

**IMPLEMENTING IMPROVISATION AND SONGWRITING TO AID
THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS: A CASE STUDY**

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Adolescence is a transitional period with many developmental tasks. Adolescents need to resolve the specific question of career choice and establishing authentic friendships. Transition to adulthood is often challenging to the adolescents with special education needs. Research has shown that music can serve as a medium for adolescents’ emotional self-regulation, peer-group affiliation and identity formation.</p> <p>The aim of this case study was to investigate a group music therapy process in which creative music making was utilized. Five adolescents with special education needs participated the sessions during which a group composition was produced. The sessions and the music were recorded and the data was analyzed using a phenomenologically inspired method of microanalysis.</p> <p>The results revealed that a music therapy group process can be beneficial for students with special education needs in transition to adulthood for the purpose of gaining understanding of their responsibilities, their own personal strengths and weaknesses, and about realistic choices.</p>	
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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.1	Research aim	6
1.2	About the methodology	8
2	THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	9
2.1	Adolescents with special needs in transition to adulthood	9
2.1.1	Education for adolescents with special needs.....	10
2.1.2	Transition planning for adolescents with special education needs	10
2.1.3	Supporting and empowering students in their transition process	11
2.2	Music therapy for adolescents with special needs	13
2.2.1	Music therapy for adolescents.....	13
2.2.2	Group music therapy for adolescents with special education needs.....	14
2.3	Creative methods in music therapy: Improvising and songwriting	15
2.3.1	Improvising	15
2.3.2	Songwriting.....	17
2.3.3	The storycomposing method	18
3	METHOD.....	20
3.1	The case study	20
3.2	The clinical approach and the music therapy methods	20
3.3	Data collection.....	21
3.4	The music therapy process	22
3.4.1	The beginning: Sessions one, two, and three	23
3.4.2	The working phase: Sessions four, five, and six	24
3.4.3	The ending: Sessions seven and eight	25
3.5	Data analysis.....	27
3.6	The phenomenologically inspired approach to microanalyses in music therapy.....	28
4	RESULTS OF THE MICROANALYSIS.....	30
4.1	Step one: contextual.....	30
4.2	Step two: open listening	32
4.3	Step three: structural.....	34
4.4	Step four: semantic	37
4.5	Step five: pragmatic.....	38
4.6	Step six: phenomenological horizontalization	38
4.7	Step seven: open listening	39
5	DISCUSSION	42
5.1	Step eight: phenomenological matrix	42
5.2	Step nine: meta-discussion	43
5.3	Limitations.....	44
5.4	Recommendations	45
6	CONCLUSION	46
	REFERENCES.....	48

1 INTRODUCTION

Looking back to the beginning of this study I remember being very enthusiastic about the idea of studying my own work. I work as a special class teacher at Valteri School in one of the units of the Valteri Centre for Learning and Consulting, which operates under the Finnish National Board of Education. I was on adult education leave from my post as a teacher from the beginning of the autumn semester 2012 until the end of the autumn semester 2013, during which time I was a music therapy master's student. My motivation for this study grew from my experiences in special education and music therapy.

I returned back to work in January 2014. I have been working with adolescents with special education needs since 1997, mainly teaching groups of students, who attend voluntary additional basic education (i.e. the 10th grade). The most important aim of the voluntary additional basic education is that every student has a realistic plan for future studies after completion. The objective stated by the Finnish National Board of Education (2016) is that when completing the voluntary additional basic education each student has a plan for future studies and the capability to start them. These studies are a crucial time for transition planning.

The transition from the secondary to postsecondary level education or to the working world is critical for all students, especially for those with special education needs (Bakken & Obiakor, 2008).

According to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary (2016), transition is a

passage from one state, stage, subject or place to another: change; a movement, development, or evolution from one form, stage...

When teaching adolescents with special education needs I am interested in understanding what kind of abilities these adolescents require in the process of transition. What are the best means to help them to acquire the needed abilities and to be more prepared to meet the challenges of post-secondary education and working life?

As a music therapist I am interested in using music therapy with special needs adolescents. I encourage a therapeutic orientation in education. According to Lehtikoinen (1973) therapy

supports and facilitates individual growth. Lilja-Viherlampi (2007) has studied the aspects of therapeutic orientation of music education and the potential music education can have in the comprehensive growth of the student. According to Lilja-Viherlampi's study, music and musical interaction can benefit the student in many ways, e.g. enriching the life of the student, supporting learning and growing, strengthening the student's identity, and preventing the problems that are involved in the student's growth. Lilja-Viherlampi stated that the most therapeutic factor is the personality and therapeutically oriented stance of the teacher.

1.1 Research aim

The aim of this study is to explore the benefits of a music therapy process carried out with students with special education needs during a year of planning for their future. The study attempts to apply the creative process as a means to support the students in their decision-making. This paper will also try to define how the creative music therapy process can help teachers to detect and understand the strengths and the weaknesses of the students.

The students with special education needs in voluntary additional basic education need a lot of support in planning for their future. In the beginning of the school year they have mixed feelings and lots of apprehension about their future. Creative music making may offer a good medium to explore the thoughts and feelings of the future plans of a group of students with special education needs in transition.

The following are the research questions to be answered in this thesis:

1. How does improvising and creative music making support students' growth and development?
2. Does musical interaction have a positive impact on social interaction between the adolescents?

In my experience, the students not only need education and counseling, but also time and space for identity formation. Music has the capacity to provide experiences of learning, capability, achievement, mastering and succeeding, thus strengthening a young person's self-esteem

(Saarikallio, 2007). According to Saarikallio many studies propose that music can function as a means to work through various developmental tasks.

I will describe the music therapy process in which I applied improvisation and songwriting. In the music therapy literature there are abundant case examples of the use of songwriting as a therapy intervention (Baker & Wigram, 2005; Hakomäki 2013; McFerran, 2010). Improvisational techniques have also been well represented (Bruscia, 2012; Erkkilä, Ala-Ruona, Punkanen & Fachner, 2012; Wigram, 2004). I was influenced by Aasgaard's (2005) study where he used creative songwriting with children with cancer. Aasgaard was especially interested in the songs as artefacts. The aim of Aasgaard's study was to find out what happens when songs are created, performed, and used, and what creating, performing, and using these songs means to the child. I was also inspired by the Storycomposing method by Hakomäki (Hakomäki, 2013).

It appears, judging from recent research on clinical songwriting practice, that songwriting is an especially popular and effective tool used in adolescents' music therapy (Hakomäki 2013). According to Baker and Wigram (2005) the process and product of writing songs within therapy sessions is a therapeutic intervention, where the therapeutic effect is brought about through the clients' creation and performance or recording of their own songs. Songs created in the therapy sessions can be viewed in terms of process and product. The songs are also artefacts and evidence of mastery, creativity, and self-expression.

Improvising is a creative act and that is a pivotal element in explaining why adolescents may benefit from it (McFerran, 2010). Among many clinical applications of improvisational music therapy Bruscia (2012) mentions such goals as to develop creativity, problem-solving and decision-making, and to promote identity formation.

With these in mind I planned the music therapy for my group. I believe that creative music making can help students to cope with feelings of uncertainty and worries about the future. My aim was to establish an accepting atmosphere where creative thinking would be possible.

According to McFerran (2010) there is very little research that specifically addresses the value of music therapy for adolescents. Saarikallio, Vuoskoski and Luck (2014) noticed a gap in the research concerning the mechanisms through which adolescents' musical behavior connects to

their general socio-emotional behavior and adjustment. In her dissertation, Saarikallio (2007) proposed that adolescence is a significant time of life for studying the use of music for different psychological purposes. It can be very important for understanding a person's future psychological self-regulation and well-being.

1.2 About the methodology

The research design for this study is a qualitative case study. Gurman and Messer (2003) support the implementation of case study designs as a case study summarizes large amounts of case material in a rich and narrative fashion. According to Wheeler and Kenny (2005) qualitative methods are chosen by many music therapists because these descriptive means of data gathering relate directly to music therapists' experiences with their clients.

The data was gathered during the academic year 2013-2014. In the autumn semester I provided eight group music therapy sessions for adolescents with special education needs. The music therapy methods I used in this case study were improvisation, songwriting and storycomposing. The music produced in the sessions was recorded on an iPad. Conversations concerning the storycomposition were also recorded. As the therapist, I kept a journal of the sessions. In the spring semester I interviewed the adolescents and the civil servant who had worked as a special needs assistant with the group. I also had to take into account my previous experience with the adolescents with special education needs in transition that I had gathered over ten years.

Finding a suitable method for data analysis was not easy, because of the multiplicity of the data. While reading about different qualitative methods of data analysis I finally came up to the method of microanalysis by Trondalen (2007), which focuses on both the music and the interpersonal dialogue. In analyzing the data of this case study I concentrated on the music the adolescents in the group produced. As music is the main tool in music therapy (Trondalen, 2007), in analyzing the data I wanted to focus on the methods of understanding music therapy processes emerging from the music. The procedure I used for analyzing the data was the phenomenologically inspired approach to microanalyses in music therapy (Trondalen, 2007). The procedure is presented in more detail in chapter three.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Adolescents with special needs in transition to adulthood

The participants in this case study were adolescents with special needs in transition to adulthood. They were selected to participate, as they were to be my students during the spring semester of the academic year the music therapy group and study in question were to be carried out. As adolescence in particular is a period during which music plays a major role (Saarikallio et al., 2014), I assumed that to be the fact with my group of students too. Also, according to McFerran (2010), teenagers spend much time engaging with music. Developmental psychologist Erik Erikson (1968) explained the primary psychosocial task during the teenage years by using the term “identity formation”. The formation of identity is based on increasing levels of self-acceptance that have been constructed as a rite of passage is achieved. The adolescents need to resolve the specific question of career choice and establish authentic friendships. The use of music is thus well founded, as music has been shown to serve as a medium for adolescents’ emotional self-regulation, peer-group affiliation, and identity formation (Saarikallio, Vuoskoski, & Luck, 2014).

Identity formation is a useful construct for understanding why musical improvising may be appealing to a teenager. Creating and inventing music does not connect with something teenagers already know about themselves. Creating music allows them to discover something new. (McFerran, 2010). Adolescence is a transitional period with many developmental tasks. The reconstruction of the conception of self and establishment of adult identity is one of the major challenges in one’s youth. The interpretive activity of composing constructs related to oneself can be facilitated by using music as an emotional framework. (Saarikallio, 2007).

The study by Saarikallio, Vuoskoski and Luck (2014) explored whether adolescents’ abilities and tendencies in musical communication of emotion were reflective of their broader socio-emotional communication and interaction. The results of the study indicate that the particular features of emotional communication connect adolescents’ musical engagement to their broader socio-emotional competence and further their wellbeing. These particular features of music-related emotional communication were reflective of both empathy and conduct problems.

2.1.1 Education for adolescents with special needs

Inclusion provides all students with a public education in the least restrictive environment (Adamek & Darrow, 2005). In Finland, guidelines for individual support for learning and special needs education are written in the national core curriculum. The ideology is to provide special needs education primarily in mainstream education. There are three categories of support for growth, learning, and school attendance: general support, intensified support, and special support. General support is given to every pupil and student. It is high-quality education as well as guidance and support. Intensified support must be given to students who need regular support measures or several forms of support at the same time. The aim of intensified support is to prevent existing problems from becoming serious. If a student cannot adequately cope with mainstream education despite general or intensified support, the student needs special support. Both intensified and special support are based on pedagogical assessment and long-term planning in multi-professional teams. Special support provides students with broad and systematic help so that they can complete compulsory education and be eligible for upper secondary education. Pupils and students who have received a decision on special support are provided with an individual education plan (IEP). (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016.)

2.1.2 Transition planning for adolescents with special education needs

The transition process for adolescence with special needs is different from their able-bodied peers. A distinguishing feature is the often very public and bureaucratic nature of the decision-making processes. The transition decisions of young people with special education needs are often made at formal meetings involving a large number of different agencies. The processes on the private level are similar for all young people, disabled or not. Every adolescent is full of doubts and indecision, and vague possibilities. (Dee, 2006.)

Ekholm and Teittinen (2014) also noticed differences in transition decision-making with students with special needs compared to the non-disabled students of the same age. Major decisions are made earlier when concerning an adolescent with special education needs. Dee (2006) argued that in transition decision-making with special needs young people there seems to be lack of the recognition of the young person's unique daily experience of difficulties in learning. The adolescents with special education needs have a strong sense of their impairment

as an integral part of their growing up and thinking about their futures. Students with learning difficulties must have their views considered. This, according to Korpi (2008) emphasizes the need for a transitioning student to have a clear understanding about his/her unique challenges, the opportunity to access information and build up the strategies that allow him/her to be successful before leaving the school system.

The transition process means uncertainty and change, which can lead to feelings of loss of control and anxiety as well as excitement and challenge (Dee, 2006). According to Korpi (2008) adolescents need supportive opportunities to develop a sense of self. They also need supportive opportunities to make decisions in order to develop their self-advocacy skills.

2.1.3 Supporting and empowering students in their transition process

Self-advocacy and self-determination skills are prominent in the literature concerning the transition process. According to Korpi (2008) it is necessary that the plan for transition for an adolescent with special education needs includes opportunities for the acquisition of self-awareness, self-advocacy, and social skills that are needed when living and working in the adult world. Korpi suggests to go beyond the boundaries of traditional classroom activities when planning the transition with an adolescent with special needs. Jones (2006) and a group of teachers found out that by involving students with special needs in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) process and encouraging them to determine their own future goals, students became empowered members in their IEP process.

Jones (2006) outlined that the students need to be taught the skills necessary for self-determination in order to become empowered. Self-determination is the umbrella under which students can be taught other relevant skills such as self-advocacy and self-knowledge. Self-determination skills focus on empowering students and helping them to gain insight and knowledge.

Self-determination is a person's freedom to make decisions independently (Bakken & Obiakor 2008; Korpi, 2008). In many cases students with special education needs require more time and support in developing self-determination than their non-disabled peers. According to Bakken and Obiakor (2008) self-determined individuals know how to choose. Making choices on

education, independent living, and work are examples of self-determination. Self-determined people know what they want and use their self-advocacy skills to get it. Korpi (2008) mentioned the connection between the sense of empowerment and self-determination. When given the chance to make meaningful choices, the students can develop a sense of empowerment that has an impact on several areas of life. Self-determination skills are needed in maintaining control of emotions, in understanding responsibilities, and allowing a person to comprehend that their actions have consequences. Bakken and Obiakor (2008) emphasized that to be fully involved in their transition process, students with special education needs should be able to advocate their hopes and needs without unreasonable influence from others. The involvement of family and support networks is at the core of self-determination because the support from those who are closest is essential when implementing goals.

Bakken and Obiakor (2008) mentioned the following specific skills as being essential in a successful transition process: Self-awareness, problem-solving and decision-making, goal setting, and communication skills. These skills can be taught by following self-determination curricula.

In Finland, versatile and flexible study tracks have been developed for the transition point between basic education and upper secondary level. They are aimed at supporting successful transition from one level to the next as well as endorsing the continuity of a student's lifelong study track. Prior to starting education leading to an upper secondary vocational qualification, it is possible to apply for pre-vocational programs preparing for vocational studies where necessary. Voluntary additional basic education is one option for students who need support in the transition process. The objectives of voluntary additional basic education are to support students' development and growth and prevent social exclusion. There is no national syllabus for voluntary additional basic education so the education provider and the student, together with parents or guardians, plan and agree upon the goals and learning objectives, the guidance and counseling, and other support the student needs. The curriculum in voluntary additional basic education is flexible. In addition to academic studies the students learn daily life skills, complete internships, and take part in excursions. (Finnish National Board of Education, 2016.)

Examined in light of the literature about adolescents with special education needs in transition, (Bakken & Obiakor, 2008; Dee, 2006; Jones, 2006; Korpi, 2008) the objectives of voluntary additional basic education seem to be parallel to the objectives of transition planning models and programs described in the literature.

Leivonen (2006) studied the empowering effect of voluntary additional basic education in the Jyväskylä School for the Visually Impaired (currently Valteri School Onerva). The results in his study indicated that the school provided empowerment as an operational environment.

2.2 Music therapy for adolescents with special needs

2.2.1 Music therapy for adolescents

Bruscia (2014, p. 36) has written a working definition for music therapy:

Music therapy is a reflexive process wherein the therapist helps the client to optimize the client's health using various facets of music experience and the relationships formed through them as impetus of change. As defined here, music therapy is the professional practice component of the discipline, which informs and is informed by theory and research.

Music therapy can be provided either in individual or group setting. From McFerran's (2010) view, music therapy with teenagers is dynamic work, wherein the provision of blended, eclectic practice grounded in flexibility and creativity is needed. In a music therapy group for adolescents, it is possible to enhance relatedness to the others, help adolescents in getting to know the boundaries and personal interaction strategies, and to experience being responsible and becoming important (Ala-Ruona, 2013).

McFerran (2010) provides a systematic synthesis of what has been documented about music therapy with adolescents. The literature reviewed by McFerran was drawn from the entire history of music therapy published in English up until early 2008, so it does not tell the current situation, and the emphasis was on the English speaking countries. The situation in Finland differs from the picture given in McFerran's literature review. McFerran found out that the vast majority of music therapy still took place with young people who were institutionalized in hospitals, inpatient mental health institutions, residential settings, or hospices. However, in Finland there is a tendency towards inclusion and to educate special needs adolescents in

mainstream schools, with the music therapy services usually being provided in outpatient settings.

In Erkkilä's (2011) experience, young clients are action oriented. Adolescents usually really want to create something instead of listening to music and discussing things. Songwriting is a useful method with adolescents, and most of the young clients can find a motivating and interesting way to accomplish their creativity through writing songs and engaging themselves in other music-related activities.

2.2.2 Group music therapy for adolescents with special education needs

There is a strong motive for group music therapy for adolescents with special needs. According to Nicholls (2002) a music therapy group can be a powerful tool to aid adolescents with severe learning disabilities. The group may help them in their search for a better way of relating to others, and help to develop the confidence and the skills for interacting with others. Relating to others and expressing oneself musically is often easier and less intimidating than through verbal communication, especially if one has impaired verbal communication. Using improvisation as the medium of exchange can help in finding freedom of movement and exploring new ways of being. Ahonen-Eerikäinen (2007) also supported the implementation of group music therapy. All people are members of various groups and being a member of a group is part of our identity. In group music therapy the participants can see who they are in a new light through their experiences of being reflected by the group mirror.

According to McFerran (2010) it is possible for adolescents to rehearse important social skills such as listening, waiting, taking turns, acknowledging, contributing, and finishing through group improvisation. Furthermore, she states that the therapeutic power of group music making with teenagers often takes place privately. The level of verbalization may be limited especially for adolescents with learning disabilities. Adolescents do not always articulate the insights they have gained, but group improvisations ensure that they have experienced them.

McFerran and Wigram (2007) studied the current practice in music therapy group improvisations by interviewing specialists in the topic. According to the interviewed specialists, music therapy group improvisation may allow the group members to discover new aspects of

themselves. The participants may rehearse new roles for behaviors within the group and they have the opportunity to express something new and surprising about themselves musically. Group improvisation reinforces the participants' flexibility in playing, ability to change styles, and awareness of the needs of others.

According to McFerran and Wigram (2007) group music therapy participants may feel as though they are part of something bigger than themselves, and the whole that is created is greater than the sum of its parts. This phenomenon took place in the music therapy group in my case study; Emil, one of the participants, stated that improvisation is much more delicate than a composition; to him, felt different and great.

2.3 Creative methods in music therapy: Improvising and songwriting

2.3.1 Improvising

Creativity is mentioned and used in many approaches of music therapy. Creative Music Therapy is an approach originally developed for handicapped children by Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins in 1959 (Robbins & Robbins, 1991; Nordoff & Robbins, 2006). It is an improvisational and compositional approach to music therapy, and traditionally it involves two therapists participating in sessions. The central concept in creative music therapy is "the music-child", which is based on the belief that every individual has an inborn musicality and the capacity to respond to musical experiences. (Carpente, 2012). Improvising is a basic element of creative music therapy, and as an activity it is as old as humankind (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008).

Creativity also plays an essential role in improvisational psychodynamic music therapy (IPMT) (Erkkilä, 2012; Erkkilä, Ala-Ruona, Punkanen & Fachner, 2011). In IPMT, improvising is seen as therapeutic when it is linked to the term that Winnicott (1971) has called "potential space" (a holding environment between the therapist and client). It presupposes certain commitment, passion, and motivation. The creative act of improvisation triggers images, emotions, symbols, memories, and associations. They can be seen as a window to the client's subconscious. When linked to the client's everyday life these creative insights can gradually lead the client to implement these insights in reality. In IPMT there are five progressing stages of creativity.

1. **Optimal basis for therapy:** To ensure the optimal starting point the therapist must consider several things e.g. the client's perspective, therapist characteristics, processes of change, structures of treatment, relational factors, the client's motivation and expectations, the therapist's emphatic competence and encouragement, the enabling change and keeping it in view, clinical fidelity and cohesion, and working alliance.
2. **Act of improvising:** When there is an optimal basis for therapeutic work, and also commitment, passion, and motivation, it is possible that improvising can lead to a new kind of thinking, or diverse thinking.
3. **Imagery process:** Creative potential can arise as images, emotions, symbols, memories, or associations. This can happen simultaneously with improvisation but most often shows up when listening back to the improvisation or discussing it. When improvisation activates an imagery process, creativity is always involved.
4. **Analytical process:** IPMT is goal-orientated work. A creative process has to be connected to the processes of recovery and change for problem resolution to occur. It requires secondary process dominant focused attention, and analytical and logical conclusion.
5. **Implementation:** Creativity enables the realization of new and image-based ideas in the client. Implementation is successful if the client feels better and he/she has a better quality of life, and if his/her disorder is alleviated. (Erkkilä et al., 2011.)

According to Punkanen (2011) improvising is an integrative experience where bodily, emotional and cognitive levels of experience are present at the same time. The whole body is used to express intentions, emotions and thoughts in musical improvisation. Wigram (2004) suggests that it is possible for anyone to improvise creative, exciting, and aesthetically interesting music. Any instrument can be used or you can improvise even just on a chair, a table, a glass, or tapping on your own knee.

2.3.2 Songwriting

As in the case of improvisation, songwriting functions as a means of self-expression. Derrington (2005) points out that a process of songwriting is an effective way for teenagers to express and define themselves, because it is a format which meets adolescents' emotional needs in a productive and organized way. Songwriting offers a structured and coherent way of creating music. It is relevant and helpful to adolescents because when writing songs, they can develop ideas in a creative way, find novel ways to define their thoughts and realize that their expression has importance and meaning which needs to be recognized.

Baker and Wigram (2005, p. 16) define songwriting in music therapy as:

The process of creating, notating and/or recording music and lyrics by the client/clients and therapist within a therapeutic relationship. The aim is to address psychosocial, emotional, cognitive, and communication needs of the client.

With youth songwriting it is necessary to address their needs, such as the development of a positive self-image and independence, the development of insight, and an increased awareness of the self and others (Derrington, 2005).

According to Bruscia (2014) there are four distinct types of experience in music: improvising, re-creating, composing, and listening. Each type has its own therapeutic potentials and applications. Since there are four main types of music experiences, these are considered the four main methods of music therapy: improvisational methods, re-creative methods, compositional methods, and receptive methods. In my music therapy group for adolescents with special education needs I used two of these methods: improvising and composing. Bruscia (1991) stated that improvisational methods may develop a sense of identity and interpersonal skills. It enables the client to express feelings that are difficult to express verbally. In addition, improvisation develops the ability to make decisions and choices within established limits. Compositional methods are beneficial for clients who need to develop identity and organize their decision-making. The most commonly used of compositional methods is songwriting, which could provide adolescents a means of expressing and understanding their fears about the future. According to Bruscia (2014), it is possible to develop the ability to integrate and synthesize parts into wholes through songwriting.

2.3.3 The storycomposing method

The storycomposing method by Hakomäki (2007, 2013) is both a clinical improvisation technique and a therapeutic songwriting method (Hakomäki, 2013). The method provides people of all ages the opportunity to express significant feelings and experiences. It is a model for musical interaction and it is appropriate also for people with learning disabilities and special needs. Hakomäki (2013) describes the four steps of the storycomposing method as described below.

1. Musical expression: Storycomposing is a creative way to express one's own musical inventions. The storycomposer does not need any previous musical skills. All kinds of keyboards and many kinds of other different instruments are suitable for storycomposing.

2. Interaction: Storycomposing is interaction, because there is always the storycomposer, who is creating the piece, and the co-storycomposer, who is writing down the piece. There can be different kinds of storycompositons, for example songs, compositions, plays, or musical stories.

3. Artefact: The storycomposition is always written down so, it is an artefact, and can be recorded using conventional notation or can also take the form of Figurenotes, drawings, or photos. The artefacts of a storycomposition are valuable both as educational and music therapy material.

4. Performance: The storycomposition is performed in a concert-like situation. The audience of the event can be for example family members, friends, teachers, or other school personnel. The performance can take place in the same session in which it has been completed or in later sessions.

In my case study the performance took place in the last session and the audience consisted of the music teacher and the group's special needs assistant. The storycomposition was played again a few months later in the spring semester. The students' storycomposition was also used as educational material.

The four steps of storycomposing must be included in the protocol for the activity to be called storycomposing, yet the method is flexible and gives plenty of space for creativity. Hakomäki

(2013) discussed the benefits of storycomposing in education settings. Primarily the aim of storycomposing in an education setting is for learning basic musical skills and how to play an instrument, but it is also a very applicable way to support children's and youth's holistic development. Composing and playing one's own pieces improves not only cognitive ability, but also emotional expression and communication skills.

By using storycomposing in education settings it is possible to set and achieve goals that satisfy both the student and the teacher. When using this method in a group, the members of the group interact with each other and improve collaboration skills. The storycomposing method provides the group members an opportunity for naming thoughts and feelings, and for practicing how to discuss matters, and how to be flexible and responsible. With storycomposing it is possible to empower young people in many ways; it develops self-expression, self-esteem, and concentration. Playing storycompositions with others, children and young people learn to understand their relationship to others by sharing the experience in a musical environment. (Hakomäki, 2013.)

After reading about the storycomposing method by Hakomäki (2013) I planned the music therapy intervention for my group. As I was familiar with the clinical improvisation techniques, I combined improvisation and songwriting in the music therapy group.

3 METHOD

3.1 The case study

My research design is a qualitative case study. Case studies bring an important aspect to clinical research: the personal application. With case studies it is possible to clarify why we are doing what we do in the therapy. Case studies allow for the assessment of individual development and meaningful incidents in the relationship between client and therapist. (Aldridge, 2005). Bruscia (2012) emphasized the importance of case examples as they give answers to essential questions such as how different forms of therapy are practiced and how clients respond to those therapies. Case studies and reports provide invaluable and unique insights into therapy practice. Gurman and Messer (2003) proposed that well-written case studies bring material alive in a compelling way.

3.2 The clinical approach and the music therapy methods

The literature review by McFerran (2010) indicated that the most obvious trend in the stance of the music therapist when working with adolescents is the tendency towards eclectic, or blended, approaches to practice. The music therapist need not identify purely with one approach. An eclectic approach is common across the majority of practicing psychotherapists, who tend to draw on the strategies that are most suitable to the individual in front of them in that moment. According to Norcross & Goldfried (2005) the four most well received routes toward the integration of psychotherapies are technical eclecticism, theoretical integration, common factors, and assimilative integration. An eclectic orientation would seem to dictate the use of those procedures that best fit the client, regardless of the theoretical origins of those procedures (Norcross & Goldfried, 2005). Bruscia (2014) stated that the therapist stays reflexive in integral practice, is flexible and open-minded, and is ready to continually meet the emerging needs presented by the client as therapeutic priorities.

I identify as an eclectic therapist; my aim is to be flexible and reflexive in my clinical work. In light of my experience and the literature of the transition process, I surmised that the adolescents needed opportunities for the acquisition of self-awareness, self-advocacy, and social skills. I tried to find the most suitable method for the group. There was a fixed topic for the group music

therapy - the transition to secondary education and adulthood. Each of the adolescents had their own hopes and plans for the future and each of them was in a different phase of the transition process.

My case represents didactic music therapy. In music therapy in Special Education, which Bruscia (2014) defines as a form of Augmentative Didactic Practices, the music therapist utilizes music to aid students with special education needs to gain nonmusical knowledge and skills that are part of, or essential to, their education, adaptation, or development. Didactic practices focus on helping clients to gain skills, behaviors, and knowledge needed for social adaptation, functional, independent living, and quality of life, thus learning and development are in the foreground of the therapeutic process.

The music therapy methods used with the group in this study were improvisation and composition, more specifically; the storycomposing method. Bruscia (2014) defined composition as a construction of emotions; the composer builds a musical composition using sounds, and in this sense, the composer becomes an architect of emotions. Composing involves the same creative decision-making as improvisation. Composition is creating a life narrative in sound that can be interpreted and experienced by others.

The group improvisations were referential. In the beginning of each session I conducted a group discussion on the topic, which always considered the future plans of each student. I then gave the students instructions to portray the feelings and thoughts they had about their future on their chosen instrument. According to Bruscia (2014) in instrumental referential improvisational music experiences the client improvises on a musical instrument to portray something non-musical, for example a feeling, title, idea, person, image, experience or event, in sound.

3.3 Data collection

The data was collected during two months in eight group music therapy sessions. I kept a journal of the sessions and recorded the music and the conversations concerning future plans on an iPad. The music teacher who was present in the sessions assisted me with the recordings. There was also a civil servant working as a special needs assistant with the group. I had asked the school principal for permission to conduct the study with the students who attended

voluntary additional basic education. I visited the class in the beginning of the school year to introduce myself and to inform the students of the study. The consent forms were sent to the students' parents. The sessions took place in the music classroom where there was a good selection of musical instruments available.

Figure 1 illustrates the transition process in this study. I combined my own preconception and knowledge with views from literature and previous research (Jones, 2006; Korpi, 2007; Bakken & Obiakor, 2008; McFerran, 2010) as I had defined which abilities, means of support, and finally the expected outcomes of a planned intervention are essential for the students in transition.

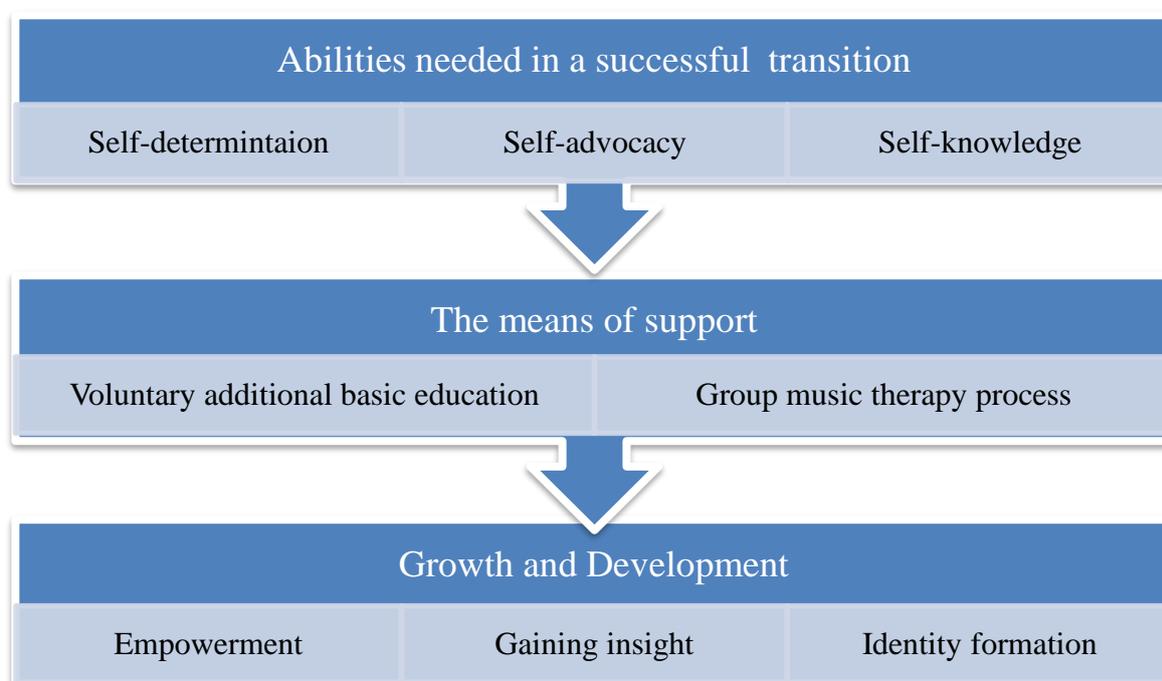


Figure 1. A successful transition process as seen in the therapeutic framework in this study.

3.4 The music therapy process

A total of eight group music therapy sessions were provided for five adolescents with special needs in the autumn semester. The group was chosen for this study, because these students were attending the voluntary additional basic education, and I was to be their class teacher during the following spring semester. The names of the students have been changed to protect their

anonymity. I had three different roles with the group; in the autumn semester I was their music therapist and a researcher, and in the spring semester I was their teacher.

In the beginning of the process I explained that the purpose of the music therapy group was to give the students time and space to discuss their future plans together in a different way: by using music improvisations and composing and creating a storycomposition. As a co-storycomposer I assumed the role of a listener, but I also had to encourage the students in their conversations and in playing the instruments. Every session began with a discussion about their future plans.

3.4.1 The beginning: Sessions one, two, and three

First I explained what we were supposed to do in the session and defined the Storycomposing method. I then shortly interviewed the students about their future plans and asked them to choose an instrument.

At the time of the music therapy group process the future career choices of the students were not yet clear. Anni for example stated in the initial conversation that she did not know yet what to study, because there are so many interesting occupations.

The questions and instructions for the first session were as follows:

1. Tell about your future plans.
2. What kind of a composition would you like to make?
3. Choose an instrument with which you would like to compose.
4. Explore the instrument freely. How does it sound? What kind of sounds does it produce?

The students chose the instruments and became familiar with improvisation techniques. I instructed them to think about their future plans and to listen to each other while improvising.

The students played two improvisations and they were recorded on an iPad and listened to so they could later comment.

For session two I sent the students questions to reflect in advance:

1. Shall the storycomposition be an instrumental or a song with lyrics?
2. Shall all the instruments play together or shall there be solo parts for different instruments?
3. How can you express different emotions and atmospheres with the instrument you have chosen?

Storycomposing began in session 2. The students agreed that the storycomposition was supposed to be instrumental without lyrics. The first part of the composition concerning future plans was composed in sessions 2 and 3.

3.4.2 The working phase: Sessions four, five, and six

Improvisations: In session four we worked with the second part of the composition. I presented the students three questions in the beginning of the session:

1. How would you like the composition to sound?
2. Are there going to be surprises or is there a fixed rhythmic structure?
3. What do you want to tell or express with your music regarding your future plans?

The structure of the composition formed during sessions four, five and six. There were three improvised parts in the storycomposition. The instructions, which the students chose for those three improvisations, were to play in a hesitant, reflective, and joyful way.

3.4.3 The ending: Sessions seven and eight

The students had made progress in improvising. This progress was heard in the improvisation that the students played on the chosen theme: internship and their future profession. The storycomposition was completed in session seven. In session eight, which was the last session, the students played the whole piece. The students were seriously involved with the storycomposing process. They did not name the composition. It was called *Tarinasävellys* or *Sävellys*, Storycomposition or Composition, so I will use the name Composition when analyzing the students' artefact. The students' participation in the sessions is displayed in Table 1. The recordings of the sessions are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 1. Students' participation in composing and improvising activity

Sessions	Anni	Emil	Iina	Janne	Juha
Session 1 Improvising	maracas	-	piano	piano	drum kit
Session 2 Improvising and beginning of composing	maracas, cabasa	-	piano	piano	drum kit
Session 3 Improvising and composing	cabasa sand tube	congas	piano	piano	-
Session 4 Improvising	maracas	congas	-	-	drum kit
Session 5 Improvising	calabash		-	piano	drum kit
Session 6 Improvising	-		-	piano	drum kit
Session 7 Improvising and finishing composing	-	congas piano	piano shaker	piano	drum kit
Session 8 Rehearsing the Composition	percussion	-	piano	piano	drum kit

TABLE 2. The recordings

Recording	Activity
Recording 1 (length 00:03:19)	Improvisation (Session 1)
Recording 2 (length 00:02:51)	Improvisation (Session 1)
Recording 3 (length 00:01:59)	Improvisation (Session 2)
Recording 4 (length 00:20:44)	Beginning of composing, planning together, bars 1 and 2 (Session 2)
Recording 5 (length 00:01:11)	Improvisation (Session 3)
Recording 6 (length 00:01:30)	Continuing composing, bars 3 and 4 (Session 3)
Recording 7 (length 00:01:06)	Rehearsing the bars 3 and 4 (Session 3)
Recording 8 (length 00:01:46)	Improvisation part of the Composition, option 1, (hesitant, Juha started) rhythm improvisation (Session 4)
Recording 9 (length 00:02:49)	Improvisation part of the Composition, option 2, (hesitant, Emil started) rhythm improvisation, chosen to the actual composition (Session 4)
Recording 10 (length 00:02:26)	Improvisation part of the Composition, option 3, (hesitant, Anni started) rhythm improvisation (Session 4)
Recording 11 (length 00:03:11)	Improvisation part with melody to be the continuum after the rhythm improvisation (reflectively) (Session 5)
Recording 12 (length 00:01:58)	Continuing the improvisation part with melody to be the continuum after the rhythm improvisation (reflectively) (Session 6)
Recording 13 (length 00:01:59)	Improvisation part of the composition to be the continuum after the reflectively played parts (joyfully) (Session 6)

3.5 Data analysis

The data of this case study consisted of the session recordings, the composition produced during the sessions, and the interviews. I implemented several microanalyses to allow different layers of feelings, sensations, and meaning to emerge.

Wosch & Wigram (2007, p. 22) define microanalysis in music therapy:

Microanalysis is a detailed method investigating microprocesses. Microprocesses are processes, changes/progressions within one session of music therapy. The amount of time can be one minute (moment) or five (therapy event) of one session, one clinical improvisation (episode), or one complete session. To analyze process over time, several microanalyses can be undertaken to look at several events.

Figure 2 illustrates the data analysis.

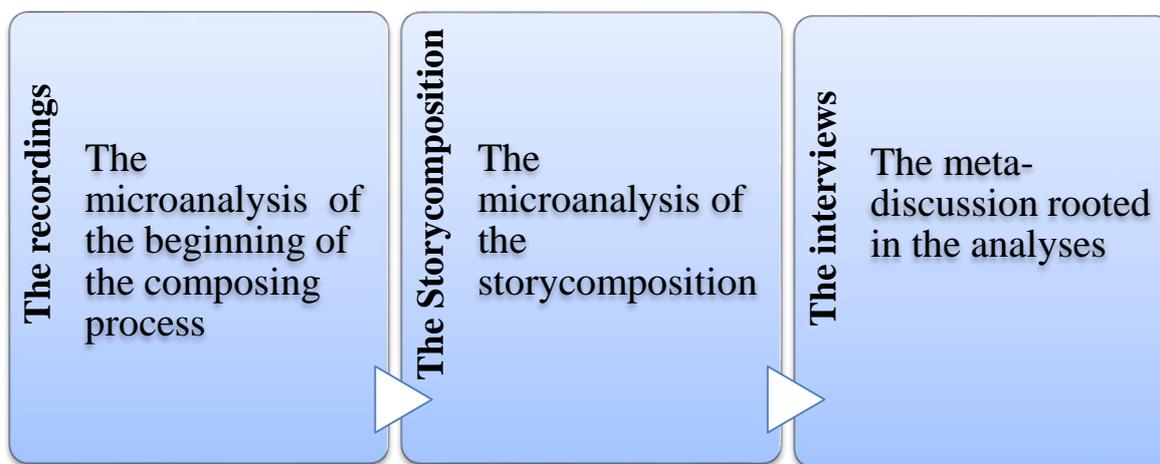


Figure 2. The microanalyses

In analysing the data, I used the Phenomenologically Inspired Approach to Microanalyses in Music Therapy (Trondalen, 2007). I found it suitable, because my data consisted of both music and interpersonal dialogue. When beginning the analysis, I listened to the recordings of the sessions and chose the recordings to be analyzed; I chose the excerpts from the recordings which had formed the storycomposition for the microanalysis. The method suggests a procedure for analyzing empirical data emerging from music as perceived and including both musical and interpersonal data. Ruud (2005) suggested that the phenomenological approach opens possibilities for a close examination of expressions, memories, feelings, and imagination as they evolve in the here-and-now. A phenomenological approach to the analysis of music allows

experiences to be in the foreground of study. Forinash and Gonzalez (1989) stated that, as a research method, phenomenology can capture the dynamic qualities of art and human service. Forinash and Gonzalez have applied Ferrara's (1984) method to music therapy research. Ferrara created a procedure for phenomenological analysis as a tool for musical analysis. The procedure begins with open listening to the musical piece allowing any dimensions of meaning to emerge. Open listening can be repeated several times followed by a reflective description of each listening. Forinash and Gonzalez modified Ferrara's method and made necessary changes to better reflect the music therapy process.

3.6 The phenomenologically inspired approach to microanalyses in music therapy

Phenomenology aims to search for the essential structures and essence of experience using the terms bracketing, epoché, and phenomenological reduction (Forinash & Gonzalez, 1989; Trondalen, 2007)

The data analysis of my study included a phenomenologically inspired description, which also took hermeneutic aspects - the interpretation - into consideration. The procedure consisted of nine steps. Many of these steps included two parts. (Trondalen, 2007):

Step one: contextual. The first part of the analysis is the contextual part. The contextual issues are sorted out and written as notes before the open listening. Such issues include the client's personal, social, biological, clinical, and musical history.

Step two: open listening. The first part of open listening addresses listening to the improvisation as one enduring whole and the second aspect of the open listening is body listening. When listening to the music for second time the researcher can move her body to the music with her eyes closed. This is an important step, because clients may have embodied mental constraints.

Step three: structural. The first part focuses on sound and intensity experienced in time, whilst the second focuses on sound/music measured in time. Trondalen (2007) suggests a modified version of the Structural Model of Music Analysis (SMMA) by Grocke (1999, 2002). The most

important thing in this step is to notice musical codes and musical relationships between the client and the therapist on a structural level.

Step four: semantic. The first part focuses on explicit meaning, i.e. referential meaning. This includes describing musical structures in relation to other information. The second part focuses on implicit meaning, i.e. analogy.

Step five: pragmatic. At this step it is important to search for a potential effect the music has within the music therapy process.

Step six: phenomenological horizontalization (informed by steps three-five). During step six, the researcher returns to steps three, four, and five. The main point of step six is to dwell upon the results so far, before bracketing this information thereby allowing oneself to engage in a new open listening.

Step seven: open listening. The first part includes listening to the improvisation as one enduring whole again. The second part includes a new body listening. These new open listenings allow the researcher to weave the earlier experiences into one new multilayered pattern of music.

Step eight: phenomenological matrix. The aim of this step is to synthesize the previous information from the analyses into three unit blocks, the essence of which are the music, the potential meaning of the music, and a potential 'effect' of the music within the treatment process.

Step nine: meta-discussion. After the music analyses, there is a meta-discussion. This discussion is rooted in the analysis and may take different philosophies of science and theories into consideration. In this ninth step the client's personal history and process in music therapy is considered. It is relevant to include information from different data sources, for example transcriptions from sessions including both musical and verbal interactions, a written score, an interview, and the therapist's own experience of the analyzed music and the therapy process itself. (Trondalen, 2007).

4 RESULTS OF THE MICROANALYSIS

4.1 Step one: contextual

The context within which the therapy process took place was the clients' personal history within a group of young adults with special education needs: Anni, Emil, Iina, Janne, and Juha, aged 17, attending the voluntary additional basic education (i.e. 10th grade).

The clients' personal history and their expectations, aims, and future plans are outlined below.

Anni had attended a mainstream school following a general education plan. She and her mother had just recently moved to the city where our school is located. Anni did not have many friends in or outside her former school. She had a habit of underestimating herself. Her aims for the year of voluntary additional basic education were to get better grades in mathematics and Swedish, and to have a plan for future studies in secondary education. She planned to apply for vocational upper secondary education after voluntary additional basic education but did not have a clear idea of her career of choice yet.

Emil had completed basic education (i.e. 9th grade) at our school. He did not have any learning difficulties, but he needed to study in a small group because of his autistic spectrum disorder characteristics. He had followed the general education plan. He applied to the voluntary additional basic education because he needed to develop his interpersonal skills. He also needed time to rethink his choice for secondary education. Emil lived with his father and younger brother in our city.

Iina had studied in a mainstream class and followed the general education plan, with the exception of English class, in which she had an individual education plan. She lived with her family in the countryside far away from the school and traveled home for weekends. Iina had many friends and good family relationships. She had lots of plans and expectations for the future. Her goal for voluntary additional basic education was to get better grades in Finnish, English, and Swedish, as well as in mathematics. She hoped to later be able to study at upper secondary school.

Janne had attended school in a small group and had an individual education plan. He lived with his family far away from the school. His sister attended our school too, so the siblings traveled the long trip home together every weekend. His aim for voluntary additional basic education was to practice his study skills and to apply for suitable education after completing the 10th grade.

Juha had attended our school from pre-school to voluntary additional basic education. He had learning difficulties and an individual education plan. He lived with his mother and his twin sister in another city and traveled home for weekends. He did not have friends outside the school and his interaction with his peers was narrow and limited. He preferred interacting with adults. His objective in the voluntary additional basic education was to practice his study skills and to find a suitable education for the future. His plan was to first apply for a preparatory program and after that for vocational upper secondary education.

The clients' musical history is outlined below.

Anni had not played any instruments. She had studied music as an obligatory school subject in 7th grade. She considered studying music a waste of time.

Emil had not played any instruments either and had not studied music since 7th grade. He showed interest in playing piano and percussions.

Iina had no experience of playing musical instruments, but expressed interest in playing piano. Similar to Anni, she considered music lessons a waste of time and had studied music as a compulsory school subject in 7th grade.

Janne took piano lessons and was interested in music. He could not read musical scores, but learnt the pieces by ear. Janne was a good singer and considered music to be very important in his life.

Juha played guitar, bass guitar, and drums. He was also a good singer. He enjoyed all kinds of musical activities and would rather have listened to or played music all day long than concentrate on doing school assignments.

4.2 Step two: open listening

My first open listening, listening to the music event as one enduring whole, addressed recording number four that took place during the second session and lasted 00:20:44 mins. I concentrated on two music excerpts from the recording. Excerpt one occurred between 12:01 and 13'03'', and the second music excerpt occurred between 16'47'' and 17'37'' on the recording.

The fourth recording portrayed the beginning of the storycomposing process. In the beginning of the recording we planned the composition together. I let Iina compose the first notes. The purpose was to engage her in the music making from the very beginning to give her the experience that music was meaningful and her involvement was important. During the conversation she said that she wanted the composition to sound slow and a little bit sad. At first Iina hesitated, but after few minutes she had enough courage to play the first notes of the composition. I then asked Janne to join Iina. He caught the atmosphere of Iina's theme immediately and created a harmony.

MUSIC EXAMPLE 1

The Beginning

Slow and sadly

Iina's and Janne's theme at the beginning of the composition

Music example 1 shows the notation of the first four bars of the composition, which was played in A minor. Bars one and two were invented in session two and bars three and four were invented in session three.

In the first music excerpt Iina played in the bass clef and Janne played in the treble clef. Juha joined Iina and Janne with the electric drum kit very fluently. Juha was a skillful drum player; he added a steady beat to the opening part of the composition and played excellent fills with the

drums. Anni's particular way of participating in the composing process did not unfold until I had completed step two of the microanalysis, open listening. I listened carefully with the headphones and transcribed the recording. I had noticed Anni's activity in the conversations and in planning the composition during the sessions, but it was the open listening that revealed the delicate way Anni was participating in playing with percussion.

The interaction between the students in the music began naturally and quickly. In the first music excerpt, Janne supported Iina by playing harmony matching her part. Anni and Juha started playing drums and percussions almost simultaneously. Juha's role was important in giving structure and form to the composition.

The conversations on the recording revealed that, despite their hesitation, the students were willing to participate and begin the process. They all took part in planning and starting the process. They were prepared to work together and with me. There was also some conversation between the students. Iina gave feedback to Juha: "Juha, you are an awesome player".

In the second music excerpt the students were rehearsing the first two bars of the composition playing it as a loop. They played the beginning of the composition four times gaining more confidence each time. As Iina and Janne learnt to listen to each other, they managed to start their playing simultaneously on the third and fourth round. Juha played several fills with the drums and Anni also played in a more assertive way than in the first music excerpt. The ensemble sounded very good and I gave positive feedback to the students.

The second aspect of open listening was the body listening. In the first music excerpt the feeling of trust was the first to come into my mind when moving to the music. There was a clear structure in the music and it gave the feeling that the music making students knew their roles in the process. When moving to the second music excerpt I felt that the percussion was very pleasant. The playing as a whole was more cohesive in this excerpt than in the first excerpt. Anni's cabasa playing made me feel happy. Anni was shaking her instrument rather powerfully, which I did not hear and notice during the session. After listening and sensing the music on the recording with my body I discovered that Anni had also made an effort in the group composition.

4.3 Step three: structural

Sound and intensity experienced in time

The beginning of the Composition (Excerpts one and two) sounded steady and smooth. There were no peaks nor arousal in the intensity. Excerpt three in the ninth recording portrayed the beginning of the improvisation parts of the composition; the intensity stayed similar to that of the beginning.

Sound/music measured in time

As the analysis proceeded, it became important to analyze the recordings which formed the whole composition.

With Structural Model of Musical Analysis (SMMA) it is possible to analyze selections of music. The SMMA contains a comprehensive list of music elements, with sub-sections. Elements 1-12 relate to musical form, while elements 13-15 relate to interpretation. The SMMA of the Composition is presented in Table 3. The SMMA was found to be a useful tool to compare and contrast various selections of pre-composed music. Elements of the SMMA might be used in isolation for analysis of music in other music therapy methods for example, in improvisation. (Grocke, 2002, 2007).

TABLE 3. A Structural Model of Music Analysis (SMMA) (Grocke, 2002)

1. Style and Form

1.1	Period of composition: e.g., Baroque, Classical, Romantic; Impressionist; 20 th century	An instructed Storycomposition including improvisational parts, year 2013
1.2	Form: e.g., Sonata form; ABA; Theme and variations; Rhapsodic form; Fugue; Tone Poem	A – Improvisation (hesitant) – Improvisation (reflective) - Improvisation (joyful) – B

2. Texture

2.1	Consistently thick/thin, or variable	Thin
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8. Embellishments, ornamentation and articulation

8.1	Embellishments to the melodic line	None
8.2	Trills; appoggiaturas	None
8.3	Accentuation: marcato; accents;	In the piano improvisations
8.4	Pizzicato/Legato	In the piano improvisations
8.5	Use of mute	n/a

9. Harmony

9.1	Predominantly consonant, or dissonant	Consonant
9.2	Consonance/dissonance alternation within the selection.	Not much alteration
9.3	Significant harmonic progressions	In both melodies in A and B parts
9.4	Rich harmonies	None
9.5	Predictable harmonies (e.g., I; IV; V progression)	Predictable in A and B parts
9.6	Unpredictable harmonies	Some, in the piano improvisations
9.7	Cadence points	Bars 1 and 2

10. Timbre and quality of instrumentation

10.1	Solo instrument: instrumental; vocal	Two pianos, rhythm improvisations
10.2	Accompaniment	Electric drum kit, congas, other percussions
10.3	Small groupings	Five musicians
10.4	Instrument groups creating timbral colour	Percussions
10.5	Interplay between instruments	In all parts of the Composition
10.6	Layering effects (adding and reducing instrument parts)	In the improvisational parts

11. Volume

11.1	Predominantly loud or soft	Soft
11.2	Special effects of volume	n/a

12. Intensity

12.1	Tension/release	In the Improvisations
12.2	Crescendi, building to peak, and resolution	None
12.3	Tension in harmony, texture etc and resolution	None
12.4	Delayed resolution or absent resolution	None
12.5	Ambiguity resolved or unresolved	Resolved

13. Mood

13.1	Predominant mood, as depicted by	Sad, hesitant, reflective, joyful
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	melody, harmony and predominant instrument	
13.2	Feelings and emotions represented.	Sadness, hesitation, reflectiveness, joy

14. Symbolic/associational

14.1	Culturally specific associations	Jazz music, the reflective and joyful improvisations reminiscent of Erik Satie's piano music
14.2	Metaphoric associations	None

15. Performance

15.1	Quality of the performance	The electric piano player and the percussionist playing drum kit were skillful, the other pianist(s) and the percussionists did not have any musical background
15.2	Stylistic interpretation - artistic merit	Improvisations were expressive
15.3	Articulation of feeling and emotion	Sadness, hesitation, reflectiveness, joy, stability

4.4 Step four: semantic

Explicit meaning, i.e. referential

In the first and second music excerpts the four students tried their best to be successful in their contribution. They carefully listened to the instructions and asked clarificatory questions. They concentrated on listening to each other and in playing together. In the third music excerpt, three students were improvising. The mode of the improvisation was hesitant. It was Anni's suggestion that the emotions related to future plans could be joy or hesitation. Of these two options, Juha and Emil chose hesitation. Emil started with congas and played TA-TA (pause) TA-TA-TA. Juha played a basic beat and kept the beat of the improvisation steady while Emil continued his rhythm. Anni shook her maracas offbeat. The initiative to finish the improvisation came from Anni who changed her playing and shook the maracas continuously for a moment. The students chose this improvisation to be part of the composition, because it expressed hesitation very well.

Implicit meaning, i.e. analogy

The students wanted to be successful in their efforts, when beginning the composing process. There was good interplay and collaboration in the students' work in the first and second music excerpts. Emil was absent, when the first decisions about the structure of the Composition were made. In the third excerpt Anni wanted to give Emil more space and attention and an opportunity to participate the decision-making. Anni showed the ability to take responsibility for everybody's equal participation.

4.5 Step five: pragmatic

The storycomposing procedure provided a warm and confidential relationship between the students and me. They respected me as a co-storycomposer. The students created a fine composition together in a short time. Through the process I gained important knowledge of the students' abilities in decision-making, taking responsibility, and interpersonal skills. When I returned to my work as a teacher in the spring semester, I already had knowledge on and a good relationship with the students. In addition, I had teaching material for our music lessons. The composition was played again during the spring semester and parts of it were written down as a score with the students.

4.6 Step six: phenomenological horizontalization

Here I review the Composition as a whole, informed by the Structural Model of Music Analysis (SMMA) in step three. The motif of the Composition was based on four different emotions that emerged when the students were thinking about their future plans. The different parts of the composition (sad, hesitant, reflective, joyful, and conclusion) are equally important in expressing the feelings of the adolescents in their transition to adulthood.

Informed by analysis steps three to five, I decided to listen to the composition as one enduring whole in step seven.

4.7 Step seven: open listening

Listening to the Composition as one enduring whole and to the conversations concerning the composing process.

PART 1, A, sad: The conversations on the recording have an important meaning. They display how my relationship with the students and their relationships with each other were making progress. The students had a positive attitude towards the creative work. They were open and curious.

I tried to be really careful and exact when writing down the composition. I directed the students in the composition process and respected every student's contribution. I remembered finding it difficult to take account of Anni's participation, because I did not hear her silent playing during the sessions. She was playing percussions like a sand tube and maracas, which did not make much sound. It was only after listening again with the headphones as I heard all the different instruments clearly, that I realized Anni was also fully engaged in the process. Juha played skillfully on the drum kit. It is audible that he enjoyed playing and wanted to show his talent.

PART 2, Improvisation, hesitant: Emil started the improvisation with congas. Juha played a basic beat without any fills on the drum kit. Anni played shaking and rattling sounds with her maracas. The congas played the first two bars alone. In the third bar the maracas came along hesitatingly and, right after the maracas, the drum kit joined the improvisation. The three instruments were not playing in synchronization, which portrays hesitation in an excellent way.

PART 3, Improvisation, reflective: There was a short conversation before the improvisation. In the previous session there had been discussion about the emotions related to future plans. One of the students had suggested to play joyfully.

Anni: Or confused.

Therapist: Yes, confusion may also be related to the future and thinking about the future.

Janne decided to play in a reflective manner, as we had agreed it was his turn to decide the mode of the improvisation. He said that it could begin from the note Bb. Anni chose percussion

and picked different percussion instruments out of a basket. There were sounds of percussions as Anni was testing them. She said: “This is good”, when picking up a calabash from the basket.

In the beginning of the composing process I thought that the whole composition would be written down as a score but, as the sessions proceeded, the improvisations grew to be in the major role. We agreed that the composition would include improvised parts, which could be varied when playing the piece again. Janne started the improvisation and was also first to stop playing after a powerful hit from Juha’s drum kit. The improvisation sounded like jazz music.

PART 4, Improvisation, joyful: The mode of the improvisation was “joyful” and chosen by the two students that had attended the session. Juha started with drums. Janne, the pianist played joyful, merry melodies. He played occasionally with two hands creating harmonies. The two musicians stopped almost simultaneously. The improvisation reminded me of Erik Satie’s piano music.

PART 5, B, conclusion: I wanted to give Emil an opportunity to compose a melody for the last part of the composition, because I had noticed his interest in piano playing. I suggested that Emil would compose the ending part of the composition with Janne.

MUSIC EXAMPLE 2

The Ending

♩ = 66

Janne’s and Emil’s theme in the ending of the Composition

Music Example 2 is the ending of the composition. Emil played a simple descending melody progression in the bass register of the piano following the scale in C major from C2 to C1. Janne completed Emil’s theme by playing a nice, positive, and bright conclusion to the composition in C major.

Body listening

In this step I listened to the composition with my eyes shut as one enduring whole without the conversations.

PART 1, A, sad and slow: Heavy steps, the melody is sad and slow. It gave the feeling that my feet were heavy and it was difficult to walk. The shaking sound of the maracas brought some lightness and gave pleasure and inner warmth. It was the only light thing in the heavy atmosphere and gave hope in the beginning section, which was played in A minor. In bars three and four the atmosphere became lighter. The congas tapped irregular beats and the sand tube was playing intermittently. Iina was playing quavers and the tempo of her playing was quicker than Janne's, so they were not synchronized in their playing. Repeating the bars sounded like they were playing a canon.

PART 2, Improvisation, hesitant: The tapping of the congas gave me a feeling of going back and forth; the movement that I felt in my body mirrored hesitation very well.

PART 3, Improvisation, reflective: When listening and feeling the reflective part with my body I felt the impulse to twirl around, sway my body, and snap my fingers.

PART 4, Improvisation, joyful: During the joyful part I got the urge to jump around with light steps.

PART 5, B, conclusion: The conclusion part gave me the feeling of settling down and stability.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Step eight: phenomenological matrix

The music was an instructed storycomposition, which included improvisational parts, and was written in 2013. The Composition consisted of five parts which were “Part A” (in recording four, length 00:01:30, bars one and two; in recording six, length 00:01:30, bars three and four), “Hesitant improvisation”, (in recording 9, length 00:02:49), “Reflective improvisation”, (in recording eleven, length 00:03:11), “Joyful improvisation”, (in recording 13, length 00:01:59), “Part B”, (on the iPad, the playback option of iWriteMusic programme).

The texture of the music was thin and monophonic. Variation occurred in the improvisation parts and the underlying pulse of the work was consistent. Important rhythmic motifs were heard in the hesitant improvisation, where the three percussionists played together. The composition began with a steady and slow basic beat. There was variety in the rhythms in the improvisation parts. The composition was made for two pianos, (but can be played with only one piano) and percussion instruments. There was interplay between the instruments in all parts of the Composition and layering effects (adding and reducing instruments) were heard in the improvisation parts. There were harmonic progressions in both melodies in parts A and B. The volume was soft throughout the Composition. There was some change in the intensity in the improvisation parts. The mood was different in every part: sad, hesitant, reflective, joyful, and stable. Janne, the electric piano player and Juha, the percussionist playing the electric drum kit were skillful, the other players, Anni, Iina and Emil did not have any musical background.

There were many aspects in the potential meaning of the music. The process of producing a composition together served as a means to become familiar with each other. The students were polite and tried to do as I wished. They knew that I was doing research and that I would be their teacher in the spring semester. The music making process was significant for the three boys in the group. The meaning of the music and the process was heard in their playing and is also revealed in the interviews of the boys. The meaning of the music making for the girls was difficult to determine during the process. Later when interviewed Iina mentioned that music is important to her.

I understood the composition in the following modes: Sadness, hesitation, reflectiveness, joy and stability. The analysis could point towards the sadness the participants were feeling when having to leave one's safe and secure life at a familiar school environment and home. Hesitation represented the many alternative choices there are to be considered and chosen for the future. Reflectiveness took a step forward and took responsibility to consider the alternative choices. Joy was experienced when the plans for the future were beginning to be clarified. The final mode recognized by me when writing down the score, playing it by myself with piano and listening to it, was stability. This referred to the situations when the decisions about the future studies had been made and applications had been sent. The emotions in the composition were relevant to the planning of the future studies.

The potential "effect" of the music within the process

The music making process helped me to establish a close relationship with the students. The students widened their perspectives regarding their future plans. The creativity and diversity was seen in their decisions in the spring term. The process strengthened the relationship between the students. In the interviews the students expressed their feelings and thoughts about music and creative art making.

5.2 Step nine: meta-discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the benefits of a music therapy group process carried out with adolescents with special education needs. The objective was to determine (1) how improvising and composing helped the students' growth and development and (2) if musical interaction had a positive impact on social interaction between the adolescents.

After examining the data, the results showed that a group music therapy process can be beneficial for students with special education needs in transition to adulthood for the purpose of gaining understanding of their responsibilities, their own personal strengths and weaknesses, and about realistic choices. The ability to take responsibility has a connection with empowerment. Understanding one's strengths and weaknesses may indicate that a person has gained insights. To be able to see realistic life goals is an important part of identity formation. (Jones, 2006).

Figure 3 illustrates the expected outcomes of a successful transition process.

Growth and Development		
<p>Empowerment Taking responsibility</p>	<p>Gaining insight Understanding one's strengths and weaknesses</p>	<p>Identity formation Making realistic choices</p>

Figure 3. The successful outcomes of a transition process.

In accordance with the second aim of the study, a group music therapy process can be beneficial in enhancing the social interaction between adolescents. The young students grew to be more open to listen to what others have to say, asking questions, and accepting comments and criticism.

5.3 Limitations

Completing writing this paper was not possible for me until enough time had passed after the school year when the group music therapy process for adolescents with special education needs took place. Certain issues arose while identifying the results of this research, so it is important to also consider the limitations of this study. There was the issue of subjectivity as I was in three different roles with the adolescents. In the autumn semester I was their music therapist and a researcher, and in the spring semester I was their teacher. To hear another person's perspective on the process, I interviewed the special needs assistant who participated in the sessions and worked with the group the whole academic year.

Although this study produced some encouraging results, it is good to remember that the actual therapy process was short, and that at the same time the students received special support and rehabilitation during the academic year at the voluntary additional basic education. Was the growth and development due to the music therapy process or due to the supportive and rehabilitative school environment? I believe that these two complemented each other.

Other limitations consist of the fact that the students' timetable was tight, and there were students missing from the sessions due to sickness and internships. Still the main data in this research was the group composition, to which every student made a contribution. So, the results of the microanalysis represent the growth and development of the whole group.

However, this research provided me with a valuable opportunity to study my own work. Through improvising and creative music making, it is possible to better understand the strengths and the weaknesses of the students. While working together with a common music project, students have to use their communication skills and cooperation skills, take responsibility, and make choices. During the process, I gained useful knowledge about the students' learning styles, their ways of communicating and cooperating, and about their future plans. It was beneficial when I returned to my work as a teacher, and worked with the student counselor in planning the students' future studies.

5.4 Recommendations

For further studies on group music therapy improvising and songwriting with special needs adolescents, I would recommend a longer process. It would be interesting for future studies to use different methods of microanalyses to analyze the minimal details or changes within a music therapy session to get the answers to questions like: "What did actually happen?" and "Did the clients really behave in the way that I believed they behaved?" With briefer periods of therapy, which is often the case in research projects, a short and detailed assessment tool is very useful. (Wosch & Wigram, 2007).

The method of microanalysis I used opened the data for me in an intriguing way. I had collected data with both verbal and musical elements, so the phenomenologically inspired procedure provided a method to focus on both the music and the interpersonal dialogue. The method is very detailed and the researcher is able to follow the nine steps of the procedure. During the microanalysis, the music, which was audio taped, was revisited several times. The open listenings enabled the researcher to dwell on the music several times, allowing different layers of meanings and musical significance to emerge from the procedure of the analysis itself. (Trondalen, 2007).

6 CONCLUSION

Not often does the therapist engage in therapeutic conversations with adolescents. Usually the therapist has to place meaning and importance on the young client's creative expression. The therapist has to keep interpretations to themselves and trust the functionality of the process. (Erkkilä, 2011.) As McFerran proposed (2010), adolescents do not usually indicate whether sessions have been helpful. Observing and assessing the change may be difficult. The value of music therapy is not always obvious in daily work with adolescents, but it definitely is worthwhile. In McFerran's interviews about youths' experiences of music therapy, the adolescents highlighted the importance of the opportunities for emotional expression. The adolescents described feeling connected to other people in their music making, and that it had changed their life.

As one of the students in this study stated:

Janne: Through music I can express how I feel.

At the end of the school year I interviewed the students. The future plans of all the five students had become clarified. Three of them had applied for upper secondary education and two of them had applied for pre-vocational programs. They were waiting for the news about the admission when I interviewed them. They were optimistic about their futures. Four of them mentioned home and family to be the important things in their lives. Three of the students mentioned music to be an important thing.

Iina: Music is really important. It is great that someone can play and offer others an opportunity to enjoy the music. I listen to all kinds of music. There is music for every mood, some music irritates, and some feels very good. The kind of music, which may sometimes be annoying, may fit your mood on another day.

I found it challenging to pay attention to every student's contribution because their musical skills were different. It happens very easily that the more talented ones get more attention. I was aware of that and gave them equal attention. During the process I was worried that Anni's contribution had received less attention than the other students'. While listening again to the recordings with headphones I heard the little versatile nuances in Anni's playing. Juha had an essential role with the drum kit by maintaining the pulse and varying the beat thereby enabling the other musicians to float in the rhythm while improvising. Iina, who was verbally competent,

commented on the improvisations in a nice way. According to her, they sounded like “everyday life” or “muddy”. I helped Iina, Emil, and Janne to write their themes on the score and then they played the themes as they followed the score. For Emil, who was present only for three sessions in the autumn semester, the importance of the process became apparent in the spring semester when the students played the composition together again.

Emil: Improvising is great. It can be much better than a pre-planned composition. It feels different.

To conclude with Janne’s words.

Janne: It was good, that Composition we made.

As the supportive school environment and the music therapy group process complemented each other, as too did my two professions; special education teacher and music therapist. Through this research I learnt something about how to combine my skills and how to help my students in their transition process to adulthood.

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