Thesis : A Movie Club to develop youth's skills of reflective thinking and discussion

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2016 Laurea

Laurea University of Applied Sciences

A Movie Club to develop youth's skills of reflective thinking and discussion

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Degree Programme in Social Services
Bachelor's Thesis
September, 2016

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Movie club for the youth

Year	2016	Pages	29

This functional thesis project was conducted in partnership with Espoo city and Kirjava youth center. The goals of the project were to teach the participating youth skills of reflection and creative thinking as well as to develop their skills of communication through watching movies and discussions related to the movies. The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of education, youth education, movie education and reflection.

The implementation consisted of 4 sessions, which were executed in the months of October and November in 2016 with a changing group of 5-10 youth ranging from 13 to 20 years old. The sessions were observed and notes were made about the discussions for the use of evaluation and analysis of the project. All of the notes were made without writing any names. The information is in the form of combined statements. Permit to conduct was granted by Espoo city.

The implementation methods were a combined product of researched data relating to the topic as well as the author's own experiences in the fields of youth work and creativity. Watching movies was chosen for its ability to illustrate real life topics and situations while being able to observe them from a distance. Discussion was chosen for its capacity to analyze experienced information in an actively participating group. Each session had specific themes relating to the ones presented in the movies being watched. Some of those themes included marginalization, mental illness, youth and relationships.

The used methods were proven useful and supportive of the goals and aims of the thesis project. The youth participated actively in both parts of the sessions and a good amount of feedback was gained from them to evaluate, analyze and improve the project.

Tämä toiminnallinen opinnäytetyöprojekti toteutettiin yhteistössä Espoon kaupungin ja Kirjava-nuorisotilan kanssa. Projektin tavoitteena oli opettaa nuorille reflektiota ja luovaa ajattelua sekä kehittää heidän kommunikaatiotaitojaan katsomalla elokuvia ja sen jälkeen keskustelemalla niistä. Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehitys koostuu koulutuksesta, kasvatuksesta, elokuvakasvatuksesta sekä reflektiosta.

Projektin toteutus tapahtui neljänä session, jotka toteutettiin lokakuun ja marraskuun 2016 aikana vaihtuvalla 5-10 nuoren ryhmällä, johon osallistui nuoria ikäväliltä 13-20. Sessiot havainnoitiin ja keskusteluista tehtiin muistiinpanoja projektin arviointia ja analysointia varten. Kaikki muistiinpanot olivat nimettömiä ja informaatio opinnäytetyössä on kootun kannanoton muodossa. Lupa opinnäytetyöprojektille saatiin Espoon kaupungilta.

Toteutukseen käytetyt metodit olivat tutkitun tiedon ja opinnäytetyön tekijän oman nuorisotyön ja luovuuden yhdistetty tuote. Elokuvien katsominen metodina valittiin, koska sitä kautta pystyy havainnollistamaan oikean elämän aiheita ja tilanteita samalla mahdollistaen havainnoin niistä etäällä. Keskustelu valittiin, koska sen kautta on mahdollista analysoida kokemuksia aktiivisesti osallistuvassa ryhmässä. Jokaisella sessiolla oli omia, elokuvaan liittyviä teemoja. Näitä teemoja olivat esimerkiksi marginalisaatio, mielenterveysongelmat, nuoruus ja ihmissuhteet

Käytetyt metodit olivat hyödyllisiä ja tukivat opinnäytetyönprojektin asetettuja tavoitteita. Nuoret osallistuivat aktiivisesti sekä elokuvien katseluun, että keskusteluun ja he antoivat merkittävän määrän palautetta, jota käytettiin projektin arviointiin, analysointiin ja kehitysideoihin.

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1   Introduction

This functional thesis was a movie club for the youth that aimed to provoke thoughts and discussion about the hardships of life and how an individual or a group learns skills and concepts through those situations and matters. While the world and society around us offers education and upbringing for most of us, some people are still left outside or go through a phase in their life that offers knowledge one usually does not receive in formal education.

Growing up, developing oneself and managing living is an entirety and consists as much of formal as of informal knowledge and practice. The difference is that the informal knowledge cannot often times be compiled into a package, because the information is based on certain and specific situations, phases and matters that arise spontaneously. It is imperative to elaborate and emphasize the importance of such knowledge by bringing as much of it to formal education as possible.

It can be challenging trying to relay any kind of information or knowledge to person and even more challenging trying to do that with the youth whose attention span is often very limited and requires specific type of stimulation to keep up. While always dramatized, movies can be used to great effect as a tool regarding transmitting any knowledge and information. Watching a movie stimulates multiple senses at the same time, brings the situations to life in front of the viewers' eyes and ears and connects to them also through emotions instead of just thinking and logic.

Creative methods are important in any kind of social and health care work, because they supplement the already existing models and services. The traditional and conventional work in the fields is often set up to offer the necessary tools and services to survive in the current form of society, keeping one's health in check and maintaining overall stability in that society through the common variables of human health and social behavior. Creative methods are not only a specialized and targeted form of health care, but the core mechanic of them is to provoke emotion and reflection of different and deeper type.

This thesis project was based on several sessions where different thematic movies were watched and there was a discussion after each movie to go through the youth's general and overall feelings and opinions about the movies and then moving on to more specific and guided questions to reflect on real life issues provoked and/or touched by the movie. It was the aim of this thesis project to offer the tools of reflection through movies and discussion in a small group to the youth for further use in life.

2   Background of the thesis

The thesis project was conducted in an Espoo city youth center. Espoo itself is the second largest city in Finland and is part of the metropolitan area. What makes Espoo special is that its urban structure relies on five centers. Many international company headquarters and high technology businesses are situated in Espoo and the city has gained fame as a hub of know-how, research and development.

Espoo is a living, growing, developing and comfortable home city for 270 000 people. The city offers versatile services, good traffic communication, well nurtured areas for outdoor activities and many other important things that are essential for the wellbeing of a person. Espoo is a combination of expertise, diverse nature and good residential areas. As an occupational platform, Espoo offers encouraging work atmosphere with great possibilities to work and develop. Espoo is a smoke-free workplace. (Espoo.fi) As a working life partner in this thesis project, Espoo offered its co-operation by allowing the author to conduct the project in one of the youth centers. Espoo asked to view the completed thesis and demanded any data possibly collected while conducting the project. The project itself was conducted with the assistance

from another youth worker in the said youth center, but there wasn't any further collaboration with the youth instructors or other employees of Espoo city. The author himself works for Espoo city as a youth instructor.

Espoo has developed the brand 'Espoo -tarina' around the city's guidelines and principles as an employer and a service provider. Furthermore 'Nuori Espoo' and 'Nuori Espoo -tarina' are the targeted brands concentrating on Espoo city youth work.

'Nuori Espoo -tarina' is for and in collaboration with the youth. Its aim is to design and come up with better, more exhilarating and more attractive leisure time activities. Espoo creates opportunities for the youth acknowledging that the fun ways of doing things are ever changing. The aim of Nuori espoo -tarina is to counterbalance the responsibilities of ordinary day to day -life with entertaining and fun activities and function in the free time. Espoo encourages the youth to be self-imposed and entrepreneurial and they give the youth a chance to make a difference through decision-making. This way the youth can participate in developing the services that they value as well as their living environment. Espoo offers modern frames and conditions for activity that correspond to the youth's need today. The city recognizes the importance of a group and aims to make sure activities are designed for the youth and their friends, no one should be left outside and bullying is absolutely prohibited. Espoo also creates opportunities for the youth to act as peer instructors. These goals and principles have been created in order to offer the youth the skills to manage their own life and make new friends and relations. (Espoo.fi)

The principles of professional youth work in Espoo city include the know-how, creativity and seeking new solutions. The professionals work as enablers to the youth's ideas and innovations. The youth that are recognized to be in need of support are ushered to additional services while walking the distance with them. Encountering and interaction are at the core of Espoo city youth work. Collaboration with families, youth agencies and other partners is important to Espoo while trying to find new innovations and directions. Espoo aims to be a forerunner in youth work and supports work done by youth organizations and volunteers. (Espoo.fi)

The youth center the project was conducted in is called Kirjava and it is primarily meant for the sexual minorities, but is open for everyone else as well, hence they call it "rainbowish". The youth there understandably have their own kind of profile to start with, but also exhibit one of the most social environments in the Espoo area youth centers. Also as most of the youth there do come from a slightly different background than is accustomed, these 2 factors made the youth center an optimal environment to conduct a project that involved discussion as an important part of it. The thesis project itself was and is not targeted on any specific group and could probably be done with any.

The target group of this thesis project mainly consisted of 15-20 years old youth. While there is a lot of research material about psychological and physical development of said age group, it often goes both unmentioned and unemphasized what the defining strengths of that developmental stage are. While the adults beyond that age are capable of reflection and analyzing concepts of all kind, they often refuse to do so instead relying on accustomed experience and opinion, leaving little room for other possibilities and new ideas. With the teenage youth, the world is still open and they measure different options as somewhat equal possibilities resulting in a lot of brainwork, reflection and often discussions. Having worked with the youth for over 3 years I have witnessed the endless amount of curiosity, desire for self-improvement and openness for guidance, advice and interaction. All of these together are very rare to come across in adults, even when those are qualities that one should always try to maintain in oneself.

Purpose and aim

The purpose and/or aim of this thesis was to teach reflection, thinking outside of the box and thinking creatively, familiarize the youth with alternative learning platforms and develop communication skills through discussions as well as to experiment with an alternative youth education method.

3   Theoretical background of the thesis

3.1   Education

Education theory was born and has been developed out of necessity and basic needs and exists for practical use. Education theory is fundamentally practical science and its significance is measured on on the scale of practicality. This does not mean that forming theories cannot happen in education theory, on the contrary, through theories it fulfills itself as a practical science. (Hämäläinen & Nivala 2008)

The goals of this project also touch citizenship education. Its definition is to attach an individual into the society socially and culturally and to prepare the individual for different roles as part of that society. This does not only mean being in a political role, but also an employee, consumer, taxpayer, service user and as any of the more personalized roles as a citizen in society. (Hämäläinen & Nivala 2008) While a lot of the practical bits and structures of the society and different instances are educated in schools and other similar facilities and services, the practice can often be drastically different from what is on the paper or in people's speech. This thesis aimed to also fill some of those information gaps resulting in higher level of societal performance, where the individual finds a meaningful place for themselves and is in cohesion with the other individuals of the society and wants to improve it for themselves and others (Hämäläinen & Nivala 2008)

Learning as a phenomenon is very twofold, when it comes to human life. On one hand a strict institutionalized education network has been developed around it that is maintained by professionals of education. On the other hand education happens self-evidently in day-to-day situations without any kind of recognition unless there's a problem with learning or managing one's life. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007)

The idea of human and humanity isn't based solely on information acquired by scientific methods. We all have personal experience and knowledge about humans. We have lived our whole life in close contact to at least one person: oneself. In addition to that we have experiences of other people as well. It is therefore important to question the importance of both science and personal experience and knowledge and measure them in relation to each other. While the theoretical approach does offer a lot of data relating to physical, biological, psychological, logical,social, moral and religious factors among others, no theoretical approach can offer the same information as interacting with another human being as one. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007)

Inspiring aims to create and strengthen social change by first stirring up the youth's initiative and responsibility. After that the educator serves as the source of information and further aims to act as a catalyst for the youth to get courage, excitement and motivation from. The educator also enables external factors for the use of the youth. Inspiring is education that derives from active and participative pedagogy. The educator doesn't offer set models or ideas but instead participates in the activity with the youth. The relationship is always based on authentic and equal dialog that respects the dignity, integrity and autonomy of the youth. Through that dialog the youth makes their decisions themselves. The very principles of inspiring lie in awaken the initiative, participation, activity and pondering the meaning of the activity. Not all activity can be considered inspiring though. Even though the practicality of in-

spiring sounds free in form, it has always to be based on planned and reflected activity that has a goal. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007)

3.2 Youth education

The youth isn't a homogenous group or any socially or culturally intact group. Youth is more of a phase in life which is mostly defined by themes of conflicting mental images. It includes hope, possibilities and freedom, but also chaos and possible threats. Youth is a state where one is not quite complete, nor is one without responsibility. One of the fundamentally defining attributes of youth is its relation to childhood and adulthood, for while the two are often understood and viewed as exact states, youth is much more vague. Youth is the maturing phase from childhood to adulthood psychologically, biologically and socially. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007) There are however certain factors varying from society to another that do define youth and adolescence precisely. Such factors can be for example: a person's biological age, the biological stage, psychological development phase, juridic position or cultural feature. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007)

Youth education can be defined as any kind of practical educational activity in the society that is meant to support and guide the growth and learning of the youth. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007) However, youth education can also be viewed from the perspective of human life's phases. The research topics of such education are such growth and learning processes that happen outside of the planned and functional activities. Such platforms can for example be media, peer groups, youth culture and subcultures. (Nivala & Saastamoinen) The Finnish youth centers can be viewed as something in between planned and phases as the structured youth work in the said centers is often a balance between hanging out and instructed activities. The youth also use these centers as gathering points, which touches peer groups. Youth education is part of the principle of education that lasts throughout the individual's lifetime. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007)

The status of theory in Finnish youth work is conflicted. On the other hand the field is thoroughly practical and in the field the theories are often experienced as useless wordplay that has no place in the actual day to day life. Also the philosophical and abstract approaches don't usually go hand in hand well with doing the practical youth work. But then the field has needs for certain theories to analyze and justify youth work's existence and form to balance its practical and jagged state that all working in the field know as the ordinary. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007)

The uniform theoretical inspection of youth education is often narrowly viewed only from the perspective of school education. Its area is however considerably broader including youth work, civil activity, home education and generally all the factors of society that also affect the youth. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007)

The younger generation that has adopted social media is in many ways more skilled in communication and language than before, but more in the form of an ability to view a matter from different perspectives and understand different tones in communication rather than just the mechanical reading of language. (Siltala 2013) While this presents a great starting point for more in-depth handling of topics, it also presents a challenge to the educators. Society continues becoming more technology-oriented and platforms like social media become the norm, for example only a third of 15-19 year old boys in Finland loans books from the library. Also many of the youth's skills in school are not up to expected level and there are serious lacks in the ability to pay attention and this causes problems in arranging teaching. (Siltala 2013) Instead of reading and writing on paper, most of the youth's life exists in a digital form and having only grown in that world, it is the only reality that they know and therefore are used to it instead of the one the older generations still remember. Therefore methods to reach the youth of today and communicate with them more effectively need to be researched and developed.

While the expectations in school have always been high in the Finnish society, that environment now illustrates the lack reformation more than ever. A big emphasis should be put on outdated subjects and lack of more modern ones. And while standardized tests and results are a much bigger problem in America, in Finland schools also exhibit the pressure of narrow targets that are supposed to represent the level of success. Also there still exists a far too common overlooking of personalized and common education that is meant to develop character, simply because it cannot be measured as easily. (Taylor 2010) That education is usually what teaches the youth about everyday life, both positive and negative scenarios included. The current school system teaches mechanical skills and basic information and knowledge about the world around us, but doesn't prepare one mentally to the challenges everyone faces in endless different situations of life.

The transition from an adolescent to an adult is different kind of an experience for everyone. Some get it easier and smoother while most of us face obstacles that we have to learn to climb over or go around, for some the transition is far more difficult and they have to go through pain, fear and danger. Guiding the youth in the world is the challenge that parents and adults face. (Taylor 2010)

A young person gladly ponders existential questions about value and significance. The educator must have readiness to participate in these ponderings so that s/he can strengthen the potential of the young person's skill in rationality and judgment as well as their personal and individual skills of consideration and criticism. This demands throwing oneself into an argumentative relationship with the youth, which includes recognizing the nature and rules of argumentation, but also justifying one's arguments and statements. If the youth is not familiar with such conversation, s/he is to be introduced into said type of conversation. To understand the youth, the educator must throw oneself into the educative relationship completely. (Nivala & Saastamoinen 2007)

3.3   Creativity

Reflection is becoming a tool of support and practice development of increased recognition in education, healthcare and the social sciences. It is used to deepen the knowledge and meaning for the facilitator as well as the facilitated. Reflection is viewed as a philosophical perspective to human beings and is used as the main tool in action research. Many academics and practitioners suggest that improving the methodology of action research without considering philosophical reflection is not possible. (McIntosh 2010)

Reflective learning is an intentional process that acknowledges social context and experience. The process is based on activity as the learners have to be comprehensively present, engaging with others and open to challenge. Transformation and improvement are the outcome of reflective learning. (Brockbank, McGill & Beech 2002)

Reflection is a process that consists of gaining awareness of one's surroundings, planning deliberately, taking action intentionally, assessing the impact of one's decisions and actions, adjusting one's course of action based on feedback gained from those assessments and engaging in the reflective cycle continuously. (Hall & Simeral 2015)

Reflection is spontaneous, common, real thinking but not all spontaneous, common, real thinking is reflection. Reflection is to make an incoherent situation or concept into a coherent one, making sense of something that initially doesn't make sense. Reflection can take place after an event has occurred or in the middle of it. Reflection doesn't intrinsically include or aim for decision-making but clarity about a concept. (Clarà 2015)

3.4   Approach

Creativity is to give life to something completely new that can add to the pre-existing culture in a significant manner. The conflict and controversy, however, arises from the reality that it needs to convince the pre-existing culture and its advocates of its importance. Creativity is therefore any concept or materialization that brings about change or transformation of a domain. (McIntosh 2010) Taking the argument further, the highest form of creativity would be to create a completely new domain, but even that needs to the consent of the related pre-existing domains on some level.

Creativity was and is at the core of this project thesis as it was and is both the underlying enabler of planning and implementing the project as well as the hoped result of it. The common description of creativity is the ability to deal with complex concepts and situations using unorthodox cognitive strategies. (Corrigan 2010) The project was and is intrinsically creative as it adopts a method outside of the youth work field to fulfill a need that is not in the standard youth work model. The hoped outcome though is important by nature and could possibly make certain transitions in life easier so the project can be viewed as complementary.

Experimentation and creativity are emphasized in alternative pedagogies. Those pedagogies are often of reformist nature and include ideas of how to improve or reform social constructs and concepts. These pedagogies aim to offer an alternative to the dominant thinking of education and upbringing. Alternative pedagogies are often fueled by different ideological factors, which can guide a practice but are not part of the fundamental scientific education research. (Hämäläinen & Nivala 2008)

Among others there are three notable ways in which creativity and critical thinking come together. Both refer to activities that are within the capabilities of most people. Both seek to educate people in a way that develops generally useful factors like habits and capacities. The ideas behind those ways come from first-hand or reported experiences. (Ashcroft & James 1999)

Holistic approach is ideal and optimal in social sciences, because it entails the realisation that most things in any field of action are connected and should therefore teach humility when one's knowledge and attitude are at test. Variables in any context change constantly and often unexpectedly and unforeseeably and they cannot be isolated from others if one is to understand how to the entirety functions. (Hearn, Tacchi, Foth & Lennie 2009)

3.5   Movie education

Movie education is watching a movie with the youth and sharing the experience. Every adult that is ready to discuss and be present while watching is a movie educator. An easy start is to sit down to watch the movie and ask the youth who is the most entertaining character of the movie. A movie can generate different kinds of discussions by showing something on the screen that relates to day-to-day life. Movies can help the youth grow in many ways: it gives an opportunity to discuss about different topics, get to know foreign cultures, have different kinds of experiences and identify oneself with characters and their issues. The whole experience of movie education can support building up the self-image and identity of the youth or act as tinder for discussion with different generations. Movies can break the ice surrounding issues and help processing them. As an art form that strongly pleads to emotions, movies offer tools for dealing with feelings and for learning skills to managing them. Through movies the youth also learns values, attitudes and gains understanding of different perspectives. Movie education encourages thinking for oneself and the role of the educator is to help structure the thoughts and mental images of the youth. Movie education is not a one-way process as the educator has the opportunity to learn something from the one being educated as well related to one's thinking and self. By recognizing one's own strengths and movie preferences the educator creates a sufficient base for his know-how as an educator. Perceiving one's own

media habits helps appreciate different kinds of media relationships and move on to constructive media education discussion. (Kovanen & työryhmä 2013)

In order to properly educate watching a movie, one has to realize that there is no one right way to watch, understand and perceive a movie. This goes for the educator as well and there should always be room for the experience and questions of the youth. It does help however, if the educator does have a basic understanding about movies, their structure and the ways of storytelling. The role of the educator is to offer safe and supportive frames for shared exploration of the world of movies. (Kovanen & työryhmä 2013)

A movie can be seen as text or language that has its own grammar that one can learn to read and write, although it is good to remember that it a movie isn't equivalent to a spoken language. It can be challenging addressing pictures with words, but the subconscious and memorable nature of the movies is good to make use of in education. Like in reading text, "reading" a movie also consists of different levels: mechanical, understanding and critical. Knowing how to read is the basis of all learning. The skill to "read" a movie includes the ability to analyze and understand the structure as well as the content and themes of the movie. Every adult can learn to read a movie and can then transfer that skill to the youth as well. The ability to read a movie is a good starting point for broader ability to read media and learning how to be critical towards media. (Kovanen & työryhmä 2013)

When choosing a suitable movie, the educator has to weigh different criteria. Which movie is educational, of quality and just generally good movie to show to the youth? Still more important than the pick is how one addresses the experience. Any movie can be used as a tool for movie education as long as it is approached with critical and analytical mindset. (Kovanen & työryhmä 2013)

The methods of movie education are related to active learning, which means the youth's independent activity and analyzing that activity while in the educational situation. A key factor in active learning is the youth's desire to learn about the matter. The educator guides and inspires the youth while also learning and experiencing. As an experiential art form, a movie inspires to ask and question, which increases the youth's motivation. (Kovanen & työryhmä 2013)

A good movie touches the viewer. It strips away the viewer's rational cover and accesses one's emotions. Feelings like curiosity, suspense and joy are written into the script for the viewer to experience, with the structure thought well so it carries the viewers emotions. Many moviemakers aim to create the feeling of beneficial catharsis in the viewer, meaning purifying the viewer from the feelings of fear, pity and anxiety. As a strongly emotional media, the movie is a good tool for working with one's feelings and is therefore an essential part of media education. (Kovanen & työryhmä 2013)

As stated earlier, one of the interesting prospects that create potential for using movies as a tool of education is based on the existence of psychological realism. It has been recognized that the proximity of time and conditions create psychological creativity in the relation to the media. The narration feels more real when the culture and language in it are closer to the viewer's own. The genuity of feelings and the emotional nature are also a key factor in psychological realism. (Mustonen 2000)

Audiovisual media and multimedia act as effective emotion machines, because in combining pictures, sound and language they offer substance for many senses. Sound effects, like music, the change in tempo and angle of view as well as visual effects like lighting, colors and symbols are extremely functional devices. Even though human beings experience music, colors and symbols in very distinctive ways, skillfully produced and interesting media content can also offer common significance. (Mustonen 2000) Human beings learn to express anger and love through observing their peers but also through reading and watching filmed models. The affect-socialization happens by restoring emotional experiences to mind that one has had before in new associations. Media also guides the conscious interpretation of emotions. We can learn schemes and scripts that carry our emotional expression: how to confess love, express

condolences, have an argument or a fight and how to appease your partner. (Mustonen 2000) This thesis relies on the assumption and argument that one can also connect the experienced emotions while watching a film to more practical situations and knowledge, using the previous emotional experience as a reflection point to make adjusted choices in a real life situation based on something that s/he has seen in a movie.

Being close to media education as a subject, this thesis project touches some of its topics like dialogue between the generations or in this case, the educator and the youth. Dialogue should be engaged in different upbringing platforms like school, home and leisure time communities. All of the aforementioned instances have their own role in opening and developing conversations. There are already several examples like the Facebook police and youth center's Facebook and Whatsapp pages/apps which are the adults' organized and transmitted form of presence in the digital environment. This model is mainly based on reaction and while this thesis is based on the same idea, its model is proactive so it aims to offer presence immediately when something occurs. Through dialogue it is possible to make better contact between the generations and bring up topics that both parties find incoherent in the beginning. Interaction and discussion also builds trust. (Meriranta 2010)

4   Project plan

There were 4 sessions where I watched a movie with the youth and discussed the themes represented in the film afterwards. Watching the movie only included staying for the whole movie, concentrating on it and letting everyone else around do the same. The discussion part after each movie was the active part where the youth got to reflect and analyze the movie first through their general opinions and then through guided questions and discussion. Each movie lasted approximately 2 hours and the discussion after was somewhere between 20 to 30 minutes depending on the amount of enthusiasm and statements. Each movie presented a unique theme, around which the guided questions were designed. All of the themes of the movies however focused on the idea of knowledge through living life's difficult phases. The purpose and goal of the project was largely to present situations and scenarios that are not easy to go through, but with the help of watching those very situations and scenarios on screen, the youth can recognize such occurrences and gain information and readiness for relating matters in their own life.

Session 1:

The movie that was watched in the first session is called Whiplash, which tells the story of Andrew, an adolescent boy in music school under a very demanding teacher whose methods are questionable at best. The teacher is mentally and physically abusive, but Andrew is determined to be the best drummer in his group and does not give up, even though he goes through a complete meltdown. The movie is an interesting insight into ambition, dedication, questionable ideals and abusive relationships. These are also the themes and topics I wanted to present relating Whiplash in addition to the general topic of youth today as the movie is the most recently released of the movies shown in the workshop.

The following guided questions were presented to the participants:

Which attributes of Andrew and the teacher would you categorize as beneficial and harmful and why?

If you knew someone like Andrew in real life or had to interact with someone like him, what would you think of him/her?

Which things in life are you determined about? Which things would you do anything for?

At which point is it ok or/and smart to give up?

The movie was generally well received, although a few of the youth thought it was boring. The discussion relating to the movie was comprehensive and almost everyone watching the movie participated actively, while a few would only comment to 1 or 2 of the questions and with only a few words.

The participants recognized ambition and dedication as Andrew's positive and beneficial attributes. According to them the harmful and negative attributes were the character's inability to give up or quit in time, being socially confined and shutting everything out of his life that wasn't music. The teacher they saw as a lunatic with psychopathic/sociopathic tendencies, who did see Andrew's strengths but used bad and harmful methods to teach and guide him. According to the participants, the goal doesn't always justify the means.

Although Andrew's dedication was viewed as a positive attribute, many of the viewers questioned him because of the lack of sense when it came to limits. They defined dedication a positive quality when it has boundaries and when it is beneficial. To them almost nothing was considered sacrificing so much for.

The youth valued people close to them over everything else in the discussion, stating that status and more abstract concepts like being really good at some skill are not something that social life should be sacrificed for. For people close to them, like a friend that feels like a brother they said they were ready to do anything for. It was also a consensus of the group that if something feels too hard, it is acceptable to give up or quit.

From the point of view of the author, the session was satisfatory in the sense of participants and discussion. A few of the youth had noticeable challenges sitting through the movie and concentrating on it, as there isn't much happening in the movie in the sense of pure entertainment. Most of them however, were able to watch it and answer the questions, but maybe not completely grasping the idea behind the questions.

Session 2:

The movie that was watched in the second session is called A Beautiful Mind, which tells the story of John Nash, a real-life mathematician who suffers from schizophrenia. Nash is a known for some groundbreaking mathematical theories, but has gone through a lot of trouble in life in the form of seeing people who aren't real and experiencing events that aren't real. The movie follows Nash through his struggle to come up with a mathematical theory and establish himself as someone important, find the love of his life, managing his difficult illness in an era when treatment was worse and coming to terms with reality that would never change. I wanted to present to the youth the concept of mental illness and what it can be ranging from the milder disorders and their symptoms into the severe illnesses and their symptoms. I also wanted to present the idea of having relationships, but also the concept of loneliness. How people can try to approach each other and help during difficult times or situations is also a question I asked the youth.

The following guided questions were presented to the participants:

What do you know about mental illnesses and what is your attitude towards them?

Would you try to help a person with a mental illness and if yes, how?

What is your idea or ideal of being close with other people? What do you provide them and what do you wish and expect them to provide you with?

What is love to you? What would you do or endure for love?

The second session was close to satisfactory as well, but had some weaker points to it than the first one relating to the discussion part of it. The movie itself was again well received although felt quite long to some but being almost 2,5 hours that is to expected.

The participants had some experience of mental illnesses, but wouldn't specify their experiences to the subject any more than that. They were also asked about their knowledge of schizophrenia, but none of the youth had much information about the illness as a whole. The basic information about the illness was then presented to them by the author but no further discussion was had about it.

The discussion became more lively relating to the second question and the viewers said that they are willing to help people close to them with mental illnesses, namely by gathering information about the ways to help and trying to get the person to move outside of home and do things instead of staying at home alone. When asked who they thought had more responsibility, the one having said illness or the people around that person, the participants unanimously thought that the responsibility to help and trying to make circumstances better were with the people around.

When discussing about love and relationships with other people, trust was mentioned as the cornerstone of every relationship. An interesting note was also made that if/when a mentally ill person asks you to leave, usually stating that it would be better for you if you did, it would be good to stay, because that is most likely a sign of the person recognizing and realizing their illness.

Like stated earlier, from the point of view of the author, the second session was not as good as the first one and the cause was in both the movie being relatively long but even more because the questions for the session might've been slightly too difficult or outside of the youth's experience in life. The point of the project is, of course, to familiarize the participants with new concepts as well, but the feeling after the session was still that the questions could've been better or linked better to the viewers' lives and possible experiences.

Session 3:

The movie that was watched in the third session is called Philadelphia, which tells the story of a secretly gay attorney Andrew Beckett who contracts AIDS and shortly after gets fired from his job. Andrew suspects he was fired because of his illness and sexual orientation, which is against the law and therefore sues the company with the help of a reluctant homophobic attorney. The movie inspects attitudes towards sexual orientation, love, attitudes and behavior. While Andrew gets the justice he seeks for, he does eventually succumb to the disease. The final scene, however, is a celebration of Andrew and the life he lived. Through Philadelphia I wanted to present to the youth ideas about fear and hate and how those two emotions walk hand in hand in every human's life. I wanted to present the process to becoming a better person and giving up your fear and hate. I also wanted to present a view to a human's life as the human chooses, being what we are as individuals and accepting and celebrating it. Death was also discussed relating to living and feelings of fear.

The following guided questions were presented to the participants:

Why do you think the hostile people in the movie were just that: hostile towards Andrew and his choices in life?

How do you view a person's sexuality? Should it concern others and if yes, why?

Could or would you forgive a person who fears and even hates you at first because of quality that you have, but who later "changes their mind" and if yes, are there conditions for doing so?

Usually when talking about death in Finland, the subject and discussion are often gloomy and full of fear and despair. Do you have other kinds of perspectives of death?

The third session was again well received, but by some considered the toughest movie to watch because of both the subject itself but also how the film is directed. Ironically the movie was still considered by many of the viewers as better than the ones before.

The hostility towards homosexuals in the movie was something that sparked quite a bit of discussion, leading to good reflection about the reasons of such hostility in the movie and in actual life. The participants' consensus on the reasons of such hostility and anger was fear and ignorance. The fears of the unknown, infection and difference were mentioned as well as stereotypes being the only information such people usually have to go with. It was also mentioned that it is crucial for everyone to think about what kind of fears they have.

Sexuality itself wasn't a very much discussed topic, but it was mentioned that homosexuality for example shouldn't concern others any more than heterosexuality does and that a person's sexuality is not anyone else's concern.

Forgiveness sparked more discussion again and there were different views on when and if someone can be forgiven, ranging from being able to forgive something that has been said to the view that basically anything can be forgiven under the right circumstances. Some felt that an attitude is something that is acceptable and can be forgiven if nothing is actually being done in the name of it, relating to negative and prejudice attitudes and thoughts. There was also a separation between intentional and unintentional insulting of someone relating to whether it could be forgiven or not.

Death as a concept was a difficult topic to discuss and the few things that were mentioned about it were that everyone has a different perspective to it and that sometimes it is a relief for both the person dying and the people around that person when they pass away.

From the point of the author the third session had some parts that didn't meet with the quality expectations and yet again they were about the discussion. The shortcomings were not as noticeable as with the previous session though and half of the questions actually stirred healthy discussion and ranging views on a topic, which is what the project aimed for to start with. Still, every question should do the same, so the conclusion is again that some questions could've been formed better, not so much this time that they didn't meet with the participants' experiences.

Session 4:

The movie that was watched in the fourth session is called Good Will Hunting, which tells a story about a genius young man, who has grown up in very bad circumstances and has therefore developed harmful behavior models and shut himself from others. Will Hunting ends up in therapy with a very distinctive therapist, who slowly builds trust with Will and opens up the locks in him. The movie is a trip to human psychology and behavior in a very easily understandable fashion and the main character Will is close to the age of the youth group that the project is for. Through Good Will Hunting I wanted to present to youth ideas about alternative ways of learning in life, difficult background, psychology and therapy, knowledge and wisdom as well as healing processes.

The following guided questions were presented to the participants:

What kind of a person did Will start as and what kind of a person did he ended up becoming?

Why did Will behave hostile towards a complete stranger without any provocation in your opinion?

Do you think it's possible to become a whole person even if you come from a difficult or bad background?

What was therapy in the movie like and how have you imagined therapy being in real life?

The fourth session was again well met, the movie was generally liked and the discussion was more lively than in the two previous sessions.

The participants described Will starting as a "bad boy", having gone to the " school of life " and as cynical, withdrawn, fearful and having built figurative walls around him to keep himself safe. They felt that during the movie he changed from all that into someone that gives a chance to life and things. The interesting note about this was that the youth recognized a more directional change instead of a full transformation.

Will's hostility was something that the youth felt as a safety mechanism so that the character could get rid of the people before they would leave him again.

A person's background was viewed as something that can affect one's thinking and attitudes, but it doesn't have to define a person or how that person ends up.

The discussion about therapy was interesting and indicated both that the viewers had very little experience and information about therapy in real life but also that they were able to reflect on their own stereotypes and thoughts about it within said discussion. At the beginning of the discussion some of the youth said that the therapy depicted in the movie was not the same as actual therapy and were going through their ideas about therapists as machines behaving in a certain way and they viewed it in negative light that therapists don't have actual definitive answers. However, through some additional questions, the youth recognized and realized that those thoughts might be stereotypes instead of actual reality. They then went further to define the attributes of a good therapist and a good relationship between a therapist and a client, mentioning chemistry as an important factor. They also discussed the balance between seeing a client from the outside to offer a perspective and objectivity and having a close and familiar relationship with the client so that they feel safe. Ironically the consensus at the end of said discussion was that a therapy relationship like Will and Sean's was possible in real life as well.

The last session from the author's point of view was more pleasant overall as the two previous ones, because the discussion was interesting and very reflective to some extent and touched the goals of the project probably the most of any of the sessions. A few of the questions were again below optimal, but the overall feeling was still satisfactory.

4.1   Action research

While the project itself was not a research of any kind, being an academic thesis, it is tangent to ideas of research, specifically action research. Action research is a critically reflexive approach, that aims to create new ways of thinking, sensing, experiencing and acting through questioning, analyzing, examining and contesting known and pre-established information. Transformation of practice is a fundamental of action research, but the significance of action research lies not only in the application to achieve an aim or a goal, but also on the quality of the information collected. (McIntosh 2010)

Action research is an optimal approach in projects and studies, where the outcomes and factors are complex and where human parameters and features are at the centre. Action research is continuous cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, that ends only to start all over again. While the aim of any project is to reach a goal or gain results, the ap-

proach of action research is more complex than more mechanical projects and studies as it does not only aim to reach the goal, it adjusts itself along the way to achieve that (Hearn, Tacchi, Foth & Lennie 2009)

The three main points of action research are

1) Active participation - The people who should benefit from the research/project should always be present in defining and evaluating the goals and objectives of the research/project and help interpreting and analyzing the gained information.

2) Action-based methods - The research/project and collecting information is based on practical methods.

3) Generating action - Action research always aims to create medium to long-term plans like new ideas for initiatives, solving problems and finding resources and partners. (Hearn, Tacchi, Foth & Lennie 2009)

This particular thesis project used researched data by Hearn, Tacchi, Foth & Lennie (2009) for its structure:

1) Planning the action - Defining what the goals and aims are. Since it wasn't a research it had to serve another purpose which in this case is twofold: hoping to transmit reflective tools through creative approaches and to examine its potential in doing so. The plan included sessions of watching movies with the youth and then discussing about them and their themes afterwards. As flexibility is mentioned as a critical factor, I planned the discussions to be client-driven while guided.

2) Taking action - This part means implementing the plan in systematic and creative manner constantly keeping the goals in mind while guiding the project and activity towards reaching them. Interaction was key factor and was monitored and reflected on throughout the project. Documentation of the discussions was done by writing notes on a notebook and then transferring it into digital writing later.

3) Observing - As the effects of such project are hard to measure or even detect, especially in a short span of time, the author's skills of observation were put to test. However, the author has obtained and developed high level of said skill and it still was the most prominent method of evaluating, monitoring and assessing information in this project while conducting it. The discussions were the main point of observation.

4) Reflecting - As written in the reference material, reflection is a process of making sense of problems, issues and processes and interpreting a variety of information and perspectives while negotiating meanings. Constant reflection is very important in even the more traditional form of youth work, but even more so in a project like this one. Reflecting happened constantly while conducting the project as well as when going through the discussions between and after the sessions.

4.2   Aim for Sessions

While in many projects each session has a different aim, in this project the combined aim was the most important. The combined aim of the project was to transmit information through movies and reflective discussion about varying topics that all relate to everyday life. Each session had themes that were determined by the movie being watched that the project aimed to teach the youth. The themes were:

1 (Good Will Hunting): Marginalization, informal education, talent regardless of background, personal growth

2 (Philadelphia): Marginalization, social exclusion, belonging to a minority, oppression, personal growth

3 (Whiplash): Youth, relationships, behavior, determination

4 (A Beautiful Mind): Mental illness, rehabilitation, understanding, exclusion

While not an actual structural aim, the project also hoped to establish the method itself with the youth meaning that each session hoped to make the process of watching a movie and reflecting through discussion feel more natural and productive.

4.3   Feedback

Like stated before in this plan, it would served a purpose to ask the youth a few evaluating questions after the last session to determine whether the goals of the project were met or not and how to improve the project in the future if ever conducted again. Also the general feelings of the youth were appreciated and they gave some information about the quality of the project when it came to generating comfort. And of course it was good to ask questions about whether the youth thought or experienced that they had gained any new skills in the sessions or had started to even think about matters differently, like for example viewing other movies with a different mindset or reflecting on recent occurrences in their life that they linked to some of the movies they had watched in the movie club. The questions presented to youth relating to that were:

What do you think about a movie club like this one? Does serve a purpose and does it have potential?

Do you consider having gained something from this project?

How have you felt after and in between the sessions about the movie club?

How would you improve this movie club?

While not all of the participants of the project were able to participate to the last session and therefore take part in the feedback either, a few good points and comments were made by the youth.

First combined comment was that the movie club was a good experience because the participants got to watch good movies and the discussion after them gave them something to think. Movies and art in general were mentioned as being good methods to spark discussion. The project was viewed as having potential, because it addressed difficult subjects and combination of movies and discussion gave the youth ability to see the topics from distance.

The second combined comment was towards the development of such project if it is to be done again in the future. While the project had discussion after every movie, the majority thought that setting up the movies would add a lot to the project. This setting up meant having a short discussion before the movies as well in order to give the viewers focus on certain aspects of the movie that they could focus on so that the discussion after the movies would be more fruitful and concentrating on the essential parts.

The rest of the feedback had comments about that maybe the movies could be faster-paced and more entertaining and that the viewers appreciated having watched good movies and having had a few discussions about certain topics. When asked if they had thought about the

movies of the topics presented in them and in the discussions between the sessions, their experience was generally that they hadn't, but that answer is not comprehensive enough, since a lot of the participants in the last session hadn't taken part in the two first sessions.

5 Evaluation

This thesis used empowerment evaluation as the main method of evaluation, but sometimes in an adjusted manner as the form of the project supported some principles and practices of the evaluation method better than others. The definition is as follows: An evaluation approach that aims to increase the probability of achieving program (or in this case project) success by providing program stakeholders (again, in this case the project author) with tools for assessing the planning, implementation and self-evaluation of their program (project) and mainstreaming evaluation as part of the planning and management of the program/project. Empowerment evaluation has an expanded evaluation framework when compared to traditional evaluation approaches manifesting in the purpose, roles and potential settings. (Fetterman & Wandersman 2005)

Development is a strong focus in empowerment evaluation. It can be also used to great effect when demonstrating accountability. The three purposes of evaluation are 1) evaluation for development, 2) evaluation of accountability and 3) evaluation of knowledge as in the increase in understanding about factors connected to the matter or concept at hand. (Fetterman & Wandersman 2005)

Empowerment evaluation is based on 10 main principles that guide the evaluation practice. Regarding this thesis project, some of these principles are integral while others are recognized and met through adjustment:

1) Improvement - While many traditional evaluation methods approach research and projects through neutrality and objectivity, empowerment evaluation always strives for improvement. Often through neutrality one only recognizes a state of a matter or concept and leaves it at that, while the users of empowerment evaluation aim for development of a project. It has also been found out that due to this mindset, honesty in finding results is more common as to improve, one has to be truly critical. (Fetterman & Wandersman 2005) A creative project like this one always aims for improvement because that would increase the potential of said project to become a continuation.

2) Community Ownership - This principle is one of the more difficult ones regarding this particular thesis project. Community ownership is meant to distribute the responsibility and taking charge of evaluation to the community, which in this case means the youth. The adjustment I had to make as the educator and facilitator of this thesis project was that the ownership started and ended with me, but it was all about the dialog with the youth when it came to the discussions and even overall experience about the project. The effects of such project can be extremely difficult to measure so letting the youth evaluate at the end of the last session was adjusted practice of the principle. One way to promote this was to ask the youth at the end of the project about how they would want the project to be developed further, their ideas and thoughts about what worked and what could've been done better.

3, 4 & 5) Inclusion, Democratic Participation & Social Justice - While most of the key points have been said in section 2, a few clarifications regarding inclusion, democracy and recognizing the social justice aspect of the project should be shortly addressed. This thesis project was and is inclusive by nature, meaning that the very purpose of it was and is based on not only inherent participation, but to increase inclusion through the skills and insight it wishes to provide to the youth. While the design of the project was created by the author, the project itself created and always hopes to create an environment where all of the action conducted is participatory and active, from watching a movie to discussion where both, the general opinions of the participants and the deeper, reflective questions are proposed for the sole purposes of inclusion, appreciation and improvement. The project part itself was always done in

groups and every participant was equal so the discussions were always kept at a level where no one opinion or view was rated higher than another. These two factors together in addition the project being managed at a youth center intended for a perceived minority aim for social justice.

6) Community Knowledge - The community members are viewed as experts of their own community by several participatory and collaborative evaluation approaches and empowerment evaluation also values and promotes this idea. (Fetterman & Wandersman 2005) Having worked as a youth instructor for over 3 years in different youth centers and schools, the author of this thesis views the youth as being able to develop their skills and knowledge most effectively in the shortest period of time of all client groups or humans in general. While some concepts and ideas can be difficult for the youth to understand, their sheer curiosity and openness exceeds the level that the adults exhibit generally quite significantly. The youth know their own world and community, but they often lack the skills and knowledge for utilizing their brains and mindsets even further. This thesis project relied on the idea and premise that if it can provide an alternative tool for realizing and recognizing issues and matters of life, the youth can then further develop themselves as human beings and prepare themselves for certain scenarios and situations.

7) Evidence-Based Strategies - Possibly the most challenging part of this specific evaluation method to follow for the author as a unique individual with certain ideals, values and attitudes but also for the thesis project with the same qualities. This principle emphasizes the importance of relevant information based on evidence as in previously researched strategies and theories. While the author aimed to deliver sufficient amount of justification for the specific methods used in the project part of this thesis, creative projects most often rely on innovation and exploration. Frameworks and previous projects can and should be studied and used as reference, but one has to be willing to be a forerunner that sometimes makes errors, when such projects are planned and designed. Also a large part of the information used to create such projects is through observation, personal experience and the aforementioned innovation. Observation, reflection, reading and understanding dynamics, theoretical and practical knowledge of psychology and constant criticism are skills that the author used throughout planning the project and continued to use them while conducting the project. Using such base of information as equal to official research requires constant reflection and the ability to assess all the factors equally.

8) Capacity Building - Again an adjusted principle in the project, the empowerment evaluation views building capacity as the development of tools of the community stakeholders (here the participants: youth) through evaluation that they conduct themselves. As stated previously, the evaluation was not so straightforwardly bestowed upon the youth, but as a lot of motivational psychological practices, is supposed to happen subconsciously. At the end of the last session of the movie club, the author discussed the experience that the youth had about whether they think they have learned something through the sessions and if so, what had they learned. The project hoped to give tools of reflection through the activity, but it is difficult if not impossible to even recognize the transmission of said skill during and after the sessions. The most plausible option for measuring and evaluating this principle was for the author to analyze and reflect the variables in the discussions.

9) Organizational Learning - While the title of this principle couldn't be further away from the principles of creative approaches, its definition is the what is the very same. Organizational learning strives to support learning instead of accepting things always as they already are, values and strives for continuous and ongoing improvement of quality, assessing and addressing underlying problems of matters and promoting new knowledge for problem-solving. (Fetterman & Wandersman 2005) Creative methods are naturally based on innovation and coming up with new alternative solutions and possibilities. This project held those values as its core ideals.

10) Accountability - Since the project wasn't exactly community-driven and the responsibility wasn't shared, but instead held by the author alone, accountability was also solely on the

shoulders of the author. In empowerment evaluation principles, accountability means that everyone that has the "power", also has the understanding and information about both the results but also the reasons and factors that contribute to those results. Accountability is so shared, but potentially making improvement more effective and easier as it would be if not all of the participants understood the whole context. As the sole author of this thesis project and as it is an innovative and creative one, the amount of responsibility was high, but welcomed instead of feared. Also, as stated before, the accountability was ensured by constant reflection and analysis.

I went through each principle after the project sessions and measured how well they "materialized" in practice. As a measuring tool I was mainly using observation as well as the excerpts from the discussions with the youth. Further potential measurement tool/method could be long-term monitoring and questionnaire, but as time was a very limited resource regarding this project and as these types of projects usually require a more personal and present approach, a questionnaire was out of character and not effective enough in said context.

Achieving project goals

Relating to goals of empowerment evaluation,

1) Improvement was the goal of every single session and the project, because like stated before, every creative project has even more pressure to prove itself as viable and justified. Throughout the project, the author tried to improve himself as the conductor of the sessions and the project in general and to think about how to improve every aspect of it, for example, the questions in the discussions and how to get the youth to participate "better". Every aspect was analyzed for the purpose of making the project better not just for this series of sessions, but keeping in mind the possible future sessions as well.

2) Community Ownership was met with the feedback at the end and with the numerous small discussions I had with the youth before and after the sessions. The youth could also decide the order of the movies being watched and while a minor factor in the context of pre-defined 4 movies, it was still a choice they could make. The youth were let in the decisions about the project as much as possible.

3) Inclusion, Democratic Participation & Social Justice were all met in manner described in the previous part. The point of each session and the whole project was that everyone can participate and that everyone is equal to each other.

4) Community Knowledge was also elaborated in the previous section, but it should be stated that the project relied completely on the knowledge and mental capabilities of its participants, trying to enhance them even further. The results of those attempts are, however, difficult to measure in success.

5) Evidence-Based Strategies remains the same as in the planning stage of the project, meaning that evidence in this case was both previously researched by educated authors but also based on the experience and skill set of the author of this specific project. I tried to my best to balance between sources of academic literature as well as my own past experiences in the fields of art, psychology and youth work.

6) Regarding Capacity Building, some factors of it could be witnessed in the discussions after the movies, the actual reflective thinking patterns mostly could not.

7) Organizational Learning ties in with the Improvement part of this evaluation and the project held its ground as trying to improve youth work with a method that is not yet standardized, but theorized and implemented in different forms in the past.

8) Accountability was kept close to mind and I as an author were reflective and critical through the entire project making sure everything goes as it is supposed to. As to notes about long-term accountability, the project itself should be improved in its length to better show results of possible learning of reflective thinking as in its current form it is a bit too short to offer comprehensive information. Creative methods in general all rely on long-term and continued practice, for the skills are usually difficult to master. This paired up with the fact that psychological skills (which reflection is) are maybe even more so, the length is something that should be analyzed well.

The goals of this project were to teach reflection, thinking outside of the box and thinking creatively, familiarize the youth with alternative learning platforms and develop communication skills through discussions as well as to experiment with an alternative youth education method.

Evaluating most of the mentioned goals relied mostly on the author's observation and skills of analysis during the sessions themselves as well as between them. Measuring the level of reflection, thinking creatively and thinking outside of the box, for example, relied on the amount of discussion relating to a certain guided question, forming and presenting their own thoughts and ideas about it and then reasoning with other project participants in discussion to come up to a conclusion. Generally the discussions weren't as reflective or participant initiative as hoped for and they always relied more on the guidance instead of jumping right into wild discussion and comparing of views and experiences of the movies. In that regard, some of the comments given in the feedback after the last session showed that the goal was indeed to set the ground for such learning platform, but noticeable learning was not achieved. It is important to take into consideration though that learning new ways of thinking and reflection in general is not as noticeable immediately as the more mechanical skills of everyday life. While a participant of this project might not recognize a learned skill, they might recall discussions about a topic later in life, when it comes acute and relevant.

The most noticeable product of the project was developing the communication skills of the participants. Granted, the youth of said youth center are very social and talkative to start with, but to get them to engage in a guided discussion like this one every single session was very pleasant. While again, the discussion could've been more in the form of an actual discussion, with the participants sharing views and actually conversing with each other, getting some personal views and reflection as individual statements was a testament of achieving the goal on a satisfactory level.

Alternative learning platform for the youth is usually much appreciated in the youth sector. Espoo's youth work in the youth center's mostly relies on hanging out and discussing with your friends while maybe playing a game of ping pong or billiard, but there should also be more functional and achievement-based youth work in the forms of workshops and projects like this one. The feedback gained from the youth illustrates that this actually is the case. Experimenting with a method for a worker in the field only becomes a positive thing, when the method is received well enough, participated in and then getting the feedback for. Results are of course a key factor as well, but like stated before, the actual results of such a project are not often as apparent as with projects based on results that have an existing measurement. Therefore appreciation, interest and the expressed feelings of having gone through thinking relating to the project goals should serve as satisfactory results. Those are all factors that have been present throughout the project.

6   SWOT

SWOT analysis examines an organization's or project's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats that need to be recognized and evaluated to create strategies to achieve the pre-set goals. SWOT analysis was originally created for the use of industries, but it has been used a lot in healthcare as well. (Harrison 2010) SWOT has been presented and suggested to us as students as a vital tool throughout our studies and it has proven to be quite useful in creating a sort of preliminary evaluation for projects. In projects based on creative and innovative nature as much as on pre-existing theory, SWOT analysis is all the more useful in recognizing the possible shortcomings as well as potential for success.

Strengths

Personal experience
Critical thinking
Creativity
Initiative and the ability to be proactive and reactive
Expertise and knowledge on the subject
Expertise as an educator and conductor
Confidence in own abilities and ability to improve while conducting

Creativity has always been my strongest suit, resulting in experiencing the life through adaptation and alternative ways of learning as well as having a strong connection with arts. Throughout my adolescence and adult life I have developed knowledge and skills in multiple fields of art, movies being one of the most important. In addition I have also developed extensive skills in psychology such as reflection (both internal and external), discussion and critical thinking. I understand well how human beings work but have always been more interested in the still quite experimental approaches of creative methods. I have conducted a songwriting workshop in my practice placement in a school previously and had some experience in how to set up such workshops, but also learned how to not conduct such activities. I am constantly analyzing and critically evaluating different options relating to everything my workshop ideas include and consist of and hold that as a very good starting point to set up any activities. I have also worked as a youth instructor and educator for over 3 years in youth centers and schools so working with the youth is familiar to me.

Weaknesses

No partner/Lack of external discussion
Insufficient amount of knowledge of such projects in the past
First time conducting this specific workshop
Difficult to evaluate

The ideal for setting up almost any kind of projects is to have partners to share the workload, reflect ideas between one another, discuss and realize the big picture from a different perspective than you can do alone. However this project will be conducted alone due to its creative nature and still rather hard-to-grasp theory and practice combined. Specific creative pro-

jects have been on the rise in social and health care work in Finland for a while now, but there still aren't many examples of similar projects to lean on in search of data. While creative workshops are familiar to me in planning and also in practice, this movie club is the first I have ever done and all new ideas always have to go through the try and error process. Creative projects are often fairly difficult to evaluate in terms of success and this one aims to plant seeds of alternative learning and creative thinking and those skills are not easy to recognize and the attempt can also fail if not done properly

Opportunities

Learning something unexpected
Transforming the project into a pilot
Working life partners
Gaining positive reputation

The opportunities, possibilities and potential of creative projects are often difficult to foresee. While such projects can result in no noticeable benefits, often times the results can be far beyond what one expected when planning and starting the project. This project for example might in fact enable visible and audible changes in the youth's ability to recognize new kind of information and education, both personal and societal. Most projects hope to not only improve but to also create a lasting practice. With other creative projects that I have been planning, this is one of the most interesting and I do hope that it succeeds so that it could continue living on, maybe even as a part of Espoo city youth work. Success would of course allure working life partners and resources to develop better and more extensive iterations of the workshop, which is of course the ideal. Gaining positive reputation is twofold, meaning both personal reputation and reputation to creative methods. Personal reputation is exactly what it sounds like, but positive reputation for creative methods means the collective of educators and instructors that conduct projects of creative nature. Most of us aim to gain this reputation, because it allows the diversifying of any practice.

Threats

Narrow guidelines and ideals
Negativity resulted from failure
Failure of transaction with the participants

The threats to this project are mostly associated with failure of some sort when conducting the project. Of course the biggest negative impact would be if the interaction with the targeted youth group wouldn't work at all. Sometimes the youth do not get interested even on common grounds and no interaction is born, in this case that would mean that the youth don't participate in a sufficient manner. Failure like that could easily result to negative atmosphere both towards the singular project but also towards the umbrella group of creative workshops. This project is rather small and there is no investment from any party into it so the risks are minimal. Another considerable threat is the societal mindset and way in which youth work is done. In Finnish society a lot of practices have become rules that have been set in stone and creative methods are often viewed as malarkey and outside of the guidelines and ideals, therefore resulting in the workshops not being allowed in the first place. Luckily we have been steadily moving to the better direction in respect to that matter.

7   Discussion

I've stated before that the challenges of a project thesis like this rise from its nature, which is creative, artistic, experimental and psychological. Due to that combination, measuring its impact and results are somewhat difficult, but from the beginning of planning and throughout implementing that plan in practice and even after it I've held my own critical thinking as one of the most important ways to evaluate and justify the entirety. I will now discuss my views on the project, its potential, practice and what was positive and what could still be improved about it.

Timeframe for creative projects and workshops is always something that causes a major part of the challenges. Having done a songwriting workshop in my second school practice placement, I understood how much time the participants (also youth in this instance) need just to grasp the idea of a workshop that is based on something different. Most of the people don't need as thorough introduction to concepts and mechanics that function in their society's everyday life in general, but with functions that require the participant to adjust their thinking to be more outside of the box, the required time grows significantly. While watching movies is an everyday function, reflecting on what themes they address usually isn't and when the reflection is in the form of sometimes difficult questions, just getting to know the "system" has to be internalized. If one wishes to see the goals defined in this project better, the amount of sessions should be doubled or tripled. In its current form however, the participants were curious, interested and already showed initiative in discussions and the concept of the club as well as commented that it was a good experience to discuss the topics presented in the films that might be somewhat difficult to talk about in everyday life. In this sense, familiarizing and experimenting with the method was successful, but continuing projects should be in longer timeframes meaning more sessions and ideally regular meetings.

Another challenge in the project was the guided questions. While the questions themselves were well thought about in general, they sometimes proved to be difficult in the context. The idea of the project was to ask questions that help the youth reflect on what they saw and familiarize them with some concepts that they haven't had much experience with yet in their life, so that they could use the gained information later when they are in a situation like the ones that were discussed in the sessions. While some of the questions and discussions as a whole might stick to their minds without them even realizing it, the questions themselves should've been designed better to balance between the reality they might already know and the reality that has not yet presented itself to them. I noticed that a few questions were slightly too abstract or maybe even too advanced in their themes to keep the discussion reflective and fruitful. This was never the intention and even though mundane questions would be as ineffective, the importance of designing the questions has to be acknowledged to even greater extent.

Following the guided questions, the structure of the discussion wasn't possibly the most optimal one since it didn't occur to me that a short discussion before each movie would've been a good way to set up the discussion after them. I do not still perceive this as a failure but rather as a learning experience as with developing new methods, the author and conductor can and should always also learn from the participants. This was definitely a valid point and any future versions of the project should have both as well as thinking about whether there should be even more question in the discussion after the movie to make the reflective experience more comprehensive.

Yet another question is whether the youth centers organized like the ones in Espoo are the optimal environments for a project like this. A movie club like this is like many other creative projects and requires work and dedication even if on the surface it might appear as if it was just watching movies and nothing more. While the project was explained and introduced in every session to familiarize the participants with the fact that it has a design and goals, these youth centers are often places where the youth come to hang out and spend time and while the centers have rules, they are basically not based around activities that one has to devote to. Because of this some of the participants changed during the project therefore hindering the projects hoped effects but on the positive side, even the youth that participated to one

or two sessions were actively part of the discussions and commented positively about the project. Espoo doesn't currently have many centers that are based on an actual activity and a good test for a future version of such a project would be to set it up in a center like that to see how much it affects the results and participation.

No matter what the project is like, it is a fact that planning and implementing one is almost always more effective when working with at least a partner but even more if working with a network. The problem with this particular project was that it was difficult to find a partner to do it with that had the same vision or even a comprehensive understanding of the vision it is based on. The network during this project consisted mainly of one other Espoo youth worker who I would actively discuss with about the project. He offered several comments about it relating to the environment, chosen movies and the participants. He was also able to get a blind youngster to participate in two of the sessions. Sadly the movies didn't take that minority too much into account but it was a point that was very good to bring up for the planning of future movie clubs like this one. Being a currently unconventional youth work method, such a project would always benefit from multiple minds bouncing ideas but also from the critique that multiple people can offer.

As for the actual method of using movies to teach reflective thinking, it proved to be at least functional and serve a purpose as movies can illustrate concepts and situations as it could happen in real life, even if in a dramatized form. Like the youth stated, the sessions did spark discussion about sometimes difficult subjects and the questions helped them delve deeper into the core of those subjects. This way the participants can look at an issue from a distance and while not being in the middle of it themselves and therefore analyze it more effectively. While the actual practical results are not too evident during the sessions, training oneself in reflective thinking usually works through this very process, you are given an idea that you have some grasp of, you take it with you and subconsciously work with it in your mind and the result presents itself later in a situation related to it and then you can use that reflection and the tools related to it to your advantage when trying to solve that situation in the most effective and optimal way.

The participation of the youth was mostly satisfactory when it came to the sessions but not always having the same participants wasn't ideal to the project. Luckily the youth participating always had actively conversing individuals to keep the discussions after movies lively and therefore all of the sessions were successful to most extent and also reached the goals the project.

The project in general was a very good experience but what made it like that was the balance between the confidence in the method and in my own ability to being critical and analyzing about all parts of it but also the factors that were apparent in that they need to be improved. Unconventional and creative methods always go through trial and error type of process and it is that process and nature that has to be accepted and not seen as discouraging. Error doesn't always mean failure but rather an opportunity to develop something. One has to be willing to see and even look for the errors and shortcomings in any projects but especially ones like this one, because that is the only way to stay alert to actual challenges, problems and even failures.

8   Ethics

In every social science activity, ethics is something that should be emphasized and emphasized again. Ethics is the most difficult aspect to understand, but also one of the most, if not the most, important factor to pay attention to, because it has the strongest and most direct contact to the clients' sensitivity and wellbeing. There's plenty of good researched data into action research in practice and the following 5 points mentioned by Hearn, Tacchi, Foth & Lennie (2009) should always be monitored while conducting a an action research/project:

1) Explaining oneself - Before and while conducting a project or research, the conductor should always explain why they are doing it and what they are hoping to achieve by doing so. If and when any data is collected from the participants, it should always be explained how it is to be used and why. If any questions arise about the project/research, they should be answered, be they about the project/research, the findings or the potentials

- I introduced and explained who I was and what the project was about thoroughly in every single session, mostly because almost every session had someone new participating but also to clarify and familiarize the participants with what the project was and what it hoped to achieve.

2) Respecting confidences - The participants must be assured that any and all information gathered from them is kept safe and confidential. Also the information must be kept anonymous if the participant(s) so desire.

- While the discussions themselves were an open discussion in a group, they were always done in the same room that the movie was watched in with the door closed. No confidential information was gathered at any point, but I wanted to create an environment where even the more difficult topics could be discussed freely.

3) Treating people sensitively - The confidences and emotions of the participants must always be treated sensitively. The conductor has to make sure not to be intrusive or disruptive.

- As a practicing youth worker, I always put my clients first and do the work on the terms that create a safe and comfortable environment for them. While the discussions in this project sometimes touched difficult subjects, the questions and conversations were set up carefully and sensitivities were taken into account.

4) Exploring sensitive issues - The conductor needs to know how to explore sensitive issues and respect other people's opinions and viewpoints even if s/he disagrees with them. In this particular project, the main purpose is to draw out those emotions and thoughts out of curiosity and to develop the participants' reflection and realization. The varying views and opinions are hoped for in order for the group itself discuss the matters while the author/educator records the data.

- Already mentioned in the previous point, but furthermore I as an author and as a worker in the social field always value neutrality, sensitivity and hearing all kinds of opinions and views on subjects. It doesn't serve any purpose to have a filter that doesn't let some through. All opinions, views and comments should be heard but also moderated, discussed and put into a context with proper explanation. I specifically wanted to hear as many different views on matters that touched the themes of the movies and got quite a few good discussions from those differing views.

5) Never put people at risk or endanger their well-being - Reporting recorded information may have real consequences for the participants and therefore the implications should be measured by the educator. People's lives are always more important than research. While the project itself does not run a high risk of doing either of these things, it is nevertheless an aspect that has to be considered by everyone that conducts a project/research like this.

- This project didn't record any data, but I as an author used notes to be able to write about what was said in the discussions. No names were ever attached to the notes, but there also wasn't anything said in the discussions that would cause any participant any harm.

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