal for special needs education is *a skilled worker* and for social pedagogy it is more *a responsible adult*. These disciplines and professional actions complement each other in personal study plan, where professional and life managing objectives for pupil are settled. However, working methods and tools differs.

Bengt Madsen construes that social pedagogy aims at the question of integration into society, and most especially integration problems concerned with *pedagogical* action and functions. Madsen thinks that it is very distinctive and contrary to general pedagogy (Hämäläinen, 139.) Madsen (2003) has analyzed the concepts 'integration' and 'social inclusion' to establish professional dialog and to show how to create communities allowing individuals to live as social participants by playing important roles in social practice. This dichotomy is convenient tool to question the detailed interventions and educational/pedagogical actions, which are put into practice in every day in vocational schools. It is also beneficial to reflect responsibilities and tasks among professionals in school community.

## **INTEGRATION**

Deviance as individual deficit

Intervention directed towards individuals

Dissimilarity is a problem

Resources supporting individuals

Minorities representing special needs

Compensation - past oriented efforts

Development concept of shaping identity

A legal right to human development

Re-integration caused by exclusion

## **INCLUSION**

Deviance as otherness in social context

Intervention directed towards community

Dissimilarity is a resource

Resources supporting Communities

Each person has special needs

Competency - future oriented efforts

Learning concept of social participation

A legal right to citizenship

Avoiding exclusion inside normal institutions

Guidance and counselling has references to identity work and subjectivity as well to 'self-techniques'. Several social structures, which use to support people in building up their own identity, have collapsed and imploded. Each person seems to be left alone in his identity work. It can be assumed that where people used to 'construct themselves' in social interaction, now it is done inside one's own head. In summary of his dissertation Juha Onnismaa (2003) says that in the definitions of counselling, the ideal of exact fact is shifting to personal significance and the presentation of possibilities. When once pro-

professionals were expected to possess a solid sense of reality, they now emphasise the sense of possibility.

## **Discussion**

Reaching adulthood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century increasingly involves weighing up various educational alternatives, planning one's career ahead, and making appropriate choices. To be able to transfer from school to working life and thus to an independent adult life, young people need help and support to achieve this. Personal study plan and pupil counseling are methods to guarantee individual pathways and arrangements. The Friskie programme and its portfolio is a personal document of increasing learning and obtaining a realistic vision as an active citizen.

Guidance and counselling exist as administrative terms and professional practices, but concepts are not truly analysed and theoretically reflected in school student welfare and counselling research. Psychological orientation and special needs education is apparent and both disciplines have solid foundations in vocational student welfare practices. This means that challenges e.g. in integration process and dissimilarity are interpreted as individual/psychological problems and not as resources for reflection in student peer groups and among school professionals. It is urgent to find and create new means in training programs "to get in", to intervene pupil's community, peer groups and learning environments to get pupils at school become more involved and more conscious in their lives. And above all, build a peaceful and safe place to reflect and share questions of active citizenship and enough time to process intentions and meanings.

The Friskie programme itself - with its three comprehensive sections: from education to work, responsible adulthood and active citizenship - is a concrete example of a new pedagogical approach to facilitate social pedagogical guidance and to deal with needs for guided participation and the smooth transition of young people threatened with exclusion.

Juha Hämäläinen emphasizes that social pedagogue as a theoretical discipline suits teachers, youth workers, nurses, psychologists, but does not exclude the opportunity to have in society a professional group of 'social' professions (a teacher, a mentor, a facilitator, a social educator, a social worker, a career advisor, a social pedagogues, et-k) called social pedagogues (2005, 144.) Social pedagogical starting points mean here concrete and visible action in every day school life near pupils. According my interpretation, starting points and goals for multiprofessional work in schools and youth work could be more relevant if professional workers have mutual and shared understanding of what they are gaining and theoretically strengthened view of the content of social pedagogical actions.



Learning materials and tool kits for professional workers are not enough. Social pedagogical actions, guidance and counselling are presumed to have space in a curriculum, in school timetables and everyday routines to strengthen namely the social pedagogical, but also the multi-professional cooperation in vocational schools. All are experts in their own professional branches and may complete in close collaboration the objective to facilitate individual learning and to prevent and alleviate the exclusion and cultural deprivation of under-achieved pupils. Cooperative and coactive school promotes reciprocal learning, participatory culture and creatively facilitate communication and encountering.

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# THE CONCEPT OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP, SOCIAL SKILLS AND YOUTH LIFE STYLES

**Anette Bolin**

Our point of departure is that participation in society provides the skills that are needed to be an active citizen. There are millions of young people between the ages of 15 and 25 living in Europe today. They should enjoy the same rights and opportunities to participate in society as other groups and they should have good living conditions and opportunities for personal development in the broadest possible sense. To encourage development in this direction, most European parliaments have adopted a series of overarching objectives for youth policy which are contained in the EU publication *White Paper on European Youth policy, A New Impetus for European Youth*, 2001.

With the White Paper as the basis, the Member States agreed on overall themes and objectives for Youth policy and proposals for joint measures.

- **Young people's participation**  
Young people should be able to take part in decision-making when it comes to issues that affect them, for example in school or in shaping political decisions in their municipalities.
- **Information for young people**  
Public information should be available to young people in the settings which are typical for them. The objective is to facilitate their participation in society.
- **Voluntary activities among young people**  
More young people should be given the opportunity to participate in voluntary activities. International experience strengthens both those who participate and society as a whole.
- **Greater understanding of young people's situation**  
The overall picture of the situation of young people needs to be strengthened by means of research about young people and through the dissemination of earlier studies. This type of information is valuable for youth policy within the EU as a whole, in individual member states, and in all of the various regions and municipalities.

Using these principles as a frame, we propose that Active citizenship can be defined by pupils themselves as they are working with the Friskie workbook material. Our aim is that the pupils will be able to develop a better understanding of themselves in the context in which they are in, for example in school, and how can they become active citizen by participating in society. The method used is discussions and group/individual practi-

cal tasks. By being more aware of yourself and how your learning of social skills and traditional school subjects, such as maths, English, Swedish etc. might be influenced by outside factors, such as poor school environment, poor teaching etc., pupils will be able to develop strategies for changing their environment as well as changing their own behaviour. By becoming aware of shortcomings in, for example, the school system, pupils will develop an insight into the dynamics between their own learning and the conditions for creating an appropriate learning context so that they will become equipped with the resources necessary to become an active citizens.

### **Some theoretical points of departure when thinking about active citizenship for young people and for ones using the workbook**

The aim of this section is to provide teachers, practitioners and other front line school workers with an insight into our ideas about the interrelations between, youth, youth lifestyles, identities, participation and exclusion which have informed our approach in creating the workbook materials and which, in particular, underpin the construction and content of the section of the workbook that has a focus on active citizenship.

#### **Relevance**

In order to encourage young people to get engaged in activities around active citizenship, it is of great importance that the material that young people are going to use encourages them to make a personal investment. The workbook is not, and should not be seen as 'just another school book'. On the contrary, it must approach youth and lifestyle issues from the perspective of young people and focus on issues that are meaningful to young people and which have an actual impact on their day-to-day lives. Thus, the primary idea underpinning the workbook is to provide pupils with a context for their social skills learning that is relevant to their own lived experiences and into which they can position their own attitudes, values and perspectives. In this way, we aim to make learning social skills a meaningful and relevant task, and to awaken an awareness that social skills can act as a communicative medium across cultural, ethnic and social divides. Further, we believe that by presenting pupils with learning material that is relevant to their own lived experiences, this will enable many of them to make the emotional investment that is so crucial to successful learning outcomes.

Motivating students is central to social skills learning and thus also to the design of learning materials. Research by amongst others, Håkan Jenner (2004), has shown that students are not motivated to learn unless they regard the material they are taught as worth learning. We are not aiming the workbook for the students who fall into the category of motivated and goal-oriented 'high-achievers' who will work hard at learning for instrumental reasons alone. Instead, we are aiming at those students for whom mediocrity or non-achievement are the norm. The task of the teacher/social worker is to convince these young people that there is something worthwhile for them in participating in learning activities. Chambers (1999, 37) explains this challenge in terms of the concept

of ‘relevance’. “*If the teacher is to motivate pupils to learn, then relevance has to be the red thread permeating activities. If the pupils fail to see the relationship between the activity and the world in which they live, then the point of the activity is likely to be lost on them...if pupils do not see the relevance of a subject, the teacher has from the outset a major challenge.*” Our aim, quite simply, is to create learning materials that achieve the relevance crucial to maintaining a learning environment that can motivate those students who are at risk of dropping out of school. We believe that an area of common relevance for young people, irrespective of school achievement, is being young in today’s society. By using themes of youth lifestyles, our aim is to make the workbook sheets on the theme citizenship meaningful for the pupils who will be using them.

The challenge for professionals working with young people in schools and other learning environments is to understand and gain insights into the lives and lifestyles of young people. This requires a delicate balancing act. Whilst it is important for professionals working with young people to draw on their own body of experience about what it is like being young, they must also be aware that whilst, from a determinist perspective, youth is a particular, defined stage in the life process, it is also, from a socio-cultural perspective, a shifting, transient and variable phenomenon. Youth identities, cultures and lifestyles are historical constructs that change over time. Thus, the recollected experiences of youth that practitioners have are, inevitably, going to be qualitatively different from the experiences of the young people they are working with. This requires that practitioners develop a professional reflexivity that, necessarily, draws upon their own experience, but does so in the context of the social and cultural practices and norms of present-day youth. The aim of the workbook is thus to provide education and social work professionals with a set of strategies and structured activities that draw on young people’s own lifestyle experiences and which provide forums for discussion and reflection in which all of the dialogue partners can meet, if not on equal terms, nevertheless in ways in which experiential commonality is central.

### **What does it mean to be young today? Youth and social change**

For many adults, looking nostalgically back on their own teenage years, youth is a stage of life associated with freedom; the first opportunity in life to explore and assert individuality and autonomy. For current generations of young people this association remains true. However, sociologists such as Archer (1995), Reimer (1995) and Layder (1994) point out that the social changes – an intensification of information dissemination, communication, competition and reflexivity – that have taken place over the last thirty or so, have had a significant structural impact on different generational strata. For young people, the stage of life in which they are positioned is one that offers choice and freedom whilst, simultaneously, restricts and constricts those same opportunities. According to Miles (2000), this feeling – being presented by an immensity of opportunities for choice yet constantly being restricted in the ability to make these choices – “*lies at the heart of young people’s experience of social life*”. If this feeling is common to the experience of being young, it is one that is felt particularly acutely by youth who experience other forms of marginalisation (on the grounds of class, race, ethnicity, poverty, sexual prefer-

ence etc.) and social exclusion. The American youth sociologist Donna Gaines, in her investigation of the everyday lives of socially excluded teenagers, observed that many young people are unable to conceive of a positive future and their lives are characterised by apathy and a lack of hope:

*In recent years many American kids have had their dreams taken from them. Their vision has been blocked, unable to move beyond next week, because the world outside is simply too much. .... [they experience] helplessness and hopelessness. Hopeless, because you see no choices. Helpless because you feel that nothing you can do will ever make a difference. You feel powerless and trapped. This makes you feel worthless; you can't defend yourself.* (Gaines 1991, 253–4)

For teenagers who are better socially equipped to take advantage of opportunities for choice, there is also a sense of restriction since, as sociologists such as Jonathon S. Epstein (2002), who conducts research on adolescence and music have pointed out, the choices that they can make and the practices in which they partake are expressed through consumerism and the mass media. Consequently, the experience of youth today is significantly different to that of previous generations. Youth lifestyles and youth identities are dictated by patterns of consumption and consumer tastes and are, thus, a long way away from the sort of resistance associated with the radicalism and powerful assertion of youth groupings and youth subcultures of previous decades (Epstein, 1998). Paradoxically, choice, in its abundance and ubiquity, also functions restrictively since socially excluded youth lack the resources to take advantage of opportunities that are provided, whilst better-equipped young people are denied the opportunities of identity-defining resistance that had previously been afforded to their predecessors.

### **Youth lifestyles and identities**

So far I have used the expressions 'lifestyle' and 'identity' fairly freely and without any need for explanation. This is because we encounter these terms on a daily basis in our work as well as in our leisure-time and have become so familiar with these terms that we regard them as unproblematic and more or less synonymous. However, when working with young people with issues surrounding active participation using the material in the Friskie workbook, it is perhaps worthwhile to pause to reflect a little on what we mean when we use these terms and how we can use them to access and understand the lives of young people.

A lifestyle is a distinctive set of shared patterns of tangible behaviour among people who share some feature of life. Identity is expressed through shared patterns of appearance, consumption, and social practices. This becomes the basis for a separate, common social identity for the participants (Bellah et al 1985, Stebbins, 1997). Lifestyles are never individual attributes or constructions, but are always created in conjunction with others in active negotiation and by the active integration of individuals into lifestyle-specific practices. As the Swedish researcher Thomas Johansson points out, the constant change

in societal and cultural values held by particular social groups is central to the process of the formation of individual identities. Most important of all, lifestyles are less determined by structural and societal conditions than they are by the ways in which an individual's identity relates to those conditions (Johanson & Miegel, 1992). Importantly, we must remember that lifestyles do not exist in isolation from one another and from other 'mainstream' or dominant cultures, but in relation to them. Lifestyles, as Miles (2000) explains, are formed in contrast to dominant cultures and are, in essence, practices through which individuals actively express their identities in relation to their position as regards the dominant culture.

For young people, identities are more intrinsically bound up in lifestyles and the importance of a lifestyle is of greater importance than it is for other social groups. It occupies a central position and, for anyone wanting to work with young people, a knowledge and understanding of the inestimable importance of their lifestyles is essential. Without this knowledge, the generational and social voids that must be crossed by both dialogue partners become insurmountable. Sobel explains the centrality of lifestyle in the lives and identities of young people, arguing that *the creation of a lifestyle itself is a time-intensive activity with a heavy investment of ego. The modern significance of a lifestyle may arise as a solution to the existential problems of boredom, meaninglessness, and lack of control*" (Sobel 1991, 171).

A style is created from a set of symbols, and the difficult task for adults is to understand the symbolic value of styles and actions. Pierre Bourdieu uses the term 'symbolic capital' to explain how something might be of value for some groups/individuals, but not for others. What symbolic value might, for instance, voting in a national election have for some young people? Does it mean that you are tacitly agreeing with the high youth unemployment (as the political parties don't seem to see this as an issue to take that seriously), or does it mean that you want to participate and take responsibility for the community? Some young people adopt a lifestyle which includes global consciousness of the inequality of society worldwide, but does this necessarily encompass inequality at a local level? For example, to protest against the international world economy at an international summit meeting might give more symbolic capital in certain groups than protesting against educational cutbacks in your own municipality. Another example might be that the symbolic value of doing volunteer work in India or at your local church can differ significantly between different groups of young people.

Groups often use symbols to express their own identity. The easiest example to use might be the ways in which football supporters use the colours of their team to communicate that they have a common frame of reference. The same thinking can be also be applied to political parties. Leonard Bernstein uses the term 'elaborate codes' to describe this and 'restricted codes' when identification symbols are more diffuse. For example, a certain ironic way of speaking might be viewed as a sign of "togetherness" in a group. Using different symbols to signal togetherness often provide individuals with a sense of belonging and acceptance. One concept is that an act of violence, for example trashing a bus shelter, might be viewed by most members of the general public as an act

of vandalism, whilst for the young persons taking part in smashing it up, it might be viewed as a symbolic act of solidarity. In using the workbook it will be an important challenge and explore with the young people the symbolic value of participation in, for example, the caring for others, or feelings of responsibility (or the lack of them) for the local community. In society at large, employment is often a significant symbol of being part of society. Thus, one area to consider is the ways in which this affects young people who are at risk of dropping out of school and the ways in which they experience the gloomy future of probably not finding an opportunity to participate in society by paying their taxes and being independent.

### **Young people's lifestyles today: youth and consumption**

How do young people growing up in Europe in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century combat the boredom that Gains (cited above) speaks of and how do they create meaning in their lives? The process of meaning-creation and signification for young people is inextricably caught up in the materialism and consumer culture that has become the primary distinguishing feature of life in late capitalism. The self-identities created by young people are constituted through the consumption of material goods. Indeed, we can perhaps view consumer products as the building blocks from which identities and lifestyles are constructed. Viewed historically, we can see that, today, young people's identity creation is, in many senses, less remarkable than was the case for previous generations since, in creating identities, they participate in the same system of consumption as other groups in society. Whilst the products that are consumed may be more specific to their generation – computer games, mobile phone ring tones, MP3 downloads – the process is essentially the same across society. But consumer artefacts are, in themselves, not inherently meaningful; rather, according to sociologists such as Miller (1987) meaning is derived from the *ways* in which these products are used. It is through the use of consumer products in *active* processes of signification that identities are projected and lifestyles are created. In effect, we can say that lifestyles are constructed *through* consumption. “*Children are ‘consumer socialised’ not only by their parents, but also by their peers. Indeed, for children even as young as seven, research shows that the child is heavily influenced by the consumption patterns, choices and preferences of their peers*” (Miles 2000, 113).

A feature of consumerism that has crossed over into contemporary youth cultures is the speed with which trends, fads and fashions change. Previously, youth lifestyles were easy to identify, define and delineate. Today this is becoming increasingly difficult. Lifestyles, like fashions in clothing and music, change rapidly. What was ‘in’ today is ‘out’ tomorrow. Furthermore, the boundaries between different fashions, tastes and trends are difficult (if not impossible) to identify and the etymology of fashions irrelevant. Indeed, we can with confidence say that cultural inter-pollination is the primary hallmark of contemporary youth lifestyles. Put simply, lifestyles are becoming increasingly less fixed than they were and are, essentially, independent of situational contexts. Featherstone explains these changes in that “*we are moving towards a society without fixed status groups in which the adoption of styles of life (manifest in choice of clothes, leisure activities, consumer goods, bodily dispositions) which are fixed to specific groups have been surpassed*” Featherstone 1991, 83).

Miles points out that, as a result of the fact that young people experience an increasingly extended transition both into employment and adulthood; it undermines their ability to participate in consumerism as a way of life. So, in the end, young people who are at risk of exclusion in school are actually facing the challenge of having to find a lifestyle in a consumer society without the means to participate in that process of consumption since they lack the necessary resources, i.e. money. In Sweden, a youth worker experienced how a group of boys in the suburbs of Gothenburg, all of whom had immigrant backgrounds, bought a 'top-of-the-range' MP3 player collectively and used it for one week each, so that, as they said, they could be cool for at least one week at a time. This is an example of how young people can navigate in the world of consumerism. So, that forces us to address the question, is being a consumer an act of active citizen? This is thus a central area that will feature prominently in the workbook.

### **The value of working life when you are young**

To consume you need money and in Sweden, in common with many other European countries, there has been a rise in youth unemployment during the 1990's. Research has shown that the gap between rich and poor widened and that it was young people who were hit the hardest (Trondmand & Bunar 2001, Miles 2000). In a nationwide research project called *Youth in the Twilight Zone* during the nineties, researchers could conclude that it is a certain group within the wider section of youth who are the ones who are most effected. These youngsters could be called working class young people, but only if by this it is meant young people with immigrant backgrounds and young people with Swedish backgrounds living in the suburbs of the larger cities (Bunar & Trondman 2001).

Anthony Giddens (1991) asserts that everyone in modern society has to select a lifestyle, but that different groups will have different possibilities. Wealth would certainly seem to increase the range of options. According to Giddens, 'Lifestyle' is not only about fancy jobs and conspicuous consumption, though; the term applies to wider choices, behaviours, and (to greater or lesser degrees) attitudes and beliefs. Lifestyles could be said to be like ready-made templates for a narrative of the self. But the choice of ones lifestyle does not predict any particular type of life story. So a lifestyle is more like a genre: whilst movie directors can choose to make a romance, a western, or a horror story, we - as 'directors' of our own life narratives - can choose a metropolitan or a rural lifestyle, a lifestyle focused on success in work, or one centred on clubbing, sport, romance, or sexual conquest. The choices which we make in modern society may be affected by the weight of tradition on the one hand, and a sense of relative freedom on the other. Everyday choices about what to eat, what to wear and who to socialise with, are all decisions which position us as one kind of person and not another. And as Giddens says, "*The more post-traditional the settings in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and remaking*" (1991, 81).



What happens when a large group of young people are denied the possibility to choose a lifestyle which they might want? And how are they effected when, simultaneously, they encounter society's mantra that 'You can be what you want to be, you just have to want it bad enough.' What, in reality, is the possibility of choosing a lifestyle if you have dropped out of school? Maybe the life style you choose is in fact the only one available. The work book sheets will give the opportunity for discussions for example around this notion 'can you choose our own lifestyle no matter if you have a job' But before discussing the reality of choice, I would like pause briefly to look at the concept of 'youth'.

### **Conceptualizing youth**

The term 'youth' is defined in different ways and we are not always in agreement about what it means being young. Young people's experiences are arguably so diverse that it almost becomes meaningless to categorize young people using the all-encompassing term 'youth'. Steven Miles (2000), a British sociologist who writes about young people, suggests however, that "*young people do call upon their lifestyles as a common resources, a breathing space within which they can actively, and at times creatively, cope with the constant uncertainties apparently characteristic of life in a so called 'post-modern' world*" (p.1) Facing unemployment could enhance these feelings of uncertainty.

Sometimes young people are portrayed as risk-taking troublemakers, only motivated by their own rebellious self-interest. That the everyday reality of young people is an expression or a reproduction of the dominant values of society is a fact that, according to Miles (2000), is often neglected. Jonathon S. Epstein (2002) writes that social scientists have long been both intrigued and confused by youth and, not infrequently, seem to define youth as social problem. The two opposite sides of viewing young people is either on the one hand, to define youth as itself a problem or, on the other, to view it as resourceful and creative. What most people can agree on is that the majority of Western societies view young people as the holders of the nation's destiny, which can in part explain the adult world's interest in the 'youth'. Many researchers have pointed out that young people are a barometer, or a seismograph of social change. At the same time, young people might equally be conceptualized as an index of social ills (Miles 2000). Different categories of youth groups have exemplified the media's interest in the phenomenon of 'youth'. In the 1960's it was the hippies, in the 70's it was punk, in the 80's it was rave, and in the 90's it was Generation X. All were movements depicted as being self-centred and having no interest in anything or anybody other than themselves. One interesting group to emerge on the youth scene was 'DIY' an acronym for 'Do It Your Self Feminism'. Basically, the idea is a reinterpretation of the punks do it yourself directive. According to Kearney, "*riot grrrls have adopted the radical political philosophy and practise of separatism in order to liberate themselves from the misogyny, ageism, and, for some, homophobia and racism they experience in their every day life*" (Kearney 2002, 140). But all the same, the criticisms both of the media and indeed of youth researchers, is that they tend to focus on the subordinacy of youth, and focus on sub cultures that have been perceived to be deviant or debased, but also lower down the social ladder due to exclusionary experiences based on class, race, ethnicity and age (Thornton 1997). Miles argues that even if be-

longing to a specific youth sub culture give young people the opportunity to experience the sense of a social reality independent of the adult world (where adults provide the space within which young people can be young) we need to remember that young people's cultural life actively reflects their relationship to dominant power structures. Miles believes that the nature of such structures and their cultural expression have changed to such an extent that, nowadays, the notion of youth lifestyles is potentially more useful than that of youth subcultures. The majority of young people in for example Sweden don't belong explicitly to a distinctive group of young people, but the media is certainly giving the picture of young people being harbingers of moral panic to such an extent that young people's real experienced problems, for example the opportunity to create an ordinary life with somewhere to live and work, are being neglected. Drawing on my own experienced working as a social worker, when asked about the future a majority of the young people I worked with wanted what we would call an ordinary 'Svensson' life. This, for the young people I worked with in a middle sized town in Sweden, meant having a job at the local automobile factory, a flat or preferably a house, and a husband/wife and some children. When using the work book sheets the young people will be able to explore their thought on a realistic future.

### **Exclusion from the symbolic value of belonging to the work force**

Exclusion in any society is a painful experience. Youth unemployment in Europe can be understood as a structural conception of alienation. Epstein (2002) means that in order for alienation to be a structural variable, there must be a discrepancy between the resources of a society and the ability of certain groups to attain those resources. One important factor for young people is how society views their chosen lifestyle. Is the young person's choice included in what is called the 'common' or the 'hegemonic' culture? The 'hegemonic culture' is created by those groups which possesses the greatest power, weight and influence in society (Lalander & Johansson 2002, 1). In Europe you could say that a dominant hegemonic culture is that one of having a lifestyle which makes you financially independent through having a job. To have a job provides both a symbolic, as well as economic belonging to society. The common culture could be described as an expression of the everyday life of the other social groups and classes.

Pierre Bourdieu presents a theory of consumption and consumer lifestyles based on the structure and agency relation. Pivotal to this theory is the term *habitus*, the everyday knowledge or what can be called cultural capital that the individual gleans from her surroundings. He defines the habitus as providing a group with a distinctive framework of social cognition and interpretation. These become the mental structures which individuals carry around in their heads and which enable them to deal with the world. Bourdieu believes that the consumer is not merely a product of social structures. He has created

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<sup>1</sup> *The concept of **hegemony** is crucial to Gramsci's, a Italian academic, thinking and embodies his most important legacy. By 'ideological hegemony' Gramsci means the process whereby a dominant class contrives to retain political power by manipulating public opinion, creating what Gramsci refers to as the 'popular consensus'.*

four categories of capital as analytical instruments to understand people's actions and thoughts; cultural capital, economic capital, symbolic capital and social capital. Cultural capital which, of the four, has been the type of capital that has received the most academic attention, is seen by Bourdieu as the embodiment of the cultural disposition and sensibilities which structure group behaviour, for example language and cultural taste – whether it be football, the fine arts etc. He suggests that habitus is in fact instigated from early childhood through interaction with family and other various social agents. My own belief is that since young people have different cultural frames to relate to, they will develop their “own” habitus which is more greatly influenced by experience with peers than with family members. For example, how will a young person's cultural identity be developed when she or he is taking part in a fifth program for young people who are unemployed without having ever been able to get a job? Even if her family culture is that work is important for receiving respectability in society, the young woman's peers' culture is that work is not important for who you are because it is your style that shows who you are. But, given a choice, she and her peers might say that work is important if they only knew it was possible for them to actually get a job. Economic capital includes the financial possibilities the young person has while symbolic capital is defined by how other people value things, actions etc. For example, the symbolic value of being a good local hip hop artist who has dropped out of school might vary depending on the context. When you are applying for a job in a restaurant it might not give you any symbolic value, but if you apply for a job in a record shop it just might. Clothes are also often distinctive symbolic value artefacts. You are what you wear. Or, perhaps, if you believe that we live in a consumer society, you are what you buy. Social capital includes, for example who your family knows, whether any family friends can help you to find a job and help to extend social contacts etc. In order to understand lifestyles in contemporary Western societies, one must understand the dynamic relationship between the individual and society. Miles gives as an example that young people in general and those pursuing criminal careers in particular, are dismissive of the support provided by youth training schemes because they simply don't provide them with the resources they need to maintain the sort of lifestyle they want and have become accustomed to through the opportunities provided by criminal activities and the from the escape that can be found through drug culture. It is important to remember that lifestyle is about identity, attitudes and beliefs. It is the symbolic value of being together. Attitudes towards work if you are young and unemployed can be viewed in the same way in that they provide a feeling of identity through belonging to an excluded group in society. If you are not welcome as a citizen in society why bother? And if you cannot become economically independent and rent your own home on the income you get from the youth project, why bother to enrol in the first place?

Lundahl and Hansson (2002), two Swedish youth researchers, conclude that, during the nineties, temporary youth projects became the common approach to handle a structural problem with unemployment on an individual level. They argue that two thirds of the projects (in a nationwide survey) focused on social upbringing and integration, by keeping the young people occupied and in this way trying to prevent social exclusion and

criminality. Only one fifth of the projects focused on the transition from education to work. Lundahl and Hansson conclude that middle class young people most frequently viewed such projects as a place to pass time before they moved on. For the young people who had had contact with social services, the participation in project seemed to reinforce that it was because of individual deficiency that they were unemployed, and not the result of any structural reasons. In their view those projects that tried to change young people's 'heads' (by focusing on personal development) instead of giving skills, were the least successful. So, one question is, is it that the adult world, with all the best intentions, is nevertheless trying, via youth projects directing young people towards an lifestyle - the lifestyle of a citizen who is working, who can create the lifestyle they want due to economical resources - that, in fact, the young person herself is not interested in because the young people have seen through this façade. They know that the chances of getting a reasonable job which they can support themselves from, is often virtually nil. The jobs that are around are often taken by middle class youth, or youth who have finished school with good grades. In a way, it seems that we are cheating socially vulnerable young people by pretending we are offering a route into society because, in reality, what we are offering instead is a route into exclusion by being enrolled in a "project". Maybe we need to change our conception from the idea that *failing education and the failure to get a job depends on the pupil's failing personal development* to one which recognises that *failing education and the failure to get a job is in fact rooted in the failure of the educational system and in society generally*. This in turn demands that education needs to change and that more work opportunities need to be created in society.

## **Practical ideas for using the workbook**

### **Dialogue is necessary**

To manage to make the workbook meaningful for pupils, the teachers/social pedagogues / social workers etc. need to be able to create an atmosphere in which dialogues can take place. In this perspective we are inspired by the work of Paulo Freire (1921 - 1997), the Brazilian educationalist, who is known to have made considerable impact on the development of educational practice – both as regards informal education as well as school-based and popular education. Our underpinning idea is that this particular form of educational practice is very much suited for the pupils who are not high achievers in school. The main principles derived from this perspective are summarised in the following section. The aim is to work with:

**Dialogue** – Working with the workbook can take place in a more informal setting, which is a common approach used by schools when working with pupils who are at risk of dropping out. It can either be in a more informal setting in school, or at a workplace. Informal education is a dialogical (or conversational) rather than a curriculum based form of learning. Paulo Freire's dialogue involves respect. It should not involve one person acting **on** another, but rather people working with each other. This aspect of learning can be seen as the teacher and pupils can interact on the same level, the formal

teacher / social worker is also the pupil whilst the pupil also becomes the teacher/social worker.

**Naming the world** – it is of great significance for the teacher/social worker to help the pupil to have a voice. Often, pupils are used to not having a voice – or at least one that is listened to – and instead their frame of reference can be that they are not included in discussions in school. By naming the world the pupils will develop a consciousness. This can be a consciousness that is understood to have the power to transform reality in such a way that the pupil might participate in school and even indeed demand an education that is in fact relevant to their more general active participation in society. This notion is arguably of greatest value.

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## **MENTORING AS METHOD**

### **Using mentoring as a means to engage with disaffected young people as part of delivering the Friskie workbook programme**

**Grahame Snelling**

When Ulysses entrusted his best friend Mentor with the task of preparing his son to succeed him as the King of Ithaca, little did he realise, if he had been a real character, that he was donating his friend's name to an important method of training and supporting people in a formative stage of their life. Mentor had to be a father, a master, a model a reliable counsellor and instructor so that Telemachus could grow up to be a wise and truthful king. Mentoring firstly developed in the modern age in the United States before being applied to a wide range of social learning, treatment and rehabilitation programmes in Europe (The Coaching and Mentoring Network, 2006). It also has application in the commercial and industrial sector since it provides an opportunity for individual staff to realise their personal goals which in turn contributes to achieving company targets. Typically mentoring is now intended to be a one to one relationship in which the mentor invests time, knowledge and personal effort to help the mentee reach their potential as person. It also a means of providing life skills training and emotional support, and as such is a significant means of supporting young people who are engaged in work to complete the Friskie workbook.

The Admovere Project, a partner in the Friskie project, was established in Kingston upon Thames, UK, 1998 with the aim of providing alternative education, work experience and mentoring support to young people who were not attending school, in public care or taking part in offending and risk taking behaviour. The mentoring component was designed to ensure that there was a trained trusted adult volunteer available for each programme member who could offer informal support and encouragement especially when the events in their lives were not going according to plan or causing them distress. Admovere staff designed a series of training and support programmes for mentors and over the last eight years the project has signed up more than 100 volunteer mentors who were all adults, sympathetic to the aims of the project and keen to offer something to their local community.

The Friskie project required that all partners contributed to the overall development of the workbook and offered suggestions about how best to engage young people in the process of completing the work. Admovere staff therefore introduced partners to the idea of mentoring as a very successful intervention. This chapter of the handbook describes in simple terms how to establish and support a mentoring scheme which will aim to produce improved outcomes for young people in terms of achieving economic well being.

## **Deciding to develop a mentoring programme**

In Britain the idea of mentoring is now well established as a means of training and supporting staff in a wide range of public and private organisations, as well as a means of providing support to vulnerable people additional to that provided by social workers, teachers etc. The first question for any organisation working with vulnerable young people is therefore to ask whether there is already a traditional method of supporting them that appears to work well. There then follows a set of further questions about the model of support provided. Does the method include weekly or fortnightly meetings on a one to one basis to review the week's activities? Is the process of supporting the young person linked to compliance with specific behavioural requirements? Is the one to one support already provided by a social work, education or pedagogical professional? Are the agendas for such meetings set by the professionals in order to address a particular issue?

The answers to these questions will determine whether there is scope to develop a new mentoring project. Policy makers should then note that the essential qualities of a mentoring scheme are that:

- Participation by young people is voluntary
- The best mentors are adult volunteers recruited because they want to make a positive contribution to their community
- Managers are clear about whether it is a service-led or young people-led scheme
- The scheme has a clear purpose
- There is the capacity to develop an effective training programme and provide ongoing support to mentors

For the Friskie project, mentoring should complement the work that is being done by professionals in terms of direct teaching and group work and it will be essential that mentors understand both the timing of the course and the style of delivery.

## **Setting up a mentoring scheme**

Once the decision has been taken that local conditions and circumstances are right for the development of a scheme, managers will have to agree the outline of the programme. They must:

- Select the client group, taking consideration of age and ability
- Take account of young people's views about whether mentoring is the right approach
- Understand the difference between 'befriending' and 'competency-focussed' methods
- Understand the challenges involved in supporting adults to maintain productive relationships with young people who present challenging behaviour



A key aspect of service planning is appreciating whether the scheme is simply about befriending young people, providing them with alternative adult role models of stability and reliability as compared with their own life experiences to date, or whether it is designed to introduce and nurture a range of specific skills that will enable individuals to reach higher goals. Many mentoring schemes will aim to maintain a balance between the two models, but in order to support the Friskie workbook the emphasis should be on building up competencies and life skills.

The overall aims of a mentoring project to support the Friskie workbook should therefore be to:

- Increase the number of adult volunteers in the community
- Ensure all participants enter education employment or training
- Aim to increase levels of literacy and numeracy (where possible)
- Improve the level of young people's participation in community projects
- Reduce the likelihood of young people offending

To ensure that the mentoring programme is established successfully it will be important to draw up an action plan which focuses on the following topics which are examined in more detail below:

- Recruitment and selection of mentors
- Training and on-going support for mentors
- Recording and reviewing activity
- Selecting mentees and matching them to mentors
- Linking Friskie topics with mentoring activity
- Target length of mentoring programmes
- Evaluation

### **Recruitment and selection of mentors**

Managers should identify their target group by identifying the minimum age and the characteristics of those who will best meet project requirements. For existing schemes this will be based on previous experience of what works best and which type of mentors achieve the best results in terms of maintaining contact and producing improved outcomes for young people. For example, recent (2005) research by the English and Welsh Youth Justice Board into mentoring programmes designed to tackle offending behaviour show that female mentors were more likely to maintain relationships than males, but the majority of mentees were male (St. John-Roberts et al. 2005). Each project should be aware of its potential client group when targeting adults to become mentors and therefore take account of age, gender and ethnicity to ensure the widest range of possible mentors that will match mentee need.

It is recommended that there is an age differential of at least 5 years but each project will select its own criteria for matching based on its own understanding of its cultural and gender context. This will also determine the local recruitment strategy since groups representing or supporting ethnic minority groups can be a good source of potential mentors.

The YJB research indicated that for projects starting up as well as those well established the best methods of recruiting mentors are through local newspaper advertising or editorials, through volunteer bureaux, displays and presentations at public events. Less effective were national newspaper advertising and local radio. The YJB's research suggested that the personal knowledge of mentoring projects through friends, families and work colleagues was also a significant source of recruits.

Each project should draw up a brief job description to clarify the key tasks involved in developing and maintaining a mentoring relationship, setting out clearly expectations regarding training, supervision and recording. Alongside this should be a brief person specification setting out the key qualities of patience, tolerance, consistency, trust and honesty that underpin a supportive relationship of this kind.

Not all applicants can become mentors and it is important to develop robust vetting procedures to ensure that unsuitable people are not recruited and trained and allowed unsupervised access to vulnerable young people. Managers will need to ensure that all applicants complete an application form which captures both personal data and a statement as to why the applicant wishes to be considered as a mentor. Previous life experience which resembles that of the potential mentee should not be a barrier provided that there is sufficient evidence that the applicant has worked through all the issues involved and can make a safe and valuable contribution. Many young people find the street credibility of such people attractive and the applicant, if accepted, will need training and support to maintain appropriate personal boundaries.

Following submission of the application form there should be an interview process, which could involve young people who have previously enjoyed a positive mentoring relationship. The aim of this based on a standard set of questions will be to go into more depth about the personal history and motivation of the applicant, enabling the production of an individual profile to assess suitability against the written person specification. It will also be necessary to undertake any such statutory police checks as required by the parent organisation or the law of the country. References should be obtained from at least two people who know of the applicant preferably in both a personal and professional capacity.

If the applicant passes all these tests they can then be invited to join the training course.

## **Training for mentors**

It is best if training follows on quickly from the initial selection process. Experience suggests that delay will result in potential mentors leaving the scheme. The training programme should reflect a mixture of theoretical sessions as well as practical sessions, and can be delivered over a number of weeks or intensively over a weekend. The main advantage of a weekend course is that it enables the training to be completed quickly but the disadvantage is that potential mentors sometimes need time to reflect on what they have learnt and the longer time scale tests their motivation (Admovere offers training courses comprising weekly 2 hour sessions which last up to 12 weeks). It is best to offer a range of training options if this is possible or agree a compromise of one whole day at the weekend and 4 or 5 weekly sessions enabling the training to be completed within about a month.

The training must include sessions relating to:

- What is mentoring and the mentoring relationship
- The purpose of the scheme
- Safe working practice and child protection procedures
- How to develop and maintain relationships
- Being consistent and the importance of commitment
- Valuing diversity and promoting equality
- Dealing with challenging or negative behaviour

In addition and according to the type of scheme being planned, trainee mentors will also need to learn about:

- The work of other agencies
- The youth justice system
- Children in public care
- Disability
- Teaching life skills and promoting literacy and numeracy in informal settings

Practical sessions where trainee mentors can role play introductions, sustaining relationships and ending them should also be fitted into the course.

The course is best planned and delivered by a professional who has an appropriate qualification in adult learning, but the scheme manager and those staff responsible for providing support and supervision should also take part both to introduce themselves and offer practical tips and hints about best practice. Staff from partner organisations should be invited to speak so that mentors can learn about their work at first hand. Young people who have been mentees can also provide very useful input.

Ideally the course should consist of taught sessions supported by the preparation of portfolios that enable mentors to evidence private research into key topics and what they have learnt. Admovere's training courses follow a national Open College Network model which is accredited to a nationally recognised level. This meant that mentors could evidence their competence to practice if they joined another project.

Successful completion of the course should therefore depend upon a minimum level of attendance at training sessions, completion of a portfolio of evidence to a satisfactory level and an agreed number of sessions of observed practice (generally in a role play setting)

Following matching (see below) mentors should be provided with ongoing support. Admovere offers monthly group supervision sessions facilitated by the project manager which allowed mentors to discuss issues of concern or recognise achievements. The aim of these sessions is to provide practical advice and support as necessary to help the mentor perform their task better, but also to help mentors deal with any personal issues that may arise. Other models of support include peer supervision where mentors are paired up to 'buddy' each other and provide mutual support or the manager providing a series of one to one meetings on a regular basis. The latter model is quite intensive and takes up a good deal of management time however. In addition all mentors meeting with young people away from regular office bases and outside office hours should be provided with an emergency contact point that is always available to them.

### **Selecting mentees and matching them with mentors**

How mentees are selected for nomination for a mentor will depend on the nature of the relationship that the project has with the young people who are its members, attendees or clients. The project may be required by law to meet with the young person (e.g. as part of a court order or as part of a compulsory education project) or the young person may choose to join the project (through college or youth club). Mentoring is best offered as one of a range of interventions since it works best when the relationship between the young person and the mentor is based on a voluntary agreement. This is not to say that mentoring is not appropriate within a compulsory relationship but the mentor in these cases will need to be very skilled at enabling the young person to appreciate the potential quality of the relationship. In addition, for each potential mentee there should be adequate referral information and a risk assessment carried out to determine their suitability for the programme as it is constructed, especially as it is likely that the mentor will meet with their mentee out of office hours and away from the office base

If based on the criteria set out above mentoring is selected as a method of supporting the delivery of the Friskie workbook in an effective manner, then it is recommended that all course participants are offered the option of a mentor and the project must therefore ensure that there is sufficient capacity. Since it is likely that Friskie will be delivered to small groups of marginalized young people it is probable that sufficient mentors will normally be available.

Matching mentors to mentees is an art and not a science. There are two stages to the process. Firstly potential mentees who have signed up for the programme and have been briefed about what having a mentor may mean and how it can help and support them at this time can be asked about their mentor preferences in terms of age, gender, employment background, interests etc. It will not always be possible to accommodate their wishes and the scheme manager may also consider that the expressed preferences are not appropriate based on referral information. Conversely the manager will have formulated a view about the strengths and weaknesses of individual mentors and by a process of comparing expressed preferences, mentor characteristics and risk factors identify potential matches.

The second part of the process is the matching meeting which is brokered by the scheme manager. The mentor and mentee are introduced and are left alone for a few minutes to check out whether they feel they can establish a relationship. The manager returns and helps the pair to negotiate meeting arrangements and identify the potential activities they will undertake together. There is still scope to change arrangements at a later date and it remains the responsibility of the manager to monitor with care the early stages of each relationship.

If the process of matching goes smoothly the mentor and mentee are then able to agree their own plans to meet up and plan a series of shared activities over an agreed period of time.

### **Recording and reviewing**

The initial contract meeting will identify a range of activities that the mentor and mentee can agree on. These may include taking part in or watching sports, going to the theatre or cinema, attending concerts, going for walks, meeting for coffee, doing home improvements etc. The first meeting will also include some discussion about topics to address: e.g. applying for work, relationships at work or school, planning leisure activities, setting up home, strategies to keep out of trouble and managing anger and frustration etc. If the project is to be concerned with promoting literacy and numeracy it will be essential to help the mentor prepare in advance simple exercise to complete with the mentee.

The contract meeting may identify a number of specific targets which relate to the young person and their particular situation. Clayden and Stein in researching leaving care mentoring projects in the UK have identified two dimensions to the purpose of mentoring (Clayden and Stein, 2006). They describe these as ‘instrumental’ – linked to hard outcomes such as getting a job and keeping it and ‘expressive’ linked to soft outcomes such as personal development. They argue that one dimension may lead to another and young people may move in any direction along the continuum between the two. This analysis is useful because it can help to shape the purpose of an individual mentoring relationship.

Mentors should be required to keep a record of what activity they have been involved in with the mentee, where they went and for how long, keeping a note of what happened and what was discussed. Most projects will prepare a pro-forma which guides the mentor in their recording and is available for inspection at regular intervals by the manager or supervisor. Mentors should be encouraged to note changes in attitude or behaviour (for better or worse), and particular achievements relative to the instrumental or expressive dimensions described above. Above all the recording should help to show how young people are being helped to achieve what in the UK are the government’s key objectives for children (Every Child Matters, 2003) The Every Child Matters agenda states that children and young people should:

- Stay safe
- Keep healthy
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

At regular intervals the manager should meet with the mentor and mentee on an individual basis to review how the mentoring relationship is progressing (This is separate from the regular ongoing support which is more concerned with operational aspects of the work). Ideally this should take place at a maximum every six months in order that an assessment of progress against targets can be made using the agreed framework. The review process also allows the manager to assess whether the mentor is making the contribution to the mentoring relationship that is envisaged by the scheme, suggesting variations to the pattern of activities if necessary.

### **The Friskie workbook and mentoring**

The purpose of this handbook is to assist trainers to make the best use of the Friskie workbook and the author of this chapter believes that enabling young people to access a regular mentoring relationship will provide an additional and beneficial dimension to the course. However it will only be fully effective if the mentor is briefed about the course and how it is timetabled so that they can develop further the issues raised by the exercises at the appropriate time. In some cases it may be appropriate to encourage mentors

to assist mentees in the completion of specific exercises or research projects linked to workbook topics. Clearly this approach will load additional responsibility onto the mentor and some may not be able to give the time nor themselves possess the necessary skills to assist young people.

However, all mentors should be given a synopsis of the Friskie workbook so that they are familiar with its contents and can use their own discretion and imagination to weave the key themes into their sessions with young people.

### **How long should the mentoring relationship last?**

The question of length is complex because it involves asking questions of the mentor's availability and motivation, the young person's wishes and feelings and what seems professionally correct either in a general sense or in particular cases. The project may itself establish rules that are designed to put limits on relationships or provide realistic time-scales in which to aim to achieve agreed targets. In general Admovere has asked for a twelve month commitment from mentors but this includes time for recruitment, screening activity and training. Therefore in practical terms the length of time a mentor may be in contact with a mentee can in some cases be no more than six months. With a two-weekly schedule this means about 10 to 12 meetings, and in many cases this may well be sufficient to offer the young person sufficient opportunity to spend some quality time with an adult who is not a parent or authority figure.

Some relationships may fail after just a couple of sessions whilst others may be sustained over a period of a year or more. It is very much for the scheme manager to keep alert to relationships that appear to be keeping going only out of a sense of duty, whilst they may also recognise that some relationships have blossomed into a deeper friendship which, if appropriate, can be allowed to develop and grow outside of the scheme. Better and more objective measures of success should however be derived from a robust evaluation scheme that should underpin the work of the whole mentoring project.

### **Evaluation systems**

As already discussed each mentoring project will have its own purpose clearly set out in its terms of reference and so will have clear indicators of success. Overall each project should be aiming to produce better outcomes for young people whatever their circumstances but the specific target group involved will generate more detailed indicators. For example a project working with young offenders would expect to see reductions in the level of offending and anti-social behaviour as a result of engaging young people in mentoring, whilst a social and life skills project, similar to Friskie would anticipate improvements in the educational, employment or training status of young people referred to the scheme. Indicators of success in this case would include young people obtaining

employment or a training place, improved attendance or sustaining work for longer periods.

Establishing an evaluation system should take place at the same time as the project is being set up. The project should identify baseline data, relative to its purpose, about its client group (collectively or individually) to provide an objective measure against which to plot improvement and successful outcomes. Referral information will be a rich source of information and it is best to set up a computerised database to record levels of achievement and participation to date, as well as specific characteristics that may have a bearing on successful completion of a mentoring relationship. These will include gender, ethnicity, and disability, physical or mental health, offending history, a history of being in public care or being homeless.

The database should also record contact arrangements, successfully completed mentoring sessions, availability of recorded information, and the outcome of reviews. This is a record of the process of delivering the service. The database should also record information about achievements relative to the agreed targets, and most importantly space for the young person's views to be recorded. Whilst it is to be hoped that the methodology of evaluation can be kept quite simple, suitably robust systems do require an investment of time and software, the cost of which must be factored in when establishing the scheme.

Mentoring can often produce high levels of satisfaction amongst young people. Clayden and Stein suggest that 93% of care leavers in their survey had some positive outcomes from their mentoring relationship and 75% claimed to have achieved their original goals (Clayden and Stein, 2006). Such data is important in supporting bids to set up any such schemes in the future, although recent research by the Youth Justice Board in the UK suggests that mentoring may not be as effective with young offenders as had been hoped. The research questioned its effectiveness on the basis that many young people did not wish to co-operate, the average number of sessions was only 8 and the input made little difference in preventing re-offending when compared with groups who had not benefited from mentoring (St. James-Roberts et al. 2005)

## **Conclusion**

Mentoring as a method of supporting marginalised young people is a well proven formula despite the doubts recently cast on its effectiveness in tackling offending behaviour. The key to a successful mentoring relationship is the extent to which the young person and their mentor feel a personal bond of commitment to each other, and the relevance of the relationship to the situation that the young person finds themselves in (Leason, 2006). A voluntary relationship is more likely to be successful than one that is based on a legal contract (i.e. as part of a court ordered community sentence). Where mentoring is offered as part of completing the Friskie workbook or as an element to any social skills programme built around the concepts developed by the Friskie project, there



should be a strong emphasis on early preparation of the young person in order that s/he can appreciate the benefits. The best people to let other young people know how it can help will be young people who have already experienced a successful mentoring relationship.

The aim of this chapter has been to identify the key stages in setting up a mentoring project to support the implementation of the Friskie workbook and method of delivering a social and life skills programme within a social education setting. It has not attempted to provide a theoretical basis for mentoring but refers to recent research into best practice with young offenders and what works well with young people in public care. Mentoring is also a very useful way of involving adults who wish to make a community contribution and a further dimension to the evaluation process could be to plot changes in an adult mentor's life resulting from their involvement. However for the purpose of this chapter, this is a stage too far at this time.

## **A LEARNING PROCESS TAKES PLACE WITHIN A SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP**

**Elsebeth Fog**

When working with the Friskie workbook together with young persons at risk, it is important to bear in mind that they might be particularly vulnerable because they have experienced their the school situation differently from so-called 'normal youth' and they carry with them previous experiences of the expectations placed upon them into this new learning situation. In order to create space for the individual, it is important to listen to the young person's own story in order to discover how their background influences their cognitive and emotional construction of meaning. How was it generated in the social context in which they were brought up and socialized? What values and meanings did they internalize? How do these values and meanings from their former experiences equate with their current life experience and what suggestions do they have about what is to be done? Kierkegaard (1859/1964) reminds us that in order to succeed in helping or guiding a person to a certain place it is necessary first to find her where she is and to use this as an initial starting point.

However, it is not always as simple as that because often people do not want to be helped or guided or they do not want to move from a place of safety to one that is unknown and where they have no knowledge about the expectations that will be placed upon them and where the new patterns of behaviour that they might have to learn. Another reason that people do not want to be helped is the fear of change. Lucas (1966), for example has suggested that it is not a lack of knowledge per se, but rather a fear of putting such knowledge to work that causes uncertainty and reluctance (Lucas 1966). If a person accepts a helping situation this brings with it the tacit requirement that they also have to acknowledge their weakness, to reveal who they really are, and to live with the consequences of what they have done. To show trust is to place oneself in a position of vulnerability (Lucas 1966). The young people we are working with in supporting them in their learning processes are likely to have internalized the image of experiences from the previously unsuccessful situations they have been through and indeed many may have developed what Paulo Freire calls a "*fear of freedom*" (Freire 1993, 29).

Keith Lucas (1966) reminds us that all forms of helping take place within a relationship and that a relationship is always bi-directional. When you receive help you are also allowing another person to enter into your own private sphere. You have to share your understandings, thoughts and feelings in order to enable the other person to be able to give you advice, so as to be able ultimately to regain control and power over your life. Risks have to be taken and the person must enter unknown territory. This means that it is necessary to relinquish the security of well known situations and cross the border to the unknown where codes of behave might be different and where you do not know what you might learn and how this learning process may change you. It is this sense of

the fear of change that can hinder the process of change itself. It is therefore vital that the helping situation is built on respect for differences and develops into a positive relationship that permits both positive choices but also permits resistance. Hence we arrive at the helping paradox; the person who is being helped must be given the freedom resist and fight against the helping situation before she/he can be helped. We need more help dealing with our negative feelings than with those that are positive. Thus the supporting relationship must be centred entirely on the interests of the individual who is in receipt of help. Helping must deal with real things, however unpleasant they may be. According to Lucas, helping “*must be based in trust; on the belief that man can be helped, however wayward he may seem.*” (Lucas, 158)

If we as social pedagogues, teachers, social workers or mentors want young people to be involved in their learning process it is important that we support them by helping them to gain access to relevant information so that they can participate in the planning process. The different sheets in the workbook can form an appropriate point of departure whilst planning for the future must start in the young person’s own opinion of the current situation, the choices that have to be made and the teaching and learning resources that are needed to handle everyday practice viewed from their perspective. The task of the social pedagogue/social educator, teacher or social worker is to link such information together and help the young person to create an individual learning plan. Indeed, such a plan could well form the start of the young person’s portfolio. The next step is to translate the individual learning plan into a curriculum containing the instructions and resources that are needed, methods of structuring the learning situation as well as suitable points of entry.

When evaluating a process both during the planning stages and later on in time, it is important to talk about the previous decisions that have been taken in the young person’s life and the ways that the young person acted in her own particular socio-cultural context. Questions that need to be addressed are the current consequences now and future development. The different sheets in the workbook can serve to create a structure for the conversation so that space is created for the young person to ventilate experiences and disappointments and to describe the lessons they have learned – good or bad – from these experiences. Such conversations can provide a hint about the young person’s motivation, learning needs, suitable points of departure for learning, and ways in which realistic plans can be made and the resources that such plans demand.

Consequently it is important to take into consideration both the explicitly articulated and the tacit reasons for the young person wanting to come to the school or the group. Why and how did the young person come? What does she/he know about what you are offering? Was she/he convinced, manipulated, coerced or did she/he want to change her/his way of living and therefore make an individual choice? Is the young person ready to expose her/himself to a group or does she/he need to be taken care of individually? Questions to be raised and talked about include the following; Was she/he referred through mentorship, social services, school, parents or did she/he come for-

ward on their own and ask for help? Is she/he really motivated to participate individually or in a group or what can be expected about patterns of participation? Does she/he feel that she/he belongs to a group like this? Is she/he participating voluntarily and does she/he experience her/himself as a legitimate member who is both concerned and involved? Questions such as these provide a hint about the amount of consideration and sensitivity that is needed in order to learn to know the young person so as to create appropriate motivational incentives that can facilitate cooperation with you and with other members of the group. According to Lave and Wenger, newcomers are caught in a dilemma.” (Lave and Wenger 2000, 33)

This means that, when working with the sheets of the workbook either with an individual or in the group, it is important to listen to and share the narratives and examples that illustrate the young person’s reaction which is built on experiences of the subject under discussion, but which also function as a meta-communication about what is said. It is thus necessary to try to find the hidden story that frames and provides the background for what is told and how the young person is influenced by the tacit presumptions that function as the active background embedded in culture, norms and value systems. Such background narratives might, for example, be about how living in a poor area didn’t provide opportunities to go to a good school or for resisting the criminality that can be part of young people’s everyday lives in such areas (Fog 2005). The narratives can also shed new light on the young person’s resources and creative survival patterns that might otherwise have appeared as destructive, as well as on actions that now have to be transformed by focusing on how he or she made use of them and on how she can use them in different activity systems. This in turn might provide a point of departure into unknown zones of activity where the young person has to learn new patterns of learning behaviour or gain the tools so he or she can be empowered and continue to make progress on her own (Rogoff 1993). Doing something and communicating about what and why this is being done in learning or other activity situations provides opportunities to see other sides of the individual’s capacity and thereby the opportunities for helping to develop individual portfolios.

### **Learning as a collective activity**

Learning in a group can be seen as a collective activity and, from this perspective, learning can be seen as an integral part of people’s social practice and being. According to Engeström (1987) all forms of transition involve the development of knowledge and skills understood as transformation, rather than mere application or use of something that has been acquired elsewhere. Things that are transferred are not packages of knowledge and skills that remain intact, but rather the very process of such transfer involves active interpretation, modification and reconstruction of the skills and knowledge to be transferred. Learning in a modern school or workplace also involves the acquisition of knowledge which may or may not be available in the ‘communities of practice’ in which people find themselves and where the learning curriculum is essentially situated.

According to Lave and Wenger (1999, 24–25) it is important to distinguish between a learning curriculum and a teaching curriculum in order to understand the role of the teacher. A learning curriculum consists of situated opportunities (thus including exemplars of various sorts often thought of as ‘goals’,) for the improvisational development of new practice (Lave 1989 in Lave and Wenger 1999) A learning curriculum is a field of learning resources in everyday practice viewed from the *perspective of learners*. A teaching curriculum, by contrast, is constructed for the instruction of newcomers. When a teaching curriculum supplies – and thereby limits – structuring resources for learning, the meaning of what is learned (and control access to it, both in its peripheral forms and its subsequently more complex and intensified though possibly more fragmented forms) is mediated through the instructor’s participation, via an external view of what knowing entails. The learning curriculum in didactic situations, then, evolves out of participation in a specific community of practice engendered by pedagogical relations and by a prescriptive view of the target practice as a subject matter, as well as out of the many and various relations that tie participants to their own and other institutions. A learning curriculum is essentially situated. It is not something that can be considered in isolation, manipulated in arbitrary didactic terms, or analyzed apart from the social relations that shape legitimate peripheral participation. A learning curriculum is thus characteristic of a community.

According to Lave and Wenger (1999, 23) the term community does not imply some primordial culture-sharing entity. Their starting point is that members who have different interests make diverse contributions to activity and hold varied viewpoints and that their participation at multiple levels is entailed in membership of a community of practice. The cultural contexts where the young person learns to read the situation and hopefully also from the reaction that is induced, may include many dimensions of diversity, such as age, ethnicity/race, gender, geographical location or community, language, sexual orientation, spiritual/religious beliefs, socioeconomic situation and trauma. The term community does not necessarily imply co-presence, a well-defined or identifiable group or socially visible boundaries. Rather, it implies participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings about what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for the community.

### **The role of the facilitator in a group**

The principal role of the facilitator is both to create a trustworthy atmosphere that motivates and gives space for the individual, and to provide a safe place where the pupils are encouraged and feel safe enough to share and explore their thoughts, feelings, conception of meanings, behaviour and the skills that they want to learn in order to enable them to make decisions for themselves and share a collective responsibility – within the group – for ensuing outcomes. In order to understand the composition of the group, it is important, at an initial stage, to ascertain the nature of the groups’ lifestyles, forms of life, cultural and religious allegiances and what the young people have learned from participating in the communities of practices in which they were socialised.

Each group member's contribution to this process is equally valid and it is important that the young persons are invited and motivated to participate in the planning process, which means setting up a program and creating the rules and ethical principle for the group. For example, one such rule might be that you don't talk to others outside the group about what is discussed in the group – so no gossiping! It is also important to be sensitive to and develop an awareness of the possibility that different topics in the workbook that might be sensitive subjects in the group and to be accommodating in helping the young people to talk about such subjects. For some young people it might be difficult to talk about their family situation, whilst others might carry secrets related to abuse or criminality and how such experiences have impacted on other situations. The consequence of this is that the learning process is essentially two parallel processes where both the social pedagogue/social educator/social worker/teacher/mentor and the young person are both learners and educators in the process of exploring the situations that might have created problems. The group members are co-creators by sharing their experiences. Through the sharing of experiences, important factors become apparent and can provide help in understanding behavioural choices and in discovering meaning.

The power dimension in the exclusion of young people, such as for example in the case of those young people who are banished to a remote place where they have difficulties in getting into the labour market, must also be explored. This is done in a process where the social pedagogue and the young person or the members of the group engage in translating prior thinking into terms that can help them to engage more easily in new situations. The subject to be explored might be the wider questions of positive and negative social capital or how the young person's life is influenced by institutions, the reasons underpinning this and how to diminish suspicions of professionals (Fog 2005). One method of tackling this is to help the group members to focus on the organisational context of the school and the workplace, as well as organisational practices which might result in the construction of new knowledge. This can provide a new understanding about the structure of what is experienced as structural oppression, but additionally, it also provides knowledge about the types of skills needed to navigate oneself through the system. Consequently, by gaining an awareness of individual rights and knowledge of how the system functions, the young person can change her/his identity from that of a dependent client to an active consumer of services.

As a facilitator, it is important to work from a multicultural perspective and to be aware of cultural intentionality, something demonstrated by the multitude of possible responses to any client issue that can materialise. In some groups, the first session may need to be devoted entirely to relationship building. In others, for example in Latina/Latino cultures, the concepts of respect and dignity are particularly important and may require a more formal approach. Cultural intentionality demands engagement in constant growth and change, the acquisition of new skills and strategies, the need for flexibility in meeting multitudes of different clients who may come from widely varying cultural contexts.

Cultural awareness and sensitivity is important because the word culture can be defined in many ways: e.g. different youth cultures, lifestyles, social class, ethnic background, religion, gender etc. It can also be defined from the degree of the client's developmental or physical disability or the concerns of those in the final stages of terminal illnesses such as AIDS or cancer. Essentially, any group that differs from the 'mainstream' of society can be considered to be a type of subculture or, as Ivey and Ivey point out, the fact that, "*increasingly, many people suggest that diversity is what constitutes the mainstream. This may suggest that respecting and honouring our differences is what will bring us together as one people.*" (Ivey, A.. and Ivey, M. 1999, 14)

As different cultural groups develop relationships in varying ways, one approach to finding out how the young person conceptualises meanings, thoughts, feelings and behaviours in relation to the workbook sheets, is to use storytelling. By using storytelling techniques, those who are participating in the process can learn how the young persons' story was generated in a social context and how values and meanings become internalized as a result of experience. This reconstruction may create a bridge between the development of social skills and experience, thoughts and feelings. It thus becomes possible for the young people to consider what they could have done differently and how they would have reacted today in order to identify and fence in acceptable and unacceptable types of behaviour, even if there was a reason for the that latter form of behaviour. The next stage in the process of preventing social exclusion is to act as an ambassador of hope and help the young people to cross the boundaries so that they can gain knowledge about different fields of activity where they can move more freely. When you have shared the problems of the group members it is important to reflect over how to maintain professional boundaries and how far you are prepared / able to go in terms of self-disclosure. The following questions arise in relation to the issue of self-disclosure: Is it for personal support or to facilitate participation or interaction, or do you find yourself in a situation where you involve yourself in counter-transference by identifying with the young people? Or is it perhaps that you suddenly experience that what you are talking about is too close to your own experiences?

Finally, you have to consider whether the young person is ready to expose herself/himself in a group or whether she/he has to build up her/his confidence in a supporting relationship where guided participation reveals different alternatives so that positive choices for the future can be made.

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# **SCHOOL DEMOCRACY – TOWARDS ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP**

**Ann Haugland**

I have been asked to write this article about school democracy, the way we deal with it in Norway. I am the “student manager” and part of the school administration in Os vidaregåande skule, which is a mainly vocational upper secondary school (high school) with almost 450 students. 70 % of them are males. As student manager I do my best to motivate students to take responsibility and to be in charge of their own lives. Most students spend close to two years of their lifetime, day and night, being in school. It is important that each student *participate* in making things happen. That they do not just sit back and watch things happen, or wonder what is happening. Hopefully schools give them a feeling of belonging, personal power, freedom, fun and success.

## **The national student union and student councils in Norway**

The school authorities in Norway stress the importance of school democracy. Most students in upper secondary schools are members of the Student Union EO (Elevorganisasjonen). This organisation holds national seminars and conferences and cooperates with the Teachers’ Unions. The Student Union gives information on students’ rights and lecture on how to motivate fellow students to care and participate in making their school and learning environment as good as possible. At these seminars students meet others from different parts of the country, and gather ideas and inspiration from one another. Once a year the organisation offers to come and visit schools that want them to, and their main issue is to challenge students and teachers, and to establish a more systematic dialogue between the two.

In order to change the every day life in schools, you have to work politically as well. The politicians are the ones who mainly decide how the schools should be run. Therefore, the SU also spends quite a lot of time working towards politicians, both locally and nationally. The SU also offers legal help when they feel students’ rights have been violated.

Every year the Student Union holds solidarity campaigns. Most schools/students take part in these projects, work and make money that they give to adolescents/students in less fortunate countries, who often have been troubled by war, discrimination or dictatorship. The money is given for *educational* programmes in these countries.

In the beginning of each school year, every class elects a class leader/class representative and an “environmental student”. The leaders represent the Students’ Council for this particular school. The “environmental student” in each class will be in charge of the class’ program dealing with ”health, environment and security”. We stress that the class

leader and the “environmental student” together with the main teacher of the class have a special responsibility for the learning environment of the class.

Before electing student leaders and Student Council, the classes must get information on what it means to be part of the union. The students should also discuss what qualities class leaders should have. If possible, we try to have both sexes and different classes/ departments represented in the council.

A class leader is supposed to discuss different matters in/with the class before attending meetings at the Student Council. If matters are to be voted on, the class leader has to respect the opinions of the majority of his/her classmates, and vote according to their wish. The class leader must be allowed to express personal points of view, but the majority of the class’ decision must come forward and be outspoken as well.

The Student Council must also be given the opportunity to hold meetings without having teachers/adults present. If not, the students will often stop being engaged and not take responsibility. However, the “student manager” is present much of the time and assists the students in their work.

Prior to Student Union’s meetings, every member (class leader) gets their own invitation, where the different matters they will discuss are mentioned. The members can bring matters from their class. After the meetings the members get a report from the meeting. So does the main teacher of each class, so that he/she can keep himself/herself oriented.

### **Coactive school – skills for life from school**

The Student Council elects a Student Board, consisting of 5–7 students. They have regular meetings and discuss matters that deal with the every day life of the students. Sometimes the Student Council has meetings, where every class is represented. At these gatherings the class leaders are being taught how to represent a group (their class), what responsibilities a class leader has and how to deal with different situations. Where many people are gathered, there will at times be conflicts. Understanding and handling conflicts are among the many tasks the Student Council deals with. Other topics are:

- How to be a good leader
- Duties and rights
- The right to complaints and how to go about it
- Getting involved on campus; being active, responsible and respectful
- Taking care of yourself and others
- Responsible choices in life, when it comes to sex, alcohol, drugs, driving etc.
- Coping with stress and crises
- Solidarity work
- Understanding diversity, values, goals and different styles of living

The students have the right to express their opinions on how things are done at school. They have the right to express their opinions on how the teachers teach, how their papers are evaluated / graded and how to plan their studies. They also have the right to make class rules, as long as they do not diverse from the school's main rules. Students have the right to influence their every day life at school when it comes to health, environment and teaching.

In order to have a functional Student Board at a school, the students need assistance and help from adults. After the introduction of the previous school reform in Norway (1994), the county of Hordaland (where Os vidaregåande skule is situated) established the position of "student manager" in all upper secondary schools. This person is part of the school's administration, and is to concentrate much of his/her work in strengthening the democratic rights of students. The student managers are not supposed to perform tasks previously performed by other personnel. They are meant to be a supplement to already existing personnel resources and they are working closely with the Student Council and the Student Board.

We also try to motivate students to participate in public meetings outside of school, to have them express their opinions on matters concerning adolescents in general. A positive identity and a positive attitude towards the society where you live, motivate you to care for the environment that you are a part of.

If we are invited to participate in public meetings outside of school, we often discuss the invitation in the Student Council. There we try to motivate some with strong opinions and interest on matters the meeting will discuss to attend, and we usually help/prepare them for the task of representing the school or the group of adolescents in general. You have to point out the student's good/high qualities and knowledge on the subject and show them that you believe in them and tell them that they will usually "grow" and learn a lot by accepting challenges like this, taking part in meetings/groups outside of school.

### **Fellow students care and participate to make learning environment**

Several times a year the students and their PE-teachers (Physical Education teachers) take part in improving the environment on campus by organizing different sport tournaments.

Each class should regularly (every week or every other week) have meetings where the interests of the group/class are in focus. The main teacher is responsible for this, and will participate part of the time. The class leader forwards ideas and requests to the Student Board, which gives advice or helps the class, either directly or by discussing the matter in the Student Council (where all classes are represented). The student leader may present the matter for the school's administration, in order to get an answer/find a solution.

The students are represented on the school's cafeteria board and on the library board as well. And members of the Student Board are free to take part in school administration meetings.

In order to achieve high quality teaching in schools, you need to involve the students. Usually we listen to their suggestions concerning the school buildings and the outdoors' facilities. It is important that we also listen when they want to discuss our teaching. They can help us find better ways of teaching and we can help them find better ways of learning. Our own thinking style probably dominates our approach to teaching, perhaps much more strongly than we realise. We tend to teach in the same way we like to learn. Students are different, with different learning needs. According to experts, people can learn almost anything when they are taught with methods matching their learning style preferences.

- Discuss with the students:
  - Why they have decided to spend a year or more being a student?
  - Why is he/she willing to put down much hard work and money this year?
  - What are the alternatives?
  - Work and income?
- What are the students' opinions on what a good learning environment is? What does such an environment consist of?
- None should have to put up with a situation where somebody destroys others' chances of reaching important goals in life (certificate/degree/etc.).
- Make the students evaluate how the learning environment is in their own class.
- Make the students point out what is good / exceptional and what needs to be improved.
- Make the students put down in words who are in position to do anything about the current situation and what they suggest we do with those in the group/class that destroy, boycott or are not willing to be constructive and work for a best possible environment.
- Make a written contract, where everyone who agrees put his or her signature

Our school has a test that also evaluates teachers and their teaching. The students or a teacher in a class have the right to use this test, to find out what the students are satisfied with and what they do not like. The test is anonymous. Therefore each student dares to be honest and give his or her point of view. The test is meant to be a help/guideline for the teacher, who forwards the result for the class and asks for guidance and help in order to become a better teacher.

Students will receive a computer-generated personal profile and report by responding to questionnaire, which contains a series of statements about themselves. By this report students can identify and are better aware about their individual strengths and personal preferences for learning, studying, reading and general information intake. Through this

analysis they will also learn how to recognise and control the elements that can enhance their attempts to solve learning problems. The report helps them concentrate, learn, read and study more efficiently and with greater success and satisfaction. If personal learning preferences are being matched for students in the classroom and at home, these become strengths and will improve their study skills, concentration, consistency and quality of their school and homework as well as their academic performance. Barbare Prashnig and Dr. Ken Dunn: The Learning Style Analysis, LSA).

Apart from the computer-generated Personal profiles the LSA Report gives a detailed explanation of all the individual elements of the LSA model plus advice on how best to utilise personal strengths for learning situations, counteract weaknesses and increase flexibilities. If the recommendations are acted upon, students will find that their overall academic performance, behaviour and concentration improve. Learning abilities as well as problem-solving skills will be enhanced, school-related stress will be reduced and often learning satisfaction and self-esteem will increase dramatically. (Barbara Prashnig: New ways of Learning and Teaching.)

## **Conclusion**

It is important that children and adolescents take an active part in what is going on in the society, and school democracy may be the most important area where this can be done, since we find almost everyone between the ages of six and eighteen in schools. Society changes rapidly, and therefore the school's role has changed over the years. Among factors that should make us think about the future of teaching, is the knowledge that 80% of the children in their first year of primary school will enter careers that do not exist now, involving technology that hasn't yet been invented. Employees will change professions, not just jobs, four or five times during their working lifetime. The amount of information in the world is doubling every 2,5 years. Children born today will live to be 81 years old on average compared with 75 for children born twenty years ago. Graduates will have been exposed to more information in one year than their grandparents were in a lifetime.

The last few years all students and teachers in upper secondary schools in Norway have taken part in a national survey. The results tell each school what they are good at and what they are not as good at. The results are published in the media, and critical questions are being asked. This situation is stressful. Hopefully schools will receive help in order to take a critical look at their own practise and work harder in order to achieve higher goals and show better results in the next surveys.

These days the Students' Union together with the Teachers' Unions invite principals, teachers and students to take part in seminars in order to forward ideas of how to secure cooperative teamwork, where students, teachers and administrative personnel are participants.

## AUTHORS

**Eeva Timonen-Kallio** is a lecturer and researcher in Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland. She describes the Friskie Programme in practical terms and reflects on the Friskie Programme and its guidance and counselling practices in the social pedagogical perspective.

**Anette Bolin** is a lecturer and researcher in University West, Sweden. Her contribution is to examine the theoretical points of departure when thinking about active citizenship for young people and for using the Friskie workbook.

**Elsebeth Fog** is the senior lecturer, PhD, in University West, Sweden, is emphasising in her text the importance of appropriate ways to start and close an empowering learning process and the importance to create necessary and optimal learning conditions for a group.

**Grahame Snelling** is the Youth Support Service Strategic Manager for the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, which is a leading local authority in England. His article discusses using mentoring as a means to engage with disaffected young people as part of delivering the Friskie workbook.

**Ann Haugland** is a student manager in Os Vidaregående Skole, gives in her chapter an example of school democracy and a coactive vocational school in Norway and presents structural ways to involve pupils in the school community and near municipality.

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