

**PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL SKILLS COURSE FOR COACHES**

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ABSTRACT

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Research on Social and Emotional Skills among sport coaches is limited. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to plan, implement and evaluate a course in Social and Emotional Skills for sport coaches and instructors. The aim was to study the learning processes and the experiences of the participants. Traditionally coaches in martial arts lead with an authoritarian style; consequently the aim of this course was to show a different way of interacting with trainees, evoke discussion between coaches of different martial arts and to create a sense of awakening from the traditional methods of coaching. The course is based on Thomas Gordon's Model of Human Relationships. The following skills are taught during the course: clear self-expression of thoughts and emotions by I-messages, Active Listening and Problem Solving Skills.

This is a mixed method action research case study. Participants of this study were 11 coaches and instructors from different martial arts. The course consisted of three weekends, altogether 27 hours. Information was collected and analyzed from the observations as a teacher-researcher during the course, from film recording and feedbacks of the participants and analyzed with narrative analysis.

The main finding of the study was that most of the participants perceived that the skills learned during this course were important for their work as instructors. The skills put emphasis on issues that they did not previously think about in a conscious way. Most of the participants developed from being reserved to openly express their thought and needs in the group. Participants also realized that social and emotional skills need practicing before one can implement them in ones daily life.

From the observations as a teacher-researcher it could be noticed that the level of security in the group was essential when learning and doing the tasks of social and emotional skills. How the course is set up the course, is as well of major importance: some tasks can be heavier for the participants than others, and need lighter activities afterwards. Leader of the course needs also to have enough knowledge in social and emotional learning, and to be skilled to lead and limit the discussions in the group.

This course acted mainly as an awakener for the coaches about new ways of communicating. Further research is needed to see how Social and Emotional Skills are implemented in the daily life of coaching in the long run. Techniques taught during this course are universal, so it would be important in the future to evaluate the suitability of implementing similar courses also in other sports than martial arts.

KEY WORDS: social- and emotional skills, communication, coaching, coach, emotional intelligence

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to plan, implement and evaluate a course in social and emotional learning for coaches and instructors: “Communication Skills Course for Coaches”. The course was based on Thomas Gordon’s Model of Human Relationships (Gordon, 2003.)

There are five core competencies of social and emotional learning (SEL): self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills and responsible decision making (CASEL 2012, p9). In this study social and emotional skills as Active and Passive Listening, Clear Self-expression by I-messages and problem solving by No-Lose Method were taught to martial art coaches.

Social and emotional skills have been taught to teachers, leaders and parents for example by The Gordon Institute. Programs of social and emotional skills has been found to enhance motivation and learning results of the students in academic settings and to reduce problem behavior in the classes (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011). The use of social and emotional skills has been found to promote positive, supportive and empowering learning atmosphere (Kuusela, 2005).

Studies with P.E teachers show that there is a great need for implementing social and emotional skills courses in P.E. education (Klemola, 2009). In addition, it has been found out that communication skills play a central role in effective coaching as well. Effective coaching is about building trust, communication, commitment and support (Wang 2013). Interpersonal skills, communication skills, creating a positive training environment and building positive athlete rapport are essential for effective coaching (Côté & Sedgwick 2003). Effective coaches are described as approachable by their athletes, and they create relaxed, open environment with a possibility for a two-way communication. Effective coaches develop honest and respectful relationships with their athletes, and they demonstrate interest in each individual (Bennie & O’Connor, 2012). Côté and Gilbert (2009) argue that coaching effectiveness should be defined according to how coaches meet their athletes’ needs and help them fulfill their goals.

Empathy, the skills of listening, holding the emotions of the athlete, providing challenge and support, and knowledge of problem solving methods are valued in the coach by the

athletes These skills help the coach to build a positive coach-athlete relationship. Being able to establish a positive coach-athlete relationship can enhance the gains made by the athletes in sporting situation (Passmore, 2010).

Bennie and O'Connor (2012) suggest that the quality of the relationship coach develops is essential for the effectiveness of the instruction and application of the training (Bennie & O'Connor, 2012). This has been seen true also at the elite level sports where interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete is an important factor that contributes to the athlete's development. These relationships are described with adjectives as trust, support, understanding, care and open communication (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Because Olympic athletes serve as role-models for younger athletes, authors suggest that these relationships could serve as models in what kind of relationships athletes and coaches should strive for.

Jowett & Cockerill (2003) acknowledge the importance of incorporating social skills in coach education programs. It is seen as important that education programs would provide information for developing effective coach-athlete relationships alongside technical, strategical and tactical skills (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Incorporating emotional skills to coaching education gets also support from several studies (Chan & Mallet, 2011; Bennie & O'Connor, 2012; Vella, Oades & Crowe, 2013). Lintunen & Gould (2014) argue that a great deal of potential is lost in sport settings because coaches and athletes lack knowledge of social and emotional skills. Most sport organizations set goals to develop these skills, but coaches seldom seek to improve the skills in practice. This could be due to uncertainty of coaches in implementing social and emotional skills in their sport. Therefore, Lintunen and Gould (2014) suggest that these skills should be taught to coaches by demonstration, practice, modeling, discussion and reflection of one's experiences. These are the methods of teaching social and emotional skills in the present study.

Teaching and researching on social and emotional skills among coaches in sport and exercise is very limited, if existent. Therefore, the purpose of this work is to study the learning processes of social and emotional skills among coaches. Traditionally coaches in martial arts are on the top of the hierarchy and they lead with an authoritarian style. The idea with this course was to show a different way of interacting with trainees, evoke some discussion between coaches of different martial arts and to create a sense of awakening from the traditional methods of coaching. To construct social and emotional

skills course of this kind for coaches and especially for coaches in martial arts is something that hasn't been reported before.

This work is a qualitative case study as well as an action research study, where I worked as a teacher-researcher in "Communication skills course for coaches" in martial arts. The course was video recorded. In addition, data was gathered during the course by observation and feedback collected from the participants after the course.

2 SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

2.1 Definition of social and emotional learning

Social and emotional learning can be defined as a process in which a person learns cognitive, affective and behavioral skills that are critical for effective handling of daily life (CASEL 2012, p9). Social and emotional core competences are according to the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as follows:

1. *Self-awareness* includes recognizing one's emotions and thoughts and how they affect one's behavior. Knowledge of one's strengths and limitations, and sense of optimism and confidence is also included under self-awareness.
2. *Self-management* includes the ability to regulate one's behavior, thoughts and emotions effectively in changing situations. Also motivating one self, controlling impulses, managing stress and ability to set and work towards personal and academic goals belongs under this core skill.
3. *Social awareness* is about empathy towards others and the ability to look things from a perspective. Social awareness is also about understanding different backgrounds and cultures, ethical and social norms for behavior, as well as recognizing community, school and family support and resources.
4. *Relationship skills* include establishing and maintaining relationships that are healthy and rewarding. Relationships skills include as well clear communication, cooperation, and ability to listen actively, conflict management skills, managing social pressure, as well as being able to receive and give help when necessary.
5. *Responsible decision making* is about making respectful and constructive choices about social interactions and personal behavior.

These choices should be based on well-being of self and others, safety concerns, social norms, ethical standards and evaluation of consequences of one's actions. (CASEL 2012, p9)

These five core competencies of SEL are part of building better performance in means of positive social behavior, reduced emotional distress and improved success in sport. Social and emotional competence is often seen to consist of individual characteristics, such as skills, attitudes and behaviours. For social and emotional learning to happen, and to become socially and emotionally competent according to the *five core competencies of SEL*, one has to manage certain social and emotional skills that are as follows (Lintunen & Gould, 2014):

Self awareness: defining values, needs, desires, feelings and wishes

Self-management: skills of clear expression of feelings, beliefs, and thoughts by using I-messages and avoiding Roadblocks of Communication

Social awareness: Active Listening, avoiding Roadblocks of Communication

Relationships skills: Positive I-messages, Confrontational I-messages, Avoiding Roadblocks of Communication, Group skills

Responsible decision making: Problem solving methods, taking responsibility and collaboration. Avoiding Roadblocks of Communication

(Talvio, 2014; Lintunen & Gould, 2014).

These social and emotional skills will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

2.2 Social and emotional skills

Social and emotional skills that participants learned during “The Communication Skills Course for Coaches” in the present study were based on Thomas Gordon’s Model of Human Relationships. These skills included Active and Passive Listening, Clear Self-expression by I-messages and problem solving by No-Lose Method (Gordon, 2003).

2.2.1 Emotional Skills

According to Lintunen & Gould (2014) socially and emotionally competent coaches are self-aware. This means that they can recognize, describe and regulate their emotions (Lintunen & Gould 2014). The same is said about people with high emotional intelligence. They also tend to be more open and agreeable (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 2004).

Emotional intelligence is essential for coaches' leadership and their ability to produce high performance by contributing to self- and social awareness, understanding the athlete and using emotions to create a positive sporting climate (Chan & Mallet, 2011). Emotional intelligence has also been found to be highly important for coaching efficacy (Thelwell, Lane, Weston & Greenlees, 2008). Coaches should be both able to appraise their own emotions and regulate them, because this has an effect to learning situation and performance of their athletes. If a coach lacks awareness of his own emotions, this may ultimately affect the athlete's wellbeing. Researchers suggest that coaches should become more aware of how emotional intelligence can facilitate their coaching performance. A coach who is able to regulate his emotions and provide positive social environments has both the possibility to increase his own confidence as well as change the psychological state of his athletes (Thelwell, et al. 2008).

Empathy is seen as especially important part of emotional skills, because it helps to understand others and their motivation and it facilitates and establishes the connection between the coach and athlete (Chan & Mallet, 2011). Empathy has an essential role in athlete's perceptions of coach-athlete relationship. Athletes who experienced that their coach-athlete relationship is characterized with trust, co-operation, respect and longevity were more satisfied with the training. They felt that their needs were taken more into consideration (Jowett, Yang & Lorimer, 2012). The importance of empathy is supported as well in the studies of empathic accuracy. Empathic accuracy is the ability of a coach to accurately understand the psychological state of an athlete (Ickes 2003, in Lorimer, 2013). High levels of empathic accuracy improve coaches' ability to encourage, instruct or use sympathy towards the athlete (Lorimer, 2013).

To be emphatic accurate a coach must be able to monitor and correctly interpret athlete's thoughts and feelings. This can be achieved by gathering information, avoiding biases, maintaining appropriate levels of empathy and being reflexive (Lorimer 2003). It has been found out that coaches' empathic accuracy improved when they received corrective feedback from the athlete (Lorimer & Jowett, 2010). This supports the importance for coaches to learn social and emotional skills, like Active Listening.

Coach should be above all conscious in his attempts to understand the athlete, instead of using past experiences as a viewpoint (Lorimer, 2003; Lorimer & Jowett, 2010). Coach should also be self-aware and in the moment. This helps him to understand the link between his own emotions and emotions of the athlete (Lorimer, 2013). It is also suggested that coaches who are more aware of themselves and others could provide better coaching and therefore bring about more athlete satisfaction and better performance (Lorimer & Jowett, 2010).

Showing positive emotions seem to be crucial in negative situations, like when losing a competition or making a mistake in the training. Athletes hope that coaches would praise, support and provide feedback and instructions in these situations. Coaches negative reactions can lead to negative feelings of an athlete and create overall negative impact on athletes' psychological state, performance and well-being. It seems like communication that is appropriate, adaptable and effective can have an especially important role in athletes' self-concept, motivation and by that to skill-development and finally success in sport (Sagar & Jowett, 2012). It is suggested by several authors that teaching emotional skills should be included in coach education, and prioritized alongside traditional and technically focused programs (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Chan & Mallet, 2011; Vella et al., 2013).

2.2.2 Listening skills

Listening skills can be divided by Gordon (2003, pp60-64) to Passive Listening, Acknowledgement Responses, Door Openers and Active Listening.

Passive Listening means giving the other person a space to talk and listening attentively without interruptions. This communicates acceptance and a will to understand the other person.

Acknowledgement responses encourage the speaker to continue talking by nonverbal and verbal cues. These are for example smiling, nodding, frowning and leaning forward. These cues give the impression that the listener is interested and attentive.

Door openers are open-ended questions that contain no evaluation. They encourage the speaker to go on or to begin, for example: “That’s interesting, want to go on?”

In *Active Listening* the listener acts like a mirror, reflecting back to the speaker what she has understood from her story. This shows a will to understand and a deep interest for the other person (Gordon, 2003, pp60-64).

Communication can become problematic when feelings and needs are not communicated clearly enough. Sometimes the real message has been coded to something else. For example, a person might ask “What time is it?” when the real feeling behind it could be for example hunger. If the listener responds only to the code, the real feeling is missed. When using Active Listening, the listener decodes the words of the speaker by guessing the right meaning of the code. By mirroring or feeding back the decoded message to the sender, can listener check if he or she has understood the message correctly (Gordon, 2003, pp63-79). Sometimes the term Reflective Listening is used instead of Active Listening (Rautalinko, Lisper & Ekehammar, 2007).

There are several studies that give encouraging results in teaching and using of Active Listening/Reflective Listening: Health care students who used reflective listening, remembered the information given to them better (Rautalinko et al. 2007). Also in the corporate settings participants used Reflective Listening principles after an intervention more than the control group. These skills also transferred five months later to work settings (Rautalinko & Lisper, 2004). Active listening helps both the sender and the receiver to understand the feelings behind the message; it facilitates problem solving and keeps the responsibility with the one who has the problem. Sender feels accepted and respected and this creates possibility for close relationship to grow (Gordon, 2003, pp63-79).

When teachers used Active Listening, it gave students feeling of acceptance and more energy and motivation for the tasks at hand. By listening attentively, teachers can as well help the students to make their own decisions and by that help them to solve problems. Moreover, teacher's use of Active Listening results to a more committed behavior from the part of the student (Kuusela, 2005; Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007). According to Talvio (2014) when teacher listen student actively, student's autonomy and agency was improved (Talvio, Lonka, Komulainen, Kuusela, Lintunen 2012; Talvio, 2014).

There is evidence that Active Listening (McNaughton, D., Hamlin D., McGarthy, J., Head-Reeves, D. & Screiner, M., 2007) or Reflective Listening (Rautalinko & Lisper, 2004; Rautalinko et al. 2007) can be taught effectively in a short period of time, and learning these skills are also valued by the participants (McNaughton et. al. 2007). These above mentioned studies used role-play or simulated situations to practice and evaluate the learning. Role-play is also used in the learning of Active Listening in the present study. It seems that results are better in communication skills training programs when skills practice is used by simulated role-playing (Lane, C. & Rollnick, S., 2007).

In summary, Active Listening can be seen as a valuable tool for coaches in many social interaction occasions that can arise during coaching. However, Active Listening is not always included in coach or teacher education, and it is not used very often by teachers (Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007; Lintunen & Gould, 2014). Therefore there is a need for social and emotional skills programs targeting these skills.

2.2.3 I-Messages

I-message consists of three parts:

1. Explanation of the situation in a non-blaming way. "When there is so much noise in the room.."
2. Explanation of the effect of the behavior in a concrete way. "When there is so much noise in the room, I can't hear what anyone is saying.."

3. Statement of the feelings of the sender. “When there is so much noise in the room, I can’t hear what anyone is saying and this makes me feel insecure” (Gordon, 2003, pp142-144).

Confrontational I-message can be used when the behavior of the other person is unacceptable and prevents coach to get her needs met. Coach has to take the responsibility and ownership for her feelings and needs. Furthermore, problems cannot be ignored because the coach is unable to continue with instructing. I-messages tell about the person who is sending them and it leaves the responsibility where it belongs, here to the coach who is experiencing the problem (Gordon, 2003, pp127-140).

You-messages (Roadblocks of Communication) are normally understood as an evaluation, whereas I-messages are understood as a statement of fact. I-messages promote willingness to change, contain no negative evaluation and do not injure the relationship (Gordon, 2003, p140). After training in SEL skills teachers were better able to express themselves in detail and express their feelings and consequences of students’ behaviour. This had a positive effect on students’ autonomy and agency (Talvio et al. 2012). When teacher used I-Messages, the aggressive and defensive behaviour of the student diminished as well and the students became more cooperative and self-sufficient (Kuusela, 2005). By using I-message teacher can by non-blameful way explain to the student that there is a problem. Behaviour will be changed because of consideration for the feelings of the teacher. This way of communicating helps student to be able to accept the message without resistance and it teaches them empathy (Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007).

2.2.4 The No-Lose Method

When there is a conflict of needs between two people or in a group, the behavior of the one person interferes the other to express or attain her needs. In conflict of needs situation, both parties own the problem. Effective method for resolving conflicts between two persons or groups is the No-Lose method. This method has six steps:

- 1) Defining the problem as needs by the use of I-messages.

- 2) Generating possible solutions: At this stage there is no evaluation of solutions. By brainstorming participants try to create as many solutions as possible.
- 3) Evaluating the solutions by using Active Listening.
- 4) Making the decision so that everyone agrees
- 5) Determining how to implement the decision
- 6) Assessing the success of the Solution by reevaluate for a better solution

(Gordon, 2003, pp228-236).

In No-Lose method everyone participates for the conflict resolution. It is effective because of the two-way communication, flow of respect and solutions that are acceptable to everyone. This brings more motivation for the participants to implement the solutions that are found (Gordon, 2003, pp225, 242-250,281).

2.2.5 The 12 Roadblocks of Communication

According to Gordon (2003) a good teacher-learner relationship consists of openness and transparency, caring, interdependence, separateness and mutual satisfaction. When there is a good relationship between teacher and learners, more teaching-learning time is created, students are motivated to learn and teachers are able to teach. However, most of the teachers use power-based methods in their teaching when they are facing conflict situations (Gordon, 2003, pp46-48). This could be true to coach – athlete relationships as well.

These power-based methods are called The 12 Roadblocks of Communication and they include, for example, commanding, warning, moralizing, advising, lecturing, judging, stereotyping, interpreting, questioning and being sarcastic. Roadblocks of Communication include as well praising and reassuring (Gordon, 2003, pp46-48).

Above mentioned power-based methods usually provoke resistance when used in conflict situations, and if used continually, they can destroy a relationship. In conflict situations non-power methods have proven to be most effective and Language of Acceptance should be used instead. Language of Acceptance tells to a person that she is fully accepted and she is given a freedom to change with her own will. This kind of

language encourages people to talk, helps them express their feelings and fosters constructive change (Gordon, 2003, pp45-59). The course developed in the current study teaches the above mentioned skills of Language of Acceptance; Active Listening, sending I-messages and No-Lose method as well as avoiding the Roadblocks of Communication.

2.3 Social and emotional skills programs

Coaching education programs in sport have traditionally mainly focused on developing professional knowledge of the coaches. According to Côté and Gilbert (2009) coaching expertise should also include the knowledge of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills: interaction skills, emotional skills, communication and the ability to solve problems. There should be as well greater consideration in how coaches could be open for continuous learning and self-reflection (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). It has been found out by Lorimer and Jowett (2009) that coaches and athletes are most of the time unaware of what the other is feeling. To ensure greater awareness and personal knowledge, coaches should spend more time together with their athletes, encourage feedback from them and engage in conversations and social activities also outside the training sessions (Lorimer & Jowett, 2009). Sport leaders and coaches, who are socially and emotionally competent, are better able to create a supportive learning atmosphere, enjoyment, and positive experiences in the training settings (Lintunen & Gould, 2014).

Sport creates a context where learning several important skills for life is possible. There is a variety of possibilities for learning social and emotional skills like recognizing and controlling feelings in sports. This is true especially in children and youth sport. Coach can be seen as an example and what he thinks and says can have a major effect for children and teenagers (Hämäläinen, 2013). A coach with good social and emotional skills has as well better possibility to help his athletes to develop social and emotional skills as well (Lintunen & Gould, 2014). Coaches often feel co-operating with the parents of the children as most challenging part of their work. Because parents being very engaged in their children's hobbies is quite a new phenomenon in sport, sport societies have not reacted to this need of new skills fast enough (Hämäläinen, 2013).

To be able to improve the interaction and by that performance and well-being of both coaches and athletes, effective approaches should be developed (Lintunen & Gould, 2014). According to Seat and Lord (1999) communication skills shouldn't only be learned through "osmosis" but by programs that are targeting teaching the skills for the context. Communication skills are not learned only by placing people in teams but they must be taught, practiced and evaluated. Bennie and O'Connor (2012) suggest additional coach training in personal skills and management, because there has been a change in the expectations of how a coach should act and be. Coaches should develop from a mere technical, tactical and physical trainer to a personal developer (Bennie & O'Connor, 2012).

In 2005 started an initiative called VOK-project in Finland to lift up the coaching level and knowledge of those coaches who are working mainly voluntarily in the coaching stages of 1-3. End product of the development was guidelines for coaching in federation based education. This offers a common structure and learning philosophy for all coaching education in Finland, including the guidelines for teaching social and emotional learning (Valmentajakoulutus 2015a). According to above mentioned guidelines coaching education at the levels 1-3 in Finland should include teaching in expressing and regulating emotions, self-expression and listening skills, creating open and supportive atmosphere and creating positive interaction. At the level 1 coach should be aware of the basics of social and emotional learning (Valmentajakoulutus 2015b), at the level 2 know the basics of social and emotional skills (Valmentajakoulutus 2015c) and at the level 3 possess the necessary skills for applying social and emotional skills into practice (Valmentajakoulutus 2015d).

Based on the Finnish National Board of Education, at the coaching level 4, a coach should master the communication skills necessary to his work and understand the principles of teamwork. He should also be able to recognize and evaluate his own social and emotional behavior (Opetushallitus, 2006). At the level 5 there are no guidelines in teaching social and emotional skills based on the curriculum of the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences in University of Jyväskylä (Saari, 2014). However, University of Jyväskylä organizes in-service training for sport coaches at work. This is a module of 20 ECTS in coaching psychology including social and emotional skills training (Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2014).

All these above mentioned programs have guidelines for integrating and developing social and emotional learning in coach education. There is no information found, however, how this is done or if the regulations are met in practice. There were no previous studies found either about teaching social and emotional skills for sport coaches. However, there are several studies of teaching life skills in sport context for athletes. Social and emotional skills can be seen as part of life skills, although not all life skills are social and emotional skills (Lintunen & Gould, 2014). Gould and Carson (2008) argue that problem with life skills research in sport is that life skills are not precisely defined or they are used with little explanation.

There are several studies done about effectiveness of social and emotional skills programs in schools: The Collaborative for the Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is the major international network of professionals who are engaged in promoting social and emotional learning in schools and other domains. CASEL states that effective SEL programs begin in preschool and continue all the way through high-school. Several programs for pre- and elementary schools are rated by CASEL. Criteria for these SElect programs is that they cover all five core competencies of SEL, offer programming through several years, include opportunities to practice the SEL skills, offer training and support for implementation of the skills, and ensure high- quality implementation. Programs should also be evidence-based. The future goal for these programs is to create a positive school climate where each student feels emotionally and physically safe and cared about. Students should as well have a voice in problem-solving and decision-making and they should be engaged in lifelong learning. Short term goal for these programs is to develop SEL core competencies, and also to promote students attitudes and beliefs about school, others and one self. Success of these programs depends on high-quality implementation and support for the program. (CASEL, 2012, 11-19).

Durlak et al. (2011) published a meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs involving 270,034 kindergartens to high school students.

They selected the intervention programs with following criteria:

- a) Sequenced: program uses a connected and coordinated set of activities to achieve their objectives relative to skill development.

- b) Active: program uses active forms of learning to help youth learn new skills.
- c) Focused: program has at least one component devoted to developing social or personal skills.
- d) Explicit: program targets specific SEL skills rather than targeting skills or positive development in general terms.

To give positive effects programs should be well designed and well executed.

Programs using above mentioned criteria improved effectively social and emotional skills of the students, attitudes towards the school, behavior in the classroom and students academic performance. Effects remained significant minimum 6 months after the intervention (Durlak et al., 2011).

In his study Talvio (2014) found similar results. He developed Dealing with A Challenging Interaction –method to measure learning of social and emotional skills during Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.) program. T.E.T teaches social and emotional learning according to Thomas Gordon’s Model of Human Relationship. Program teaches SEL skills by role-plays, group discussions and one-on-one skill practice (Gordon Training International, 2014). During the intervention teachers gained knowledge in social and emotional skills: they gave more room to the students and included them in problem solving situations. Teachers were as well better able to express themselves with I-messages. These actions contributed to students’ autonomy, agency and well-being and helped class teachers to deal with challenging interaction situations as well as create better atmosphere in their classes (Talvio 2014). Talvio, Lonka, Komulainen, Kuusela and Lintunen (2013) argue that supporting autonomy of both students and the teacher should be one main goal of SEL and it can be seen as a collaborative act (Talvio et al. 2013). Challenging situations can however arise quickly and teachers do not often have time to think beforehand how to respond. Training in interaction skills help teachers to become aware of the ways they interact but it requires a change of attitude and a will to give room to the students (Talvio et al. 2012).

Humphrey, Lendrum, Wigelsworth and Kalambouka (2009) found out that implementation of effective small group interventions in social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) of children depends on various variables. Skills and experience of the

teacher and physical space in which the session is held should be considered. There should also be achievable targets, reinforcement of desirable behavior and focus on fun.

Programs supporting the importance of learning communication skills and SEL skills have as well been implemented in health care (Heaven, Clegg, Maguire, 2006; Wilkinson, Roberts & Aldridge, 1998; Brown & Bylund, 2008) and P.E teacher service in Finland (Kuusela, 2001; Klemola, 2003; Kuusela, 2005; Kauko & Klemola, 2006; Klemola & Heikinaro-Johansson, 2006; Liimatta, 2007; Klemola, 2009). For example a 26 hour course over a six-month period covering practice of communication skills and attitude training in nurses has been found effective. After the intervention nurses were better able to effectively detect patients concerns, and picking up cues. Training had the biggest impact in the areas that nurses felt emotionally problematic before the training (Heaven et al. 2006). It can be suggested that when the course is long-term in nature, it gives the participants more time to review their own skills, and it creates more cohesion in the group (Wilkinson et al. 1998).

Heaven et al. (2006) criticize that communication skills won't automatically transfer from the course to the workplace, so some kind of intervention is needed. Authors suggest that limited transfer of the skills could be due to the complexity of the skills, being even more complex in the real life situations. Wilkinson, Bailey, Aldridge and Roberts (1999) found out though that communication skills can be maintained, and even improved over time. This they suggest could be due to gradually gaining confidence for using these skills at work. Brown and Bylund (2008) criticize the interventions of communication skills in health care of not providing enough details for the skills being taught, or framework for organizing communication skills training. They argue that communication in consultation should thrive towards creating an environment for effective communication. This includes giving information in a way that it is understood, responding emphatically to emotion and giving cognitive appraisal.

Because physical education teachers are the closest professional group to coaches, research done of implementing social and emotional skills in physical education context in Finland are studied in greater detail here. These studies mainly deal with what kind of

skills students learn, and if the programs are effective in physical education, but how the programs have been implemented, are seldom studied.

According to Klemola (2009) there is a great need for implementing social and emotional skills interventions in P.E. education (Klemola 2009). In fact, teachers feel they do not have enough skills for facing students in conflict situations or helping them when they experience problems. Even though physical education and sports often have goals related to social and emotional skills, such as fair play, they seldom seek to improve these skills by applying a specific method (Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007). Teaching social and emotional skills in schools could give PE teachers valuable tools for facing the problematic situations and skills to promote to positive, supportive and empowering learning atmosphere (Kuusela, 2005).

In her study Kuusela (2005) planned, implemented and evaluated a program of social and emotional skills for the period of one year in physical education of 8th grade girls. Kuusela's study is a rare example of an approach to study the processes of learning SEL skills and implement a program of social and emotional learning. In her work Kuusela (2005) reflected and evaluated the course and studied how students evaluated their learning of social and emotional skills. Furthermore, she studied how the use of social and emotional skills was present and what kind of interaction processes there were in the physical education class. This study showed that implementing social and emotional skills to physical education of adolescents could be an effective part of sport and health education in schools (Kuusela, 2005).

Most of the students in the study of Kuusela (2005) recognized that they had proceeded in the area of social and emotional skills and that they were increasingly motivated to take part to physical education classes. During the intervention students started to interact better with each other and conflict situations diminished. There was also an increase in communication, which tells about the trust created between participants. Besides, students became an active part of planning and carrying out the classes. Lastly, the role of the teacher changed from controller to care taker because students learned to be more active and take more responsibility. As a result, the learning climate became more positive, learning more effective and there was an improvement in student-teacher relationship (Kuusela, 2005).

Klemola (2003; 2009) planned, implemented and evaluated a program of social and emotional skills training for the P.E. teacher students. Purpose of the research was to see how P.E teacher students were learning the SEL skills and how they implemented them at their working practice in schools. Teachers generally feel that their work has become more challenging and relationships are the most stressing factor in their work. Study showed that social and emotional skills program was very useful for the teacher students. It could be argued that coaches and instructors might have the same need for social and emotional skills programs, because they work as well with people and many of them with children and adolescents.

In the study of Klemola and Heikinaro-Johansson (2006) P.E pre-service teacher's use of social and emotional skills were followed during their teaching practicum. It was found out that when teachers were using social and emotional skills, otherwise negative experiences changed into positive ones. Social and emotional skills helped in conflict resolution and also prevented conflict situations. Teacher students felt the suddenness of the conflict situations as problematic for using the social and emotional skills. On the contrary, understanding and expressing their own emotions had a calming effect when working in class settings. Sending I-messages affected students' behavior in problematic situations and using Active-Listening helped in cooperation with school children. As emphasized before, teachers felt that social and emotional skills are important for the work of a teacher and they should be more in focus during teacher education (Klemola & Heikinaro-Johansson, 2006).

Furthermore, the study of Kauko & Klemola (2006) concentrates on how P.E teachers support the growth of social and emotional core competencies of their pupils during the P.E classes. Teachers used mostly encouragement, differentiation, non- competitiveness and exercising in skill levels. Teachers found P.E-classes to be a great place for developing respect, fairness and honesty. Besides, P.E-classes were a good arena for practicing the conflict situations and recognizing and understanding the feelings of others. Especially accepting strengths and weaknesses, regulating one's own feelings, harmonious conflict solving skills, honesty and fairness, respecting others and ability to work together can be improved during the PE-classes. Generally teachers felt supporting social and emotional growth as a challenging task, because of the lack of knowledge based on teacher education. Teachers own enthusiasm and continuous development can

be seen as essentially important for teaching social and emotional skills in class settings (Kauko & Klemola, 2006).

Virta (2010) studied a 30 hour course in social and emotional learning for P.E teachers. The objective was to study the meaning of social and emotional learning for teachers. Virta (2010) found out that there is a tension between teacher and students in several occasions: to use power or to negotiate, to teach or build relationships, to concentrate on the individual or to the group, to have an open communication or to respect privacy? Results present that when applying SEL skills to the daily work, teachers noticed how complex using these skills can be. Using SEL skills helped teachers to develop in their pedagogic thinking, and look teaching from a different point of view. It could be suggested that each teacher should strive for to find her own way to communicate and use SEL skills (Virta 2010; Virta & Lintunen 2012).

Lastly, Liimatta (2007) studied cooperation and problem solving skills in problem solving tasks during a course in social and emotional learning. She was especially interested in how listening skills were used in situations that require problem solving in a group. In addition, she studied norms, competition and taking a role in the group. During problem solving tasks, participants realized that it was not the competition but developing the skills in social and emotional competence that was important. Equally important, listening skills of the participants developed during the course with both quality and quantity (Liimatta, 2007).

To conclude, there should be much more emphasize in creating effective social and emotional interactions in school and sport settings and creating an atmosphere that promotes emotional welfare and diminishes stress factors (Lintunen, 2006, Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007). Durlak et al. (2011) suggest that efforts are needed to concentrate on proper implementation and effective evaluation of programs for progress towards desired goals, as well as methods for sustaining beneficial programs over time (Durlak et al. 2011).

However, it is argued that SEL is a challenging theme to study (Lintunen 2009, p181, Talvio, 2014). According to Lintunen (2006) effective interventions concentrate on teaching specific skills, they are long term in nature and they promote the use of skills

also outside the intervention settings. Social constructivist, systemic and action oriented approach could be used when implementing social and emotional learning programs for groups (Lintunen, 2006). Learner -centred, dialogical and action-oriented teaching and learning methods are essential. To create safe training settings is, as well, essential for high performance level and well-being of athletes and exercisers in sport domains (Lintunen, 2006, Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007). Demonstrations and discussions about the topics can be seen as some of the best ways to work with this kind of interventions (Klemola, 2009). The overall aim for this kind of implementations is not only to teach the skills for the participants involved in the program, but also to enhance communal level learning. As its best communal level learning crosses borders and is more than a sum of the performance of the group members (Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007).

For coaches to facilitate social and emotional learning in athletes, they should prioritize social and emotional learning by intentionally making efforts to create a climate positive to SEL, consciously making effort to become aware of their own and athletes' emotions, teaching and using I-messages, Active Listening and avoiding Roadblocks of Communication to enhance coach-athlete relationship. Also enhancing team building, problem solving skills and responsible decision making is important (Lintunen & Gould, 2014). For coaches to be able to implement these strategies, they need to manage the above mentioned skills themselves first. Therefore, organizing and developing courses in social and emotional learning for coaches is essential. The present study serves as a one possible example for this kind of a course.

3 AIMS

The aim of this study was to plan, implement and evaluate a social and emotional skills course for coaches.

1. Planning: the aim was to plan a social and emotional skills course that fits the purposes of coaches. Previously similar courses have only been implemented for teachers, health care professionals and business executives.
2. Implementing: during the “Communication skills course for coaches” the aim was to study the learning processes of social and emotional skills among coaches. The purpose of the course was to show martial art coaches a different way of interacting with trainees and create a sense of awakening from the traditional methods of coaching. The goal was as well to evoke some discussion between coaches of different martial arts.
3. Evaluating: the course was evaluated by the observation of the teacher-researcher, by film recordings and by the feedback of the participants. The aim was to evaluate if the course was suitable for coaches, and how this kind of courses should be implemented in the future.

4 METHODS

The purpose of this study was to plan, implement and evaluate social and emotional skills course for martial art coaches. The course was called “Communication skills course for coaches” and it consisted of three weekends, altogether 27 hours. During each weekend there were 3 hours of practice on Fridays and 6 hours on Saturdays.

During the course participants learned theory and went through exercises about social and emotional skills. Skills were based on Thomas Gordon’s Model of Human Relationship. The skills learned were as follows:

- Perceiving, understanding and expressing the emotions in one self and in others.
- Active and Passive Listening Skills as well as Door-Openers
- I-messages.
- No-Lose method
- Avoiding the Roadblocks of Communication

The course consisted of three weekends:

1st weekend 27.-28.11.2009: Introduction of the course and participants, making rules, getting to know each other/ grouping, theory and exercises of emotional skills (recognizing, expressing, affecting), passive and active listening –skills.

2nd weekend 15.01-16.01.2010: Back together –exercises, Active Listening cases, theory and exercises about I-messages

3rd weekend 19.02-20.02.2010: I-message exercises, theory about No-Lose –method, problem solving exercises

4.1 Participants

Participants of this study were 8 instructors from aikido, two from jujutsu and three from Pilates. The basic idea was to implement this course only for martial art coaches, but because only 10 martial art coaches volunteered, I also allowed Pilates instructors to

come in. Recruitment was done by email, and by announcing the course in the local martial arts center in Oslo. Recruitment was done only locally for participants to have easy access to the course. The course was held in the martial arts center in Oslo, Norway. Altogether there were 13 participants, 5 women and 8 men, teacher-researcher and a camera man. The ages of the participants varied mainly between 20 and 45, one of the participants was older (60). Two of the participants dropped out during the course because of personal reasons. There were 11 participants who completed the whole course.

Participants had different backgrounds in coaching. Some of them wanted to become instructors (3), some of them were working as instructors in daily basis (3), and some of them were instructing now and then (5). Only few of them had any kind of education in coaching and none of them had done any courses in social and emotional skills before. Some of the participants knew each other from before, but most were unfamiliar for each other.

4.2 Design and the methodological choices of the research

This study is a qualitative case study as well as an action research. This study can be seen as a practical action research, where the project is started by an outside developer, and it helps the participants to become aware of and shape their consciousness and practice (Metsämuuronen, 2000, p30). Action research is a cyclic process where understanding develops over time (Heikkinen, Rovio & Syrjälä, 2008, p36). Action research is based on intervention and it is practical, reflective and involving social process. Its purpose is to research social reality, so that it can be changed for finding better ways of action (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p27, p35). The purpose of action research is also to trust the participants and their ideas of development, and give them possibilities to learn (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p29). With an action research one studies, tests and evaluates actions and their effects (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p136.)

One important factor of action research is the spiral of action research with cycles of planning- action- observation and reflection. (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p80). In this study this can be seen in three main phases of the study:

1. Planning of the study autumn 2009
2. Organizing the “Communication skills course for coaches” in the autumn 2009 – spring 2010
3. Reflection and feedback from the course participants afterwards

There were also small spirals of action research between each meeting, where I planned the course before it, implemented the course into action and observed what happened during the meeting, as well as reflected the feedback and my actions after the course. These observations and reflections worked as feedback for planning the next phase of the course.

Planning the “Communication skills course for coaches”:

Planning of this course started in 2007 when I took part to a similar course in our department. That was a course for students of sport and exercise psychology. I found these skills appealing and wondered why I hadn’t heard of them before, even though I had been working as a trainer for many years. This was the first step of inspiration to start planning a similar course that could fit for sport coaches. As part of the planning process I took also part to Gordon effectiveness training course (Nuisku –kurssi) by Nuorten Keskus ry to learn more of these skills.

The leading thread for the course is experimental learning, where the participants after hearing the theory, try it out in practice. Sometimes there are also demonstrations of the exercises beforehand. After exercises participants discuss first in small groups and afterwards with the whole group. Between the theory and exercises that demand concentration, there are some group building exercises in order to make the atmosphere relaxed and to make the group stick together. The plan was to use only short periods of theory and to try to include everybody in the exercises. Also Klemola (2009) built her program by using task specific “warm-ups”, theory of the skills, demonstrations, discussions, practice and sharing the experience. CASEL is suggesting this way to build the classes in social- and emotional skills training programs. Demonstrations help to understand the skills and discussions and are most useful in teaching the skills.

During this research I worked as a teacher-researcher, being an active part of the course. When working as a teacher-researcher one can be more in a part of a researcher

(observer as a participant) or in a part of a teacher (participant as an observer). (Metsämuuronen 2000, p45.) Part of an action research is the observations the researcher is doing during the action. The purpose of participatory observation is to understand the subject of research and by that way to influence actions of the group in process. (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p106). Action research is a hermeneutic process where understanding from the research object is developing over time (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p20). In the field work it is important but challenging to be able to balance between participation and observation, to teach and to same time live the course with participants. (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p102).

4.3 Data gathering and analysis

Most important methods for data gathering in action research are participatory observation, researchers diary based on the observations and interview. In method triangulation different methods are used (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p104). The current course was evaluated all the time during the course using participatory observation. After the course evaluation was based on the video recordings from the course and feedback from the participants. New information was collected by reflecting own experiences, and conceptualizing and analyzing the material.

Observation. Working as a teacher-researcher during the course, and being actively part in the process as well as an observer during the exercises, gave me first hand information of the formation of the group, of the feelings expressed in the group, of the atmosphere in the room, and of the expressions of learning during the course. These observations I noted down to a researches diary. The researchers' diary lifts up researchers' observations, feelings, impressions, self-evaluations and it also builds interpretations (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p207.)

Video recording. The main data gathering method was filming. The material can be analyzed as it is or to be used as a supportive method for observation (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p106). The whole course was filmed by an outside camera man, who was instructed to try to disturb as little as possible, but to try to capture what was going on in the group at each moment. Participants became fast familiar of the presence of the

camera and seemed not to be bothered about it. The films were transcript afterwards and written down word to word what participants said, but also what one could observe from the course via filming. From the combination of this transcription and a researcher's diary a detailed story of the course was written. That is presented in the results.

Questionnaire. Participants were also given a feedback questionnaire (APPENDIX 1) right after the course that concerned about what they thought was positive and negative aspects of the course, if they thought the skills learned were important for their work as instructors, and what skills they thought they learned well enough to be able to use in coaching. These answers are reported in the results.

The results are written in the form of a story about the course. The story is based on the films taken from the course and observations from the teacher-researcher during the course. A transcript of 91 pages with font 11 and line spacing 1,15 was written from the video recordings. Afterwards a narrative was written from it that is presented in the results. When a research is made into a story, it is called a narrative analysis. It is a story with a storyline, and the idea is to bring out the researchers and participants' experiences as authentic as possible (Heikkinen et al. 2008, p117).

4.4 Trustworthiness

In action research it is understood that the understanding of being a participant in a research is changing the behavior of the participants and affecting the result. This is seen as a natural part of the research and it is understood that objective information cannot be collected, but instead perceptions of the participating coaches and the researcher can be obtained. (Heikkinen et al. 2008, pp72-73)

The result is only one possible truth of the research subject. The researchers work is to tell the story as truthfully as possible (Heikkinen et al. 2008, pp118-119.). This is done in the results and the trustworthiness of the story is evaluated as a one possible truth as it is told by the researcher and the participants.

According to Heikkinen et. al. action research can be evaluated by principle of historical continuity, principle of reflexivity, principle of dialectics, principle of workability and principle of evocativeness. (Heikkinen et al. 2008, pp149-160).

Principle of historical continuity: researcher is evaluating the history of the research object and the actual research.

Principle of reflectivity: understanding of the research object is developing over time. Researcher is reflecting her own understanding, her role in the research, development of her identity during the research and relationship with the study object.

Principle of dialectics: researcher should bring up different voices and interpretations as authentic as possible.

Principle of workability: research should have an effect in practice and it should be useful. Workability can also mean that the participants have become empowered.

Principle of evocativeness: research should evaluate the pros and cons of the project, also how it brings forward mechanics of power.

Researcher should also evaluate the ethics of the research; how the research is affecting the participants and the society, and if the participants can be recognized from the study. All these points are followed in the present study.

In addition to these points presented above, member clearing is lifting up the trustworthiness of this study. The results were sent for member checking to one of the participants. Participant agreed that the story written from the course was truthful and according to his remembering.

Ethical choices of this study:

All the participants in this study were volunteers who gave their consent to participate. Anonymity of the participants is kept the best way possible in the results by writing the story in a way that recognizing individual participants would not be possible. Real names of the participants are not used and describing participants are kept as minimal. Data of the present study is stored in a safe locked place and destroyed when the study is completed.

Participants approved to be part of the study when volunteering to the course, and they were informed that they could any time pull themselves out from the study if they so wished. Also participating to each exercise and discussion was up to participants. They got also informed that the course would be video recorded, and the recordings only used

for the research purposes. They could also inform the camera man if they didn't wish to be filmed. No-one refused to be video recorded.

In the beginning of the course, rules for the group were made. Everybody could come up with suggestions for a creation of safe environment for the group. The well-being of the participants was kept in the focus during the whole course, so that participants could come up with suggestions to how they wanted the course to advance by timing of the lectures, amount of pauses and exercises and so forth. Feedback from the participants was also collected after each meeting to make the course fit better the expectations of the participants. From the feedback of the participants that are presented in the results, it can be seen that the on participants perceived the course in a positive way and also learned new skills and, consequently, benefitted from the course.

5 PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS COURSE FOR COACHES

”Communication skills course for martial art coaches” was held in winter 2009/2010, and it consisted of three weekends. Each weekend consisted of Friday evening 18.00-21.00 and Saturday 10.00-17.00, altogether 27 hours. There were 13 people in the group; 8 coaches from aikido, 2 from jujutsu and 2 from Pilates. The course was organized in the aikido training locality, on the outskirts of Oslo, in a room of about 200 square meters with martial art training mats.

5.1 Weekend 1

The goal for the first day was to go through the introduction for the course, introduction of the participants, grouping and getting to know each other, theory about emotional intelligence and interaction, recognizing one’s own emotions and setting the rules.

Feeling in the room was waiting and a bit excited. The group was attentive. From the video I can see that I look quite anxious at the beginning but I start to melt after some minutes. That has also some effect to the group. I am actually quite amazed that they can concentrate so well after the whole week in the work even if it is so late.

5.1.1 Getting together

Our first exercise was to write to on board “What would you like to experience during this course?” I chose this exercise to get to know participants’ expectations about the course.

I have written “Welcome” to the board and under that “Fun” with big letters. My point of view is that it’s easier to learn and remember and to grow as a group, if we have fun in the midst of learning.

It seems like people had a bit hard time to figure out what they would like to write. Maybe it is difficult to think what they would like to experience or they might be bit anxious how other group members would react to them. In the end we found out that participants would like to experience: warmth, communication, learning, inspiration, fun, reflection, experience, personal growth and new ideas.

The second task was that everyone writes their names on a card and had it on their shirt. I gave them also some stickers with smiley faces they could choose from; what represents them most at the moment. Participants should then tell about who they are and why they chose a specific smiley face at the moment. This created some laughter and atmosphere got lighter. Purpose of this exercise was to get to know each other, recognize our own feelings and to be able to say these feelings out. It looks like that all of these instructors are in a starting phase with their instructor career and eager to develop their teaching skills. Where are all the experienced instructors?

Next task was to write down 3 questions about “what you would like to know about another group member.” This task is about getting to know each other better. Each participant wrote their questions on a piece of paper, and these papers were then mixed in a hat and given one to every participant. Their task was to answer these questions as honestly as possible. Atmosphere was waiting and a bit confused. It seemed difficult to find out what should be asked. Intensive thinking and writing was going on. Laughter. People were discussing and looking a bit tired.

These were some of the questions participants were pondering about each other at the start of the course:

- How can you be sure that you understand or that you have been understood?
- What are your barriers when you have to start communication?
- Have you ever been in a situation where your communication has been insufficient?
- How do you deal with insecurity?
- What do you find most challenging?
- What do you want to attain?
- What can you bring to this group?
- What are you afraid of?
- What makes you happy?
- What is your strongest side?

Questions were challenging for the group in the beginning phase. However, everybody seemed to be trying to answer honestly and thoughtfully to these questions. Atmosphere was a bit shy and holding back though. These are sensitive matters and maybe the assignment should be taken up later in the course. Interesting though was that it was the participants themselves who brought these questions up.

Rules of the group:

Next I organized the group assignment, how to build the rules for the group. It is important to create safety in the group by building rules for the group. By this exercise we could also get to know each other better and understand what we were waiting for a group situation like this. I told a story that goes like this:

“Native American Indians had a very successful way to organize meetings and counseling. They were sitting in a circle and the one talking had a talker stick. Others were supposed to be quiet and attentive. When the talker was finished he passed the talker stick to the next person. If someone wanted to answer, they picked up an answering feather.” The items represent the respect Indians had for the talker, in addition they show the turn who is talking. The idea was to have this in mind in later discussions.

Next, I suggested following rules for the group:

- 1) everyone is responsible for their own needs
- 2) to disagree is ok
- 3) we can skip

Following rules came from the group members:

- 4) respect for each other
- 5) Open mindedness
- 6) We are sharing personal matters, so we should keep what we have discussed inside this group

One person also mentioned that it is difficult to remember and behave if we have too many rules, so we should keep it simple.

Everyone seemed to agree on the rules. We wrote them down to the paper and hung it on the wall.

Afterwards we discussed about the difference that you think that you are put down by someone and react on that and really be put down by on someone. One person said that best is probably in any occasion to ask what is really the persons intention. If it is not to put you down, you will understand that you interpret something wrong. If the intention

is to put you down, the person will probably at least have to consider what he is doing. After this discussion there was a quit long, thoughtful silence.

After going little bit further with the power point presentation about the emotions, I asked the group members “What emotions are allowed or not allowed in Norway?” This question started a long and inspiring talk. Almost everyone took part to this talk and everybody seemed interested.

It seemed that the feeling in the group was very good at this point of the course. People seemed quite connected and interested.

I also asked what feelings they don't accept in themselves. There was not so much respond, they were mainly thinking themselves. Some looked tired and one participant was looking the time. Theory part seemed a bit too long because people were getting sleepy. So talk less, do more!

Feeling maps:

Last thing we did this day was an exercise of recognizing one's own emotions. Task was to draw a picture of a person on the large board paper and by using different colors of note papers to tag in the picture where in the body you feel the following basic emotions: happiness, love, anger, anxiety, fear and wonder.

As I went around the room, it seemed like the participants were concentrated and excited about the exercise. There was conversation about the topic and most of the participant seemed to find where in their body they felt the emotions. I also described that we often put our hand to the place where we feel the emotions. We had to stop this exercise in the middle of it because it was getting too late in the evening.

Participants were hanging around at the room after we closed up and I heard them talking about the emotions and about the “maps” we made. They didn't seem to hurry anywhere. It took more than half an hour before people left the building.

My observations about the group: It seemed that there are some participants that are very motivated and they take part in the course a lot. But there are also some participants who seemed not motivated at all or perhaps they were shy. The participants who work with these things every day seem generally more interested. Most of the

participants seemed thought to be genuinely interested and took actively part to the exercises and discussions.

It seemed like the group got very fast used to the camera, even if it was changing the place all the time. Maybe it helps that the camera man does not bring himself forward. One thing that came up a lot is when discussing as a whole group was that there was only a few that were taking a part or maybe the feeling was unsecure. When working as pairs feeling gets lighter and everyone talks without a stop. During the starting phase of a course like this it is natural that some people need more time to warm up, and wait that the group gets safe to say their opinions and show their emotions.

5.1.2 The unsecure group

In the morning of the next day everyone seem a bit tired, I as well. There was much less talk than the day before. Everybody sat quietly in the circle.

We continued with the “feeling maps”. After discussing in the groups for 5 minutes, participants seemed ready. Groups presented their maps first to the whole group. Feeling was very tired, kind of a sticky.

No-one really wanted to start first. To get more clarity about where the emotions are felt and if the emotions are felt at the same place, I draw a picture on the board and everyone set their feeling cards on it. First we had decided the colors for each feeling: Love-pink, Happiness-green, Wonder-dark blue, Anger-yellow, Anxiety-violet, Fear-light blue. This exercise seemed also really difficult to get started, participants were like half asleep. They were sitting mostly quiet and thoughtful, not talking so much as day before. What happened with the yesterday’s motivation!

Finally everyone managed to place their feelings on the map. It seemed like the feelings were about the same places for everyone. Anger=head, Wonder=head, Fear=head/chest/stomach, Love=chest, Happiness=chest/stomach (legs for one person), Anxiety=stomach

Norwegian foot play:

I was tired of people sitting around and looking unmotivated, so I asked if they were tired. There was only long silence as an answer. So I decided that we jump up and do

some awakening exercise, called Norwegian foot play. That play is good for waking up but also for connecting the group and is fun!

Norwegian foot play: People are standing in a circle, holding hands. First person steps to someone's toes. That means that person has to move that leg and step to someone else's toes. So it continues so long that the group cannot move anymore or someone falls out. Group is divided into two smaller groups of six persons. Generally very fun and very good balance practice! Everybody seemed to have fun and they started to wake up! When we got back to the circle, quietness returns. Maybe group was very unsafe at that moment.

5.1.3 Recognizing the emotions

Next exercise was about recognizing the emotions of others. I had brought with me some cards that were pictures from paintings of some well known painters. There was one card for each pair and all of the cards were different. In all those cards there were people expressing feelings. I asked the participants to choose a partner they had not worked with so much this time. First the participants were discussing about the feelings and story of the painting with their partner. There was a lot of talking and thoughtful faces, also laughing. Everyone seemed to take part and this exercise managed to break the small groups that existed in the circle we had when we discussed with the whole group.

Afterwards we went through the thoughts the cards evoked with the whole group. The pair who had the card was explaining first and then the card went from one pair to another. That caused bored feelings and looks because people didn't really know what they were talking about. So the last three cards were first passed in the circle so that everyone could see them, then the pair whose card it was started to explain, followed by others. It seemed that people were a bit excited and scared of what to say! Some of the participants passed this exercise or talked very little. Others talked very much and had a lot of ideas.

During this exercise we were discussing how people recognize feelings. We also talked about that feeling spreads out easily in the group or between people. It was VERY QUIET and difficult to get conversation going on!

I asked the participants what kind of mood they think it was in the group at that moment. I thought myself it would be tiredness. Answers were: wonder (laughter), excitement, and fear to say something wrong. Some participants thought also that the group was more settled and more relaxed.

I asked the group if there was something we could do to make the group safer, so that everyone could say their opinion. Participants thought that the reason for the unsafe group could be the language we were using (English), so everybody was holding little bit back. So we agreed that it was okay to speak Norwegian. I was holding the course in English and those who felt comfortable discussed in English. Most of the discussions with the whole group were done in English, when most of the discussion in small groups or pair happened in Norwegian.

5.1.4 Listening skills

I explained the theory about the roadblocks of communication. I also read some examples from the book. Participants thought that it was confusing and roadblocks were too general. Participants seemed bored or that they didn't seem understand. Perhaps I should have maybe had more own examples directly from coaching!

However, participants raised up themselves some topics they wanted to discuss about: they came with examples in how they understand listening or not listening the emotions of others in our society. This can be seen for example adults not listening to children, or answering with preoccupied thoughts that are not according to the present situation. One should rather try to see where the person is at and accept that. To be accepted as one is and to feel okay to feel what one feels, is a wonderful feeling, says one participant.

Passive listening:

We went through theory about passive listening and practiced it by telling about how our day had been. Our partner was listening the story passively, concentrating on how he expresses himself with the body language. It really seemed that participants were listening. They were talking quite enthusiastically, laughing. It seemed that they just wanted to continue. I felt I should go around more and listen, but when doing so I felt I disturbed the talk.

Participants were commenting that it is difficult when you cannot talk. I tried to make them understand that this exercise was about practicing our body-language and the way to be present with the other person. Essence in it is to be able to be quiet in your own mind and really listen what the other person is saying, without preparing your own story and answers while listening.

Acknowledgement responses:

We did similar practice with acknowledge responses. The task was to tell about something really great that had happened. The task of the partner was to use encouragement to help the one telling the story to tell more. The exercise was starting slowly but when they got into speed it was difficult to stop. The exercise created a good atmosphere and everybody was talking enthusiastically. They found it though difficult to share with everybody else afterwards.

Active Listening:

We used similar exercise with Active Listening. The task was to tell about some difficult situation that had happened to you. The task of the partner was to use Active Listening to help the talker to understand his feelings. It looked that they understood it. People seemed to talk easily. They learned more about the other person and the topic. Some participants commented that one gets to know what is going on in the person, and it is good to solve it in the better way. There is also the possibility for one to feel the same feeling. One person says: "Something released inside me as well. That was maybe from a different situation."

Feedback:

Participants commented that the course was fun with lot of activities. That makes people to open up and makes the course open minded. Then it is easier to talk about how you feel at the moment. One also gets more focused, since it's not so theoretical.

Another person commented that it was really interesting to learn about body language and he sees that this is very helpful for his work. He also thought it is useful to refresh other things as well. Some commented that it is not natural with acting when doing the cases.

It seems like the group has become safer during the first weekend. The shyness of the beginning of the course has changed to an interaction with quite deep thoughts. Perhaps the listening exercises, making rules for the group and participants genuine interest in discussions has helped with this. Talking about emotions when meeting a group first time is a challenging task and exercises about emotions can feel quite unsafe for the group in the beginning. How to make these exercises safe as an instructor would be relevant to think beforehand when organizing a course of social and emotional learning.

5.2 Weekend 2

There were 7 participants present this weekend. For those who weren't present (6 participants), I organized a meeting for one Saturday, where we went through the theory and exercises for these both days. I have decided to follow here the main group and what happened during their time in this course. This because some problems with video camera with the other group and because there were more participants with the main part of the group.

The goal for this weekend was to refresh the skills learned in the first weekend, to learn about Active Listening and sending I-messages and also to make the group connected and safe. Participants seemed very positive when coming in but I sensed that there was a little bit of excitement in the air.

5.2.1 Connection

Most of the participants of the martial arts are aware of the concept of connection. This seemed at least clear for the group present. Connection is something we need in martial arts and in communication. Connection creates a bridge through which the information is delivered between the people. In martial arts connection created by a grab, for example, enables one to feel the movement and intention of the partner. In higher level of practice, connection is already created before the physical contact, when one is examining the bodily expressions of the other person to get a hint of the coming attack. When communicating verbally or non-verbally with a person, we need a similar connection, which could be defined as an aware attention towards another. When we are attentive and in the present moment, we give a greater chance for ourselves to pick up the information presented by the other person.

Connection exercise:

As a warming up exercise we were examining this and combining the physical connection (shaking hands) to verbal communication between two persons. The aim was to deepen the verbal communication with a physical contact and to create an aware connection between two people by holding hands and looking in the eyes.

Participants walked around in the room. When they met a person, they shook hands and tried really to connect with each other. They kept the hand shake and eye contact during the whole conversation. The idea was to ask how the other person is doing and answer truthfully. This gave us the possibility to know where all the participants were at that moment.

What I noticed was that quite many of the participants used door-openers during this exercise. When I said how I felt, many of them answered ‘Really?’ That’s a kind of open-ended question or a door-opener that allows me to tell more about how I feel.

The feelings participants announced were: excited, tired, happy, excellent, exhausted, lack of energy, little bit stressed and tired but happy. I perceived genuine contact with everyone. Participants were talking with each other, they seemed really be meeting. Participants felt also that they got good connection with everyone. We discussed that when people normally ask how you are doing, they don’t really want to know the answer, because if you say something about your real feelings, they will just change the subject. Some were also wondering that if someone says to you something negative, for example that they feel bad, how should you react then.

“Now we have got connected, and we can get to know each other a little bit better!”

5.2.2 Cards

I put different pictures on the floor and participants can pick up the two that tell most about them. Everyone rushed to the cards, someone picked a card in one instant, but for some participants there were some difficulties in choosing. People were laughing and they seemed to have fun. No-one wanted to like to start telling about themselves first, so I went ahead first.

People were participating attentively and respectfully. They were telling quite personal matters of themselves, openly and surely. This exercise seemed to bring closeness and understanding in the group. Group seemed safe now.

We went forward towards the goals:

Last time each participant set a goal that they should concentrate on between the courses. But no-one remembered the goals they set last time! They hadn't been concentrating on them. I felt disappointed but I tried not to show it. Participants seemed a bit shamed, uneasy. I had taken the papers where they had written the goals down, so they maybe didn't remember them. It needed to be better planning with the goals! And follow up during the weeks!

Suddenly I got really aware of the time. That it went really slowly. I thought that I cannot fill in the whole class. I was almost panicking. So I jumped to the theory. We went little through of what we had last time. Atmosphere was clearing and everyone seemed to listen.

5.2.3 Active Listening cases

I continued by reminding participants of Active listening and how it works. I noticed I should use better examples that link it directly to participant's experience as instructors. It looked like people are bored or tired, so I asked if they want to have a break. They didn't, so we decided to just go through everything without a break. In this exercise one person acted as an instructor and the other one as a student. Participants got one paper each with an explanation about the situation. Then they should try to play their part as good as they can and try to solve the situation. I instructed them to act out the feelings so that the case would become as realistic as possible. There are altogether 6 cases they went through with their partner.

It seemed like it was difficult to start, some were just sitting quietly, and some seemed disturbed if I came around. Some felt it was difficult to act, they were asking the wrong questions, or they made it too easy for their partner and solved the problem right away. After a while when participants had got warmed up in acting, it seemed that solving the cases started work out better. Everyone seemed really to try at least. People seemed to

have lots of difficulties, but also realizations and fun. They seemed to be able to link it to the training.

One person commented this type of problem solving method:

“Sometimes you find out (the problem) without asking, maybe I should ask more, but are afraid to touch the tender subjects. I usually get the idea very quick, but maybe I’m afraid to get into it directly.”

And another participant thought that:

“It’s better to keep asking around the subject than backing out. Try to avoid giving solution; maybe you should do this or that. And talk with him instead”

There came up some difficulties instructors meet in their daily work. At least in Pilates the classes are constructed in a way, where the instructors need to keep up the flow all the time, and verbally instruct the group and at the same time show the movements or correct the whole group or individuals. Afterwards participants are running to next classes or instructors are starting new classes, so there is no time to solve problematic situations (if for example atmosphere in the class doesn’t seem to be right). It seems to be difficult to establish a personal connection to the groups they are instructing. Participants can also jump in to the classes or drop the classes whenever they like, that makes instructors insecure of what this means. “You can choose the class you take (the participant), so everything has to be perfect. If you do one mistake, they just drop you.”

People were just sitting around, talking, waiting but having a good time. I closed up the exercise by asking their experiences about this exercise and if someone has something to ask. Some people seemed the exercise was difficult, especially when one played the part of the instructor. Some commented on recognizing similar situations in their work as an instructor.

Afterwards we were filling in the Active listening stairs and I gave instructions to fill them in once a week between the courses. The idea was to follow the progress and also keep the Active listening in mind all the time. As I came to notice, this was not working out at all, because participants didn’t commit on filling in these stairs. People seem thoughtful when writing their papers. I get caught up in a conversation with one participant and it lasts quite a while:

We discussed about a situation where a person had asked advice from this participant, and he has tried to use Active Listening. I said that in a situation where the other person is clearly asking for the advice, it is okay to give it. It is a different situation if a person is giving out advices without asking. This participant agreed and thought it is best if one finds it out for oneself. There are many situations in coaching when a coach tries to give advice but it doesn't really sink in, before the student realizes it himself.

This participant felt that there was no room for it and that the person giving advice kind of fills up all the space in the person asking the advice with all his ideas, and then for this person it would be difficult to start to build it up from the inside and it remains only something from the outside. It's just like plaster; the person doesn't own the ideas himself.

He thought it can be hard to open up and create a room for discussion, so that it's natural for the students to give something in a meeting, but it's also that the coach shouldn't always be asking questions, because then it becomes like an interview. So the coach should try to establish an intercommunication, to throw the ball back and forth. The coach can try to act as an example, but should have a responsibility in what he says and how he acts, because he is an example and affects the student. Sometimes he can affect the student negatively, so it requires a lot of awareness.

I noticed that the other participants were lying around, waiting, and looking tired and bored. They had been just waiting or talking with each other, while I was discussing with this participant. First I didn't notice this and then I had hard time to stop the discussion in between. This kind of discussion should maybe happen after the class, but it's not always so easy to handle because this was a spontaneous talk that needed active listening. I instructed the participants to fill in the goals about Active Listening for the next time. We would decide the goals about sending I-messages the day after.

To end the day with relaxation and connected feeling so the participants in the group would feel connected to each other when departing. Then starting next day could be easier. That seemed to work well and everybody look relaxed. It was silent and positive atmosphere. It was good stop here for the day. I gave homework to think about a play/game that is good for team-building. Everyone was going slowly out from the room.

Next day three participants could not participate and one only for a half a day. We started with exercise because everyone seemed tired. It took a lot of time to get started today.

5.2.4 Meeting with a feeling

The idea with this exercise was to get reconnected with the people in the group and also to get to the present moment by activating the sense of feeling. Here we went one step deeper from the meeting exercise we had the day before, because in this exercise we had our eyes closed and the communication happened only through the physical contact of our hand shake.

In this exercise the participants were guiding their partner around the room when he had his eyes closed. When two people met, they shake hands and tried to guess who they were meeting with and how was that person feeling at that moment.

People seemed to concentrate and have fun. Afterwards they said that it was difficult and maybe they didn't feel the feeling so much, because they were concentrating to guess who it was they met. Some people could feel little bit. One person got an impression when he was touching a wet hand that it was nervousness, but the person having a wet hand denied that.

5.2.5 Getting centered and saying your need

Being centered is an essential part of martial arts. When you are centered, you are balanced and you can use your energy effectively. Here I compare being centered physically to being centered mentally, meaning knowing yourself and your opinions and being able to say them out with a secure feeling. During these following exercises we were experimenting how a feeling of being physically centered affects to one's ability to say out one's meaning.

So we continued with different kind of I-messages. To use these messages you need to know yourself and be centered in yourself.

Centering exercise:

This exercise is sometimes used in Aikido: One person is standing legs shoulder wide and trying to have a relaxed posture. The other person is walking around and pushing the person standing. The one who is standing tries to find he's center. The person walks around and pushes from different places (back, legs, shoulders etc.). But the idea is not to push so hard that the person would fall. Participants can have an intention that they are building each other up. And when they are pushing, they should try to get centered as well, because if they don't have a center, it's very difficult to push.

Participants paired up with a partner they hadn't been working with so much this time. The feeling in the group was excited before exercise. Feeling during the exercise was concentrated and silent. They seemed to have fun but they took their task seriously. After stopping the exercise people started to discuss intensely. It felt like there was a good, safe feeling in the group. I got feedback that they feel great, energized, expanded and grounded. Participants also said that they felt centered in the center they wanted to be in.

Consciousness or awareness is very much concentrated on in martial arts. It is a way of being in the situation and knowing what happens around you, but also the way to get to know yourself better and to develop as a human being.

To express one's needs:

As we went on we tried to keep the center we had found during the exercise about I-message and saying one's need. So I asked people to think the following questions: what is the thing you need from this group, from these people here, so that you can have the best possibility to learn? I informed that they should try to use the experience from the previous exercise and have in mind to stay in their center while speaking out their need.

The answers that came up were:

Participants needed to be safe and secure; they needed more clear messages and direct messages from other group members. They wanted people to be open and try not to bring too many readymade opinions in the group. Some participants needed honesty. But they understand that it's important and difficult, because it requires trust and open-

mindedness. Some participants also asked not to judge anything before you try to understand what has actually been said.

During this discussion, participants took up a topic about respect:

Respect is thought of something really important, essential for the working of the group. Some experience it as openness from the other participants. Respect is also an essential part of martial arts, where people learn to use potentially dangerous techniques and practice them on each other. In a group respect is seen to be accepted as one are. One participant says: "If I have a bad day and I'm aggressive and angry and someone still keeps open, he has to respect himself and know himself good enough to understand that this is not my shit, that's his shit, so maybe we can change it." One participant also reminded us that to give respect, you also have to have some respect for yourself.

It seemed not to be too easy to talk about one's own needs. I noticed that participants were speaking very quietly when telling about their needs. Participants noticed this too. It might be difficult to say the needs out loud. Some commented that you might feel it's too egoistic or it might hurt someone else's feelings. And not all needs can be met at all times. One participant didn't see how things could work if everyone would just demand to get their needs met at all times. I reminded them that we practice this as a part of I-message and also how to be able to say your need out in a problematic situation.

One participant said out that she understands that this way of communicating is more like getting the message through, when you have a basic need that is not maybe been understood. Then you don't just expect that the other person understands but you find out. One participant pointed out that we are sometimes not aware of our needs, because we don't really put them into words, so we just feel unfulfilled and realize we don't have the guts to put our wishes into words.

The other person commented that the most interesting question for he is, do we actually really know what our needs always are. People want everything, but what do they really need? He saw that openness and honesty might bring understanding to it.

I felt there was lot of good points, but the energy of the group was going down at this point. People were also asking for having a break. But I decided we try to do one more exercise before the break just to try to lift up the energy and create something positive.

5.2.6 I-message

Positive I-message exercise:

Everyone gets a sheet of paper taped on their back. Then they should go around and write something positive in each other's backs in a form of: I feel or I experience, instead of you are. The sentence should be put in a way they experience the person, something positive, nice and cheering up.

Some participants were making jokes about the exercise, everybody's laughing. The atmosphere started to change already. People were going around, writing on each other's backs. There were long queues, people writing and waiting. It looked funny. Energy of the group seemed to go up, and people seemed to have good time. Atmosphere was anticipating, excited. They looked thoughtful. After the exercise everybody took their papers and read them immediately and eagerly. Participants seemed to go for the break with good feeling and lifted mood.

Sword fight:

After the break everybody was lying around, looking tired. Just to get some energy going, I gave a soft sword for everyone. These swords are used in the children training in our aikido club. People started to run around and to hit each other with them immediately.

The idea of this warming up exercise was that we tried to hit with the sword, and block the hit from the others. Not with full power. We played everyone against everyone so that the game would get more challenging. If a person got a hit they should do push-ups or sit ups. From my experience, what has worked well with children is that if they get hit on the arm, they put it behind their back or if they get hit on the leg, they jump with one leg. If they get hit on the stomach, they do 5 sit ups and if they get hit on the back, they do five push-ups.

Everybody seemed to have good time, immersed in the sword fight. People seemed to have fun, but they were getting tired after a while. This practice also took some time, because we played it so long that everybody had dropped out. At least we were now awake and could continue with the theory.

Problem solving I-messages:

I explained the theory behind the problem solving I-messages: instead of labeling the person, you tell about the situation and your feelings. The idea with this exercise was the same that with the Active Listening cases last time: to practice situations where one is the coach and the other one is the student. I had prepared several cases of challenging situations that might happen during the instruction. The task was to try to send an I-message and then shift to Active Listening and try to figure out why the student was behaving like she did. I also instructed participants to try out consciously what happens when You-message is used. Very often we are thinking that something is somehow, before we find out how it really is.

One participant commented that it's very important to say things in this way, because then there is nothing to discuss. If you tell that the situation makes you feel like this, no-one can say it's stupid. We made pairs so that participants found out a pair that had a similar thumb to their own. People had fun with finding their pairs, which they managed to do after a while. I went around and listened to the cases. Participants seemed to have some difficulties and road blocks of communication were used a lot. This is though natural in the beginning phase of learning the skills. It needs practice to master the communication skills as well as martial art. Here are some examples of how the participants managed to solve the cases. It is noticeable that participants have learned to use I-messages but are also eager to offer solutions to the problems, instead of listening actively to the student:

Case 1:

Student: You have to hurry to catch the last train after the training and you have no time to put the things you have used in the training back to their places. Instructor stops you when you are on your way out.

Coach: One of your students always leaves things he/she has used all over, so you have to put them back to their places. You stop him/her when she/he is on the way out. Tell how this affects you and makes you feel with I-messages and Active Listening.

Coach: Why are you just leaving this behind?

Coach: I think it's little bit frustrating for all of us to try to keep nice and tidy place here when you just leave your things behind, and I get a bit irritated by it. Is it possible that you could not leave your things behind?

Student: But I have to catch my train here, I'm sorry.

Coach: But we are tidying the place for everybody, everybody is tidying up.

Student: Okay, I have no time to discuss; I have to catch my train. Can we talk about this when I'm home?

Coach: We can talk about this next time.

Case 2:

Coach: One of the children is running in and out from the class to toilet and this is disturbing your teaching. There is a rule to ask first and he/she is not following the rule. How do you act in this situation by using I-messages and Active Listening?

Student: You are feeling very excited because you have birthday today and all your friends come to birthday party after training. You will be 10-years old! You need to run to the toilet all the time.

Coach: When you are running out without saying anything, it is very disturbing for me and it is actually disturbing me, so I hope that you could say when you are going out. But is it something special?

Student: I have birthday today...

Coach: Congratulations!

Student: I get friends for a visit, that's very exciting!

Coach: Are you nervous?

Student: It says here (looking at the paper)...

I gave also instructions to try out what happens when they use you-message. Under is the same example as above, but with you-message.

Case 3:

Coach: I'm trying to teach you something!

Student: But I have to go to toilet!

Coach: Why?

Student: Because I need to pi!

Coach: Ok, but do it fast then!

Participants realize that in this case they didn't find out that the child had a birthday. That the coach was stopping the communication by allowing himself to get angry.

Discussion with the whole group:

One participant did notice that he used to just stop talking when students were disturbing him with their talking. Then everybody's attention went to those students, which made them probably feel ashamed. He saw this was not actually a very good way to handle the situation. Instead he found out that he could say his message, if it has importance to everyone, in plenum instead to only one person. Then there is a bigger change not to create bad feeling for the student. Here is an example from him: 'If someone has borrowed something from the box, it's good to put it back, because when the next person needs it, he will find it there'. He thought this is a good way to get the message across without hanging out one person. One person commented this that it is a good way, but we cannot use it if everybody knows who has done wrong.

The same person commented that you might also say that you see that something is wrong, and if the person wants to talk about it, even if you might feel anger. He thought this might give an opening for the person to go forward.

One person commented that if you get irritated or angry as an instructor and you shout to a person, then you are actually putting it on the person, even if it's actually your problem, your feelings. But when you are saying how the situation is, then you are talking about the situation and not putting your feelings on the other person. Another participant commented that he can see this in the school when he is working as a teacher. It's easy to say to a student that they are disturbing when it's actually he that

gets distracted. He also commented that you have to concentrate extra when practicing I-messages, and to be able to use them in the real life, one has to practice it first.

Another participant saw that I-message is about holding back a reaction and that's why it's more difficult. It's maybe easier in a class, when you don't have that kind of relationship, but with your parents or boyfriend it's easy to just react immediately.

Own cases:

Our next task was to find out in what kind of problematic situations one can encounter at their work as a coach and create a case about it. Afterwards participants should practice the case and show it to everyone.

While others were planning, I discussed with one participant: he felt that trying to be honest in the feeling when playing the cases is challenging. It testes one's reaction and how one would solve the cases. It is easy to fall in to the old patterns instead of thinking of new ways of solving the problems. The old reaction can be that if someone confronts, we start to block. This situation can also be seen in aikido when one is doing a technique. If you try to force your technique on someone, the person starts to block, but if you are blending your movement to the movement of that person, the technique happens like itself. The idea of aikido is that power is never put against power, but the idea is to work together to create a movement. There seems to be lot of similarities in physical and verbal communication. And doing a technique or guiding someone to a technique is a kind of communication through the movement.

At the same time people seemed to be planning intensely. I went around and asked how it is going. They were sharing with me some problems they have faced as an instructor. It will be interesting to see the cases. Two participants had already found out a case and they are showing it to everyone. Other groups get homework to finish their cases for the next time.

The case:

Student is doing a movement, where he sits on his knees, should hold his back straight and bend backwards from his tights.

Coach: You should keep your back straight

Student: But my back is straight

Coach: It's not completely straight.

Student: Yes it is, I can feel it, its working good.

Coach: It's not straight, I can see it.

Student: Yeah, but now it is straight, I can feel it, it's very good now, you can just go now, I can do this myself.

Coach: I feel that when I give you correction, that you don't really like it and it makes me insecure if you want to hear it or not.

Student: I don't want to be corrected.

Coach: Can I ask you why you don't want to be corrected?

Student: I just don't want to be corrected when it's so many people. I just don't want to be corrected in front of all the people.

Coach: So you would prefer if I give general corrections and you try to follow them than hands on correction?

Student: Yeah, I don't like when you stand beside me and tell me what to do.

Coach: Okay, I will avoid that.

In this case the two people had totally different standpoints though they were in the same situation. One person in the course told about a situation where one instructor was really pushing people without hearing their point of view. This ended up in that they didn't like the sport. They could have maybe continued if the instructor were more open to hear what the people had to say.

I-message stairs:

Afterwards we filled in the I-message stairs. The idea was to fill them in once a week between the courses. People felt that it was difficult to find only one of the scales to get into. Some of them saw some situations where they were down the scale and then some situations where they were doing better. One person told that the more serious problem or the need is, he is getting higher on the scale, because his involvement is bigger.

When he is getting more down in the scale, his involvement stops and he gets slower with his reactions. Some people felt that using I-message feels very professional and not very natural. That might be because there are not so many people using it.

I feel energy of the group was going quite down in the end. And then I just ended it there! It was very empty, low feeling in the room. That is not good! I should have ended it in another way.

Only half of the group attended for this day, because of work and other issues. It might have some influence to the group.

I got feedback from the group that exercises were really good, but there could have been some better discussions (more people attending to them). They also asked some more concrete examples. I also got feedback that it was a good feeling and better confidence in the group. They felt they had learned new things and that they could apply these techniques. Some felt that the exercises had been difficult but rewarding. There was a positive and good feeling in the group.

5.3 Weekend 3

9 participants. There were two participants that had dropped out from the course, one because of the problems with the work and one because he didn't feel the course was his thing. There were also two participants who couldn't come for this last weekend, but went through the exercises with me on one evening.

The goal for this weekend was to remind the group about all the skills we had gone through, and do group-exercises where we try to use and develop these skills.

Start seemed a bit difficult this day: participants were talking quietly and were not very eager to tell about their experience between the courses. So I thought that the participants hadn't been concentrating too much on the communication skills since our last meeting.

5.3.1 Becoming aware

After a while some participants noticed that they had been using Active Listening unconsciously at their work and free time. One said to have become more aware of how

he is giving orders in the classroom if someone is misbehaving (working as a teacher). He found Active Listening working in these situations. Another participant felt that she had become better in not giving ready answers to the problems of her student's. One participant thought that in general this course has made him aware of not presenting solutions all the time, and actually accepting just to listen, that one doesn't need to actually solve or fix someone else's problem. He thought it is ok to just to listen and to be there. He was not sure though if he had made any conscious change. The same participant also said that he had become more aware of the source of the emotions he feels. He could now understand that the source might be found inside himself, instead of blaming others or outer circumstances. This he understood, makes it easier to deal with the situation, and this is one of the things he saw this course has helped him with. To this another participant commented that he has also noticed this in his work, that he had become aware of if there is an emotion coming up, which he knows belongs to him, he can fix it there and then by changing his habits.

One of the participants understood another one's explanation wrong about using I-message. He understood that he takes the problem into him and leaves it without solving. So the participant gave the following example of his use of I-message between the courses:

"I'm giving them a good explanation of what their behavior is actually doing: it's causing me to lose a track of what I'm doing, it's causing me to have problems having the class, so they know why they shouldn't misbehave. If I just say that you should be quiet, and then they don't know why they should be quiet, they are just getting told to be quiet. So I think as long as they understand it and they know why and then they know they don't start to do the same things over later. But if you just say "You be quiet!", then three days later they have forgot it and they start to make it again... I focus from them being a problem to me having a problem. It's not that I'm saying that you can blame me because you do that."

To this one participant commented that he has noticed that this course has also pointed out that there are different perspectives to the problems: there is the behavior of the student, then there is your reaction to that behavior, and then there is you two in interaction. He said he used to think before that if he has a negative feeling, that is the fault of the other person. Now he has realized that the reaction is not a direct cause from

the behavior, it is something one can choose himself. He has also noticed that one reacts often in an unconscious level. To make one more aware of that, it is easier to use some of these methods we have been learning in this course. At his words: "Okay, there is the behavior that is not good and should be fixed, but I don't have to make this my emotional problem, I don't have to make it so that emotions rise in me, or if it does, I can see it and notice what's going on". He suggested that by this way one can make some distance to his own emotions.

Some of the participants started to look bit tired and not concentrated, so we went forward to a physical group-exercise.

5.3.2 The Chair Exercise

The task was that all the members of the group should be on the same chair at the same time, all their limbs of the ground for the period of 10 seconds.

The task started as a chaos. Everybody seemed to be talking at the same time, no-one listening to each other. Some people were staying in the background, some people were more active. One person took the initiative by suggesting a solution. Another one tried commanding the group with little effect. They tried first so that one person was sitting on the chair and others around. Next plan, everyone with one leg on the chair and helping each others with arms seemed to work after some try outs. There were some people taking more charge but when I asked afterwards they all felt that they had been heard and everyone was doing the exercise together. They seemed to have good time and going back to sit on the circle didn't seem so fascinating. Although it seemed that in the beginning everybody was talking over each other, everyone was scanning and listening. One participant commented that everyone was doing the same and agreed on one thing, so even if people weren't actively listening what you were saying, you felt like they were still noticing what you were thinking.

5.3.3 Confrontational I-message

We went back to memorizing how one uses I-message in problematic situations. One participant had some funny comments that made the whole group laugh. I reminded them of the exercise we had last time, where they should make out their own case and show it to everyone. No-one had their partners present, so we started the exercise all

over again.

Case 1:

Per cannot sit still when the class starts.

Coach: I have noticed, you are often restless when we should start the class and that you are not really with when we should bow and like that. Have you noticed that yourself?

Student: And?

Coach: I have at least noticed it and you have probably noticed that we bow every time we do aikido, so I was thinking if you think it's strange that we do like that.

Student: Yeah.

Coach: You think it's a bit strange?

Student: Yeah.

Coach: Do you know why we do it?

Student: No.

Coach: That I can understand you feel is strange, because we don't do like that in our society, but we can see it in a way to respect others and that now we have started, now it's aikido that matters, not any sms, no school, football or what happened in the school. Now we train aikido and then we don't need to think the other stuff. And the way we start is that we sit quietly and we concentrate, and then we bow to each other and we bow to the founder of aikido (picture on the wall).

Student: Okay? To a picture?

Coach: Yes, to a picture. But more than to bow to a picture, we bow to what he represents.

Student: And what does he represent?

Coach: He has found out aikido. He's an indirect cause that we are sitting here today, and he has found the system we practice.

Student: So we see him as a god?

Coach: No, not at all. That you don't need to do. We bow to him to show respect and also to be humble because there is so much that we cannot do yet. Otherwise it's easy to come to training and think that I can all these things already, because it looks really easy, but sometimes we need to remind ourselves to be humble with what we are doing and have respect for those we practice with.

Student: Ok.

Coach: Do you get something out of what I say, or?

Student: Maybe I should try..

Coach: I feel sometimes if someone is restless when we should start the training, it causes restlessness in the whole group. Everyone has their problems and thinks about their things, but when we come together as a group, it's important to think that we should work as a group. Try to forget about the problems one has and to get to the group feeling. Then you can float with the energy of the group and get something out of it. That's why we train together.

Student: I hope we would stand on the mat and not float...

Coach: The best is if you float, but you can stand too...

Student: Ok.

Coach: I'm happy that you understand!

Discussion:

I gave feedback to the group that I noticed it was the instructor in this role-play who was giving most of the solutions to this problem. I agreed that was okay to explain why we do what we do in aikido but it is best if the student gets more room, and becomes an active part in solving the problem. This could happen by the instructor listening more to the student.

The group doing this case explained that what they was focusing on was to figure out what was the concrete problem in the case, and they saw that one cannot just sit and send I-messages. They also thought about how to use I-message. They said it more impersonally first, because they thought the group was more in focus in general. They

showed that they can construct an I-message afterwards, and they saw that they could have used it more during the role-play. They saw that it's a motivation by itself if a person understands what he does has a negative effect to oneself and to one's learning situation.

The discussion continued that if the student in this play doesn't have any opinion, or doesn't care and doesn't involve himself with any kind of suggestion, the coach would have to keep going somehow, and would have to make some kind of suggestion himself. The participant playing coach in this role play didn't see the point of always finding the reason to the problem, if it's not really necessary in the situation. But in a different situation, he agrees completely, that you might want to find a solution to the problem.

The person who acted a student in this role play thought that sometimes the intention behind can be different, so the instructor should keep an open mind for the solution, to try to understand. Kind, warm attention, sincere and concrete intention behind, and actually to be aware.

I explained that even if we have some kind of intention behind our actions, it is in times misunderstood by the way we try to express this intention. The coach may have a good intention by explaining or telling someone what to do, but maybe that intention is understood wrong.

One participant thought that it's in any situation of communication; there must be an effort to try to open up some kind of receptivity, because one can't just send the message and expect it should be understood. One has no guarantee. Maybe it is possible to understand the words or the intention, but one has to open up some kind of receptivity, information going back and forth, so one is in a way creating a vibe, to be able to communicate, and sometimes one needs to send a message "don't do that". That is essentially the message, and then it can put in other words, like I-message is about. But he felt that there has to be some kind of basic understanding going on, that one should have before one even starts conveying a message. At least to know that your partner is listening, what you can do by asking questions. He saw that in a natural situation it is very difficult to construct a message in this way, because there is so much going on. But he felt this is essentially about creating a room, a space where you can meet. This he thought is possible to create by listening. Then one has to also invite the other person to this space, and this is to be done by asking a question (door-opener). If

one has a problem that should be solved, then first he thought one has to create this space and then you can address the problem. This is when one needs this kind of knowledge (I-messages) so that one won't be too hard.

Case 2:

Coach: I'm training kids and one is just lying down, so I try to find out what's going on here.

Coach: Hi! When you are lying there like that, the other kids have difficulties to concentrate and they also want to lay on the ground like that. Is there a reason why you are doing it?

Student: I'm just bored..

Coach: You are just bored. When you are lying there, I feel it is difficult for me to teach the others and I get so worried about you. Is there something important you haven't told me?

Student: I'm just bored...

Coach: Do you think there is something that is fun in aikido?

Student: To play catch and run.

Coach: Could I make a suggestion? Maybe we can play catch and run on our knees, so that we go on our knees?

Student: Yes!

Coach: Should we do that?

Student: Yes!

Discussion:

The one playing student in this role play told that they talked a lot about children (when practicing this case), that it's not so often they tell the real problem, so it's difficult to get into a solution or find out what the problem really is. That is why you have to maybe come to a solution that is affecting the whole group without focusing into the problem.

Others commented that this is true especially with small kids. That it maybe doesn't work out with the I-message, and if you show that you get irritated, they see it. This participant believed more to figure out a positive solution instead figuring out the problem and digging oneself into that.

The one playing coach in this role play thought that it's often fast solutions we use in the group situations and we take the problem afterwards. She thought that all the kids should feel that they have been seen, heard and understood in the level that is all right. And sometimes with kids it is very difficult, and you have to just let them lay there on the ground if they wish. And some of them actually do it.

Another participant told a story about a little kid: "There was this kid who had a long walk in the forest and said: "I cannot go any longer" and the father said "but you can run!" And then he was just running and running without getting tired at all."

One participant commented that children should learn I-message in school, because it's not used too much. She thought it's a very good thing to learn, and a very few in our society actually can it. She said: "When emotions come, you blame or you go with them. Both of them are very easy. I can blame you and then I make myself better, but that's not better."

We closed up for the day by massaging the shoulders in a circle. Participants got silent and seem to enjoy the moment.

5.3.3 Roles in the group

It seemed that participants haven't concentrated on their goals or stairs during the break now either. So we started the day with the theory about roles in a group. I asked participants to write down which role they take in this group. Some people felt they have different kind of roles than normally, some have similar. Some felt roles are given and some felt they are taken. I also asked them to think if there are roles they wouldn't like to be in. One person commented that the person he is, is the same all the time but if the task has an importance to him and he feels confident, he can take a more active role. I also instructed them that during this day they can consciously try out roles they don't usually take. But during the day, for some reason, we didn't follow up this at all. We were also going through theory about group cohesion and together goals. We had been

before working on goals of each group member, and now I took up that we could make a goal for the whole group.

These were the suggestions that come up:

- That everybody gives the best of themselves for the group but also has the respect for each other
- To cooperate
- Just to do the best thing for your group as a person.
- I try to sum it up by: be your best and support everybody to be their best.

That got support in the group. But it seemed like there is not so much enthusiasm in the group towards these goals at the moment. And I was anyway trying to push some answers from them. It didn't work too well, participants were looking bored and pre-occupied in eating.

We went back to the theory and through conflict of needs and conflict of values. After a while we had a break and people wanted to do exercise instead of hearing lectures.

5.3.4 Legs and arms

There were 3 groups of 3 people. I gave a number of legs and arms that needed to be connected to the ground. The group needed also to be connected to each other at all times. The task was to move to the other side of the room. The tasks were 3 legs and 2 arms, 5 legs and 4 arms, 1 leg and 3 and 2 legs and 2 arms.

Some groups found out how they should move immediately. Others used more time and tried out different methods. They seemed to have very fun. Each group figured out their own things and didn't do the same than others.

Everyone seemed really engaged and having a good time. Some took more leader role than others but generally it seemed that they were discussing together. There were no competition between the groups and they seemed to support each other. They also used a lot of creativity! After this exercise people were really awake and didn't seem to want to go back to the theory. Small groups seemed also well connected.

One participant commented the exercise that no-one had any pressure for anything, so everybody had to just try out. So they couldn't say that "you have to this and this", they just had to try. Another participant commented that it was very good to be connected like this. And it was very interesting to see what others came up with.

5.3.5 Own cases

Last time we had cases of Active Listening and I-messages. Now we took one case, only the instructor part and participants discussed with their partner about the problem. The idea was to practice win-win method.

The feeling in the group was thoughtful, everyone was with. We had been doing the exercise for long time now, but everyone was still with 100%, wholeheartedly, concentrated. It looked like people were having really interesting discussions.

We went through the cases in the group, and here are some examples:

Case 1:

Every time you try to instruct something, one of your students says «but if». That makes you think that you might not be a good instructor and he tries to test you all the time. You feel insecure. How do you solve this so that you can create a good feeling between you two. Use I-message and Active Listening.

The group tried to come up with a concrete example about why the student says «but if» all the time, and the one they thought it could be because of fear.

They used a concrete example, a hip throw, koshinage. Many can feel that technique is quite hard, so they fear the coming throw. That might cause the action of the student in this case to distract an instruction or a technique to avoid it. The group thinks that in this situation instructor has to be sure in his role and communication:

"The thing with the I-message is that you shouldn't put the blame on, because I think we both in this situation feel insecure. Instead of saying that I'm insecure, we say that I feel insecure about what you are meaning, so we say almost the same thing."

After they had done Active Listening they found out that the student was especially afraid of this throw. The coach talked with him about what they could do that he could

feel safer, and they found out to explain that in this particular class there is lot of different levels and it is not any competition and everyone practices on the level they are on, where they can take care of their own needs. The coach agreed then with the student that he could do the throw but he could go up on the back of the thrower but didn't need to do the fall, and if he would feel safe, he could fall by himself.

Case 2:

This group had a case where a kid was carving with a key to the floor instead of paying attention to the instructor. They recognized that the need of the instructor was to take care of the equipment and not to have any damage to the equipment, and also to be able to teach a proper class without being disturbed. And then the need of the student depends on why he/she is carving. They thought that the student might be bored, more because of he/she doesn't understand everything and cannot pay attention because he/she doesn't understand the technique properly, and then she starts getting bored and starts drawing things. They used I-message and Active Listening, talked to the student and figured out that this was the reason.

Then they tried to come up with some solutions and one of the solutions could be just to say: stop this and pay attention! But they saw that would cause a big unbalance of power so they felt that they needed to get the attention of the student over from what she was doing to the actual instruction. One solution was to take the student up and use the student in the demonstration, so that she could actually get something out of the technique because the instructor would be paying a lot of attention to the student and showing everything. That might help the student to understand the technique better and taking away the risk of getting the equipment destroyed.

One group was thinking that in this case if it is a person that likes the attention, maybe they can ask him to teach the technique and include him in the teaching. And if it's obvious that the student doesn't understand that she is disturbing, they would use I-message and help her to understand that she is creating disturbance in the whole group.

This group realized that the challenge is often to understand why. The reason behind why the students are acting as they are acting. They saw that if it's just a person with too much energy, it would be easily solved by including him and giving him ways of letting the energy out. But if there are deeper problems, then there is the possibility to talk to

the family or talk to the student outside the class, in order to create some kind of solution. This group was also discussing if one should actually discuss personal problems in aikido class. The one argument against it was that it's also nice to have a space in which you don't bring your personal problems, to find a way to make the class go smoothly without including the baggage what everybody carries with them.

Another participant commented this, that one can be an instructor by helping the person in another way, because it is not possible to help everybody in all their problems. But it's always possible to help them by contacting someone else who can help, or find another solution for helping.

Another participant commented this case; that most irritating for the instructor is to have students talking while the instructor is trying to instruct. He thinks it's very difficult to find good solutions to it. He thinks the only solution is awareness; that you are here and now as an instructor, and also tell to your students that they should be aware, and to be here and now. He sees that this is the only way to tell them that they should follow you.

I agree that to be here, in this moment, completely for the other person, is most of the time enough!

5.3.6 Bed of balloons

The last part of the course consisted of three different problem solving exercises; Bed of balloons, Paper tower and Survival exercise. One of these exercises, Bed of balloons, is shown as an example here:

We arranged the group in one small group of three and one group of four. The task was to make a bed of balloons. Each group got 10 balloons and the idea was to blow, tie and set them into their place by using only one arm each. In the group of four there was one that could use two arms (but not in the tying of the balloons) and in the group of five everybody used only one arm. The task was to blow so many balloons that it would be possible to place one person laying on them without supporting him. The person should lay on the balloons for a half a minute, without the balloons to explode.

People were laughing and didn't believe that would be possible.

It looked like everybody just started to blow the balloons without any plan. Then they

just stood there with one balloon in the hand. At first they tried to do the knots by themselves, without helping others.

In the group 2 one member was trying to bind the balloons by having them between the feet and helping with the mouth. In the group 1, the person who could use the both arms, had two balloons, one in the mouth and then two people trying to do the knots. One holding the balloon and one trying to do the knots.

The group 2 started after a while to figure out how to work together. One person was giving instructions to another. He was holding out a finger and doing the knot around it. Another person in this group was sneaking with two arms and working by himself. One person was laying on his back, balloon between his knees, trying also to do the knot by himself. And it worked! Another one was knotting the balloons with two hands. After a while they had started to work by themselves again. And the one that sneaked with two hands was still trying by himself and making it in the end. In this group one person tried to suggest that everybody should lay on the ground and the one on the balloons is laying in the middle. Nobody heard her suggestions. One person was putting a sitting pillow on the ground. Then everybody started to put their pillows around the balloons.

The other group had gathered the balloons together and the smallest person was laying on them. The other group was ready at the same time. They had put the pillows around and one person was laying on them on his stomach.

Afterwards everybody wanted to try it, and they made it! Only the biggest person was left, and finally the group managed to help him on the balloons. He thought that the balloons would explode, but they were holding him, and everybody laughed and applause. Not one of the balloons was exploding. Everybody looks happy and empowered.

Afterwards it happened a spontaneous act that everybody in the group became involved in: All the participants took each of their balloons, or several of them, and started running after each other, putting the balloons on each other's heads. Some participants were throwing and kicking the balloons all over and across the room. Everybody was laughing and seemed to have a really good time. The whole group seemed to get crazy, and the atmosphere became emancipated.

We ended the course with Trust Fall: we made a "bed" with our hands and each group

member fall on to it at a time and we rocked the person forward on the bed. Group seemed now well connected and people were hugging and seemed to have a hard time to leave. Everyone seemed to be happy about the course and so was I.

5.4 Feedback

I send a feedback form (APPENDIX 1) for the participants after the course, and got following answers:

Most of the participants felt that the skills learned during the course are important for their work as an instructor. One comments that he would probably not use the techniques in such a clear cut fashion, but would go with his gut feeling. The techniques have broadened the horizon and put emphasis on issues that they did not previously think about in a conscious way. Techniques are seen to be useful in a work as an instructor and in other situations as well. Participants also realized that these techniques need practicing before one can implement them in ones daily life.

“I became more conscious in my role as an instructor. It (the course) has put emphasis on issues that I did not previously think about. I think it is extremely important to be aware of our way of communication in every aspect of life. In my work as an instructor I find the theory interesting, it has made me more aware of how I can be more supportive than controlling in my motivation style and try and help my students develop a stronger inner-motivation and autonomy in their training.“

The skills participants thought they learned well enough to use in their daily life were Passive and Active Listening, sending I-messages, being aware of the roadblocks of communication, particularly the ones they normally considered to be positive, such as giving suggestions to solutions. Many participants commented that they are already using the skills in their daily life. Skills that are mainly used are Active Listening, passive listening, and avoiding the roadblocks of communication. One person also mentioned win-win method.

Many participants commented that they have realized that they can be in a communication just as a listener, a mirror for the other person. That one doesn't need to solve the problem for the other one but rather give them a change to find the answer for themselves.

“I realized that even if a problem seems easy to solve to someone on the outside it can be troublesome for the one experiencing it, never try to diminish its importance and also do not contribute to make it a bigger problem than it really is.”

Generally participants try to be more aware in communication situations, how they approach a conflict, handle a conversation, or how define the problem (as needs). They see it as a very important tool to be able to understand the other person’s needs and aspect on the conflict.

Participants liked about the course that one gets aware of different aspects of problems. “It’s easy to just see the person been an ass, but really the person can be dealing with other problems.”

Participants liked the tasks and different ways of getting to know each other, and thought the course was fun. Exercises were seen as a good “ice- breaker” in the group and they brought light to the theory. One person wished more theoretical discussions. “Real life” exercises, especially the ones with Student-Instructor perspective, were liked, because the participants could practice what they had learned during the course and get a better understanding of it. Roadblocks of communication were also seen as a very important theory to know, because it makes one aware about the strategies one normally uses.

What could have been done differently was to have less time between each weekend, and a tighter schedule. One person thought some of the theory was presented too simplistic, therefore it did not convince him 100%. One person comments that he didn’t like the fact that they had to be so close and personal with people that they did not know and probably would not have had any contact with otherwise in other settings, but he ended up liking that the best about the course. “The fact that we had to open up for people we didn’t know was a growing experience for my part.”

Generally participants seem very positive and happy about the course, and it has been according to their expectation. They have learned new theories they have been inspired to use in their work instructors. Many participants comment on becoming more aware and that they consciously try to change their communication patterns.

“I have grown a lot after this course, as a person. I did not know that so many different people could work so well together and to change the way we see other people”

6 DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to plan, implement and evaluate a social and emotional skills course “Communication Skills Course for Coaches”. The effectiveness of this program has been evaluated constantly during the program with the spiral of action research: planning- action- observation and reflection (Heikkinen et al 2008, p80). Firstly, in the planning phase, the course was planned on the scientific basis of skills and methods that are documented to be effective. Secondly, when implementing the course teacher-researcher used observation and collected feedback from the participants after each meeting. The course was then adjusted according to these observations and feedbacks. Afterwards, the course was evaluated according to the final feedback from the participants and from the observations of the teacher-researcher from the video recordings from the course.

According to Durlak et al. (2011) effective social and emotional programs use criteria called SAFE. Current program was developed and implemented according to these four criteria:

1. Current program was Sequenced in a way that it used activities that were connected to social and emotional skills in target and activated participants in practicing these skills. Activities were also discussed in pairs and in the whole groups afterwards, so that everyone could share their experience and come with questions about the topic.
2. Current program used active forms of learning, so it can be seen as Active: topic was first introduced by a short lecture, demonstrated, practiced in action and finally the experience from the exercise was processed with the whole group by discussion.
3. Program focused on teaching social and personal skills. Skills taught during this course were: Perceiving, understanding and expressing the emotions in one self and in others, Active and Passive Listening Skills as well as Door-Openers, I-messages, No-Lose method and avoiding the Roadblocks of Communication
4. Program targeted specific SEL skills listed above, so it can be seen as Explicit.

According to Durlak et al. (2011) to give a positive effect, programs must be also well designed and well executed. How the program was implemented can be evaluated from

the story written about the program previously in this work. Program was executed according to a careful planning that was based on the targeted social and emotional skills. The aim of the program was to teach social and emotional skills to coaches evoke discussion about different communication methods and awake the coaches to think about their methods of coaching and the possibility of using other kind ways. Lintunen (2006) suggests that effective interventions concentrate on learning specific skills, they are long term in nature and they promote the use of skills also outside the intervention settings. As said before this program concentrated on specific skills in the area of social and emotional learning. The program was also long term in nature, it consisted of three weekends, altogether 27 hours and the time between each of the meeting was about one month and consequently, the whole program lasted three months. This program promoted also the use of social and emotional skills outside the intervention setting, by providing home works and discussions based on these tasks during the course.

Most of the programs proven to be effective have used same or similar teaching methods than in the present study (Wilkinson et al. 1998; Seat & Lord, 1999; Kuusela, 2005; Brown & Bylund, 2008; Klemola, 2009). Methods used in this study were lectures, demonstrations, practice, role-plays, discussions/reflection in small groups and in the whole group. This way of building the social and emotional skills training programs gets as well support from CASEL (Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning). According to Lintunen and Kuusela (2007) learner- centered, dialogical and action-oriented teaching and learning methods are essential (Lintunen & Kuusela, 2007). These methods were used as well in the current study. As a summary, when the current program “Communication Skills Course for Coaches” is evaluated according to the above criteria from the previous studies, it can be seen as effective.

Effectiveness of this program according to the feedback from the participants:

Participants filled a feedback questionnaire (APPENDIX 1) right after the completion of the whole program. Feedback from the participants tells that the course was according to their expectations and that it was experienced as positive. Participants felt that the skills they learned were useful for their profession. Similar results have been seen in previous research (Talvio 2014; Klemola, 2009). Real-life exercises (role-plays) and knowledge about the Roadblocks of the Communication were seen as important skills by the participants. They felt that they learned Active Listening, Passive listening, and

avoiding the Roadblocks of Communication well enough to be able to use these skills in their daily life.

There is some previous research on learning of active listening (Rautalinko & Lisper 2004; McNaughton et al. 2007; Rautalinko et al. 2007). In the study of Klemola (2009) Active Listening was seen as the most difficult of the tasks. This seems not to be the case in the present study. At least participants saw that they have learned the skill well enough to use in their daily life.

No participant from the current intervention mentioned that they had learned to use I-messages well enough. They may have found the use of the skill challenging. Participants in the study of Klemola (2009) found, as well, that sending I-messages is difficult in problematic situations. In addition, in the study of Liimatta (2007) there was no record of participants using I-messages in the end of the study. In the present study, I-messages were taught and also practiced actively with different methods: lectures, discussions, demonstrations and role-plays. During the role-plays participants also demonstrated the use of these skills with varying success. Talvio (2014) and Lahtinen (2010) also support the fact that I-messages can be learned during an interaction skills course. Why then participants feel that I-message is not learned well enough, should be studied more, to find methods of teaching that gives the participant enough tools to use these skills in their daily life.

As a finding of main importance of the present study, would be participants' feedback that they became conscious about new ways of communication. The course made the participants more aware of their communication methods and made them think in different ways. This is also true in the study of Talvio et al. (2012). This supports the aim set for the program. When evaluating the course according to the feedback from the participants, it can be seen effective because it has achieved its aims of teaching social and emotional skills, where at least some of them were felt to be learned well enough for transfer to sport settings. Learning social and emotional skills as sending I-messages, problem solving methods and using less of Roadblocks of Communication has been demonstrated during this and similar interventions by Talvio (2014) and Lahtinen (2010).

Intervention achieved as well its aim to make the participants to think and discuss about new ways of communicating and above all it made participants aware of new possibilities. To become aware can be seen as a starting phase of all learning. It gives space for new information to sink in and the possibility for the new ways to transfer to practice. According to Heikkinen et al. (2008) a successful research makes the participants to believe in their own abilities, it awakens them to think and feel in different ways. Successful research is affective, lively, and plausible and gives holistic impression (Heikkinen et al. 2008, pp149-160.)

Effectiveness of this program according to the observations of teacher-researcher:

During the program participants developed from being shy to express their thoughts and feelings, to individuals that could argue about their meaning and who dared to express deep thoughts. In the beginning for example, talking about one's needs seemed difficult. Over a time it seemed like the participants became more aware of their own needs and meanings and could express them more openly. This tells that the group felt safe when the program proceeded.

Challenges in the implementation of the course from the point of view of the teacher-researcher was to be able to follow the plan that was made for the course, and at the same time to be flexible to change the plan when observing that the group is not safe enough for some exercise. The exercises should be carefully chosen to each meeting in according to how the group is able to work on them at the current development stage of the group. Klemola (2009) has found out that sense of security for the participants is essential when learning social and emotional skills. That is as well why it is constantly important to use the spiral of action research to actively observe – reflect and re-plan the activities. The activities that seemed challenging for the group were talking about emotions in the first meeting, expressing ones' needs and using the skills learned in action when doing group-building exercises. From the point of view of a teacher-researcher when observing the Active-Listening and I-message role-play cases during the course, it seemed like that participants actively tried to implement the skills into practice.

It was also challenging to be able to lead the discussions so that each could say their meaning, but at the same time limit the discussions so that they wouldn't take too much

time. Some of the discussions were spontaneous and demanded active listening from the part of the teacher-researcher. It happened that these discussions could take quite a long time and lead to a boredom of other participants. When implementing a course in social and emotional learning, the teacher should closely evaluate beforehand how to lead such discussions and should some discussions rather be taken after the meeting.

When observing the film recordings it could be seen that group-building exercises lifted the energy of the group and made the course fun. This was also supported by the feedback of participants. Exercises that were focusing on feelings or sending “negative” messages like confronting I-messages seemed to get the feeling of the group down. These exercises could have been perceived as heavy. Tiredness of the participants was reported several times by the teacher –researcher. This could be due to that some of the exercises, like sending Confrontational I-messages, were experienced as heavier than other exercises. Also learning new skills and trying to constantly interact consciously with others could contribute to tiredness of the participants. Also lectures and discussions can be seen as heavy if they take too long time. Timing of the course and different exercises can as well have an impact to this. Therefore, the timing of the various exercises and topics, and how to lift the energy of the group afterwards if it should go down, should be clearly evaluated. Consequently, when planning the course, it would be advisable to plan clear timelines for these. It would be perhaps best to have as short introduction to topics as possible, followed by a clear demonstration, after which participants could practice the skills in action. After the practice it seems important to go through the exercises by discussions, but to limit these discussions so that they wouldn’t become too long. After more heavy topics, instructor should organize lighter activities, like fun group –building exercises, in order to keep up the energy and motivation of the group.

To organize a course in social and emotional skills is a challenge for the instructor, because one feels like under scrutiny of the participants all the time. Therefore, it is essential that when organizing the course, instructor should have learned in these skills well and feels that one can manage to transmit the skills to the participants. It is equally important that the instructor of the course has knowledge of the sport the skills will be transferred to. It will be then easier for the participants to relate to the instructor that is not totally outsider, and easier for the instructor to answer the questions of the participants in specific topics of the current sport. It has been found out by Durlak et al.

(2011) that social and emotional programs to be effective in schools, they should be taught by the school-teacher and not by the outside force (Durlak et al. 2011). This could be important to consider when implementing social and emotional programs in sport settings.

Limitations of the study:

The limitation of this study was to some extent the way the course was implemented: the home assignment designed for the participants were not done by the participants and that could have hindered the transfer of the skills to the daily life. This tells about the need for a closer follow up between the meetings, or shorter time between them. From the feedback of the participants, it can be seen that they wished shorter time between the meetings, this probably having to do to be able to keep the skills learned better in mind. It was evident from the participants' feedback though that long course gives time for the participants to reflect the learned skills. This is also supported by Wilkinson et al. (1998) and Lintunen (2006).

The other limitation was the inability of the teacher-researcher to actively write down the observations seen during the meetings. Because the task as a teacher took most of the time and energy during the courses, was the task of researcher put almost aside. The course was mainly evaluated by what teacher-researcher remembered after each meeting and by what was recorded in the films. This problem could be perhaps solved by having an observer aside that is partially part of the course, but not a teacher, that writes down the observations. This can though affect more to the actions of the participants as they can feel more observed. Now the teacher-researcher was actively part of the course and could work as a researcher without the feeling of disturbing the actions of those researched.

Now the course was filmed and most of the observations based on the film recordings. This doesn't though give a whole picture of the course, because one is in the mercy of what the camera man has decided to film. But this would be also true when based the results solely in the observations of the teacher-researcher. According to Heikkinen et al. (2008) the result are only one possible truth of the research subject. The researchers work is to tell the story as truthfully as possible (Heikkinen et al. 2008, pp118-119). This advice is followed when recording and evaluating the current program. From the

film recordings and from the story written based on them, the course can be effectively evaluated by the reader.

Future recommendations:

This study concentrated mainly on how to plan, implement and evaluate a social and emotional skills course for coaches. Future research is needed to see if these skills are transferred to the daily life of sport coaches. According to Durlak et al. (2011) effective SEL programs in academic settings had significant effects that remained minimum 6 months. Also Talvio (2014) found out that these skills were transferred to practice. So it can be argued that similar programs targeted for coaches could have transfer to practice as well. If these skills are transferred to the practice, has though to do about coaches' certainty in using the skills. Lintunen & Gould (2014) comment that even though many programs target these skills as important, only few coaches use them in practice due to uncertainty of how to use them. Study from Wilkinson et al. (1999) suggests though that communication skills can be maintained or even improved over time, because participants gain confidence gradually over time (Wilkinson et al. 1999).

Therefore, the main objective for courses in social and emotional learning should be to empower the participants to be sure enough to use these skills in practice and give them tools to how to use the skills in their sport. Even though these skills are universal and applicable to school, health-care and sport context, programs teaching these skills should be targeted to different profession groups. Each profession has its own challenges and each coach her own ways of communicating. Social and emotional skills programs for coaches should give tools for coaches to survive in challenging communication situation with athletes, parents and in different settings like competitions, training and periods with low motivation. Therefore, the tasks and practices organized during the course are of main importance, so that coaches can relate to them. Tasks should give direct tools that coaches can apply in their daily work. During this course some of the tasks used were successful in targeting the situations coaches come into and were also supported by the participants (role-play cases), some of the tasks were perhaps too general (group building exercises) and didn't give direct value for the coaching setting. Also in the study of Wilkinson et al. (1998) role-plays are seen as stressful but important element of the course, because it helps one to practice for difficult working situations. (Wilkinson et al. 1998).

There is need for several studies that are targeted for coaches and sport context, so that most effective possible way to teach social and emotional skills for coaches could be developed. One future direction could be to collect information from coaches in what kind of situations they need social and emotional skills for and what kind of tools they feel are most effective for them. This would help the development of effective social and emotional skills programs for coaches and instructors in the future.

There are courses in Finland at the moment teaching the social and emotional skills to coaches in coaching education levels 1-3. How the professionals teaching these courses have organized the courses and what is the effect of these courses in the communication skills of coaches in long run would be of interest. At the moment there are only guidelines given how the courses should be organized. If they are effective in practice has not been researched. Therefore, there is a need in the future to do more research like the current one in sport contexts. This study is the beginning, and gives some guidelines of developing studies in social and emotional skills in sport context. It gives guidelines of what practices have been working and what should be developed in search of a potential ways of organizing a social and emotional skills course for coaches. Maybe, as its best, this kind of a course functions as an awakener, that motivates the coach to learn more and search for himself, what kind of ways of communication functions best for him and his athletes.

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