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different generations can enter into meaningful and rational dialogue and interaction with each other.

Developing third age university activities requires voluntary involvement and production of knowledge from the participants themselves, particularly regarding course contents, central concepts and theoretical foundations. In this sense one central concept used in this research is self-realization. This refers to in-depth comprehension of self via learning, which will lead to better management of one's own life. On the other hand, self-realization can also be seen as part of societal involvement, which provides an opportunity to integrate one's own experience in a relevant manner in the process of development of society and culture.

Old Age and Learning

In the Finnish UTA studying and learning is integrated in the concept of **generation**. As in other countries the students (born 20-30's) lost their possibility of studying because of the crisis of the society (wars depression etc.). Secondly, learning and studying is integrated to the **newest scientific research and knowledge**. Thirdly, behind the activities there are the questions of **life histories** at the concrete and theoretical level. Students have horizons of their own as the basis for learning new skills and ideas. The situation is quite different from the university of "the young ones". One important starting point to learning and studying in old age is found to be (Moody 1978) life history and experience. Fourthly, the task is by reviewing the knowledge of one's past to orientate oneself with the help of new scientific research to the prevailing society and ask how ones **own experience** can be used and be heard around the society.

An important aspect is to produce the knowledge from the perspective of the participants and develop the content, key concepts and theoretical perspectives of the UTA university. This is why one of the key concepts in the research is **self-realization**. This means at an individual level, that one can deepen one's own self-understanding during the learning and studying, to be able to cope better in later life. On the other hand self-realization can be one part of participating in the activities of the society, where life experiences can be used to develop under prevailing society and culture.

By representing old age in such terms as self-realization, self-actualization or personal growth, the third age discourse will point out the positive perspectives of modern old age. The concept of self-realization refers to in-depth comprehension of self via learning, which leads to better management of one's own life. On the other hand, self-realization can also be seen as part of societal involvement, which provides an opportunity to integrate

one's own experience, in a relevant way, into the process of development of society and culture. The emphasize is on the discovery of positive growth potential, such as later life learning and artistic creativity, that persists into old age.

2 Beliefs of human nature reflected in the third age Discussion group of philosophical psychology in the UTA of Jyväskylä – Eeva Kallio

My presentation will focus on my experiences as group leader in discussion groups in the local Third Age University. I was leader in the group called "Discussion group of philosophical psychology", held here in Jyväskylä between the years '92 to '93. This group was a part of the research project, the intention of which was to develop education and teaching methods in the Third Age Universities. Researchers of this project were Marja Tikka and Arja Laitinen, who participated also as members in the discussion group. I would also mention here that originally the method I will now describe has been specially developed here in Jyväskylä by one of our chairmen, namely Kari Turunen. I have to stress that my viewpoint here is of group leaders' viewpoint. I will use in this presentation the term *group leader* referring to my role as educator in the group. I am going to focus on the description of the more practical sides of discussion groups as educational method.

I'll divide my presentation into five parts, namely, firstly, a description of the (1) goals of the discussion group, (2) description of the practical arrangements of group meetings, especially for those educators who are interested in using the same kind of methods in other Third Age Universities, thirdly (3) description of the used method and the role of group leader in the group process, fourthly (4) I'll give list a of the themes discussed in our group, and lastly (5) I'll describe some general impressions of the developmental processes of the group.

(1) **Goals of the discussion group.** Goals of the group were twofold. Firstly, the aim was to discuss the philosophical assumptions about human nature. With "philosophical" I here mean vaguely any thoughts which could be defined as a part of world-view. I clarified this in the beginning of the group meetings by saying that we are interested in the *assumptions* about the essence of human beings. I made examples of the questions

which could be topics of discussion. Thus we could discuss several eternal questions, for example the questions if there is free will or not in human decisions, if human being is essentially good or bad, moral and ethics of human action, differences between animal and wo/man, meaning of life and other questions like these.

Second goal of the group was psychological in the sense of phenomenological psychology. Thus my intention was to lead discussion to the subjective experiences of structure of inner world and human mind. With phenomenological I mean approach where focus is directly on the experiences of one's soul-life. Questions under discussion could thus be for example nature and qualities of feelings, relationship between thought, action and feeling, differences between feeling states and similiar other questions.

I made clear in the beginning that I was interested in members' subjective experiences and beliefs; our focus was *not to speak* about general philosophical or psychological theories. I mean here that our focus was not e.g. to speak about psychoanalytic concepts of ego, superego and id. We could of course refer to those concepts. It is hard to avoid this culturally accepted way of perceiving and classifying inner psychological phenomena. My intention, however, was to stress members' subjective ways of giving language and descriptions to their own psychic processes. However, it is also important that these *subjective experiences are discussed on a general level*. This makes the difference between educational and psychotherapy groups.

(2) Of the themes discussed. I am sure you are all interested which kind of themes were discussed during those two years we met each other. There were lots of different themes, as you can see from the following list:

Although it seems that there were almost too many different topics, I have to say immediately that these lists don't give a true picture. Namely the same viewpoints were expressed, the same themes came again and again in the discussion during the two-year's time.

(3) Practical arrangements of group meetings. Based on my experience, the best size for a discussion group is 7-10 persons, as it was in our group. Groups with more than 10 persons are too large for everyone to get in the discussion easily. It is also the best to keep group closed from the beginning to the end, thus no newcomers are allowed to come as members in the middle of process. This is important because of developing mutual trust between the members. Certain group processes are also only possible after the same persons continue to be together for a longer time.

The group meeting room was arranged to be the same for every meeting. We met every other week for one and half hours. I advise also to make an

agreement beforehand for how long the group will meet; we made an agreement of two years. Two year's time may sound quite long, but actually it is not. There is enough time to go deeper in the discussion if the group makes agreement to work together for longer time.

(4) Method and role of group leader. The basic method was free discussion. I often started meetings with a few words on a subject which was closely connected to our basic themes, in other words, beliefs of human nature and qualities of inner life. Thus I once started the discussion with my own opinions of narcissism. Discussion started in a lively manner and immediately there were differing opinions of how we should define the term, what narcissism actually means, should we evaluate narcissistic behaviour morally and other similar questions. It was possible that the same theme continued for one and half hours, the time we spent together each meeting time, but it was more common that there were two, sometimes three themes during meetings.

I hope you won't get impression that it was always my task to start discussion. In practice there were many times when the group itself gave the themes in the beginning of the meetings. When I started the discussion, I was careful not to lead the theme of discussion too much. I tried to respect what was coming from the group: it is naturally important to listen to the needs and thoughts of the group members.

It is a leader's role to keep discussion continuing and bind together the various viewpoints. In some situations it is also leader's role to make boundaries for discussion, if, for example, there is somebody who wants all the attention and doesn't want to give room to the other members. Naturally it is leader's task to be neutral and accepting of various viewpoints. In this kind of discussion group it is evident that there is disagreement between members and also the leader could be in a position where s/he can't accept somebody's claims. It is also very important to integrate various viewpoints and facilitate them to coordinate with each other. Otherwise it is difficult to have any larger picture of the discussed themes. I find it useful at the end of every meeting to try to formulate my view of the structure and logic of discussion.

(5) Some impressions of the developmental processes of the group. I am now going to give some examples of processes which I noted in the group during two years time. I stress here that they are only examples, I am not giving any complete list.

(a) Aid of group-dynamic processes to learning. Although it was an educational group, it was evident that there were certain group dynamic processes going on all the time. Group dynamics refers here to the emotional pro-

cesses which arise after any group of persons meet each other for some time. Such processes could be, for example, competition between members or member and leader, silence and inability to say anything important, so called pairing between some members, exceptionally strong emotional involvement as negative/positive feelings between some members. Also leader can have her/his own emotional reactions towards the members of group. It seemed obvious, that these processes could actually facilitate learning processes. Especially, to meet different viewpoints, react emotionally to them and try to adapt to this situation, is in fact, the most effective learning environment. On the other hand, mutual agreement and positive feelings were also important.

Although the leader should be aware of this emotional group dynamic phenomena I think it is not wise to open them. That is because it is an educational, not a therapy group.

(b) *Development of autonomy and social-centered interest.* In the beginning of the process, the members often seemed to have an expectation of the leader's role to having an authoritative position on any theme discussed. They were waiting for me to express the "final truth" of any topic. However, this pattern changed during the two years. At the end of the group process, I had a more minor role than in the beginning. In other words, members became more independent of me. Secondly, I got the impression that they became more interested in each other's differing opinions during the process. In the beginning of group work it seemed that they mostly wanted to have only room to express their own thoughts, without interest in listening to what others think about the same subject. As I said, in the later stage this changed to social-centered interest of others' thoughts and development of relativistic notion of differing viewpoints. (c) *Development of mutual trust.* One of the most important processes which developed was an increase in mutual trust. It helped to speak about the themes which are often difficult. For example sexuality was a theme which came as a topic after one year's process. It was interesting that members also got courage to speak of their spiritual experiences in the later stage of group development. Differences of feeling states and emotions were also topics of later stage of process. According to the members, it was important that they were allowed to speak freely about topics they hadn't previously been able to speak so openly.

6. *Conclusions.* I have tried to give a picture of the use of discussion groups as educational method in the UTA. My description mostly focused on practical sides of this method. Basic claims behind this method are the following ones. First, the method I have described is an example of *process education* methods. Group members started a process of change after coming to the group. Simply said, it was necessary because they had to reflect

mutually different thought-systems. During this process members possibly changed and re-defined their own concepts and learned different viewpoints from others. Secondly, the material discussed in the group has to be based on *subjective experiences of group members*. On more general level, to start with personal life-experiences could be the most important idea in this kind of education method with the elderly: *their rich life experience could be used as a source of learning together.*

Appendix

(A) BELIEFS OF HUMAN NATURE REFLECTED IN THE THIRD AGE

Discussion group in UTA of Jyväskylä

GOALS OF THE GROUP

- * to discuss of the philosophical assumptions about human nature, eg. if there is free will or not, if human being is essentially good or bad, moral and ethics of human action, differences between animal and wo/man, meaning of life
- * to discuss the phenomenological-psychological structure of inner world and human mind, e.g. nature and structure of feelings, relationship between thought, action and feeling, differences between feeling state.
- * Generally, the topics of discussion are "What are my beliefs of human nature", "Qualities of inner soul life"

ARRANGEMENTS OF GROUP MEETINGS

- * best size of group is 7-10 persons
- * group is closed from the beginning to the end, i.e. no newcomers are allowed to come as members in the middle of group process
- * an agreement how long the group will continue together (e.g. one year, two years)
- * duration of the meetings is advised be the same each time, eg. one and half hours every other week

ROLE OF GROUP LEADER

- * to keep discussion continuing
- * to lead and (in some situations) to make boundaries for discussion
- * to be neutral and accepting of various viewpoints
- * *to integrate the viewpoints and to facilitate coordinating them*

METHOD

- * free discussion, started often with few words by group leader
- * open-ended discussion
- * *focus is on subjective experiences and beliefs of participants*
- * *subjective experiences are discussed on general level*

* includes no lecturing or describing of specific theories, i.e. intention is not to teach any special theory

(B1) THEMES OF DISCUSSION

- 10.3.1992 *Moral and ethical questions*
Tolerance
Work and values
- 25.4. *Narcissism*
- 15.4. *What is personality?*
Strong personalities
- 29.4 *Life-span development, time and ability to 'create one's own life'*
- 6.5. *Modern time and crises*
- 13.5. *Differences between animal and wo/man*
Astrology
- 9.9. *What is difference between knowledge based on life-experience and knowledge based on 'academic' learning from books?*
Economical depression - those who are 'survivors' during that time
- 23.9. *Suicide*
Personal freedom
- 21.10. *Nature conservation*
'Generation gap'
- 10.11. *Self-consciousness*
Difference between private/public, subjective/objective
- 18.11. *Boundaries of behavior*
Public figures
- 1.12. *Meeting other person 'deeper' than usual*

(B2)

- 27.1.1993 *Astrology*
Spiritual growth
Living 'here and now'
- 16.2. *Dreams*
Sexuality
Ethics
- 23.2. *Meditation*
Self, ego
Life-experience
- 9.3. *Self-esteem*
- 17.3. *Psychological and spiritual qualities*
Anger in friendship
Decision-making in life and moral questions
- 25.3. *Religious and spiritual qualities*
Memory
- 13.4. *Aggression*
Sexuality
- 20.4. *Remorse and regret as feelings*
Change and self-fulfilment
- 13.5. *Self-knowledge*
- 15.9. *Difference between "wisdom" and "intelligence"*
- 29.9. *Emotions, instincts, reflexes*
- 13.10. *Can we choose freely?*
Emotions

- 3.11. *Culture of ancient Egypt*
- 10.11. *Others as "mirrors" to oneself*
Aggression and love as emotions
- 24.11. *Feelings of disappointment, aggression, love*
- 8.12. *Ending of group process/subjective feelings of ending the group*

3 Life-experience and learning - older people at the university - Sari Poikela

Traditionally learning is considered as a part of human life during the first and second age. Adult learning has been researched, but research has been emphasized mainly on adults in second age. Anyway a recent research shows that preconditions of learning remain relatively unchanged during the whole life-course. Later years of one's life can also be an active time for studying and self-realization. The idea of lifelong learning forms a basis for learning and studying in the third age. In every age it is important to have a possibility for wide self-development. Learning should be a part of everyday activities in the human life. If learning is understood in a broad sense, for most of the people it goes on as long as life itself.

I have studied ideas about learning, life and aging among Third Age University students in Tampere in Finland. Subject of research was a seminar-group, the aim of which was to encourage students to be critical and reflective in their learning. I collected data with interviews, essays and observation. One main question of the research was how the students felt about their own learning. Others were e.g. what learning actually is and how it is affected in different life situations? What is the meaning of learning in life? I will focus on those questions in this presentation.

Learning does not depend only on age. So it is not always relevant to divide learning to pedagogy, andragogy and gerogogy. For this reason the theoretical background of the research was experiential learning instead of gerogogy. The model used was developed by David Kolb. Experiential learning emphasizes learning as an important part of the whole lifecycle. The model states six arguments of learning and development. These arguments formed a basis for my analysis of learning.

The first argument states that learning is a continuing process. It is best conceived as a process not in terms of outcomes. Learning and knowing are processes not products. The seminar I studied clearly had an influence on