



SOCIAL PEDAGOGY SEMINARS

Building a Pedagogic Workforce in Residential Child Care

PROJECT REPORT

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Background of the training

Implementing a concept like pedagogy from one country into another is a highly sophisticated task that cannot be accomplished by imitating good practice. In a sense it calls for a pedagogic approach of implementation: It requires sensitivity for context and culture; otherwise the implementation is doomed to fail. In addition, a successful and widely-practiced introduction of social pedagogy must be solution-focused, which is to build on the strengths and competences of residential child care workers, on the work that already is successful – it has to start where the workers are. For these reasons our pedagogic approach was characterised by valuing participants, encouraging discussion and creating synergetic effects between our knowledge of social pedagogy and participants' experience in their care practice.

Our aim to give participants in-depth knowledge about and a holistic understanding of social pedagogy led us to choose a methodological approach, which created opportunities for participants to experience pedagogy with “head, heart, and hands”, as the Swiss pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi described. We felt it was important not to simply explain pedagogy to them, but to let them feel and experience it as much as possible through diverse activities, so that they could personally relate to pedagogic concepts and fully grasp the sense of pedagogy. A key factor in this approach was to bring our participants together as a group and to facilitate group dynamics so as to bring to life the benefits of working in groups. Consequently, participants were not passive recipients but actively engaged in the training, and thanks to their eagerness to play an active part the training has worked out exceedingly well.

The social pedagogy seminars comprised six days of training in three two-day blocks. Following the pedagogic triangle (Badry & Knapp, 2003), which describes the pedagogue and the child as being in relationship in order to achieve a certain task, the outline of the three training blocks was:

- Day 1 and 2 were exploring social pedagogy and the pedagogue;
- Day 3 and 4 were focussing on the child or young person and the relational aspect of pedagogy;
- Day 5 and 6 were concentrating on the pedagogic task of providing opportunities for personal and social holistic learning.

To illustrate the training and the topics covered under the three key themes, we described the training as a journey we wanted to take together and which was very much like mountaineering. Ultimately, the journey would take us to the summit of Mount Pedagogy, and on the way up we wanted to choose a route with participants, which was a new experience for everybody. We supposed that some participants would already be familiar with parts of the journey, but we hoped that the route would provide learning opportunities for everybody.

The image of Mount Pedagogy also illustrated our aim: Once we were all on the summit, we would be able to see where we are, we would have found a new perspective, a perspective from which the world might look a little different to participants – or might not.

Like in mountaineering, the successful journey in the training relied on team work in order to reach the top. This means that we needed participants as much

as they needed us – with their knowledge and experience, the mountain would transform into something that is also new for us.

We have described our journey below in chronological order, explaining what activities and exercises we did, why we used certain methods, and what we hope participants will have learned from these.

The 11 delegates from 6 residential units participating in the seminars represented a good mixture of fieldworkers (3 males / 1 female), unit managers (1 male / 4 female), and strategic managers (1 male / 1 female); all were British white. Each participant received from us a pedagogy folder filled with the topics we covered throughout the training and additional material complementing activities and exercises from the seminars.

Day 1 – May 22nd, 2007

As we did not know our participants and they were from different residential units, we decided to take ample time for the forming process, so that every person could settle and get to know each other. Therefore, the first day began with a welcome and introduction round. We had previously asked participants to bring along one item which represents their work. Interestingly, most participants brought an item they had been given by a young person or which symbolized their relationship with their young people.

In order to tailor the social pedagogy training to participants' wishes, we asked them – after introducing participants to our programme and Mount Pedagogy – which areas of the mountain they wanted to cover more intensively (see appendix). We further requested participants to write on moderation cards why they wanted to participate and what their expectations were. Most people's decision to participate was to gain knowledge in this topic (3), for their personal development and to take something back to their unit (2), to obtain new ideas, because it was seen as essential to the future of residential child care, or as a good framework for practice; One person was intrigued by what social pedagogy meant and eager to follow it up; Three people were sent from their managers, but they had become interested after having found out more about pedagogy. The experiences workers hoped to get out of the training were named as enhancing skills in working young people, getting knowledge of different skills and techniques, sharing new ideas, gaining experience and information from a different approach (2), understanding how pedagogy can contribute to their practice (3) or whether they are already providing a holistic approach, getting information about qualifications and experiences from other countries, how to deliver universal pedagogic services, and getting a deeper understanding of children's needs and how to meet these.

An Introduction to Social Pedagogy

We then started the first discussion of what social pedagogy is by forming three groups with the task to find and present a definition of social pedagogy. Getting participants actively engaged in group work was not only useful in terms of initiating cooperation and team work, but also to find out how participants think about social pedagogy, how much they already knew, what assumptions they had. One group listed attributes, such as social education approach, holistic approach, child-centred, enabling children to develop at their own pace, and letting children be children. Obviously they emphasized the holistic learning dimension in connection with a pedagogic concept of children in their definition. Another group defined: social learning theory, holistic social learning, upbringing/interventions/personal responsibility, links into social work, social concept about the way we learn and what we learn, education based concept, promoting the overall well-being, positive role model. While emphasizing the educational dimension, this group also pointed at the *social* in the term social pedagogy and included personal attributes as well. The third group defined social pedagogy as 'a holistic approach to meeting the needs of young people', adding that it is 'a multi-agency standard for working with young people'. Their explanation demonstrates how the group translated the term into a British context of 'meeting needs' and 'multi-agency standards'.

Following this exercise, we presented an overview of the many aspects the term social pedagogy incorporates by quoting key thinkers of social pedagogy. These demonstrate that there is not one definition, and illustrated how the understanding of the term has changed through history.

Key Pedagogues

To give participants a thorough understanding of pedagogy and its social and historical context, we introduced them to four key pedagogic thinkers, whose ideas have influenced the development of social pedagogy in Europe: the Swiss Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, the Italian Maria Montessori, the Polish Janusz Korczak, and the German Kurt Hahn.

As learning is most effective when impressions need to be expressed, we used the jigsaw method for this exercise. The jigsaw method requires participants not only to understand a topic, but optimises learning as participants from one group need to explain their topic to participants from other groups, thus taking ownership for their own and others' learning.

To divide the group into four small groups, we handed out a small film container filled with a substance that created a distinct sound when shaking. Participants with film containers of similar sound formed a group and read a provided text about one pedagogic thinker, whose ideas and relevance for their work they discussed afterwards. Then we mixed the groups again so that the new groups consisted of participants who had read different texts. Each participant then presented to the rest of their group what they had read and exchanged opinions about those ideas. In this process the groups were mainly left on their own, and they were very engaged in their task and initiated very good group discussions as they reported afterwards in the reflection on how the group work went. It seems that the group liked this exercise, as it gave them a suitable historic context from which pedagogy has evolved – and as they found, many pedagogues were far ahead of their time (and still are), which shows how much time it can take to implement a new idea, such as Pestalozzi's method of educating head, heart, hands, or Korczak's emphasis on children's rights.

Person-Centred Interdisciplinary Theories Relevant to Social Pedagogy

After the lunch break and an interaction sequence to get participants together as a group and to be physically active, we presented some theories relevant to social pedagogy. In accordance with the seminar outline for the first block, those theories were person-centred rather than relational, and included an introduction to salutogenesis – an alternative medical concept which looks at positive factors that keep people healthy and sets the focus of social pedagogues on strengthening such factors to contribute to children's health in a holistic meaning of the word – which was followed by a presentation of Sense of Coherence – which is one major factor of salutogenesis as it describes a person's feeling of understanding and being able to influence his or her surroundings. In addition, we introduced participants to the psychological construct of self-concept, how this can be strengthened in young people and what implications self-concept has for a child's development. Closely connected to this was the

theory of developing self-structure, which describes the influence of interaction experiences in forming generalized cognitive schemes of the self that impact on the way future interaction experiences are perceived and interpreted.

Group Discussions – Value Continuum

The next exercise aimed at getting a spatial impression of participants' views to certain issues, which also had the advantage of encouraging participants to take part in a lively discussion of various issues. Depending on their opinion, they had to position themselves in the room – on one end if they strongly agreed, in the middle if their opinion was ambivalent, and on the other end if they strongly disagreed with the statements we read out. This exercise is particularly suitable to involve every participant as it gives facilitators an opportunity to also ask those who are less outspoken otherwise. At this stage of the group process, it was to be expected that views would generally be less controversial as participants were naturally keen on a positive, harmonious atmosphere. Overall, the exercise gave participants the chance to get to know each others' views and perspectives, thus bringing more dynamics into the group process.

While all participants agreed to a large extent with the statement 'working with looked-after children means making a difference in their lives' for obvious reasons, there was controversial discussion about the assumption that 'looked-after children are the most vulnerable group': one participant argued fervently that looked-after children are most at risk of failing at school, becoming criminal, homeless, unemployed, and suffer from various other disadvantages, whereas others countered that looked-after children were being taken care of after all and therefore not the most vulnerable group, though undoubtedly one of the most vulnerable group. The statement 'the government and the public do not support us as much as we'd need it' did not trigger extreme views, with most slightly disagreeing in terms of the government and slightly agreeing in relation to the public. Similarly unanimous was the slight agreement that 'social pedagogy is a new term for what we're already doing', while it was acknowledged that social pedagogy was something more and could offer helpful ideas to improve practice, but was overall not completely different from English practice. The statement 'care is more important than control' divided opinions again, mainly due to different definitions of control: some argued that control is important too, and therefore disagreed, whereas others felt that care has to come first and that young people are already very much controlled and consequently mainly need more care than control. Interestingly, nobody disagreed that 'guidelines help me do my job professionally' – the extent of agreement varied from relative indifference towards guidelines to feelings of guidance that were seen helpful in creating a coherent approach. It was evident that this exercise gave participants not only an opportunity to reflect on their own positions but also gave them an impression of where other people stand, how they think and argue.

The Four Pedagogic Styles

This exercise was designed to build on the reflective element from the previous exercise, which focused on reflecting one's notions – now the idea was to enable participants to reflect their actions and underlying pedagogic style. The method

of using role-play sequences and discussion was again interactive and directed at making the group feel more intimate with each other.

We split the group again into four smaller groups and gave each group the task to think of a scene in everyday practice where workers would use a particular pedagogic style – authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, or disengaged. Then each group performed their short scene as a role-play and we discussed with the audience what style had been presented and how they distinguished a particular style. This led into a discussion which style was considered to be most useful in a relationship with children and young people, and we asked participants to position themselves in a coordinate plane showing the level of affection and the level of control. While it was not surprising to find everybody in the authoritative corner – showing lots of affection with high levels of control are usually considered good parenting/pedagogy – we discussed the importance of using an approach depending on the child or young person and being flexible in one's approach while at the same time always starting from the same position. This hopefully encouraged self-reflection on one's own approach or style as well as an alertness towards colleagues' styles, which might be discussed in the residential units.

Team Challenge – The Flying Egg

It was then time for changing towards a fun group activity, the flying egg. Wrapped up in a potentially true story about an expedition team discovering a dinosaur egg, three small groups each received a raw egg, 10 sheets of paper, two balloons, one roll of tape and five straws. They were to protect the freshly hatched dinosaur egg in its inevitable fall from five meters, using the material provided. This exercise provided participants with a challenging task that required solution-oriented team work, cooperation, and creativity. Their egg-protection prototypes were then empirically tested by letting them fall from a first floor window – naturally not without previous risk assessment. The constructions of two teams did protect the egg from any damage, whereas the third group's egg fell on a curb and broke.

Reflecting and Transferring Learning

To round up the day and transfer learning, we asked participants to reflect for themselves under three headlines: review/recall, affect/effect, and summation. This process was in their own responsibility and we consciously did not ask what they had written down. To gather feedback on how participants had felt about the first training day, the final circle was used to get a one-sentence feedback from each person completing the statements: too much of..., too little of..., just the right dose of... Importantly, each opinion was left uncommented so as to create an atmosphere where personal impressions did not require justification. In relation to the training the vast majority of participants felt it was just the right dose of everything, of activities and theory. With this last round we said goodbye for the day.

Process Analysis

From our perspective the first training day was very well-received and worked out perfectly well, which was the more astonishing considering that it was not only a very new approach with a very new target group, but also the first cooperation between us trainers. It seemed that the only slight criticism was that the interdisciplinary theory part followed directly after lunch, when participants felt rather tired. We also had the impression that the group had started to develop very positive dynamics and was very receptive towards our ideas.

Day 2 – May 23rd, 2007

On the second day we welcomed our group and checked their energy and motivation level on the energy barometer – one side of the room symbolising a high energy level, the other one a low energy level. In tendency the energy level was rather high, while some participants had a low energy level, but were eager to change that through the activities. Before we went outdoors for the experiential part of the training, we prepared the group with a ‘starter kit’. To point out the importance of giving each other feedback for the development of group dynamics we presented the Johari window. Illustrated on one of the real windows in the room, the model shows that there are parts of oneself characterized by whether they are known by oneself or by others. Feedback as an open form of dialog helps to discover those parts that are unknown to oneself as well as to disclose information about oneself, which is not known by others. This process is very personal and therefore requires certain rules for giving and receiving feedback, which create a safe and constructive environment. Instead of giving the group established feedback rules, we decided to ask them what rules they considered important for an open and honest exchange:

- Highlight positive things instead of negatives
- Speak for yourself and do not generalize
- Give feedback immediately, not much later
- No feedback if the person does not want it
- There is no place for ‘getting back at someone’ when giving feedback
- Appreciate if somebody gives you feedback
- Listen without interrupting

Experiential Pedagogy – Challenge by Choice

Then we went outside to use the park area of the venue. Starting with an energizing game called group juggling, participants were standing in a circle and we threw a ball from one person to another, creating an order that needed to be remembered and repeated, with additional balls coming in, too. This accelerated the process of catching a ball and passing it on to the next person and soon ended in chaos and dropped balls. The group was then asked to reflect on their team work and what could be improved to work together more successfully.

We then introduced the learning zone model and the principle ‘challenge by choice’. This means that it’s up to the participants to choose how much they intend to challenge themselves to leave their comfort zone and explore the learning zone. It is about giving them power and control. Consequently their

level of involvement, of taking activities seriously as individuals and as a group was their decision.

Rope Games

The feeling of being part of the group and playing a role in balancing the group's performance was conveyed in the first group exercise: All of us held on to a rope with both ends tied together, then we all went a couple of steps backwards to build up tension and leaned back so that the rope would hold everyone. It became clear that any movement had an effect on the balance of others, and that keeping the balance was therefore easier when acting in harmony with others – a simple way of demonstrating interdependence within a system.

Holding on to the rope, participants were then asked to close their eyes and form as a group a shape such as a circle, a triangle, and a square. The difficulty in this exercise lies in communicating blindly and is a useful tool to reflect various themes, such as communication, who do people listen to and take orders from, who gave orders and who decided to follow them, and how did the group work together and take care of group members. It became evident that some group members took on different roles, sometimes unconsciously and even against their intention. Another interesting issue arising was that people were not so familiar with each other that they could recognise somebody's voice and mainly did not know whom they followed; their decision to follow orders was therefore not based on any previous structure, but, as some participants stated, depended on whether an idea sounded reasonable and convincing.

Group Challenge – First Aid

To strengthen group dynamics we gave participants in the next activity the task to transport one group member with the aid of a rope to create a stretcher. While this exercise sounds fairly easy and was well-mastered by the team of participants, it was suitable to observe and reflect leadership, how ideas were selected, who was involved and in what form, and how group members were included in working towards the solution. First issues arose about inclusion, with some arguing that their input was not really necessary or contributing. But the group had started to emerge from the storming phase into the norming phase, where it gradually became clear who had what role in the group and who brought what skills and competences into the group.

One-Way Communication

In the following exercise groups of two participants stood back to back and had a piece of string each. One person was to tie a knot and verbally describe what sort of a knot he or she was tying; the other person was to listen and tie the exactly same knot without being allowed to ask back or look. While some struggled with either explaining without getting feedback or listening without asking back, most teams managed to tie similar knots. After everybody had had their turn we reflected communication skills, how it felt to listen and not being allowed to ask questions, how it felt to give commands and not being able to control the results immediately. Participants were also asked to think of

situations in their practice which might have comparable communication structures. This exercise and reflection illustrated the significance for dialogue and feedback as well as active listening.

Group Challenge – River Crossing

The last exercise for the morning put the group in front of a new challenge – together they needed to cross a river (symbolized by two ropes as there was no real river available). To get across the river, the group had as many floating steps (rubber foam squares, 10” wide) as there were group members. However, the group would need to be in contact with all squares at all times; if anybody let go of any square, the river fairies (facilitators) would come and take it away. Also, if any group member stepped beyond the squares and into the river, the whole group would have to start again from the beginning. To ease the pressure on the group and keep the challenge manageable, we did not give them an initial time limit, so they were able to try out their ideas of how to solve the task. When crossing the river, the group worked well together as a team, and especially the three people in the back of the queue that formed to cross the river were hard-working so as to pass the last square forwards to the first person. The system they had agreed on was to have both feet on one square, then starting from the front put the left foot on the inside of the front person’s right foot, thereby linking with them. The last person then had to put both feet on the front person’s square and keep the balance while passing on the last square. Beginning with the first person, the group then one by one stepped with the right foot on to the square, on which they stood with their left foot, then started over again going one step forward. The group was very concentrated, had a very good and fun time, and they did not make any mistakes until the very end when the first person had stepped on to the riverbank. Having led the group before, they were now a little bit too certain of reaching the bank and forgot to keep contact with all squares at all times, thus resulting in some square losses that made it suddenly more difficult again. But they were able to get back into their rhythm and complete the task successfully and with much laughter.

To reflect their experience on a metaphorical level, we gave them a choice of postcards and asked them to pick one postcard that related to how they felt during the exercise and explain to the group why they had picked that particular postcard.

Group Challenge – the Spider Web

After the lunch break, we started with a small warming up game and then put the group up for a new team challenge – the spider web. With ropes spanned between two trees, the spider web consisted of about 18 holes that were just wide enough for a person to get through, but they were on different heights. The group’s challenge was to get all participants through the holes; however they were not allowed to put more than one person through each hole, and were not allowed to touch the ropes or walk around or crawl underneath the spider web. Initially the group was very casual in their approach, trying to get some people through the holes, but caring not too much about touching the ropes. After a short while they figured out that they needed a more consistent and structured approach to accomplish the challenge and worked better towards helping each

other through the spider web. However, their approach still seemed very relaxed and a bit too confident, and they did not engage as one team – they had not yet left the norming phase. When one of the last people then clearly touched the rope, we decided to send the whole team back to start all over again – but not without reflecting why they had failed and what they needed to improve. Their opinion was that the holes were too narrow and this kept them from succeeding, but we pointed out that, like in real life, you sometimes have to accept the conditions and cannot change them. Rather than making the challenge easier for them by widening the holes, we told them that their team work and mutual support and strategy would need to see improvement. In consequence they thought more about whom to get through the web first, which holes to keep open for the last few persons and how to get people through the holes. With much more care and effort than previously and after a long exercise that lasted about 1.5 hours altogether, they managed to get every person through the spider web without touching the rope – as a group they had obviously reached the performing stage.

Back indoors a quick one-word reflection round brought to light that they were ‘happy’, ‘proud’ and ‘pleased’, felt ‘achievement’, ‘enjoyment’ and ‘success’ about having accomplished the task. We then asked one group member who had been assigned the role of observer during the last attempt what she had observed about the group’s progress. She pointed out that they seemed to have taken the second attempt much more seriously, had tried harder and worked more as a group rather than as individuals (as they had done before), that there was a clearer structure and consistency. We then reflected together how they had coped with the initial experience of failure, what they had attributed it to, what they had changed for the second attempt, and how they felt they had supported and involved each other. It became obvious that they were very positive about the team experience, had not felt bad about failing, but rather challenged, and were happy about the improved group dynamics.

Transference – Pedagogy in a Residential Environment

We then separated participants into three groups to discuss and answer the following question: What do you think do residential child care workers need to work with a pedagogic approach? Each group presented their thoughts to the plenum. The results and ideas are depicted below:

Group 1:	Group 2:	Group 3:
▪ Funding	▪ Understanding and development	▪ Information
▪ Multi-agency understanding	▪ Multi-disciplinary understanding	▪ Patience
▪ Organizational support	▪ Organizational Support	▪ Support
▪ Ownership of practice	▪ Acknowledging good practice in use and building on it	▪ Accepting change

▪ Training	▪ Theory – pedagogy	▪ Training
▪ Constancy	▪ Consistency	▪ Opportunities
▪ Choice	▪ Freedom & flexibility for young people	▪ Examples
▪ Confidence in others	▪ Common theme/value	▪ Allowing for transitional change
▪ Relinquish some control	▪ Allowing responsive work	▪ Need to feel safe
▪ Knowledge	▪ Knowledge	▪ Knowledge
▪ ‘Team’ communication	▪ Good team work	▪ Time
▪ Flexibility	▪ Communication	
▪ Theory		

All groups put an emphasis on theory and knowledge, on multi-agency understanding, consistent team work as well as on organizational support and sufficient flexibility and time to bring about change and try out new approaches. These notions are a first indicator of what residential child care workers think is needed when an implementation of social pedagogy is meant to work. Significantly, the opinion of the experts for residential child care is congruent with our notions as the experts for social pedagogy.

Transferring Learning

To illustrate which part of the route we had already been covering throughout the two days, we then located the learning on Mount Pedagogy, asking participants which areas they felt had been sufficiently covered and which still needed more exploration. We found that we had already made very much progress and achieved quite a lot in two days.

As on the day before, participants were then given the opportunity to reflect individually on their learning by writing down what they recalled, what effect this had had on them, how they could summarize their experiences, where they thought they could apply learning in their practice, and how they could ensure being committed to this. This so-called creative reviewing was repeated at the end of each day to establish it as a possibility for structured reflection and to give participants a chance to express their impressions.

The Researching Practitioner

Pedagogy has also a research element, and we aimed to point this out to participants by giving them a research question to answer during the four weeks until the second series of training. Their task was to ask the young people in their institution what is important to them in their relationship with their key worker. At the same time and without knowing the young people’s answers, the participants were to write down what they thought young people would say. Our intention behind giving out this research question was also to make participants

reflect on the nature of their relationship with their young people, and to ensure that young people's views were at least to a certain degree included into the training. Furthermore we hoped that through this some of the content of the course/social pedagogic approach would become transparent to the young people and the staff.

Feedback

A positive and appreciative way of giving each other feedback is the posi-orange game, in which small participant groups receive an orange and have the task to fill it with as much positive energy as possible to make it ripe and juicy. As part of this reflective game, participants holding the orange said a sentence about what they had learned through the training and then passed the orange on to another group member, saying why they thought this particular person deserved the orange, e.g. 'I want to give the orange to ... because she had very good ideas in the activities today'.

To finish the day appropriately, we gathered in a circle and gave a one-sentence feedback. This was not only important for us as trainers but also for the group to know how everybody felt about the training. It was very encouraging and pleasing to hear that everybody had really enjoyed the two days and was eager to come back for the second series.

Process Analysis

From our perspective the second day had worked really well and had enabled participants as a group to develop and become a strong and potent group able to master the challenges we had provided them with. The experiential element was very well-received and highly suitable to give participants a holistic understanding of social pedagogy – but at this stage we assumed that they were mainly not conscious of their newly gained knowledge of social pedagogy, they had not yet put the jigsaw pieces together. But we were confident that with the help of the material in the pedagogy folder and with the following training days participants would be able to see the wider picture.

Day 3 – June 27th, 2007

Having set the bar very high with the first series, we felt that the days 3 and 4 had to continue in the same tradition of learning with head, heart, and hands, but at the same time we were eager to add a further dimension to the seminars by changing our approach and adapting the programme more to the group, which we were now familiar with. We also decided to reveal more of the underlying rationale for doing particular interaction sequences and exercises in order to give participants a better understanding of our pedagogic approach within the training. Additionally, we designed the handout material in a more complementary way: rather than having handouts which were reflecting what we did and talked about, the material also covered new aspects of an issue or new issues altogether. And the texts mainly consisted of academic articles this time, partly to get participants used to the academic dimension of pedagogy, but also to discuss potentially well-known concepts such as empowerment or attachment in a new light, as well as to present raw material rather than texts which we had pre-digested for them.

On day 3, we welcomed all participants who had been with us the two days before and started pretty much straightaway by outlining on the Mount Pedagogy picture which areas we had already covered and where our journey would lead us in the next two days. But before starting with the programme we did an icebreaker interaction sequence.

Group Phases

The first topic of that day was group phases, and rather than us explaining the five phases – forming, storming, norming, performing, and transforming – we asked four groups of participants to discuss one phase each and think of an example for that phase in their practice. In the ensuing reflection about how to use this knowledge about different phases and dynamics in groups for their practice, participants felt it was very relevant and could often be observed, particularly in staff teams. We highlighted that these processes can be steered and influenced by being very aware and analytic about them and giving a group the right tasks at the right time as well as adapting leadership depending on the group phase. Having brought the group into the performing phase in the last training, as participants stated, it was important to point out that groups can fall back in a previous phase. This was something which then actually happened within the training group itself making the third day harder than we had initially thought...

Communication in Practice and Theory

Communication and cooperation are vitally important in group processes, and they were in the centre of a group exercise which required a high level of group cooperation and awareness, and nonverbal communication. A group of five received an envelope with five small envelopes. In these small envelopes were pieces to form squares; however, no participant was initially in a position to piece together a square form. To come up with five similar squares, participants

had to exchange pieces in their group, but were not allowed to signal to each other, talk, or interfere with others' constructions. We did this exercise in two groups and with one observer. Both groups finished the task almost at the same time, but both groups had flouted some of the rules in order to succeed. As they argued it was impossible to cooperate without communicating and therefore they did communicate somehow. We also reflected the way they interacted within the group, how involved people were who had already finished their own small square and whether they leaned back or tried to support others. One group had at some point decided to put all pieces into the middle and work together in creating five small squares from all pieces. This strategy, while not exactly being in accordance with the rules, showed how well participants interacted in their group. We also discussed why we had chosen this exercise and how it illustrated the importance of team work and team communication as well as being creative in ways of communicating.

Well, that was all okay and interesting to participants, but had Sylvia not said she was going to talk more about social pedagogy? Gabriel asked her in front of the whole group. No, she felt she was talking about social pedagogy, he should be more patient and should not have asked her in front of everybody. Of course this irritating conversation was staged: with this short role play, we introduced the four aspects of a message, demonstrating that Gabriel's message to Sylvia was sent on four levels: first, it contained an *informational* aspect as we analyzed with participants – i.e. were we going to talk more about social pedagogy? Second, it also contained a *relational* aspect, revealing something about the relationship between us two, i.e. there was a power imbalance through the way Gabriel asked, but Sylvia's harsh reply put him in his boundaries. Third, the message included an *appellative* aspect in so far as Gabriel's question had a very strong appellative character, nearly demanding from Sylvia to do what was asked of her. Fourth, there was also an aspect of *self-disclosure* in the message as it said something about the sender's feelings, thoughts, opinions, et cetera – obviously Gabriel felt Sylvia was not being relevant in her explanations. Considering these four different aspects, the underlying question was which aspect Gabriel had emphasized – Sylvie had obviously understood the question as being very appellative towards her, but had Gabriel really meant that? Had he perhaps intended to stress the informational aspect? Clearly, the fact that a single message could be sent with four different sets of lips and heard with four different sets of ears does not make communication easy. Pedagogues, as we discussed then, need to be aware of pitfalls within communication and consequently communicate clearly, asking back in order to ensure communication happens under the same aspects – otherwise unintentional connotations can lead to misunderstandings. Especially in groups, misunderstandings can cause conflict, which is often avoidable when being aware that there is more to a message than only words. It was also noted that the increasing usage of email makes it sometimes difficult to decipher what aspects of a message were intended by the sender.

Solution-Focus in Practice – the Acid Lake

As we had the impression that participants were at a stage where they needed to be put into motion, we then decided to continue with a group challenge

outdoors. In order to survive, the group needed to rescue a bag with food from the middle of an acid lake. To save participants from dissolving in the contact with acid, the group could make use of acid-resistant material, such as a rope, a harness, a blindfold and a helmet. Initially, the group exchanged their ideas in small random sub-groups and only part of the group got to hear the ideas. One participant then reminded everyone of coming together in a circle and exchanging ideas so that everybody would be informed. The group came up with two ideas and decided for the easier one. Refining the method during the task, they accomplished their mission. But it had been obvious that the level of involvement was not equally spread and that the group was not acting as 'one'.

Working with Cultural Difference – the Dederdians

Back in the room, we started with a group role play – the Dederdians. The Dederdians, played by seven participants, are a people living close to a small town, but their village is separated by a deep canyon, and in order to get to the town and sell their harvest the Dederdians have to travel to a remote bridge across the canyon, which takes 2 days. In order to get to the town faster, the Dederdians have now contacted the townspeople and asked for their help in designing a new bridge that connects the two villages directly. The town has decided to send four of their best architects and planners to the Dederdians to design the bridge with them.

The group of participants playing the four architects had to decide on sending two people to a pre-planning meeting with the Dederdians so as to find out what exactly the Dederdians wanted. The small group negotiated to send the two members who were deemed best in building new relationships and negotiating in a positive manner. They were then sent into Dederdian territory, while the remaining two planners heard with apprehension that there were kissing noises and loud screams coming from Dederdian country! Soon afterwards, their colleagues returned from the pre-planning meeting and reported that the Dederdians had very strange habits, that one could only speak to them after having greeted them properly, which involved three kisses on the shoulders, and that a man and a woman had to hold hands – otherwise they would start screaming. After this briefing, the whole planning group of townspeople went to meet the Dederdians – and the townspeople quickly learned how to behave properly, how to adopt the Dederdian culture to avoid their screaming (this is a perfect example of operant conditioning). During a hilarious visit, the townspeople further realised that paper could only be touched by men, while only women were allowed to hold pencils – and in the end they were able to plan the bridge without too much screaming on the Dederdians' side.

When reflecting this cultural encounter, the Dederdians stated that they had tried to help explain their peculiar culture, but that the townspeople had not worked out whom to hold hands with; however they had picked up quickly what items they were allowed to touch. The townspeople noted that some bits of the culture were obvious, but that there were others which were hard to pick up on. This reflects the iceberg model of culture, which illustrates that culture is like an iceberg: only a small part is visibly above the surface while the major part is invisible. The townspeople said they had had a plan, which was to be receptive and listen and mainly ignore the cultural difference. But it soon turned out that the cultural part could not be ignored – the invisible part of the iceberg had

become an obstacle. There was also a frustration of not getting to the task quicker because of the culture. They also felt apprehensive about not knowing what to expect when entering Dederdian territory.

Transferring the Dederdian role play into a more practical context, we asked participants what different cultures could stand for. They named relationships, for instance with young people, as an example. It was also mentioned that one had to know one's personal boundaries while respecting and valuing each person, irrespective of their culture. There is a need to learn about different cultures, according to participants. In the encounter with other cultures, it was said that balancing values becomes important, meaning that one has to know own values in the relationship and strike a balance with the values underpinning the other culture.

Personal Values – Young People's Values

To pick up on the value point, we continued with a value exercise after the lunch break. Participants were handed out a sheet with a scale showing on the left scale pan the young people's values and on the right the personal values; common values formed the basis of the scale. We asked participants to individually reflect values under these three headings. As we discussed afterwards, knowing one's own value base is important when forming a pedagogic relationship with young people: it poses all sorts of questions from being a role model in terms of promoting one's values, to tolerating young people's values and not influencing their value base, to how value differences between pedagogue and young people can be handled. We had also seen in the Dederdians before that values, although they are often underneath the surface, are important drivers for one's actions.

Rhythmic Pottery

In the following exercise, we aimed to give participants a very different sensual experience. Blindfolded, we led them into a room with calming music and placed them around small tables in groups of threes. Each table was equipped with a bowl of water and a piece of modelling clay. The task for each group was to form the clay in the group without talking and to let the music inspire them. We then chose three different music tracks, starting with some jazz, classical music, and finishing with techno. For each track the groups had a fresh piece of modelling clay. Our observations showed that the first track encouraged them to talk, and it took a while to calm them down, but during the second, classical part everybody was really quiet. The third, more hardcore track left some participants with an obvious indecision how to connect to this sound and be inspired by it – some simply hit their clay rather than forming it.

In the reflection we asked participants how they felt about having to use other senses than sight and not being allowed to communicate, and the response was from some that they felt uncomfortable with either of these preconditions while others were excited about this and surprised at the detail of their blind work – they had assumed that their artwork would not be too sophisticated. As participants clearly realized one of the reasons for doing the rhythm pottery was to let them experience what an influence our surrounding has on us – all of

them stated that the music did affect how they worked, and nearly all found the classical music most inspiring.

Transferring the experience to their practice, the exercise made it visible that the surrounding of the institution has an impact on the young people as well as the workers. The exercise is also about rhythm, and it is important to reflect one's personal rhythm, what rhythm suits to it, because 'rhythm is the process through which worker and young person find a common and comfortable way of being together', as Smith (2005: p.2) writes – rhythm connects us. This requires sensitivity for one's own as well as for other people's rhythm, and the exercise aims to support this sensitivity through the group work aspect and the blindness of participants.

Running Numbers

We then went outdoors again to give participants another challenge: we laid out a circle with A4 sheets spread inside showing numbers from 1 to 30. The group's task was to run to the circle and step on the numbers in ascending order – however, each participant had to touch at least one number, and no two people were allowed in the circle at the same time. Clearly, this activity was about being fast, and therefore we stopped the time the group needed. They first had time to think of a strategy and then had their first attempt, which took around 2min 30sec. Asked how happy they were about this, the majority responded that they thought they could do better, and the group stated that they could do it in under a minute with some more practice. They decided that each person would touch one number, and then the last person would touch the remaining numbers. The second attempt brought them 40sec closer to their goal, but still the majority felt that more practice would bring them even nearer – yet some group members did not see much sense in the exercise, but still joined the group. Coming closer to the 1min goal with every attempt the group also came closer to conflict between those who had set the goal and tried to pursue it and those who did not feel like repeating the same exercise over and over again. At the fifth attempt, the stopwatch showed 58.6sec at completion, and the majority of the group celebrated their success.

The reflection addressed what had happened in the group. Some members stated that they felt the task was pointless, they had no interest in the challenge and did not see any sense. Although they had still participated for the group's sake, they acknowledged that their level of engagement was rather low. One participant also said that she would have liked to change the strategy and felt she could have contributed with a more successful strategy, but the group was clearly more intent on sticking to the initial strategy and refining it. This had naturally discouraged the participant from giving her best. The other part of the group felt very different about the exercise, stating that it was one of the best and that they had enjoyed the competitive character and the chance to practice and get better with every try. This group found it hard to understand why some had felt differently, and they did essentially take those people's reluctant participation for granted, because the majority of the group had decided. This heated and at times very personal discussion finished on a positive note in that it was accepted that some felt unchallenged by the competitive character; it also became clear that the group was back in the 'performing phase', but this time on a deeper level where dissent was allowed and practiced and dealt with in a

constructive way. It was the first time that the group had to overcome inner tensions, but they emerged from it with new strength.

Theories on Social Learning and Relationship-Building

Although everybody was exhausted, we decided to stick to our initial plan and start a theory exercise, splitting the group into three small groups, which were handed different articles about a theory relevant to working in relationship with children and young people. One article was about attachment theory, and participants were asked to critically discuss Bowlby's theory in relation to their own practice, exploring how important it is for building relationships with young people in care.

The second article described empowerment in work with older people and showed some striking parallels between concepts of old people – as senile, as unable to make decisions on their own, and as in need of care – and concepts of children and young people – replacing senile with immature. Empowerment is vitally important as an approach in social pedagogy, as it means building on the personal strengths and enabling people to make their own decisions rather than making them on their behalf. In this sense, it is essential for participation. Therefore we asked participants to transfer what was written about older people care to child care. Our idea was that such an attempt could give an idea of how to translate concepts from one field to another, how to look for similarities and differences.

The topic of the third article was Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, a pedagogic model which states that learning is most successful in a social context, meaning that people learn more and develop further when being supported by somebody who is more advanced in a certain area and functions as a mentor (this is the pedagogue and could, according to Vygotsky, be a practitioner or another child!). This social learning theory was meant to spark reflections on the own practice under this aspect of proximal development.

Considering that the three articles were written in an academic style and that it had been a long and exhausting day, participants struggled in understanding the texts – or at least said so. Therefore we amended our initial idea to interchange groups (jigsaw method) and asked each group to present key points from their texts in the plenum. It became clear that the groups actually had quite a good understanding of the issues portrayed in the articles. We did, however, not discuss the texts in too great detail, but decided to finish the day with the debriefing funnel (see above) and a quick feedback round.

Feedback and Analysis

The feedback was mainly positive with participants having enjoyed the training again, but it became outspoken that not everyone had felt positive about all the exercises and activities. Also, some raised concerns that they still had not understood what social pedagogy really meant, and that the theory part was too much when everybody was exhausted.

From our point of view an important learning process took place concerning the influence the group atmosphere can have on the feelings of the individual and

the overall performance of the group. After having previously parted in a harmonious, intimate and “we are brilliant” sort of atmosphere, they seemed to find themselves as unfamiliar with each other as at the beginning. This evidently took them by surprise and they needed some time to digest this situation. By coincidence we had planned to present the theory of what processes groups go through and how this influences their performance etc... Through their own situation the participants were able to relate to this very strongly, and this helped them see their situation from a different perspective. Some participants stated later that this process had made them realise again how the young people in their care must feel at times and that it can improve outcomes to be conscious of this dynamic.

For us, the third day had required much restructuring in order to get the participants more actively involved and into a high energy level. After falling back into the norming phase at the beginning of the 3rd day they lived the norming phase more intensely, not avoiding necessary dissent. This enabled them for the next day to get to a higher level in the performing phase. We felt the group had become more expressive in voicing their honest opinions and showing dissatisfaction, with activities, processes, and the programme. This gave us a very good indication what participants expected and what we needed to include into the following day in order to create a more positive and energetic atmosphere again. In this sense it was important that the day had not been as harmonious as the previous ones – the transformations it had initiated were far more significant.

Although in retrospective we would have taken more time in the beginning of the day to bring the group back together and into focus, for instance by going in more detail through the topics from before and the explanation what pedagogy is, it may have been important to have some dissatisfaction and the experience that even with a pedagogic approach things do not always turn out the way they were planned. Rather it is about reflecting why some things did not go well and exploring possibilities to amend that, which prompted us to prepare day 4 all over again in order to adapt it to participants’ needs.

Day 4 – June 28th, 2007

As a consequence of day 3 and the changes in the programme as well as participants' wishes, we rethought the programme of day 4. We started with a welcoming sensual exercise – a sound massage, which is a non-tactile form of massaging. One person closes their eyes while another person massages around the head through sounds created by snipping fingers, rubbing the palms against each other or soft clapping. This requires empathy from the masseur and trust from the person being massaged and was generally perceived as relaxing, though some participants were a bit anxious about not seeing what was happening around their heads.

Researching Pedagogy

In order to find answers to the question how social pedagogy relates to residential child care, we asked participants to fill in an appreciative inquiry questionnaire and explained the research aspect of the pilot project in greater detail, emphasizing that there are several ways in which the programme is subject to research, but that all information is treated with confidentiality, that participants are anonymous and that any concerns can be addressed to us. In general, we have aimed to create a confidential environment, stating that what is being said in the training will not be shared with anybody outside – but obviously, we are also interested in achieving some change by sharing learning and experiences. To overcome this conflict, we offered participants to send them our project report before publishing it so that they can detect any sensitive information they might not agree on sharing.

Social Pedagogy Revisited

The previous day had shown that some participants were concerned about not fully grasping the concept social pedagogy. We therefore made this the first topic, outlining that pedagogues work with head, heart, and hands. They combine the cognitive and reflective, with the emotional, sensual, and with the practical, active – and they harmonize these three parts so as to find and keep the balance. The same model translates to the work with children and young people, as holistic education requires educating head, heart, and hands of the child. Additionally, we explained the 3P's, a Danish concept of distinguishing between the professional, the personal and the private pedagogue. As we tried to show before, through the discussions about diverse topics, there's much that's already being practised in English residential child care. Pedagogy is rather about making connections and creating a coherent, harmonious and reflected framework of various theories and concepts – and about working consciously with head, heart, and hands.

Our explanations sparked very interesting discussions about being a professional, about the importance of the 'head', i.e. knowledge and theories, in order to work in equilibrium, and about personal boundaries. We also discussed international differences in child care. Participants said that there was a difference in how the British government and society value children and how this seemed to be in other countries. They also felt that in England residential

child care received little appreciation and was not acknowledged despite the importance of the work – unfortunately, the situation in other countries is not necessarily better. One obvious and briefly discussed difference was the better qualification of staff in other countries and how this affected the head, heart, and hands levels of workers. We explained that social pedagogy studies in Denmark and Germany paid attention to keeping a balance between these three areas. Participants also recognized the importance of recruiting staff with not only good knowledge and practical skills, but also with a good heart and wondered how to ensure this. As we pointed out, one way forward would be to involve children and young people into recruitment, as from our experience their main interest in a job interview lies in finding out more about the personality or the heart of the applicant rather than ask questions about somebody's knowledge. This struck participants as a good thought, and some institutions had previously used to involve children in recruiting new staff, but had stopped at some point – an example which shows that our training not only raised new ideas but also brought back old and nearly forgotten approaches. In summary, this part refreshed participants' knowledge and made them aware of what they had already learned the days before – it brought their unconscious learning to a conscious level and for many participants it 'clicked'.

Creating the 'Rich Child'

Strengthened in such a positive way, we set about to create the 'rich' child (Dahlberg, 2000). To conceptualize children as active agents, as competent human beings with strengths and a lot of positive attributes, we asked participants to team up in small groups and draw with chalk the shape of a child's body on the ground and to fill this body with as many positive attributes, characteristics and strengths as they could think of. As their drawings showed, children have a wealth of resources. A number of things participants drew included:

Love, education, boundaries, networks, communication, resilience, contribute, self-awareness, health, innocence, touch, trust, happy, belonging, fun, values, self-esteem/worth

Trusting and honest, empathy, creative, sensory, sharing, warm, truthful, thoughtful, tactile, individual, problem solving, resourceful, open, expressive, confident, healthy, spiritual, able, fun, grateful, loving, happy, sad, survivor, intelligent, imagination

Understanding, learning, fun, open, innocence, sensory, energetic healthy, active, reactive, individual, education, confidence, loving/affective, friendly, play, questioning, sensitive, expressive, sensory, understanding, attached, sense of humour

Love, fun & humour, social skills, empathy, compassionate, sensitive, relationship, high self-esteem, able to share, safe, moral base, socially acceptable, innocence, healthy, friends, interests, respect, secure, intelligence ⇔ educationally and emotionally, healthy fear, confidence, resilience, self-worth

Happy, good health, good relationships, good self esteem, kind, caring, good communicator, participate, inclusive, educated, hobbies, belonging, secure,

balanced, generous, 5 ECM outcomes, achieve, independent, confident, loving,
safe, friends

Changing Social Constructions of Young People

Transferring these drawings into everyday, we reflected with participants how their concepts of children differed from society's perceptions of young people. Participants stated that this is obviously very different, that young people are often stigmatized and that a few young people are portrayed in the media as representing a whole age group. Consequently, all young people are considered anti-social. We also thought about how we could possibly influence the social construction of young people, and participants argued that the media reporting has to become more balanced. Young people or their carers should have a right to respond to portrayals of young people on TV or in newspapers, and there is also a responsibility to get the message across to the public that young people are engaged in very positive activities as well, supporting their community and so forth. It was said that we need to celebrate kids more in order to change these public perceptions.

Another point raised was that there are possibilities to influence the community's perception of young people, for instance by building more bridges between the community and the children's residences. There are already some good examples of open days and young people making active contributions, being involved and socially integrated into the community, which gives something to build on and expand.

Some of the more disturbing views about children can be found in marketing, where G-strings are advertised for eight-year-olds, as one participant described. There are other disturbing examples of how children have become marketing targets and how this is connected to a certain ideal of children. The conclusion is that we have to concentrate on adults' responsibility, and this includes being role models.

Interaction Sequence – Atomic Accident

We then had another exciting interaction sequence for the group, where they could bring in their personal strengths and master another team-building challenge, which fitted into the group process. An atomic accident required from the team to rescue two eggs, balanced on bottles, out of an atomic reactor, which could not be entered. Participants could only enter a surrounding area, but had to wear blindfolds. The material to rescue the two eggs was limited, as were the blindfolds. The task also included building a campfire to fry the eggs.

The team very quickly split up into a main group concerned with getting the eggs out, while two participants took care of gathering wood and lighting a campfire. The reactor group decided to send two people into the restricted area and to have one navigator directing these two people in their movements. The first team knocked down both eggs – one was knocked down by accident before the little basket to catch the egg was in place, the other egg fell into the basket, but its weight turned the basket, which was held on a string, upside down. However, the second egg was only slightly cracked, and we gave the group another try on the condition that they start from outside the reactor again. They then rethought what had not worked well, improved the catch-ability of the basket – which consisted of a small dishcloth with the ends tied on a piece of string held by the two people – by expanding the basket with a roll of tape, and

decided to exchange the two blindfolded people in the reactor. They also agreed to use as navigator one of the previous reactor people, as these seemed to have a really good idea of how the commands were received and how to give precise commands. And this time the team really caught the egg, brought it out safely and transported it to the campfire, which had been set up in the meantime.

The reflection afterwards brought to light that all participants had really enjoyed this task and felt that all had been able to participate with different skills. They were now familiar with each other and knew whom to trust, who had good ideas and who had good skills to put them into practice. As stated later, the group was back in the performing phase, but on a much deeper level than previously.

The Value Continuum – Notions on Building Relationships

After lunch we started with another short interaction sequence, then went into a discussion sequence with the help of a value continuum requiring participants to position themselves depending on the extent they agreed with a statement. The first statement was rather provocative in exploring the attitudes workers had towards their young people: “love for children is important when working with them”. As expected, such an ambiguous term as ‘love’ split the group into a majority that agreed pretty strongly and a minority that was inclined to disagree. Their reason was that love was not the appropriate word, rather affection and aiming to find the positives in the young people, but that the feeling was distinctly different from love in the sense of love towards one’s own children. Others, however, stated that it was important to make young people feel loved and cared for, and that they considered this a priority in their work.

The following statement “care workers have to behave like role models” was generally rather agreed on, though to differing degrees. Arguments were that workers should not be role models in that young people should not be just like them, but rather be themselves. It was also seen that residential practitioners must be allowed to have faults – so role modelling would mean practitioners are being authentic and encourage young people to be authentic themselves. In a similar direction participants argued that everybody is different and that it was rather about picking positives than picking a person as role model.

For the last statement, “all children are equal to adults”, participants took position along the whole spectrum. Those who disagreed argued that children are not equal in terms of the law – they are not allowed to vote, drink, smoke, they are punished in a different way than adults. Their argument went on that this inequality was not necessarily bad, because it meant less responsibility too. They also stated that people are not born equal, but are born into different social conditions and with different personal predispositions. Furthermore, they reflected that society has chosen to make children less equal by putting people in boxes. Inequality is therefore socially constructed. The other group, who agreed with the statement, argued that children are as valid as adults and that we are all human beings.

Interesting for us in this exercise was to see what participants think about issues related to childhood and residential child care, to make them discuss controversially among themselves and to see how they argue, what arguments they use. We felt that there was a high level of reflectivity in the arguments of

both sides, that participants were able to formulate an own position and defend it or rethink it. There was also a lot of appreciation for contrasting opinions, and more often than not people agreed with the arguments of the 'opposition' while still feeling that they had positioned themselves correctly.

Research Question – Building Relationships

Having explained the research dimension before, we then dedicated some time to the research question we had given participants at the end of day 2 in order to debate important factors in building relationships with young people. In three groups participants discussed their results. Some had asked the children in their care what was important to them in the relationship with their key workers, so we could include young people's views in this way and get their perspectives on relationships. The children had listed what they considered important in a good worker, who in their eyes is somebody who:

- Cares for them
- Is honest
- Listens and understands what they say
- Is organized
- Is approachable
- Makes them laugh
- Does nice things with them
- Talks to them and takes them out
- Tries to do the things that they ask
- Gives them some individual time
- Treats them with respect
- Gives them a feeling of safety
- Looks after them
- Keeps stuff confidential, who they can share with
- Provides relationship and attachment
- Is consistent
- Is open about 'different' behaviour
- Is helpful
- Is in tune with children and young people
- Is there

The residential practitioners had listed what they considered important to their young people in the relationship with them:

- Honesty
- Being consequent in one's behaviour and doing what one says
- Being solid
- Commitment
- Listening and talking
- Being respectful
- Caring
- Trust
- Security/safety
- A sense of fun
- Attachment (if possible)
- Reinforcement
- Boundaries
- Positivity
- Clarity
- Not making promises (a point widely discussed and considered important as young people had often been made promises, which were broken. To spare disappointment, workers felt it important not to make promises)

In summary, these two lists mainly overlap, which is a sign that participants are well aware of what the young people value in their relationships with them. But such an exercise highlights that it is often the very simple things that count, like being there and having time for the young person, appreciating their opinions and wishes by trying to do the things they ask, or being somebody who seems approachable and who they can confide in. This demonstrates the essentiality of the *personal* pedagogue, because a pedagogic relationship is a human relationship and as such always personal.

Participation and Ownership

A further set of questions we asked participants to ponder about in small groups were concerned with ownership and participation. In order to assess what measures are already in place, where participation could be improved and how this could practically be done, the groups analyzed where it is possible to give children and young people a sense of ownership in their children's home. Our aim was not to judge how well participation was implemented into institutions but rather to raise awareness and build on previous discussions from the day, where it had emerged that participation is vitally important and brings great benefits. This exercise also included possibilities to exchange ideas about best practice and for participants to discuss with others how different institutions involved their children and young people in different processes. These discussions went very well, and we came up with a wealth of possibilities to convey ownership, ranging from involvement in house meetings, recruitment, planning the menu, referral and care plans to changing the culture of a residence towards a homely atmosphere where children and young people can personalize their rooms, or where they have their own organic garden – and participants seemed keen on getting ideas from other units and seemed to be really open about where they saw possibilities to improve participation in their units.

Transferring Learning

As on the days before, the final part of the training looked at the transfer of learning into practice. We took time to map the learning on Mount Pedagogy, which made visible where we had come to, which issues we had covered and which also encouraged participants to start reflecting on the whole two days. We then handed out the usual creative review sheets, and the NCERCC evaluation forms, which have become an important part of receiving feedback and thoughts on the issues covered.

Feedback

In the beginning of the day we had let participants draw the name of one other participant and had given everybody the task to closely but secretly observe this person throughout the day, detecting some positive and characterizing features in her or him. At the end of the day, each participant said what he or she had observed and the rest of the group guessed who it was that had been described. We felt that this variation had two learning dimensions. First, it trained participants' observation skills related to positive characteristics – a skill that is particularly important when working with young people who might show

challenging behaviour at times, because it shifts the perspective to positive attributes. In ensuring that these do not go unnoticed or are taken for granted, but can be built upon, feedback plays an important role, and giving participants time to practice feedback was the second benefit of this exercise. Additionally, it made our participants feel appreciated to receive kind words from others, it felt good for their hearts.

To finish the day, our last feedback round was magical: we handed around a wand which granted each participant three wishes, as long as they were related to the training or residential child care. This form of feedback was again a way of putting attention on positives and on possible or desired changes instead of focusing on negative things in a non-constructive way. The magical climate also left participants in an exhilarated mood and hopefully with many good wishes and ideas.

Process Analysis

The fourth day had greatly improved group dynamics and had brought the group even closer together. We think that participants started seeing the wider picture of social pedagogy as more and more 'jigsaw pieces' fell in place – clearly our input and discussion which linked in the first two days was highly beneficial and showed that we took the group's opinion and wishes seriously. While the activities on the previous day had not been enjoyed by everyone to the same extent, the level of enjoyment on the fourth day was more harmonious. On both sides there was a lot of confidence that the training was going in the right direction, and we all looked forward to the last two days, which would lead us on the top of Mount Pedagogy.

Day 5 – July 24th, 2007

The final part of the training was mainly dedicated to transferring more ownership to the participants and to get them involved with the issue of implementing a social pedagogic approach. To achieve this we planned to complete the “input” of the training content on the first day and to give them the choice to work on one of three levels of implementation on the 6th and final day.

The aim for this was to intensify their learning process by letting them perform what they had taken in during the course and to get an impression what and how they had spiritualized the content and the experiences of the previous days. Furthermore we saw it as an essential part of the pilot project to make them aware and empower them to initiate an implementation process in their unit. The outcome of this training session, concerning the implementation, would also state the opinion the participants/practitioners have of the benefits of social pedagogy and what, in their point of view, is needed on different levels of society for its implementation. This seemed to be an important contribution for the further development of an own “British” model of social pedagogy. To lead them to the path of empowerment we chose some methods which gave the trainers a much more restrained part than before, and through this more responsibility for the outcome and process of the tasks was transferred to participants. Again, we tried to use interaction sequences to offer the participants a mirror of the training content on an emotional level. From our point of view becoming aware and reflecting the personal emotions concerning a subject is very important for people working in the social field. We were supported in our decision by the intensive and holistically orientated discussions which had constantly followed these sequences in the previous sessions.

As the transfer of learning was already strongly represented by the final task of the training on the second day and as there were two evaluations from NCERCC, we refrained from using the creative reviewing sheets from the times before. On request of one of the participants the subject “challenging behaviour” was added to the agenda.

As we were conscious that the group might again fall back into the norming phase, this time we put a strong focus on making the group familiar with each other again right from the beginning.

Due to the annual leave of one of the participants we unfortunately started day 5 with one group member less. Instead we were joined by our colleague Eilen Bengtsson from Denmark who is responsible for the evaluation of the project. We had informed participants in the previous session about her visit and her role in the project and everyone seemed to be relaxed about her presence.

Following a brief recap of the subjects already worked on in the previous sessions we presented the programme for day 5 and 6, pointing out the more active role our participants would have in this part of the training.

After some activities to promote the comfortable and intimate atmosphere in which they had parted the last time we started with the programme.

Quotations

To also get the participants tuned into the content of the training on a personal level again, we laid out some quotations on the floor. These were from well-known personalities concerning the socialisation and learning of children/young people. We asked participants to choose one which they associate with the training. We then asked each group member to present their choice and explain the relation they see. Their contributions often revealed the way they had perceived their own upbringing and that they were conscious that these experiences influence their behaviour towards the young people they work with. Furthermore, it was discussed that it would be a positive contribution if society would start seeing children and young people in a more positive way and would respect their individual needs more than they do at this point of time. But it was also seen that such a change can only take place if it coincides with wider structural changes and that this could only be done by the politicians responsible.

Furthermore they discussed that maybe a social pedagogic approach could possibly promote such a change in attitude within the workforce of residential child care and in society in general.

Common Third

After this we presented the concept of the “Common Third” which is central to the Danish understanding of pedagogy. This means that, within pedagogic settings, the pedagogue and the young person create a commonly shared situation as something third between themselves: they are sharing an activity, wherein they meet and around which they can develop their relationship. As Husen points out, “to be sharing something, to have something in common, implies in principle to be equal, to be two (or more) individuals on equal terms, with equal rights and dignity” (cited in Hatton 2006: 116). This form of a subject-subject relationship further implies that the pedagogue appears authentically, as a self-reflective person, and brings in their own personality as a resource.

This concept was already familiar to the participants through the previous activities of the training and to some of them through their previous working experience. But although they already knew the practical side of this approach we decided to present the subject in a more scientific manner to emphasise the value of its use for the building and supporting of relationships. Furthermore, we wanted to point out that these activities could be created on different levels, meaning that this could either be a bigger project like learning how to inline-skate or an every-day activity easy to materialize, like cooking.

Promoting the Research Practitioner

To initiate a dialogue about which interests/hobbies the practitioners share with the young people they are working with, we had previously given them the task to talk to the young persons about this. Apart from the wish to get the young people’s view on this subject we also hoped that this would start/support the process of the Common Third within that unit. Furthermore, through this

approach some elements of the training were made transparent to the other staff and to the young people.

To get the sharing of the results and the discussion between participants going we chose the method of “speed dating”. This meant that five chairs with participants had been placed in the middle of the room in a small circle facing outwards and that the same amount of chairs was placed opposite the others in a bigger circle so that each participant was sitting face to face with another participant of the other circle. It was then their task to talk about one possible Common Third activity each of them had found out through their research and discuss ways of realising such an activity in their unit. After 2 minutes we interrupted the conversations and asked the participants of the outside circle to move to the next seat. This continued till everybody from the inside circle had spoken to everyone from the outside circle.

The participants really liked this method, because it gave them the opportunity to have a short and intense conversation with several people. They also commented that they had received a number of new ideas and tips how these can be put into practice. As the trainers we were not included into the exchange of information and only asked for their feedback about whether the outcome was satisfactory. With this method our aim was that the participants would take on more ownership for the outcome of the exercise and we wanted to point out that it is very valuable to exchange experiences.

Group Challenge – Balancing the Group

To further enable them to actually experience the positive effect of the Common Third and to demonstrate what benefits can be gained by taking a manageable amount of risks, we set the whole group the task of crossing a jungle using three ropes. These ropes were tied between four trees, about 60 cm above the ground at the beginning, and the trees stood between 3,5 and 5,5 metres apart from each other. As the jungle ground was infested with dangerous animals, they were not allowed to touch the ground and if one did they would all have to go back to the beginning. A further rule was that they had to get off the rope in reverse order to how they had mounted it.

One part of the group was very eager to start the task, the other was more quiet but did not seem unmotivated. It was evident that the group relied on 1-3 participants of the group to “manage” this task. These had proven themselves in previous days and were seen by the group as most capable for such activities. So the start was made by 2 of these by testing what and how the task had to be tackled. Doing this they were coached by the rest of the team, which they welcomed. They then did very well up to a certain point already getting half of the group to two thirds of the way, when one participant couldn’t hold the balance any more. So the whole group had to start all over again. This time they nearly came to the same point but then the part of the group which was already quite far on the rope and in danger of falling again realised that they would have to develop their own strategy, without the “leaders” who were quite far away and occupied with something else. They did not need a further start and the parties cooperated again once the others had reached them. During the second round the participants started bending the rules and we didn’t tell them off for this. Slowly they kept on bending the rules further and further.

We stayed outside for the reflection and all of the participants said that they were pleased with the way they did it (including the bending of the rules) and that they had achieved it as a team. The following discussion circled more around some special subjects than the way the group had achieved the goal. Some of the participants saw a significant cultural difference concerning the touching of one another between Britain and other countries. Quite a few participants stated that they see a certain amount of physical contact as an important aspect of developing a relationship and that some young people need it for their comfort and well-being. They also reflected that this need obviously changes, that it depends on the previous experiences and that it can be met in different kind of ways, for example with the acoustic massage we did the month before. At this point nearly all of the participants articulated how British regulations have made it nearly impossible to meet some of the physical needs of young people in residential care. But it was also seen that such regulations were put up to protect young people from negative experiences.

Risk and Benefits

After the lunch break and a short “refresher” we started on the subject of what benefits taking certain risks can bring and to help the participants to develop a personal argument base for their future work concerning this subject. With the chosen method we aimed to promote their ownership for the training and for them to be productive in the plenum without us leading.

To get them tuned in for this we showed the participants the photo of a boy standing on a wooden plank above a stream, holding a bow saw in his hand, bending over and obviously trying to saw through the plank which he was standing on. We then proposed to them the method of the “pro & contra show” or in this case “the risk and benefits show”, meaning that there is a group supporting the subject and another group opposing it – and this presented in form of a TV show. Consequently this discussion is directed by a “show-master”. So a participant was selected to act as a “show-master” and the rest of the group was divided into a pro risk and a contra risk group. The two teams and the show-master then had 15 minutes to prepare for their role and to find arguments either for taking or for avoiding risks.

To start the show the show-master was given the responsibility of directing and managing. At the beginning the groups seemed to see the task just as a fun activity. After a while the show-master started to take his position more seriously and the others joined in. The arguments that were brought forward by the “pro group” seemed more provocative like: “We can also chew the food for them so they don’t choke on it” and did not refer so much to the actual benefits that can be gained by taking risks. They also saw the rules and regulations concerning risks as a main cause for the lack of possibilities to take risks in every-day practice and that constantly more and more activities are getting assessed as a risk. Their opponents on the other hand kept on pointing out that it was very important to stick to all the rules and regulations, that they were initiated because someone had already gotten hurt or even killed and that they made sure that no unnecessary injuries could happen. Furthermore, they stated that there aren’t any benefits to be gained by risking that someone might get hurt and they were appealing to the other party on the emotional level: “Do you want people to get hurt?” After a while both parties did not see the sense in

carrying on as they did not really have such controversial opinions about this issue. At the end a common base was shared by both parties:

- Young people need a certain amount of risk to be able to manage challenging situations when they leave the shelter of the unit
- The current regulations are preventing young people in care from having enough of such “risks”
- Looked-after children have even less opportunity to be confronted with challenging situations than young people who live in their family home
- More and more everyday-life situations are being rated as having (too) high (a) risk potential.
- Staff of residential units are afraid of taking risks, because they had the impression that they personally would be held responsible if anything happened.

In the discussion the participants referred to some of the risk orientated activities the group had been tackling during the training. In some parts of this task the participants seemed to struggle to take it seriously. We are not sure if this was due to the structure of the method, due to the ownership they had been transferred or because they felt unsure about the subject.

Solution-focused Approach

The group was quite energetic after this and we continued with the programme by presenting the solution-focused approach. This approach promotes a change of perspective in the management of problems and does not see the analyses of a problem as a necessary step to its resolution. From the solution-focused view a successful therapy depends on knowing where the client wants to get to. Furthermore, it does not see problems as an indicator for underlying pathology or deficits and acknowledges that however fixed the problem pattern seems to be, there are always times when the client is already doing some solution building. The approach also values the smallest of changes in the pattern as this sometimes is enough to set in motion a solution to the problem. It is the task of the therapist to find the way in which clients are able to cooperate with therapy. The main instrument of the therapist is the use of a different kind of questions. One kind is the asking of questions to elicit examples of exceptions to the problem. These are times when a particular difficulty is less, easier to cope with or absent. To find out where the client wants to get to, the therapist needs to build up a picture of a preferred future, without the problem that has led them to seek help. To do this the therapist creates unreal situations like: “Suppose that tonight, while you are sleeping, a miracle happens and the problem that has been troubling you sorts itself out overnight... what would you find yourself doing the day after the miracle, what would others see you doing?” The last part of this approach is to attempt to acknowledge the problem in a non-blaming and non-pathologising way, to strengthen the client by for example complementing the client on his/her strengths, solution building activities etc. and to occasionally give them tasks like to observe what is already helping to move them towards a solution.

The following discussion was very short and brought to light that a few of the participants were already acquainted with some of the aspects of this approach and that one had even been trained in its use.

Vignettes

To get the participants involved into a solution process we divided the big group into three small groups. Each group was given a short description (Petrie, P.; Boddy, J., Cameron, C., Wigfall, V., & Simon, A., 2006) of an everyday-life situation in residential child care with the task of finding a solution for these particular situations. For this the groups had a short period of time to come to a solution and present this to the rest.

- The first group had the situation that a girl, aged 12 years, tells you that she is missing her parents. One night you find her crying in her room. The same girl is two hours late coming back from a day out with her father. She phones and says she would like to stay the night with her father (although this is not in his access arrangements).

The approach of the group was that they told her to come home, that they understood her need to spend more time with her father, that they could discuss together if the access arrangements should be extended and that she would not be sanctioned for being late.

- The second group had the situation that two children do not get on at all together; A says that he does not want to be near B at table. Something we haven't told you before – A is a refugee; B has made insults about his dark skin colour. One day you find them physically fighting.

The proposal of the group was to let them carry on fighting, making sure that they were similar in size and ability and that they could not hurt each other seriously. After this they would address the issue of the insult by showing up boundaries to the boy who insulted the other one and that this was not seen as appropriate behaviour and that he would have to apologize for what he had said.

- The third group had the situation that one night they find a group of children drinking beer on the premises. A few days later, late at night, you get a call from the police to say one of the children in this group is in the town centre, looking as if they might have taken drugs.

Group three decided that they would not get wound up about this until it was cleared that it was one of their children.

Looking at Challenging Behaviour from a Social Pedagogic Point of View

To achieve our aim of completing the input of the training content on this day we carried on with a short presentation of what we thought and experienced to be a social pedagogic approach to managing challenging behaviour. Giving our point of view on this was asked for by one of the participants. As an introduction

a quote from Insoo Kim Berg was read out to them with the aim to point out that there isn't just "the one" answer to tackle challenging behaviour and that circumstances are never comparable as we are all individuals with our own socialisation. Furthermore, these circumstances constantly change, sometimes from one minute to the next, and the pedagogue has to constantly adapt his or her "strategy" to these changes.

"Knowing when to push, when to let go, what to listen to, and what to ignore – all these skills are based on the profound respect for human dignity and working to restore a sense of who they are and what they want to be"

The presented headlines were:

- Evaluation of the situation;
- Or putting this aside and using a solution-focused approach...;
- Some practical approaches like: challenging the behaviour and not the person, challenge by choice, empowerment, self-judgement, strong valuation of strengths, ignoring negative behaviour and highlighting positive behaviour (reinforcement);
- Last but not least: reflecting the dose of change in managing behaviour, taking into consideration different group roles, taking care of yourself

Implementing Children's Rights

Last but not least we presented to the participants a rights-focused approach and how this could be implemented in residential child care. The rights-based approach is not meant to be just another method, but is an overarching framework which compliments existing ways of working in child care. It is based on the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child, which calls for three categories of rights: Protection, Provision, and Participation.

There are two models which can be used to implement a Rights-Based approach into Practice. The Triangle of Rights is clustered around four core principles which help interpret the UNCRC as a whole and offer a holistic way of making decisions regarding children and young people. Three of the core principles form the corners of the triangle. When the triangle is out of balance, it poses a risk of jeopardizing the right to life, survival and development, which is the fourth core principle at the heart of our work with children and young people. The three core principles forming the three corners of the triangle are non-discrimination (Article 2), best interests of the child (Article 3), and participation of the child (Article 12). For practical use, there are questions to ask around each core principle, e.g. "Are the decisions based on the child or young person's background, future and best interests?", which help maintain the balance within the triangle.

The second model describes the difference between working towards rights versus needs. Unlike a rights-based approach, a needs-based approach does not identify anyone who has a clear responsibility to meet needs. Needs – unlike

rights – do not create any valid claims on anyone to fulfil them, thus making the fulfilment of needs a charitable action dependent on the goodwill of powerful adults. By contrast, a rights-based approach focuses on the responsibility and duty under the UNCRC to uphold the minimum requirements of care outlined in the Convention. This approach also places a greater emphasis on the strengths of children and young people and their capacity to play an active part in the realisation of their rights. It encourages workers to look at underlying psychological, economic, political or institutional causes of the child's situation. It asks workers to make decisions which explore the bigger picture and challenge the causes of problems.

(Both models were developed by "Save the Children" (Vrouwenfelder, 2006).

Feedback

As most of the participants seemed exhausted, we facilitated a short energiser to get them more active again. For this a small circle was made and each participant had their left hand on the right knee on the partner sitting left to them and the right hand on the left knee of the person sitting right next to them. Doing this all arms were crossed with the arms of the neighbours. The task then was that an impulse in form of a tap on the knee would go round the circle from one knee to the next. This was practised and after a short while a further rule was introduced: if a knee was tapped twice the impulse would change its direction. To stay in the game the participants had to concentrate to lift the correct hand at the right time. If someone lifted their hand at the wrong time or not at all that hand was disqualified.

The following feedback showed that some of the participants had experienced the day and especially the afternoon in different ways. They all stated that they enjoyed the tasks of the first part (speed dating) of the day. Two participants commented that the group atmosphere had been better right from the beginning of this and that they had acknowledged the more intense group building approach of this time.

Some of them did not like the amount of theory, especially in the afternoon. Others on the other hand had “really enjoyed” the input and it had “got them thinking again”. Finally one of the participants put so much trust into the group and gave the group an insight of how much his particular needs prevent him from participating in the training as much as he would like to.

Process Analysis

The beginning of day 5 was very different to the reunion of the last time. To start with, the participants acted more familiar right from the minute they had arrived and they seemed to get back into the subject much faster than the time before. This also became clear during the first team task where they had to get into a lot of physical contact with each other and they nearly immediately came back to the level of performance from the last time. The feedback and other comments during the day showed us that some of the participants had acknowledged this difference of the group dynamics to the previous time. Another difference we were able to observe was that the participants stated different opinions and showed their dislikes and disagreements more obviously to the group. Their overall performance gave the impression that they had taken on and digested the content of the previous training days. Due to our aim to finish the level of input concerning the content of the training on this day, the timetable of the afternoon was very tight. Because of this we did not have the opportunity to introduce as many experimental learning methods as the participants are used to. Some of the feedback indicated that the issues presented would have had a higher impact if they had been worked on in a more interactive style.

Day 6 – July 25th, 2007

After the feedback from the previous day and the working attitude participants had performed we were very confident that they would be successful in working on the different levels of implementation. For us as trainers this day was quite a challenge as our role changed from leading to mainly assisting, observing and organising break times etc. To start the day we asked the participants to place themselves on an imaginative energy-barometer like we had used before on day 2. Most of them placed themselves more towards being energetic. The less energetic participants stated that they usually need some time to get going in the morning. One of the 100% energetic said that he felt “olympic” and that he was looking forward to the day.

Unfortunately, one participant could not attend due to a private matter.

Interactive Recap

To revitalize the content of what we had presented, worked on and experienced during the previous 5 days we had planned an interactive recap. For this we hung up a big piece of paper with the drawing of a head, heart and hand (indicating Pestalozzi's model) connected in a triangle, and we had prepared some cards with the headlines of the content of the training (for example “using yourself”; “child-centeredness”; “values” etc.), with headlines around the methods used in the activities (like “jigsaw”; “learning by doing”) and with some cross-boarder subjects that had not been named distinctly up until then (for example “flow”, a positive state of feeling which can develop if you do something that makes you happy and which makes you dive into the activity itself). We then started to draw out a card from the pile and briefly explained what it meant, letting participants guess the phrase on the card. Then we placed the card on the big piece of paper either near the heart, the head or the hands, depending where the subject related to the most. After a while we asked the participants to join in. Initially they seemed to struggle slightly in doing this. To break this up and revive some memorable moments we had prepared a short slideshow of all the pictures that had been taken during the training. After this we continued with the cards. We initially had planned to make the second round a pantomime round but the group did not pick this up at all and as they had already seemed uneasy with the first round we did not motivate them to do this any further. Surprisingly the second round worked out much better and it seemed that slowly everything was coming back to them.

3 Levels of Implementation

Directly after this we introduced the participants to their tasks for the day. We had prepared for them to split up in three groups and each group would work on a different level of implementation:

Level 1: Work out a mission statement for the further implementation of a social pedagogic approach in residential child care

Level 2: Work out a fieldworkers' guide to pedagogy for residential child care

Level 3: Develop a group activity you could implement with young people of a unit – the activity should contain beneficial elements of risk and enable participants to experience a flow feeling

We had decided to let the participants choose themselves what level they would like to work on. The reason for this was to use their energy on what was closest to their field of interest and heart and to put the approach of challenge by choice, which we had promoted during the whole course, into practice. This helped avoiding that they would work on something they didn't feel enthusiastic about. Luckily, each task was of interest to someone out of the group and everyone seemed very motivated to get going, particularly by the prospect of making a difference and having an impact on a wider level – considering the pilot character and the wide influence of the National Centre for Excellence in Residential Child Care, the results of these tasks are likely to be published and noted nationwide. The target we set them was to complete their task on that day, put the results into writing and present these to the rest of the group.

To support the group which worked on the mission statement, we gave them the SMITE model which is an aim-directed method. It favours the following structure:

Context: Where are we?

Aims: What do we want to achieve?

Initiative: What is going on?

Signs: What do we see?

Evaluation: How do we want to evaluate?

Working on the Task

We had booked two further rooms so that the groups could work as intense and uninterrupted as possible. For the first working phase they were given the time up until lunch. We as the trainers stationed ourselves in another room and were constantly present for the case the participants needed any help. From time to time we visited the groups to see if any assistance was needed.

All of the groups seemed very involved with their tasks and the group who was developing an activity was already getting the materials together for their presentation before lunch.

After lunch we split up the working groups for 15 minutes to initiate an exchange of information between the groups. For this one or more delegate/s of each working group were put together into three new "short exchange" groups. Apart from the level 3, who were only two, each group was represented in the new groups. After this the original groups were formed again and they continued with their task.

The level 3 group who had already finished with putting their idea into writing used this time to prepare their activity outside.

Presentation of the Results

The presentation of the results was started with the group who had the task to develop a group activity which could be implemented with young people from a residential care unit. They had worked out an outdoor and experiential learning activity, which could be adapted to a large number of people if necessary. For the actual presentation we as trainers handed over the leadership to the two participants of that group.

During the activity and the reflection round it became visible that they considered many aspects like:

- How can you get everybody involved?
- Initiating a confrontation with different abilities
- Need to develop long-term strategies
- Promoting communication
- Promoting cooperation
- Promoting the challenge by choice approach
- The fun-factor
- Building up physical contact
- Working with the imagination

After the activity itself the two participants lead the reflection round by roughly using the three steps method we constantly used in the training for this:

- What happened?
- How did it work? / What did work?
- What is important for further tasks? Are their parallels to my field of work?

The feedback showed that the others enjoyed the task and they encouraged the two participants responsible to rethink the amount of rules and the presentation of these to the group.

Both stated that they enjoyed their task, that they felt comfortable in their role and that it had worked out like they had imagined it.

Description of the activity:

Cat That Got the Cream

RULES:

- 1) One blindfold for the group.
- 2) All participants must be touching at least 1 other person to form a new circuit light.
- 3) Cream for the cat can only be removed by the 2 people in contact nearest the cream.
- 4) Cream must reach the outside of the circle without being dropped and the circuit being broken.
- 5) All participants must return in a safe manner to the starting point in reverse order (Last in first out).

Introducing story:

“You are lost on a strange planet after your pleasure cruise to the planet Zog came under heavy fire from the hideous insect barbarians of Gromblethen IV. You are

exploring the planets surface when you are captured by a tribe of Cat People, and having failed to rescue your trusty supply of catnip have no means of escape.

To earn your freedom you have been instructed to retrieve the Holy Cream of Gnargg and find yourself with your surviving comrades in front of a large chasm that is inaccessible other than by a number of fiendishly placed metal slabs. It looks easy enough to cross until you notice at the far side of the clearing a deadly-blinding radiation kill beam emitter that is covering the entire area. This appears to be connected to a pressure pad on the far side of the chasm.

You also notice that the cage holding the cream is double booby trapped by both a cage that looks as if it needs a static current to lift it. If the current is broken, then it will surely fall down again. To add to your problems, an eagle eyed member of your party spots that the cream holder is also protected by a dual DNA detector beam, meaning that somehow, 2 of you will need to grab the cream at once.”

The group which worked on developing a **mission statement** for the further implementation of the social pedagogy approach in the residential child care read out their results to the group. They had taken up the structure of the SMTTE model and had added the point of “Further thoughts about what is needed to work with a more pedagogic approach”.

Like before the end product shows that the participants involved had taken the content and experiences in and were able to reproduce their knowledge in form of a mission statement. The rest of the group agreed with the outcome and said that they had felt informed and part of the result through meeting in the mixed groups earlier on.

The developed mission statement:

What is Needed for Residential Child Care to Adopt a More Pedagogic Approach

An analysis by participants of the NCERCC social pedagogy seminars

CONTEXT

Where residential child care currently is:

- Overly regulated
- Backdrop of historic allegations of abuse
- Differing understandings of the residential task
- Risk averse
- Sector undervalued (Task, Young People and Staff)
- Society’s perception of Children looked after
- Excellent Practitioners

Available resources:

- Existing staff
- Cross fertilisation of practice
- NCERCC/York Uni/SIRCC/SCIE etc
- Existing Training
- Other workers (CAMHS etc)

AIMS

What do you want to achieve

- A pedagogic approach that underpins practice
- Create the rich child
- Address negative perceptions of children's residential care and CLA
- Challenge the value placed on the task/ staff and young people

INITIATIVE

What is going to create change

- Training of staff in pedagogy/social education/experiential learning
- Existing training linked/themed to Hands/heads/hearts
- Pedagogues visiting children's homes
- These seminars to be replicated on a team basis
- Consultancy from Silvia and Gabriel
- International exchanges
- Acknowledge we are already doing a lot of the pedagogic approach

SIGNS

What we are going to see

- Greater team spirit
- Richer children
- Improved group dynamics
- Higher level of fun throughout
- Sense of belonging
- Happy children

EVALUATION

- Evaluate the outcome
- All staff and young people to take part
- To evaluate the success
- The intention of the evaluation is to identify how this could be translated into other homes
- Timescales for evaluation – ongoing including at handover meetings/staff meetings team days consultation visits by a pedagogue

Further thoughts about what is needed to work with a more pedagogic approach:

- Consistent implementation across the country
- Young people's involvement in interviewing (new staff)
- Clear definition of Corporate Parenting
- Clear understanding of the Residential Task
- Clear out the 'dead wood'!
- Pedagogy themes throughout all existing trainings
- Value residential care
- Acknowledge strengths and failings of the NVQ process (measure a minimum standard)
- Give residential workers permission to be creative
- Keyworking sessions – head, heart, hands
- Information sharing
- Multi-agency training on pedagogy

- Cross-fertilization of practice and ideals
- Standardisation of paperwork
- Matching processes
- Costs of placements

This also applies to the group which worked on the **fieldworkers guide for pedagogy**. They obviously had also taken on board most of the content of the training and the methods used. Some of the issues were joined and some were rephrased. Like before the rest of the group agreed on the results.

Outcome of the group:

Easy Read Guide to Social Pedagogy

Content:

- Definition of social pedagogy
- History of social pedagogy
- Glossary of Terms
- Group work and involvement
- Life space
- Head, heart, hand (feel, see, hear) – pedagogic triangle
- Using self – being genuine/authentic
- Ownership
- Relationship – equal roles
- Reflective practice
- Child centred approach
- Children's rights
- Concepts of children
- Risk (understanding benefits, controlled risk, risk assessments)
- Common third

Methods:

- Group exercises to build relationships and emphasis group dynamics
- Reflective practice – ways of giving feedback (observing people exercises, positive orange)
- Enjoyment/fun
- Learning through activity
- Rich child exercise
- Debates/discussions
- Value exercise
- Interactive methods
- Role play – enabling staff to be child like and remember what it's like being a child
- Solution focused – how, when, what, where

Theories to be fitted in throughout the content.

At the end of the presentation the participants were very interested what we were going to do with their outcome, what reactions these would bring and if we would feed these back to them.

The Picasso Method

To slowly bring them on the path of the final group phase – the “Saying Goodbye” – and to focus on a more sensual and practical aspect of social pedagogy again we had prepared the Picasso method for them. As we already were behind on our time schedule we let the group decide if they would be prepared to overrun in order to do what we had prepared.

For this method the group had to be split up into smaller groups with up to 4 people maximum. The groups were so far apart so that they could not see the canvas of the other groups. Each group was given one canvas, paint, brushes etc... To start this, the whole group was given a theme for painting a picture. In this case it was “social pedagogy”. The task then was that each group starts with a picture which they associate with social pedagogy, after a while (the length of time is decided by the facilitator) they were told to stop immediately and go to the picture of another group. The times this process is to be repeated depends on the number of groups involved. If possible every group should have worked on every picture. It is advisable to make it a rule that there should not be any uncovered part of the canvas at the end. This often motivates groups to be more daring in their approach. During the task it became obvious that some of the participants found it hard to stop painting when they were told to do so.

After finishing the task the group stated that they enjoyed the task but found it hard to go away from something when they had not come to the point they had aimed for. Furthermore, they said that it took some time to grasp the intention that stood behind what had already been painted. Being asked if they see any relation to their work some saw a strong resemblance to situations they often are confronted with, for example that they never know how the next young person that would be placed with them would be like, that some young persons leave again before they could achieve what they had aimed for and that the young people often had already had other “painters” in their live.

Feedback

After completing the two evaluation forms we eventually came to the ritual of the “end of day feedback round”. As this was the last time, we had written quotes on little pieces of paper and rolled these up. These were placed in a cotton bag with some “magic social pedagogy” gems to give the participants the necessary energy and patience to strive on the implementation of the social pedagogy approach. One by one the participants gave each other a quote, stated their impression of the day/training and chose one of the gems for themselves. As this was the last feedback of the whole training many of the contributions related to all of the sessions. Some of the statements were:

- that they hoped that the social pedagogy approach would spread,
- that they liked the methods,
- being so active,
- that they had never thought they would get so physically close to other participants in a training,
- that they felt comfortable with the group,
- that it will change their work,
- that it has changed their approach to work already,
- that they had developed as group,
- that they really enjoyed it.

Process Analysis

Looking at the group performance from the content point of view the day started off in a rather slow mode – so slow that we became a bit concerned if they were going tackle the central task of that day. These doubts quickly diminished once they started getting into the interactive recap and their high

performance continued during the whole day. We were able to observe three groups which got involved in an in-depth discussions about the chosen issue and who were so eager that some of them skipped breaks. From our point of view the last day was a true performance day for the group. At all times of the training they had been eager and willing to work on the subjects of the course and on the group dynamics. This last day somehow seemed like the harvest of our joint efforts. We see the possibility of visiting participants in their unit, involving them in the regional seminar and all of them going to a European workshop for social pedagogues in Ghent as a chance to support the participants in their aim to implement a social pedagogic approach beyond the end of the course.

Follow-up Visits

On the last day of the training participants were offered a follow-up visit in their unit with the aim to evaluate what aspects from the training they would already have implemented and to reflect with them how this process would have worked out. Due to the project timeline these follow-up visits took place at the beginning of September, thus giving participants time to take first steps and start with the implementation where they felt their practice would benefit most. Considering that 7 weeks between the end of training and the follow-up visit is a short period of time – especially in summertime where most of the staff take their annual leave – it can be difficult to introduce something new into a team.

For each visit we had planned a 3 hours visit, which meant that we could visit all children's homes. Those participants working in a management position outside of a unit met with us at one of the units belonging to their head organisation. One participant did not take part in the follow-ups as she wasn't present when we were planning the dates and we did not have any more time available. One unit could not be visited as that participant had to cancel our meeting due to personal reasons, so we ended up visiting five children's homes altogether.

The results we found can be summarized under four headlines: we were told about changes in procedures and practice, about the personal impact the training has had on working styles, and about how other members of the team were informed about social pedagogy in order to convince them to adopt a more social pedagogic approach; some participants talked about how they had used some of the methods and exercises from the training. Further, participants also emphasized that the implementation has only just begun and that they intend to take further steps in the near future – they also made suggestions on how to improve future social pedagogy trainings.

Changes in Procedures

Although it is difficult to deduct general conclusions from these five visits, we had the impression that, depending on the level of responsibility, participants had chosen different approaches of how to implement aspects of the training. Participants who are working in middle management positions seemed to be primarily interested in ensuring that all members of staff were well-informed about what social pedagogy is, while participants in a more fieldwork-based position were primarily interested in how to practically transfer their learning from the seminars.

Many changes that we were told about are not necessarily exclusively due to our social pedagogy training, but it became clear that the training had inspired participants and had often given them a new perspective on their practice, a rationale and professional arguments for changes that had already started. As a result of having read a text about the Polish pedagogue Janusz Korczak on the first training day, participants from one unit were inspired to change the procedure following incidents in their children's home. Where formerly a sanction book had been in place to record incidents by filling out a sheet listing what had happened, writing down what sanction followed and getting the young person to sign the form at the end of the shift, they decided that practice would work better – or at least not worse – without sanctions. According to our

participants, the sanction book had meant that shifts ended on a negative note and that the underlying cause of the incident was not adequately dealt with – it was rather lost in the paperwork. Not having sanctions also gave the advantage that young people were taken seriously and that they experienced the consequences of their behaviour and in accordance took more ownership for their behaviour.

Another change following from discussions in the seminars about participation was that the recruitment procedures had been changed in one unit. With the intention to better recruit staff with a good heart, this unit now invites applicants to informally spend some time with the young people and the staff team prior to the interview.

The same unit had also developed a reward system for the young people. While we didn't talk in great detail about the system itself, we discussed the way it was set up – not by the managers but by the fieldworkers themselves. The managers had reflected that they could give their team ownership and responsibility by letting them develop a reward system on their own instead of telling them what to do. They were clear on the learning benefits for staff in this process.

Another unit had previously started a reward system for their young people and were now using pedagogic arguments why their approach seemed beneficial: through certificates for even the smallest achievement they aimed to give young people a sense of their own achievement. Again, this approach focuses on the positives and aims to reinforce positive behaviour rather than sanction negative behaviour. It is also a visually attractive way to demonstrate a young person's progress – often there is little that shows the development of a child throughout the years in care.

One unit explained that following from the training they had started to give the children more decision-making power and responsibility in everyday life. This meant that there is less pressure from staff, who let the children decide and experience the consequences of their actions. They aimed to improve this further in the future.

Throughout the visits, and particularly in one unit, we also noted a change of language away from complaints and sanctions and directed more towards positives.

In line with the idea of the Common Third, one unit reported that they had already organized an outing for all staff together with the children, and that everyone had been able to see the others from a different perspective (personal pedagogy) and thus to develop deeper relationships with each other.

In two units, participants stated that they had not actually changed their approach as they were already working on a high level and towards a social pedagogic approach. They acknowledged that this approach was working very well, which underpins that social pedagogy is beneficial and can make a difference: best practice in residential care shows striking parallels to social pedagogy (see also Petrie et al., 2006). Similarly, we were often told that many pedagogic elements are already there, but that social pedagogy meant to participants to put these elements into context and to get the right balance between them. In this sense, social pedagogy is about bringing these parts together to create something whole, something that is more than the sum of its parts.

Personal Assessment of Training Impact on Working Style

Although many participants stated that most aspects of social pedagogy from the training were not completely new to them and that they are already doing a lot social pedagogy, all of the participants said that the training has had an empowering effect on them, has given them renewed confidence or has reinforced their working style. Many also felt more legitimated to work using more of their common sense rather than robotically following procedures. Some said that social pedagogy gave their work an aim and made practice more goal-directed: 'social pedagogy gives something to work on to'. In summary we gained the impression that the training has had diverse personal benefits for participants and that these have helped improve their practice. Similar conclusions can be gathered from the extensive evaluation of the project, which has had a more detailed focus on the personal effect of the training.

Spreading the Word – Introducing the Staff Team to Social Pedagogy

During our visits we were able to observe very different approaches the participants had taken to spread what they had learnt and experienced in the training. But obviously all of them had talked to some or all members of staff about it. Some had done it in an informal setting, whereas other units have additionally planned to introduce social pedagogy more formally on team days. The reaction they received from their colleagues seemed to be positive and full of curiosity for the subject. Two organisations have already chosen to spread the knowledge and experience through several staff development days. Both are taking the approach of piloting social pedagogy in one unit only to see if and how something like this should and could be facilitated. And after evaluating this they are planning to include all the other units from the organisation. As their working position would suggest these participants seem to look at the implementation of the social pedagogic approach from a much broader angle and on a very long-term basis. One unit structured the implementation of the social pedagogy approach into three steps:

- Awareness for social pedagogy: done through meetings and updates for all homes of organisation
- Understanding: using methods of the training in practice at one unit and keeping other unit manager updated
- Implementation with children

All participants were conscious that the implementation will be a long-term process, that staff must have the opportunity to adapt, and some also saw the need to make it a dialectic process for the rest of the staff, as in the training where we fitted the daily programme around the demands and the learning process of the group.

In one unit where a major change in procedures had taken place the staff could not really see sense in the change and did not understand the rationale and pedagogic ideas underpinning this change. While they did not feel that the change of approach had improved things, they acknowledged that it had not made things worse. We do not know how staff members were informed about

social pedagogy or how the decision for this change had been discussed with the team.

Some participants found it hard to ‘sell’ social pedagogy to others as it is not a concrete concept, not easy to describe and grasp, and they sometimes felt unsure if they were on the right track themselves. This implies – and some participants stated this explicitly – that ongoing support from social pedagogy experts would ensure that participants stay on course and that the momentum will not be lost.

Applying Learned Exercises

The two units who are already in the process of facilitating training for their staff have used some of the exercises and are planning to go further with this. Both units have realized the value of the experiential learning methods in making the participants not only understand but also develop a feeling for situations similar to those the young people in their care are sometimes in. One of the participants felt unsure in using some of the methods, especially how to enable the participating staff to reflect on the relation of their experiential learning experience and their work – which we then explained.

Looking Forward – Plans for Further Changes

All visited units had plans to strive further with the implementation of a social pedagogic approach. Some of them are seeing this as a never-ending process, as their practice and society are constantly changing. As before, the plans were made at different levels of implementation. One unit was planning to change their kitchen more towards being a place where the Common Third can take place in a more inviting atmosphere. Another unit was planning a stronger focus on the Common Third and on group dynamics. As already mentioned above, some units are planning trainings on the whole spectrum of the social pedagogy approach and others are planning more targeted trainings concerning special subjects like group work. To make use of all the knowledge and further experiences in the implementation process some participants are already networking with each other and are planning to extend this. We were also told that two of the participants will present social pedagogy to other managers at a regional networking meeting, thus continuing with awareness-raising in the North-West.

Suggestions for Improving the Implementation Process

Nearly all except one unit suggested that from their point of view implementing social pedagogy would take place on a more intense level if there was further support for units, meaning that there should be consultations from social pedagogy experts in order to enable other members of staff to pick up on the social pedagogic approach and to assess what further changes should or could be made and how these can be done. One unit went a step further in suggesting an even wider awareness campaign to improve understanding why the social pedagogy approach is important and that it can make children’s lives better. One participant who had been the only one to participate from her unit pointed

out that an implementation would be easier if at least two members of a unit took part in the training. From her point of view two are better able to motivate, control and support each other in this process.

Comments About the Training:

A few participants commented on the training, its content and the methods used. All of them saw the methods as a constructive approach to get participants active and personally involved. Many compared this training to previous ones where they mainly had to sit and listen. Two participants from one unit suggested to extend the input about the history of pedagogy and the basis of social pedagogy so that the understanding of the whole concept would be more profound. For one participant the last two days got it all together and in some cases she did not realize during the training what deeper meaning it had. But being reflective she is noticing it now. Furthermore, in the training she started enjoying things like the outdoor activities she did not like before.

Settings of Follow-up Meetings:

In all units we experienced an open, friendly atmosphere and most of the staff present were interested to learn what this mysterious training and approach was all about. In some informal discussions at meals we talked to them alone and had the opportunity to chat about their work and sometimes even reflect where and how this related to social pedagogy.

Reflection:

One observation that we made is that social pedagogy seems to work better in residential practice when the level of hierarchy is low, when management and fieldworkers create an equal team working with a coherent approach. This is not a particularly surprising finding, but it is important nonetheless, because it emphasises that social pedagogy also relies on a non-hierarchical approach: commanding workers to adopt a more social pedagogic approach will not produce the desired results – rather it is vital that managers know the practical implications of social pedagogy and are close enough to the base to experience social pedagogy in practice.

All visits demonstrate that social pedagogy is transferable into English residential practice and that it is not completely new but can build on existing best practice: ‘we do a lot social pedagogy all the time’. However, there are clear cases where social pedagogy meets boundaries due to existing regulations. One such issue we touched upon is the care-leaving process, which – at least in Wales – showed little understanding of the social and emotional needs of young people in care but rather had a one-dimensional preconception that young people had reached a sufficient level of maturity by the age of 16. Another sensitive issue where social pedagogy is rendered ineffective is current regulations around risk and risk assessments. According to the participants we discussed this with, the rules are so strict that it is virtually impossible to implement some aspects of social pedagogic work with children in care, because workers would expose themselves to legal liability. This means that it is not always possible ‘to do what is right instead of what is correct’, as the pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi demanded. Social pedagogy will need confident workers who trust in their professional judgment without fear of litigation. The third issue arising was concerned with social perceptions of children in general and of looked-after children in particular. The stereotype of these young people

as 'naughty' still prevails in the community and leads to discrimination against young people in care. Participants pointed out that this needs to be addressed – and hopefully social pedagogy can contribute to valuing residential practice.

The great advantage that social pedagogy can bring is that it links into current practice and brings the 'head, heart, and hands' into a balance by creating connections between existing approaches.

In reflection, while visiting the units two months after the training made sense and ensured that participants felt our support, the implementation will require a longer trial period, and it would be ideal to visit all children's homes again in six months' time.

We want to express our gratitude for the enthusiasm we encountered among our participants. Some of them even met up with us although they were on leave (and rescued us when we locked the keys in the boot of our rental car). The work that all of them have been doing in integrating some of the thoughts, concepts, and ideas they gathered during the seminars into their practice deserve our full respect and have exceeded our expectations. Though their ways of implementation are different and have been following different paces, all of them have taken steps that fit to their individual practice and which are authentic.

Ways Forward

From our point of view, the approach tried in this part of the NCERCC pilot project has clear benefits. Delivering social pedagogy training takes participants out of their unit, which is synonymous with their comfort zone. By putting them into a new group and a new environment, we think we have sparked highly interesting learning processes. For one, there is the personal benefit in that many participants, if not all, have learned new theories, new methods, new skills, and have reflected from a different perspective on their personal practice. Irrespective of what will be implemented on an institution-wide level, we think that participants have gained strong confidence in their own abilities, knowledge and skills – we could say that they have improved their head, their heart, and their hands – and we are certain that this has a positive benefit for the children and young people as well as colleagues they are working with.

Our approach also had the benefit that participants could really experience pedagogy in practice, as we aimed to offer holistic learning opportunities that allowed participants to fully grasp what social pedagogy really is – even if it might still be difficult to explain. They have gone through an intensive group process, which has proved how valuable a resource groups can be as well as how to direct such a process. In summary, our training was not only *about* pedagogy: pedagogy was ever-present, in the methods we used, in the exercises we chose, in the behaviour and the interaction we showed as trainers, the relationships we built, and in the concepts and thoughts we discussed.

And it was not only us trainers who lived pedagogy; all participants lived it with us. We hope they will continue living pedagogy in their residential practice, and they will incite their colleague's curiosity about social pedagogy. And hopefully, they will have taken new ideas into their practice and will be eager to improve residential child care for the benefit of children looked after.

The training has shown that there is much to build on to – social pedagogy is not entirely new: residential practitioners share the same philosophy, the same motivation of making a difference for children in care, and important modules of a social pedagogic approach are already in place, e.g. participation. The opportunities that social pedagogy brings for residential child care should therefore not be seen as devaluing current practice. Instead, social pedagogy offers 'freshness' – a critical reflection of one's own practice strengthened with grounded theory, a new language that conveys a positive concept of children, and a new perspective in re-defining residential child care.

Appendix – Mount Pedagogy

