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**a) Why focus on processes and how**

The processes of pedagogical interventions are a primary subject of inquiry, and not only in terms of their capacity to facilitate transmission or exploration of content (e.g. which process are more adapted to explore the concept of racism, or early school leaving as a matter of fact). Rather, because the process itself implies learning. Indeed, learning does not only take place through a transmission of information: the actions, interactions, routines that happen in a workshop shape behaviours, interaction patterns that participants can use outside the workshop. For instance: how participants interact with their peers, how they relate to hierarchy, how they handle tension and conflicts. These elements may sometimes be considered as marginal in a pedagogical intervention, but we would argue, that in workshops focusing on young people at risk of ESL they are as important (or possibly more important) than talking *about* the subject of early school leaving. These may be the “active ingredients”.

**Identifying active ingredients**

To highlight the importance of aspects of the workshop process we borrow the metaphor of “active ingredients” used by Belgian artist / art mediator Werner Moron. In medicine, “active ingredients” refer to those components of a chemical, which are responsible for change in the body (the component that reduces fever, fights bacteria etc.). Similarly, in art interventions or all pedagogical interventions “active ingredients” describe the components responsible for changes that can unfold through a workshop. Identifying the active ingredients is what would allow us to see what really mattered in the workshops. So, this is our objective in this chapter.

**How did we proceed?**

To explore the processes of the workshop we asked facilitators in all workshops to keep diaries, to write down their expectations and perceptions concerning the specific phase of the workshop. We also asked participants to interview each other concerning the workshop process. Finally we asked facilitators to define key elements of the workshop.

**b) The starting point: negotiating meaning and processes**

Processes are not only a source of learning but also a result of it. Indeed, both “Forum theatre” and “Community reporting” seemed to be new methods for both the participants and the schools / intermediary institutions that the partners were in touch with. This “newness” implied that both the meanings and the processes of the workshops had to be negotiated with

the participants and also the teachers / educators that we were in contact with. All workshops started with such negotiations that took place more or less explicitly, and more or less easily. Although the starting points were different, in several workshops the unfamiliarity with the methods often implied a sense of resistance from both participants and teachers. That is, the starting point for negotiations was often not a neutral point but a negative one.

### Challenges met at the beginning of the workshops

- Young people physically fighting
- Young people throwing around and damaging art equipment (Play Doh and pens)
- Young people constantly talking and interrupting the trainer combined with outright refusal to take part in activities
- Young people filming/taking photos of one another without consent
- Young people constantly trying to access the internet to download apps or access Facebook, despite being told this was against the rules
- Young people moving/throwing dangerous items including snooker balls and a chair
- Despite games and warm-ups there was a general refusal to work in pairs – this was supported by the youth staff who said it would be better if people worked as individuals.
- The centre had a culture of young people being able to ‘choose not to participate’ and this combined with a lack of staff support meant that engaging the group was extremely difficult
- Some of the young people were behaving in a challenging way, refusing to take part, using inappropriate language and then taking part but giving inappropriate answers (messing around and swearing)
- Staff organising outings at the same moment where the workshops were supposed to take place

### ***Negotiating the meaning: what are the workshops for?***

In one of the workshops the young participants assumed they were sent because they were the “problem students” and that the workshops were some kind of punishment. The facilitators had to reposition the workshops so that participants understand it not as a compulsory exercise deserving resistance but an opportunity to learn.

### ***Negotiating the processes and rules of collaboration***

Young people following regular school system are often unfamiliar with any alternative to the frontal teaching model based on discipline and rigid distribution of roles. When such discipline is lifted, often chaos follows, for the lack of familiarity with any other style of learning or collaboration. Participants had to acquire the skills necessary to listen to each other, to be able to pay attention and focus even when they are not disciplined by the authority figure. They had to recognise that even if the rules are not coerced in an authoritarian way, rules of collaboration do exist and are needed to allow the joint work. They had to integrate these new rules encompassing mutual respect and protection, as well as active participation and self-disclosure etc.

### ***Negotiating roles: who are we in the interaction?***



In an authoritarian setting the division of rules is clear-cut: some have authority; others do not. Some possess knowledge; others receive it. In contrast, facilitators using non-formal pedagogy position themselves in a more egalitarian way (even if we cannot talk about complete equality). The relationship between participants and facilitators is not based on power difference but on partnership. This itself requires a delicate negotiation between letting participants get close to facilitators, being friendly on one hand and being able to keep limits on the other hand.

### ***Negotiating between content and process***

A particularity of the Y4Y workshops was that while choosing fundamentally non-directive methodologies the project imposed a pre-selected theme, that of early school leaving. Contrary to what is genuine to these methods participants were not completely free in detecting the subject matters important to them, but had to search for issues and oppressions connected to this theme. Several facilitators perceived this as an interesting challenge and all of them had to negotiate between the desired freedom of process and autonomy of participants' choice and the need to explore this particular problem.

### ***Negotiating commitment or a common identity***

Developing loyalty towards the other participants; starting to learn the ways of working, and having an understanding of the meaning of the workshop are key conditions to be properly committed to joint work. We can also understand these as the anchors to adhere to a common identity. When facilitators are sure the participants will come back the following day, and the starting point is not resistance but a willingness to contribute to something created together. When this happens, real transformation can take place.

## **c) Active ingredients**

### ***Creating a group that trusts***

We have seen in the chapter before that facilitating the development of relationships between students is not a usually important concern of the schools. Even though relational skills are possibly the most important key competence for success in social life. In our workshops creating a good cohesion and trust was the first objective. Indeed the group can be a very strong resource in a learning process but also an inhibitor if there are tensions and resistances. Facilitators spend much of their time / energy on monitoring, reacting to, adjusting to the group climate. One of the workshops had participants from two different schools with slightly different demographic profiles. One of their facilitators told us that “during her first 3 sessions, after the 3 hour-long workshops I felt as if I had worked in a mine for a complete day without breaks. The group required tremendous attention because of the size and the tensions of getting to know each other”. Then the breakthrough happened one day later when “there were much less participants than before. This helped the group to feel more comfortable; the atmosphere was calmer and more intimate. This point helped the group to reflect on each other easier, and to open up for the strangers as well.” That day participants in this workshop managed to establish a group cohesion and collaboration on which they could build on during the consecutive sessions.

In some workshops, the delicate task of threading social connections was done through dyadic (pair) activities, because it was easier for participants to open at first just towards another person, and then once sufficient number of pair activities took place, it was easier to

open “towards the group”. Most of the time group building is done through alternating games with moments of self-disclosure.

### ***Play and demechanisation***

One of the basic ‘habits of mind’ (Winner, Gardner 2006) students often learn in school is that there are questions to which there are specific good answers, and all others are mistakes, are wrong. In contrast, all of our workshops started with introductory sessions focusing on play games. Either with objects, with their own bodies or with each other, the playful activities offer an experience of cheerful easy existence. “Mistakes” are allowed, or even more: “celebrated” as precious occasions for learning. The FT process includes a phase of “demechanisation” where participants break the routines that are inscribed into their bodies by the repetition of daily actions. For Boal, creator of the FT method, demechanisation - i.e. getting rid of our mechanised routines - is a necessary first step to prepare body and mind for creative work.

### ***Becoming (again) embodied beings***

Western-European style education has a great tradition of separating body and mind. Take an average school: most of the time when in class, the students are confined in a seated position to their chairs and tables, only their minds should be busy. The training of the body is the responsibility of a specially dedicated subject, that of physical education. In contrast, both methods – and in particular Forum Theatre are embodied methods. Participants are engaged physically – mentally - emotionally without segmenting these much-connected aspects of their functioning. In FT particularly, body becomes a source of awareness. In “demechanisation” activities they are invited to “walk in space” adopt different rhythms, move out of their ordinary body repertoire. In “image theatre” participants are encouraged to create bodily reflections of concepts / roles / situations. All through the process they are encouraged to identify bodily sensations as relevant information about their state of mind.

### ***The reflected self / in dialogue***

People often dislike hearing their own voice or seeing themselves on film. Usually because what we see is not what we imagine. The voice we hear internally sounds different than the one channelled through the media, and in real life there are very few opportunities where we actually see ourselves from an external point of view. Such occasions indeed are extremely rare, and are effectively transformative experiences. Everyone reacts emotionally to their own image, and adjust what they perceive to what they thought of themselves.

Community reporting invites participants to reflect on their experience and then tell their story in the way that they want to tell it and then record themselves using either video or audio. While some participants take time to feel comfortable in reflecting with support most participants accept the challenge. The stories are then shown to the group in a feedback and reflective session. Here they have a chance to give each other constructive feedback and participants are invited to identify elements that they appreciate in each-others’ stories as well as provide different perspectives on the story and the ways forward. This not only gives them confidence in telling their story and a sense of being heard the supportive nature of the feedback allows them to reflect their experience and listen to other perspectives thus overcoming any embarrassment issue they may have had at the start of the process

Seeing ourselves on film is not the only way our workshops can trigger self-reflection. Several workshops included an activity quite at the beginning, which invited participants to speak for 30 seconds / one minute to others. This activity proved to be such a particularly challenging one, that at first many participants resented: they had a concrete experience of how the presence of others has an impact on their capacity to speak, and a somewhat

objective measure of their communication skills: could they speak in a sensible way just for one minute?

All in all, receiving feedback from others, understanding what our own impact is on others are one of the most important elements in the workshop. They help participants develop a dialogical potential that is the bases of all transformative interaction.

### ***Questioning the unquestioned***

The workshops do not only trigger reflection on the self but also on a variety of subjects – more or less closely related to ESL. In several workshops, it came as a revelation to participants that they could take a step back and reflect on issues they never thought about before, because until then it was deemed evidence: why are we going to school for instance? Why do adults work? Is it “evident” that adults take jobs they don’t enjoy because of necessity? In some workshops participants talked about about how they learned to rethink past actions or behaviours, how they reconsidered their connections to peers they considered worthless suddenly discovering they were fun people after all.

### ***Creating a piece, using media***

Both FT and CR methods have end products. Unlike some form of interventions where the learning through the process is the primary objective, in these workshops participants develop either a theatre piece (which they present to an audience) or short videos (which they present to others). The existence of these end products implies a constraint, but also gives a focus to the work. The need to finish the work by a specific deadline helps to structure the collaboration.

### ***Collectivisation and sharing: my story is meaningful for others***

Both FT and CR consider it a key step to move from the individual to collective, shared stories. At this point is where is possible to differentiate pedagogical processes from therapy processes. While therapy focuses on one individual story, the collectivization of the stories (where one individual story has a common point with another individual story) opens up the possibility of peering education; my problems are no longer "just my problems because I am wrong, or bad, etc.." but is possible for participants to identify social structures that affect all of them and to learn how precisely this social structures affect our personal psychology and also our collective psychology (collective unconscious, Carl Jung). (connect it with video lesson number two)

This process itself is an empowering moment of insight for individuals and moments of peer education, as it brings significant learning.

Realizing that the problem one struggles with also implies difficulty for others lifts the individual’s culpability and opens up a great resource for the search for solutions. It is this potential that the explicit focus on peer learning takes one step further.

### ***Taking responsibility for others in peer learning***

“The best moment in the whole workshop was to see how the workshop participants engaged with their younger audience and became facilitators of their learning managing small group discussions about the Forum Play”. For one of the facilitators, offering youngsters a role of responsibility towards a younger peer was an essential moment of the project. Indeed, being able to take an expert role implies recognition of their learning process and personal empowerment.

#### **d) The synergies of the two methods**

One of the main missions of the project was to explore the possible synergies between CR and FT methods: map where they can be complementary, where they can facilitate the objectives of the other methods. While a prezi (<https://prezi.com/view/KA0rKtjvqY143OsFuLa3/>) prepared by the Y4Y team can walk you through the main steps of how such a fusion could be possible, here we would just focus on a couple of points focusing on the processes.

#### ***What CR can bring into a FT process***

- Participants tell their story and present it as a vox pop which provides a focus that can help structure the FT process
- The use of media as an interface in interaction for groups to whom the use of technology can have an extra appeal or who may be more in a position of resistance to the idea of engaging with other people immediately
- An opportunity for self-reflection through watching oneself express ideas on film
- Inviting each participant to engage with others, develop communication / listening skills, being curious to another.
- videos made by the youngsters during a theatre process helped a lot in the 'collectivisation' of the stories, the video making was the tool to find collective stories to work later on with the final play (see 2<sup>nd</sup> video lesson by LaXixa about creating collective stories)
- Through the need to create a film: a focus / creative constraint that can structure the process
- Through the physical end product: a trace that remains even after the workshop process

#### ***What FT can bring into a CR process***

- A variety of playful activities to start a workshop process and build a group with strong cohesion and trust, prepare participants for the creative work.
- Work in embodied way, help participants prepare for communicating in ways where body and mind are aligned, focused. Embodied activities also enable the methods to work in non-conscious or deeper levels of psychological functioning.
- Offer a structured way to work on / test together possible solutions to the issues identified through the forum presentation. Develop hands on / embodied / practical strategies to address oppressions / difficult situations.
- Help people to reflect their experience and support them to decide the story that they want to tell
- Help capture their journey through the FT process and the change and reflection that have taken place on an individual bases.

***Please visit our video lessons to gain some more practical insight and accompaniment on how to adapt such methods!***

***[http://y4yproject.eu/en/video\\_lessons](http://y4yproject.eu/en/video_lessons)***

## References

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Diaries of facilitators / videos of participants of the FT / CR workshops held by LaXixa Teatre (Barcelona), Artemisszio Foundation (Budapest), People's Voice Media (Manchester), ABN Consorzio (Perugia). (references remain anonymous)

