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# Workshop on Racism

Addressing Diversity with Young People

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<p>The goal of this functional final thesis was to produce and implement a workshop on racism and diversity directed for young people aged 13-15. The need for this kind of a workshop came from All Our Children organization and their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary campaign that tackled the issue of racism. Also the current negative atmosphere in Finland about diversity and attitudes towards immigration influenced the decision to produce this workshop.</p> <p>The workshop is based on social constructionism, social learning theory and the concept of dialogue. All of these theories support the aims of the workshop and gave a strong theoretical background for the workshop. When designing the workshop the current situation, needs of young people, their development level and needs of working life partner were taken into consideration in order to create a beneficial workshop.</p> <p>After implementing the workshop and getting feedback from the participants and working life partner it could be argued that the workshop met the aims set for the workshop. It also fulfilled its purpose of creating an open environment where ideas about diversity and racism can be openly discussed.</p> <p>The main conclusion from implementing this workshop is that there is a strong need for a workshop about diversity and racism for young people. The feedback from the participants was overall positive and they expressed a need to discuss these subject matters even more in the future. In the future the work done on this workshop could be improved and taken further. An interesting aspect would also be to somehow measure if the workshop affects the lives of the young people in positive way in the long run.</p>	
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<p>Tämän toiminnallisen opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli luoda ja toteuttaa 13–15 vuotiaille nuorille työpaja, joka käsittelee rasismia ja moninaisuutta. Tarve tämän kaltaiselle työpajalle tuli Yhteiset Lapsemme järjestöltä ja heidän 25-vuotis juhlakampanjastaan, jonka teemana oli rasisminvastaisuus. Myös yleinen negatiivinen ilmapiiri moninaisuutta ja maahanmuuttoa kohtaan Suomessa vaikuttivat päätökseen tuottaa tämän kaltainen työpaja.</p> <p>Työpaja perustuu sosiaaliseen konstruktionismiin, sosiaalisen oppimisen teoriaan sekä dialogiin. Kaikki nämä teoriat tukevat työpajan tavoitteita ja antoivat vahvan teoreettisen taustan työpajalle. Työpajaa suunniteltaessa nykyinen tilanne, nuorten tarpeet, heidän kehitystasonsa sekä työelämäkumppanin otettiin huomioon, jotta lopputuloksena olisi hyödyllinen työpaja.</p> <p>Työpajan toteuttamisen jälkeen ja palautteen saatuamme voidaan sanoa, että työpaja saavutti sille asetetut tavoitteet. Palautetta kerättiin niin osallistujilta kuin työelämäkumppaniltakin. Työpaja saavutti myös tarkoituksensa luoda avoin ilmapiiri, jossa moninaisuuden ja rasismien herättämistä ajatuksista voidaan avoimesti keskustella.</p> <p>Tärkein johtopäätös työpajan toteuttamisesta on se, että nuorten kanssa moninaisuutta ja rasismia käsittelevälle työpajalle on vahva tarve. Palaute työpajaan osallistuneilta oli yleisesti ottaen positiivista. Esille nousi tarve keskustella kyseisistä aiheista tulevaisuudessa enemmänkin. Jatkossa tätä työpajaa voisi parannella ja laajentaa. Mielenkiintoinen näkökulma olisi myös tutkia, onko työpajalla positiivista vaikutusta nuorten elämään pitkällä aikavälillä.</p>	
Avainsanat	rasismi, moninaisuus, nuoret, työpaja, dialogi, sosiaalinen konstruktionismi

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## 1 Introduction

Finnish society is becoming more and more diverse as time goes on. For example, in 2012 Finnish population grew by 25,407 persons and 87 per cent of that population growth were persons whose native language is something else than Finnish (OSF 2013). Immigration is a fairly new concept in Finland and even though acceptance of immigrants has improved, there are still negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in general in our society (Salonen & Villa 2006:21-22).

The need for our thesis comes from the current negative atmosphere, public discussion and general attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism (Salminen 2009). We felt that it is important to educate and inform our youth about these subjects. Our working life partner, All Our Children, had the need for a workshop that tackles racism and diversity, especially amongst young people since the organization is involved in promoting the rights of multicultural children here in Finland and abroad. Also, our ideas and interests suited well together with our working life partners' 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary campaign.

Our goal for our functional final thesis was to produce a workshop for young people which could be implemented in secondary schools by social work professionals working in All Our Children organization. We wanted to use participatory methods to engage the participants in the workshop and this way they could get the most out of the workshop. The goal of the workshop was to use dialogue to create an open environment where ideas about diversity and racism could be openly discussed. Through dialogue our aim was to educate and introduce different viewpoints that might differ from the current zeitgeist. Ultimately we wanted to promote the message of accepting ourselves as who we are and through that, the acceptance of others and diversity.

In the following chapters we will describe our working life partner in more detail. Key concepts regarding racism will be elaborated. Theoretical frameworks, planning and implementation of the workshop are described in the latter part of the report. Finally we will evaluate and share our conclusions and propose ideas for future studies.

## 2 Concepts of Racism

### 2.1 Racism

Racism is a system of oppression where there are ideologies of racial superiority and inferiority. These ideologies are the foundation for inequality, conflict, discrimination, and prejudice. In racism, like in any other system of oppression, there is imbalance of power where the dominant group has unearned privileges, such as respect, freedoms, access to resources, and opportunities. Stereotypes, discrimination and prejudice can be seen as the building blocks of racism but they are also the products of racism. Racial discrimination takes place when attitudes and beliefs rooted in racism are expressed. Racism and racial discrimination can be seen at several levels. These include cultural, institutional, interpersonal, and individual levels (Jackson 2006:396.)

Racism can be divided into old-fashioned racism, symbolic racism, modern racism, and aversive racism. The term old-fashioned racism refers to explicit racial discrimination with an endorsement to hatred, stereotypes, and separation of the races. Research suggests that the contemporary forms of racism are more common than old-fashioned racism. In symbolic racism the racist beliefs are socialized in early life but are acted out only symbolically through politics. For example in symbolic racism there is no direct advocacy for segregation. The term modern racism, which is close to symbolic racism, is used when racist beliefs are displaced onto socio-political issues with a lack of awareness of these racist feelings. Both symbolic and modern racism are associated with conservative political views. In aversive racism there is an aversion of outward racist attitudes but at the same time there is a discomfort with racial or ethnic minorities. Racial stereotypes and prejudices are rejected but there are underlying negative feelings toward a specific racial group. This anxiety and negative feelings are expressed in subtle and indirect ways. Aversive racism is often associated with liberal political views (Jackson 2006:397.)

Racism and how young people experience racism have been studied mainly abroad and although Finland has a unique immigration history, population structure, multicultural policy, and a different tradition on how racism is discussed in the public, there are still similarities with other countries regarding how young people experience racism. Young people feel that some people are questioned by surrounding society of their

existence in that society. Also experiences of open racism are similar to those experienced in other countries. There are also a lot of similarities in how young people see the incapability of parents and teachers to see and understand young peoples' experiences of racism and how it affects their well-being (Rastas 2007:121.)

The cause or root of racism cannot be defined to a single point of origin. They are grounded in the society, in the group, and in the individual. Racist views and opinions rarely surface at maturity but are formed in the process of social learning and social construction over many years. The information that children receive about other racial groups is often coloured by their parents' and others' opinions and attitudes (Lynch, Modgil & Modgil 2006:56 – 59.)

## 2.2 Racism in Finland

Finland has traditionally been a country of emigration, not a country of immigration. This started to change in the 1990's when immigration to Finland started to increase. Even though immigration has been rising, the number of immigrants is still relatively small compared to all of Finland's population. Although the increase of immigration to Finland has been generally viewed as a positive thing, both culturally and economically, there are also negative attitudes towards it. These negative attitudes do not always manifest themselves as direct racism or discrimination but for example, media can have a stigmatizing effect when discussing topical and controversial subject matters (Salonen & Villa 2006:21.)

In 2005 The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia released a report that compared attitudes of ethnic majorities about ethnic minorities in different European countries. Almost sixty per cent of Finnish respondents answered that they were opposed to immigration. This was the fourth highest number among 19 countries. However attitudes differ depending upon which ethnic minority group is in question. The prevailing ethnic hierarchy is that immigration of Swedes and Ingrian Finns is viewed more positively than Russian and Somali immigration (Salonen & Villa 2006:22-23.)

According to studies done in Finland, women are more accepting towards immigration compared to men. Boys aged 15-17 and pensioners had the most reserved attitudes towards immigration. One fourth of the boys who took part in the study claimed to be



racists. According to Virrankoski's study done in 2005, racism and intolerance has increased amongst young people by 15 to 35 per cent. Virrankoski states that in Finland prejudice does prevent the expansion of multiculturalism (Salonen & Villa 2006:24-25.)

During the previous year's different methods, such as Non-Discrimination Act and Immigration Policy Act, have been taken into use in order to decrease and eliminate racist and unequal treatment of immigrants in Finland. Because of these Acts which have been created and activated there was over 50% increase of racist crimes reported to the police in 2004. It has been argued that the numbers have been rising because people are more aware of their rights. Even though these acts have been raising the awareness of equal treatment of people, there is still a lack of information about discrimination and effective preventive methods in the Finnish society. (Salonen & Villa 2006:31-32, 89.)

### 2.3 Diversity

Diversity can be described as a phenomenon in which there are a whole range of categories intertwined together. These categories can be for example racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-political, socioeconomic, educational, sexual, and ethno geographic. Diversity also goes deeper to embrace psychology, fashion, different customs, cuisine, attitudes, and age (Sinagatullin 5:2003.)

The nature of diversity is that it is constantly changing. People learn new languages while some lose their original native language. Racially and ethnically mixed families are more and more common. Immigration changes society and immigration requires adopting new ways of life. These changes and increases in diversity are a challenge for educators to have new ideas about how to design and use multicultural methods and strategies (Sinagatullin 5:2003.)

For the survival of both ecosystems and social systems some diversity is essential. Both ecosystems and social systems need a balance and variety to survive. It is common however that in both systems there is often a group that tries to dominate or eliminate other groups. There are multiple examples of this happening in the recorded history. From this viewpoint diversity is kind of a double-edged sword. On the one hand some diversity is needed for the survival of biological and social systems and on the

other hand it can also contribute to social instability and strife (Knotter, Lobel, Tsipouri & Stenius 2011:10.) This is why diversity should be discussed and handled skilfully so that the negative consequences that are attached to diversity could be prevented.

### **3 Work-Life Connection of Our Thesis**

#### **3.1 Work-Life Partner**

Our main working life partner for the thesis was All Our Children Organization, which was founded in 1988. It is politically, ideologically and religiously nonpartisan non-governmental organisation that has 1000 members around Finland. All Our Children is a national child protection organization which aims to increase the status of immigrant children, multicultural children, children adopted from other countries and children which belong to an ethnic minority. The goal of the Organization is to work towards a society which is accepting of diversity and which is safe to live in, for all of the children, no matter of their skin colour, culture, religion, language or origin (All Our Children nd.)

The core idea of the organization is that understanding of others can be increased through everyday life relations with people from different cultures. The organization aims to alleviate discrimination that children and young people face because of their ethnic background. Advocating is done by trying to influence political, bureaucratic and social work professional's decision making (All Our Children, n.d.)

Our final thesis was a part of their 25th anniversary project; Ole Rohkea ja Reilu-Uskalla Välittää! The project aims to decrease racism, discrimination and to change Finnish attitudes towards more caring atmosphere. During the campaign year, awareness of the experiences of racism and discrimination faced by multicultural youth and children are raised. Children and youth are provided with opportunities to work with their experiences of racism through participatory methods. The need for this kind of a workshop came from the organization. In evaluating our final product we asked our working-life partner's opinion on how useful our workshop seemed to them and if it fits their initial need for it.

### 3.2 Other Work-Life Connections

The workshop we created is aimed for young people of 13-15 years old. This is why we thought it would be beneficial to implement and plan these workshops to be held in a school setting, because the young people are easily reached in there. Our aim was to implement the workshop at different schools so that we would reach different young people and evaluate whether the workshop works in various school settings. As schools were also a major work life connection for us, we also hoped to bring some value to the schools through our workshops.

We were able to implement the workshops in two schools. One of them was in East-Helsinki and one in Joensuu. The young people in Helsinki were on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade (13 years old) and in Joensuu they were in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (15 years old). It is important to mention that the schools were very different in the sense that the backgrounds of the students varied between the schools. The school in Helsinki has a lot of multicultural students and the school in Joensuu has only a couple of multicultural students who are mainly refugees.

We applied for a research permit from the Education department of the city of Helsinki. This was done that so that we could implement the workshop in Helsinki public schools. We applied and received the permit, even though in the end we did not implement the workshop in Helsinki public schools.

## 4 Young people

There are various suggestions of the official age of adolescents. Most sources argue that adolescence cannot be defined by a set age limit and that adolescence is more of a transitional period that is experienced when moving from childhood into adulthood. According to World Health Organization (2013) adolescents are defined as young people between the ages of 10 until 19. As young people move further away from their childhood and closer to adulthood many changes take place in their lives. One of the many ways to explore adolescence is to view it as a shift from the childhood's dependence to independence as adults and taking notion to the interdependence between individuals and communities (UNESCO 2012.)

According to psychologist Erik Erikson, people go through eight stages of psychosocial development in their lives. He called these stages Life Crisis, since the crises emerge at certain points of life when people's behaviour is dictated by social demands and physiological maturation. Erikson argues that adolescents are going through a life crisis called Identity versus Role Confusion. During this stage young people struggle with the transition from childhood to adulthood and try to figure out the question of "Who am I?" Erikson states that if adolescents do not establish their basic identities, they will stay confused with their roles during adulthood as well. Process of trying to establish their identities can also be described as a struggle between ego identity and role diffusion. According to Erikson the main influence in adolescent's lives is played by their peers (Fleming 2004.)

Adolescence is best to be viewed through four different aspects of development; physiological, cognitive, emotional and social development. All of these developmental fields are closely intertwined and sometimes even hard to distinguish from each other. In our final thesis we will not go into detail with physiological development because it does not affect the topic closely.

#### 4.1.1 Cognitive development

Cognitive development includes the development of perception, language, learning and thinking. Cognitive development has been explained through a variety of theories which all try to explore the mind's way of internalizing and processing information. According to cognitivist theorists the mind's process of organizing person's internal interpretations is the key of learning. Cognitivism also argues that learning happens continually, through observation and indirect discovery.

The most noted cognitivist psychologist is Jean Piaget who studied children's processes of acquiring, processing and organizing knowledge. Piaget is also known for creating the 4 stages of cognitive development. He argues that children and adolescents go through changes in cognitive thinking at different stages and in the 4 stages he explains this process. According to Piaget, adolescents (aged 12-15) are going through a Formal Operational stage which implies that children start to move towards abstraction rather than focusing only on the concrete and sensible things. An essential idea of Piaget's theories was that learning will be made easier when it is combined to activity. He stressed the teachers and parents' role of preparing the children with the premise for

learning through setting up appropriate activities. Piaget's greatest contribution has been argued to be the notion of people being in charge of their own learning.

On the other hand cognitive development is also explained by socio-cognitivists, most well-known of them being Leo Vygotsky, Jerome Bruner and Basil Bernstein. Even though all of their theories have small differences, all of them argued that both formal (in-schooling) and informal social interactions which are mediated through language, results to reasoning and learning. Socio-cognitivists recognize the importance of socio-economy and the cultural structures related to learning. (Zwozdiak-Mayers 2007:72-83).

In short, cognitive development could be explained as organized development of mind (Zwozdiak-Mayers 2007:74). During adolescence cognitive thinking develops which means that young people start to absorb, internalize and perceive information at a deeper level. Adolescent's decision making starts to make progress as well and decisions made, are based more on socially accepted norms of "right" and "wrong." (Väestöliitto 2013.)

#### 4.1.2 Emotional Development

Emotional development includes an establishment of identity in relation to others. In order for young people to discover their true identities, they often tend to experiment different ways of appearance and behaviour. According to Zwozdiak-Mayers (2007) exploration of different roles and self is necessary in order for young people to establish their identities. On the contrary, forcing adolescents towards certain roles does lead them towards role confusion and is very disempowering because of the inadequate time given for them to explore different options.

Experimenting is a natural part of adolescents and they differ between individuals. Building identity does not only cover who the young people are at the moment, but also what they have been, what they might become and what they would like to be. Adolescence is also the first time when young people are capable of pondering issues of identity because of their increasing cognitive capacity. As adolescents start to build up their identity, they might come across with difficult questions and often young people struggle with questions of sexuality and diversity. Young people should be given time to explore and also provide with possibilities of discussion and support.

Another aspect of emotional development has to do with recognizing and regulating emotions and emotional skills. Such skills are also known as “emotional intelligence”. Most important skills that young people continue to practice are relationships skills, whether they are of friendly or romantic nature. Emotional intelligence consists also from the learning and practice of developing empathy, constructive conflict solving and cooperation with others (American Psychological Association 2002: 15-20.)

Social progress happens with interaction skills and dealing with other people. These skills are practiced with friends and later on taken into use in relationships. Throughout adolescence young people learn to identify, understand and control different emotions and reactions (Väestöliitto 2013.)

#### 4.1.3 Self-Esteem

Self- esteem is defined as the ability of recognizing positive qualities of self. When an individual is capable of recognizing more positive than negative qualities within oneself, their self- esteem is good. If the person sees more negative than positive aspects of self, their self-esteem tends to be negative. A person with good self-esteem still has a realistic image of themselves, since good self-esteem is understood as the ability to recognize and be honest about one’s imperfect qualities. The recognition of these imperfect qualities does not destroy one’s self- esteem. At the same time, people with good self-esteem are able to recognize their flaws and they intend to get rid of their bad traits (Keltikangas & Järvinen 2001:17.)

Self- esteem also refers to self-confidence and appreciation of the self. Self-appreciation appears in situations where a person sticks to his values and morals and does what he thinks is right even though majority would not agree with his values. When a person has strong self-esteem they are more likely going to stand for themselves, protect themselves and not let others insult them. Self-confident people are not afraid to set high goals for them and accept challenges; they are also capable of seeing the uniqueness of their life and understand their worth, without having to prove it with special actions (Keltikangas & Järvinen 2001:18.)

According to Keltikangas and Järvinen (2001:19) people with good self-esteem are also able to appreciate other human beings; they see the success of others, give

recognition to them and appreciate other's opinions. On the other hand the lack of self-esteem makes people feel that everyone else who succeeds are threats. This makes people criticize and undermine each other and in the worst case others must be invalidated or even destroyed.

#### 4.1.4 Social development

Social development occurs in different contexts, such as family, school, peers and community. Changes of social behaviour vary between these contexts.

One of the most noticeable changes during adolescence is the shift from the time spent with family towards spending majority of time with peers. This happens for a reason because the young people should be able to create greater independence from their parents. Spending less time with the family does not mean that the importance of family would become any less, quite the contrary. Families should support adolescents towards independence within boundaries that are safe for them. (American Psychological Association 2002: 21.)

As discussed above, adolescence is the time when identities are built and peer groups provide reference points for building identity. With peers, young people also practice and learn moral judgement and values. Peer groups are also important source for status, popularity, prestige and acceptance. Acceptance of peer group is one of the most important confident builders during adolescence. Even though peer groups remain important throughout adolescence, the type of the group tends to change. In early adolescence groups that young people spend their time with share often similarities in many aspects. The desire for conformity and belonging might encourage young people to attend in activities and adapt to behaviours they would not normally engage in. Peer pressure is one of the negative consequences of wanting to be accepted.

As is many other situations, adults should provide support and help them find alternative solutions for being forced to doing something inconvenient. By the time of middle adolescence (14-16) peer groups tend to become less coherent and more tolerance is showed towards appearance, beliefs and behaviour. Social change also appears as experiments of romantic relationships, even though they tend to last for a short amount of time (American Psychological Association 2002: 21-23.)

#### 4.1.5 Diversity and Racism in School Setting

Schooling is compulsory for all children and young people living permanently in Finland. In practice this means that most children and young people go to compulsory school from age 7 until they graduate from 9th grade. This means that young people will have spent nine years in school settings (Opetushallitus 2012.) As young people still attend school, majority of their days are spent in educational facilities. Majority of young people's time awake might be spent in educational facilities, which means that schools have a lot of responsibility to provide means for healthy development and opportunities to guide young people towards being stable and conscious members of the society (WHO 2013.) Schools are a central place for Finnish and immigrant background young people to confluence and encounter with each other. These encounters are obviously forced upon the young people since they are not able to choose who they go to school with. Because encounters are not optional the encounters do not necessarily produce positive attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism and does not guarantee that multicultural young people would make new friends easily in Finnish schools (Souto 2011:14.)

Former minister of education Tuula Haatainen argues that schools play an important role in instilling attitudes that are accepting of difference and diversity to children and young people. Environment affects the quality of teaching but it is also true the other way around: teaching affects the environment. Knowledge helps to promote democracy and builds peace. Knowledge can also improve the respect given to human rights and acceptance of cultural diversity (Myllymäki 2004:9.)

Schools also provide a setting with unique interactions and interdependencies for those operating in schools. Schools are also shaped by social forces and pressures. These include institutional racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and heterosexism (Spradlin & Parsons 44:2008.) Given the unique role that schools play in young people's lives, and in fact in our society, it can be argued that engaging young people in a school setting is highly beneficial.

It seems that racism is still a topic that is not discussed enough in school and teaching setting. Multiple studies have showed that young people deal with racism at school



setting but yet racism and interfering to it is not included in schools' curriculums (Souto 2011:16.) Often when the subject matter of racism is discussed, it is discussed in a roundabout way, using words and concepts like tolerance and immigration work (Jokisalo & Simola 2013). This is why Souto (2011:16) argues that it would be important to tackle the issue of racism in a school setting because it is such an unspoken topic.

As stated, adolescence is challenging time in a young person's life, since it is a time of uncertainty and constant changes. Their personality is still developing and that makes young people vulnerable to various external factors. Such factors consist of different medias, school settings and most importantly young people's closest networks; families and friends (Siegel & Welsh 2011:3.) In her ethnographic study Souto (2011: 154) found out that immigrant background students feel like teaching mainly consists of education about Finnish young people's lives and those phenomena related to immigration and multiculturalism which are significant for the Finnish culture. When multiculturalism is discussed from Finnish points of views, it often becomes problematic, generalized, stigmatizing and uncomfortable for the immigrant background students. Immigrant background students also felt like they are not provided with tools, support and encouragement to share experiences of their countries of origin, culture or experiences of immigration in a positive way.

Because young people are in the process of founding their identities, that causes them to feel doubt and uncertainty which often leads to undermining others. Mean comments and actions towards others are often used as safety mechanisms, since during adolescence young people are very uncertain about themselves. Putting others down might give them a sense of control and putting themselves ahead of others. Even though teasing might seem like playful and accepted in the peer groups it can do some serious damage in the future and harm young people's self-esteem for a long time (Pickhardt 2011.) Often the targets of teasing and undermining are the groups of people who in some way stand out from the majority.

When minority groups are treated unequally the possibility of conflicts between different groups emerge. Souto (2011:16) argues that peer relations and the sense of acceptance are very important for the integration of immigrants and the overall school atmosphere that it very necessary to explore school settings as a community and try to build that community towards a strong group spirit. If young people are not provided with information of minority groups they will not be able to relate to them and will con-

tinue to treat them differently. Piaget's two stages of moral reasoning suggests that morality is created through cooperation and social exchange. When young people are being challenged to examine their thoughts of minority groups and are exposed to knowledge they are able to develop their moral reasoning. This will help them to grow into self-confident young adults who know the value of themselves and others.

## **5 Social Learning Theory**

The main social learning theory which has been central to current practice and thinking is Vygotsky's social learning theory. Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who worked in the early twentieth century. He claims that a fundamental aspect of flourishing cognitive and intellectual growth is social interaction. His social learning theory stresses the importance of dialogue and interaction between the learner and others. Vygotsky emphasizes not only the interaction with the learner and teacher, but also the interaction with learner and peers (Pritchard & Woollard 2010:14.)

Vygotsky claims that children are actively involved in their own learning and much of the development and discovery of new learning happens because of them. According to Vygotsky much of the learning happens in social cooperation with a capable tutor. The tutor provides verbal instructions and behavior modeling, which the child will try to internalize and take into use later on in his own actions.

An Important aspect of Vygotsky's theory has a lot to do with Tutor and I, which is the convention of knowledge by More Knowledgeable Others (MKO), such as teachers, parents and peers. MKO does not have to be an adult but simply a person who has more knowledge of a specific concept (McLeod 2007.) More Knowledgeable Other refers to social interaction with any other individual which can lead to social learning. MKO can provide learning opportunities in any setting, for example at school doing pair work or friends sitting in a park and talking (Pritchard & Woollard 2010:15.)

According to Vygotsky cultural development of children always appears twice in their lives. First it appears on the social level (interpsychological) and after on the individual level (intrapsychological). Since learning development appears first in the social level, we must emphasize the importance of social actions and the roles others play in children's lives.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a very important part of Vygotsky's work as well. ZPD is a concept of learning which describes the difference of the effectiveness of a child to learn alone compared to what he can learn in cooperation with a partner (McLeod, 2007.) Vygotsky describes the ZPD as the development of problem solving in collaboration with peers or adult guidance. Children's capability of collaboration can also indicate more about their mental capacity than their ability to work alone. If the child is struggling to learn something alone, it is highly beneficial for him to explore the subject with a partner. In other words learning process is made possible by social interaction (Pritchard & Woollard 2010:15.)

Another well-known and appreciated social learning theory has been conducted by Jerome Bruner, an American psychologist, who also worked in the twentieth century. His theory of social learning supports the view that Vygotsky has presented. An important aspect of Bruner's findings is the notion of learning being an active process. This process happens through construction of new ideas which are based on pre-existing and present knowledge. Bruner also states that information is chosen and transformed by the learner. Learners are also the ones constructing hypotheses and making decisions based on references. Individuals' construction of hypotheses is also based on their reliance of internal cognitive structure. The cognitive structure Bruner refers to, is what allows individuals to build new meanings on top of what is already known, in order for them to move forward. Cognitive structure can also be viewed as network of schemas which does provide meaning and structure for experiencing (Pritchard & Woollard 2010:15.)

Bruner thought that a crucial part of learning is that learners should be encouraged to find discoveries for themselves. These discoveries can be best found when learner and teacher engage in an active dialogue. Teacher's role is not about forcing knowledge to the learner, but to support the process of transforming information in an appropriate way for the learner's present capability of understanding. In Bruner's theory the main emphasis of learning is on social contacts with others and the mainly unconscious selection of information and creation of hypothesis which are added to their already existing knowledge (Pritchard & Woollard 2010:15-16.)

According to social learning theory, people are also capable of learning and acquiring new responses by observation of other people's behavior (Delamater & Myers 2011:10.) It has also been argued that attitude formation fosters from social learning.

This can be supported by many views, one example being that, people often have attitudes or dislikes towards famous people even though they have never met them in person. Same goes with having negative attitudes towards people of different cultures. It might be possible that the person with negative thoughts has never met, or gotten to know a member of this culture, but still has very strong attitudes towards them. Because the attitudes cannot derive from actual experience the negative attitudes are learned from interaction with third parties, which influences our thoughts and attitudes. In the process of children and young people being influenced to certain stimulus, such as hearing a certain group of people being referred to as lazy or stupid, they are very likely to associate this certain group with negative images (Delamater & Myers 2011:146.)

## **6 Dialogue**

Dialogue comes from the Greek words “dia/logos” which means something being in between. This is the essential point in dialogue; it raises from various people and settles between them. Dialogue is a shared experience, free flow of thinking which exists in between people and it does not belong to anybody and should not be hidden. (Puro & Matikainen 2000:8.) If used in a narrow sense, dialogue can mean a simple conversation. However, dialogue is not the same thing as a conversation or debate. A conversation might be very formal or superficial and in a debate there is competition where different sides try to hold their own point of view and refute other points of views. One of the key elements of dialogue is mutuality, where each party is able to create the situation and influence shared steps (Mönkkönen 2007:86 – 87.)

Dialogue is often associated with the notion of Socratic dialogue that comes from ancient Greece. The ultimate idea in Socratic dialogue is that different truths must be driven in contact with each other and when this happens, truth is tested together. Dialogue is not just plain speaking, listening or a simple conversation. It is more, because at its best, both sides can learn and change their attitudes and opinions. Therefore dialogue should be thought as communication and relationship (Mönkkönen 2007:88 - 89.) Puro and Matikainen (2000:7-8) also argue that dialogue’s importance comes from the interaction between people. The quality of these interactions and the experience which rises from the dialogic encounter with other people can possibly shape the individuals taking part in dialogue. Basis for this argument is the belief that the human mind is developed through interaction and social encounters. A factor of success in dialogue is

when the participants realize something essential, find a new point of view or can settle in a consensus even on a topic which raises contradictory thoughts. Usually these factors can be best reached with other people, not alone.

Paolo Freire described dialogue as an encounter between men that is mediated by the world and where the goal is to name the world. Taking this into consideration, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who are not interested in this naming. Similarly, dialogue cannot occur between those who deny other's right to speak and those whose right to speak has been denied. When speaking their word aloud people name the world and transform it. Thus dialogue is a way, by which people achieve significance as human beings and hence dialogue is an existential necessity. Dialogue is needed for communication and without communication there can be no true education (Freire 2005:88 - 93.)

Dialogue has been described as a skill of people thinking together. It stresses the point of thinking being communal and collective. When people express their thoughts out loud these thoughts raise new ideas in the surrounding people. When thoughts are shared in this way, people are capable of developing their views about already familiar topics. In a good dialogic conversation all of the participants are winners (Puro & Matikainen 2000:9.) As described, the main concept of dialogue is to work together. Dialogue aims to create better understanding of the world, ourselves and each other. Dialogic thinking is based on the notion of people having a lot to say and their need to be heard. Often the thoughts might be too quiet which means that they will not be heard by others. This is why there is a need for a method which allows silent people's voices to be heard (Puro & Martikainen 2000:10.)

According to Freire true dialogue finds itself on love, humility, faith, hope and the existence of critical thinking. True dialogue cannot exist without the dialoguers engaging in critical thinking. This kind of thinking perceives reality as process and as transformation rather than a static entity. Contrast to critical thinking is naïve thinking where the naïve thinker sees past experiences and acquisitions as layers, from which emerges the well behaved and normal present moment (Freire 2005:89 - 92.) Critical thinking in dialogue is also described as criticism towards things which have been stated during the conversation and argumentation for these opinions. Even though criticism is an important factor it should be remembered that one must be unbiased and also accept criticism towards one's own opinions. When participants are willing to face and present

criticism, dialogue can reach a more in depth comprehension. Whilst criticism is a positive aspect of dialogue, dialogic atmosphere should be accepting and open because without the sense of security ,the participants might be afraid, feel like they should defend themselves or feel like their thoughts are dismissed. From this position it is definitely hard to move towards free flow of thinking, questioning and pondering together as a group (Puro & Matikainen 2000:24.)

For dialogue to be successful, it is very necessary to accept the diversity of people. Acceptance refers to the understanding of no-one being exactly the same as others. Everyone has their own special place in the world and through that position they view the world and other people. Every participant must be accepted for who they are and for their thoughts. Diversity is closely linked to the question of equality, which is vital for the participants. All of them should feel accepted and equal partakers in dialogue. Equality should emerge in all actions such as being heard and having equal amount of time to express thoughts. The sense of equality becomes even more important when handling disagreements, people who appreciate others and their opinions do not try to win the others, take pride on themselves or act hostile. People who value equality are able to not judge others or label their opinions as right or wrong, good or bad (Puro & Martikainen 2000: 24-25.)

All though dialogic discussion often considers serious topics they do not necessarily need to be covered in a completely serious manner. Negativity and humorlessness are the fastest ways to kill a creative and flowing dialogue. Humor can quickly open a locked conversation and also bring up the positivity and comical aspects of human life. Humor does also create an open and relaxed atmosphere which provides the opportunity to express wild and non-serious thoughts. Creativity does prosper from relaxed atmosphere and when participants feel comfortable they are more likely to be creative and daring (Puro & Matikainen 2000: 25-26.)

## **7 Social Constructionism**

Social constructionism challenges the view that our conventional knowledge is based on unbiased and objective information. It asks us to look critically at the way we look at the world and ourselves. In social constructionist view we should be suspicious of our assumptions about the world and how it appears to be. For example, the categories that we human beings divide the world in order to grasp it mentally are not necessarily

real divisions. A radical example of this is the categorisation by gender. Social constructionism raises the question why such great importance is given to the reproductive organs that we should divide people to categories of personhood based on them. In social constructionist view we could as easily divide people to tall and short or to those with ear lobes and those without (Burr 2006:2.)

Social constructionism emphasises historical and cultural specificity. All the ways of our understanding are historically and culturally relative. The ways of understanding are specific to particular culture and period of history and they are also the product of that culture and history dependant on social and economic agreements of the time. For example, the notion of childhood has gone through many changes. We could look back to recent history where children were seen as small adults. The things that were natural to children to do and what was expected of the parents to do for their children have dramatically changed (Burr 2006:3.)

In social constructionist view, knowledge is constructed, fabricated and sustained between people through daily interactions in social life. Everyday life is seen as the practice where our shared versions of knowledge are constructed. Therefore, our accepted truths about the world are not the product of objective observation, but of the social processes and interactions between people. Knowledge is not seen as a dualistic thing that a person has or does not have. Knowledge is something that people build together through interaction (Burr 2006:3 - 6.)

If knowledge is seen, in a traditional psychological way, as something inside a person's mind, it favours the distinction between the teacher and student. Students are seen as objects and the teacher knows what to fill their minds with. In the social constructionist view the individual does not possess some substance or rationality but participates in them. Educational, well informed and rational statements are not outward expressions of the mind but are relational accomplishments (Gergen 2001:134.)

Social constructionism takes the anti-essentialist view that states that there is no determined nature of people or even the world. We as people and the world around us are products of social processes. People do not have an essence inside them that makes them what they are. Explanations for social phenomena are found in social practices and interactions between people. They are not to be found in the individual

psyche or in social structures but rather in the daily social interactions between people (Burr 2006:4-5.)

Traditionally psychology has looked for explanations for social occurrences inside the person. Entities inside the person, for example attitudes and motivations, are seen responsible for how people act and also for wider social phenomena e.g. prejudice. Sociology counters this view stating that institutions and other social structures give birth to the social phenomena we see. In social constructionist view these positions are both mistaken. The proper focus of our enquiry should be on the social practices people engage, and in their interactions. Explanations for social phenomena are not found in psyche or in social structures but in the social and interactive process between people (Burr 2006:5.)

Regarding pedagogy, social constructionism proposes new possible alternatives to traditional epistemology. The social constructionist view of knowledge argues for democracy in education and what counts in educational practice. This also means localization of curricula, breaking disciplinary boundaries, education on social issues and a shift from the traditional view of subject and child to focusing more on relationships (Gergen 2001:136.) Social constructionism points out the problems with monologic vs. dialogic processes. In the monologic process the recipient of the monologue is denied his or her voice. With the denial of voice comes lethargy and abolishment of identity (Gergen 2001:126.)

## **8 Process of Making Final Thesis**

A functional thesis aims either to instruct or organize an activity in the professional field. Depending on the field the functional thesis can be an instruction or a guide, or it can be the arrangement of an event such as conference, international assembly or exhibition. It is important that both the practical execution and its reporting are combined in the functional thesis. The thesis should be work life oriented, executed with a research based thought process and it should show the level of needed skills and knowledge in the professional field in question (Airaksinen & Vilkkä 2003:9-10.)



## 8.1 Planning the Workshop

The idea for our final thesis arose from an innovation project that was part of our studies in the fall of 2012. In the innovation project we explored diversity and how people should have the peace to be themselves. This was a message we strongly believed in and wanted to develop a thesis which takes a hands on approach to diversity and equality of all. Young people were an interesting target group, because as explained previously, they are in a delicate situation with development and explore their attitudes and view of the world.

When we decided that our main interest is in exploring diversity and promotion of equality, we came into the conclusion that schools are the best place to reach young people. We wanted to avoid the stereotypical lecture about the subject and engage young people in dialogue and promote critical thinking. The search for working life partner turned out to be less difficult than expected. All Our Children Organization started a new 25th anniversary campaign that matched with our interests. We suggested that our thesis could be a part of their *Ole Rohkea ja reilu- Uskalla Välittää* campaign. At this time we also came to the conclusion that workshops could be a potentially beneficial way to explore these subject matters with young people. We came to agreement with our work life partner and decided to proceed with the workshop idea.

When our main concept of creating a workshop for young people was born, we started to do research of methods, theories and already existing workshops in order to come in terms with what would be the best way to cover these topics. The goal of the workshop was to use dialogue in order to create an open environment where ideas about diversity and racism could be openly discussed. When planning the workshop we took in to consideration the developmental level of young people aged 13-15. We decided to focus on social learning theory, social constructionism and dialogue for our main theories. The ideas presented in social constructionism, social learning and dialogue seemed to fit, not only our main goals of our thesis, but also implementation of the workshop. It seemed that a workshop as an interactive method to discuss subjects of racism and diversity would be suitable. In a workshop we could introduce these subject matters in a social setting which encourages participation and dialogue. The methods chosen for the workshop were mainly modified from various already existing diversity trainings. Exercises were modified in order for them to match with our aims and ideas of how the workshop should be implemented. We chose different types of exercises so

that the discussion about the subject would not be approached from a single point of view. All of the exercises are different but all of them were designed to encourage participation and dialogue.

Any facilitated session needs to be flexible. Most often it is not possible to predict what a certain group is going to do at a certain time. If there is a discussion flowing and it is relevant to the workshop, it is sensible to let that conversation go on. This may mean that some exercises are cut short or cut out altogether (Clements & Jones 2008:142.) We kept this in mind when planning the workshop. We did not want the structure of the workshop to be too rigid.

In the planning process we thought about our roles as facilitators in the workshop and how to handle specific situations. One of the advantages for us as facilitators was the fact that there were two of us. There is strength in having two people facilitating a workshop. Having two people facilitate offers the opportunity to have a slight break and a second opinion on how the group is functioning. Also facilitators can share their feelings to each other about the whole process (Clements & Jones 2008:145.)

During the planning we did not get in too deep about group dynamics and the theory of it. The young people participating in the workshop knew each other before hand and hence had already created their own ways of working as a group. It was, however, our intention that the workshop could in some way help the group accept diversity in their own group and in that way influence the group dynamics.

In planning the workshop we did consider the fact that diversity is not really a topic that is neutral, which is why people might have strong feelings about it. Learning about diversity can uncover emotions and strong feelings in people so we had to be prepared to face different emotions during the workshop (Clements & Jones 2008:144.) According to Clements and Jones (2008: 135-136) silence usually emerges when participants feel shy and insecure. To avoid this, it is beneficial to try to ask the right questions at a right time and use open- questions instead of closed ones. What should also be kept in mind is the distinguishing of reflective silence and silence from other reasons. Participants should be given enough time to reflect and ponder what to say and in these cases their answers should not be hurried. Facilitators also need to reflect on their own actions, if they are the ones doing most of the talking, the participants might feel discouraged to participate. Clements and Jones (2008: 134) also mention that anger is a

natural reaction to the topic of racism and diversity. It is also an emotion that might be challenging to work with. A suggestion for facilitators facing anger in diversity training is to remain calm and professional. It is also important to remember that anger might be the only way for the person to deal with the topic and it should not be taken personally. In a challenging situation it is vital for facilitators to take notion of their own body language as well. In some cases the facilitator might use calming words and voice but their body language stands for the exact opposite, which might provoke the participant experiencing anger.

Throughout the planning process we kept contact with our work life partner in order to make sure that we were in agreement about the workshop, and its contents and relevance to the campaign.

## 8.2 The Workshop

According to Souto's study (2011: 135) one way to define racism is to look at it as a natural fear towards diversity. In this case racism can be looked at as a fear that we are born with and which stays with us throughout the life span. This constant fear has been argued to be universal. Racism understood as a human beings' natural fear rarely recognizes the cultural and racial logic behind the underlying fear. This kind of explanation can justify the lack of intervention of racism. This kind of thinking goes against the social constructionist view where there is a high emphasis on culture, history and their context. Social constructionism does not believe in some kind of essence that people naturally have (Burr 2006:3-5.) In this case this essence would be the tendency towards racist behaviour. With the workshop we wanted to follow a path of social constructionism and social learning theory. They both promote the idea of learning socially and the ability of people to change their surroundings through the social processes in which we take part regularly.

Workshop as a tool to organize a setting for discussion of racism and diversity was best suited for our purposes. We wanted to create a setting which encouraged participation and open dialogue. Workshop is also useful as a method since it does not resemble traditional lecturing and teaching, but thrives from participation of all. The point was not to have the traditional subject and object setting of students being just recipients of information but to learn from interaction and from others. This can be supported by the social learning theory which states that dialogue and interaction between

learner and others is highly important for the learning process (Pritchard & Woollard 2010:14.) All of the implemented workshops had the basic same structure but the situations were unique and varied depending upon the participants and situations. This is also one of the strengths of our workshop that different aspects, questions, emotions and thoughts arise from different situations. These impulses need to be taken into consideration without the necessity of following the workshop structure blindly. Obviously there are many ways to organize workshops but through planning, implementation and evaluation this became our version of it.

The workshop was planned to be held for one class at a time, which optimally means 20 to 30 students. The workshop was planned to last for 1 hour 15 minutes, which is the duration of the usual double class at school. We drew the limit to one class at a time so that everyone was ensured to have enough time to participate and share their thoughts. It is also easier to control one class at a time if the situation would get too restless. Students might also feel more comfortable to attend if they were surrounded by their class mates they were already familiar with. Our wish was also to conduct the workshop without the teachers being present. This idea was based on our feeling of young people being able to be more honest and true to their opinions and thoughts if their teacher was not participating. In our opinion the presence of a teacher might make them feel criticized.

Below we will introduce the methods and explain the workshop the way we implemented it with the young people.

### 8.2.1 Introduction and Warm-up

The workshop started with the introduction of who we are and why we are there. We would explain that the idea of the workshop is to discuss and explore diversity and racism in an open way. We would stress that workshop is interactive and not a lecture, the more the young people participate, the more they would get out of it. During the workshop everyone's ideas and opinions are valued and that there are no wrong answers.

We introduced two rules that take place throughout workshop which were; everyone has a right to express their opinions and those opinions will be respected during the workshop and after it. To keep everyone from talking over each other we implemented

a hand signal that once deployed means that everyone stops talking and listens to the person talking.

As a warm-up we used a couple games to ease the mood before starting the actual themes of the workshop.

### 8.2.2 First Impressions

In this first actual activity the young people were shown pictures of people from different backgrounds. They would see a picture of one person at a time. While seeing the pictures young people were instructed to think about what comes first to their mind when seeing the person in the picture. They were encouraged to say the first thing that came to their mind. The idea is to share the initial thoughts out loud to the rest of the group.

Young people were encouraged to ponder the questions of where these people are from, what they do for a living and how the participants would react if they bumped in to them in the street. We also asked additional questions depending upon the picture. We encouraged young people to reflect where these impressions, stereotypes and assumptions come from. The idea of this exercise is to raise awareness of the prejudices we have towards people based on the way they look. We chose to go through different groups of people using pictures since they often raise more thoughts that just describing them verbally.

We felt that this exercise was ideal to start with because it encourages the participants to think about different assumptions they have and where they come from. We also felt that beginning with assumptions was a good way to start the internal thinking process of diversity for the participants. It is also an exercise that does not have right or wrong answers so the threshold to participate is low. The main philosophical and theoretical background for this exercise is the social constructionist view explained in chapter seven. Social constructionist view challenges us to critically examine the thing we believe to be true (Burr 2006:2). For example, in social constructionist view, the idea that all people who have dreadlocks are somehow involved in drug use is a construct of our social processes and not an objective observable truth.

This exercise is also related to dialogue that promotes learning from interaction and the exchanging of views, opinions and assumptions. Learning through dialogue is based on pondering and reflection of the whole group's ideas, even though they might differ (Puro & Matikainen 2000:7-8.) We felt that the first exercise should have the dialogic process strongly present so that every participant would feel included and heard in the workshop.

With this exercise we wanted the participants to really think about where their assumptions and prejudices about certain people come from. Do they come from social interactions, media, our parents, friends or other social networks? We also encouraged them ponder why and how these aforementioned factors influence us. The point was not to criticize young people about their assumptions or to embarrass them. We emphasised that it is natural to make assumptions about people, but what is important is that we realize we have these assumptions. It is also important to realize where these assumptions come from and that they are not the absolute truths about different groups of people. When can move past these assumptions we can see people for who they really are, not what we think they are.

### 8.2.3 Statement Cards

The idea for statement cards activity came from a publication called *More Diversity Activities for Youth and Adults*. It has been published by Pennsylvania State College of Agricultural Science (Ingram 2004.) The statements from the original exercise were modified to meet the aims of our workshop.

This second activity was about trying to figure out the differences between facts and opinions. Young people were divided into smaller groups and they were handed out cards with facts and opinions written on them. Groups were asked to go through them and divide the cards into three piles; facts, opinions and do not know. The groups were given about 10 minutes to organize the cards. In the mean time we moved amongst groups and helped them if it was necessary.

When the groups were done we went through the cards to check if something was challenging to be determined as a fact or an opinion. We went through the differences between a fact and an opinion and how it is possible for one to tell them apart. We promoted the importance of critically thinking whether something you hear is a fact or

an opinion. We also discussed how something can be stated as a fact even though it might not be true. This also happens when we hear discussions about minorities and other cultures, and without critical thinking we might build up false assumptions of certain groups of people which, in the end are false.

In this exercise we divided the participants in to smaller groups because it has been shown that the reluctance to engage in a bigger group is possible to overcome when participants are divided into smaller groups. Smaller groups also provide a beneficial situation for more or less dominant participants to engage with each other and share experiences, views and opinions. Working in a small group can make the processes of learning more interesting and dynamic (Clements & Jones 2008:132.)

The idea of this exercise was to go through the differences of facts and opinions. It is very important for the young people to learn and realize the difference between the two of them, since opinions are often based on beliefs and the young people might not be capable of verifying the validity of the belief. According to Clements and Jones (2008:77) the aim of diversity training is to make participants dispel their beliefs and increase the factual knowledge of the subject.

After the groups had gone through their cards we would go through the differences between facts and opinions. Opinions are based more on tentative information rather than factual knowledge (Clements - Jones 2008:77.) Opinions can also be described as beliefs and points of views. On the other hand facts are something that has really happened and can be proved with experiments or data. We also discussed the risks of believing other people blindly and why things should be questioned.

This exercise is also based on the idea of social learning where cognitive and intellectual skills prosper in a social setting (Pritchard & Woollard 2010:14). Dialogue and interaction between the learners is crucial in this exercise because they share their thoughts and experiences. The idea was that participants would work in cooperation and come to some kind of agreement about the statements in the statement cards. Our job as facilitators was to offer support and help them in the right direction when needed.

#### 8.2.4 Stepping Across the Line

Stepping across the line is a classic activity where people move from different sides of the room according to their opinion. One side of the room stands for “I agree”, the other one for “I disagree” and the centre of the room “I do not know”. We would read statements regarding questions of traditional roles of people in the Finnish society. The aim of this exercise was to raise conversation about why certain people are forced to behave in a certain way and is it necessary for people to follow these patterns of behaviour. As an example we read a statement about, whether it would be all right for the young people if Finland’s president was black.

This exercise aims at exploring our values and norms which we have about people’s behaviour and their rights. In our opinion it is good for young people to ponder the roles of different people in the society and why they are expected to behave in a certain way or why they would not have the same rights as others. As mentioned before we asked would young people tolerate if Finland had a black president. After they gave their answer we would ask following questions to encourage them to reflect their thoughts. As an example we would ponder if it is possible for someone to be Finnish even though their looks might differ from the traditional image of a Finnish person. We also lead the conversation towards different cultures and how values and norms differ in them. We would also bring up the fact that values are fluid and they have changed over time also in Finland. Social constructionist view supports this view of values being constructed by cultural and historical changes (Burr 2006:3). It was also important to engage in dialogue about these things and we would present open questions about these topics so that the situation did not turn into a lecture at any point.

#### 8.2.5 Friendship Game

Our version of the Friendship Game is based on the original version *Kestääkö Kaveruus* by Markku Tynkkynen. The idea of the game is that there are four imaginary people, each of them with their unique personal traits. These imaginary persons are represented by their names printed on A4 sized paper. These papers are placed in different parts of the room. First the young people were instructed to select one of the persons based solely on their name. After this phase was completed, we revealed one trait of these fictional people, based on this trait the participants had an opportunity to change their “preferred friend”. If someone changed their friend we would ask why this



happened and if the trait revealed was somehow unappealing or not preferred to them. This revealing of traits would go on for five rounds. The idea of this activity is to think about how we choose friends and which traits are most appreciated in a friend. We discussed importance of appearances versus personality. We would also bring forth the question if our friends should be similar with us.

The point of this exercise was to make the young people think about their friendships and whether they value the personality of their friends more over their background. We wanted to raise conversation about what makes a good friend and does it have more to do with appearance or personality traits. Through the conversation we hoped to raise thoughts about friendships and whether it is beneficial and positive to have diverse friends, or is it only possible to be friends with people who are similar with each other. When young people changed friends because of the traits they found out we would also discuss the thoughts which rose from certain traits. We wanted to discuss the topic of friendship with open dialogue. In this case dialogue as a method was planned to encourage participants to think and reflect together. This is one of the core ideas presented in dialogue (Puro & Matikainen 2000:9).

#### 8.2.6 Circle of Experiences

This activity, originally called *Common Ground Activity*, was modified from the book *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (Adams, Bell & Griffin 2007). In the original activity the questions were much broader and touched a lot of subject matters. So we ended up modifying the questions and coming up with our version of the activity.

In this activity young people were instructed to sit in a circle and stay silent during the activity until one of us would let them know that the first part of the activity is over. We read the statements to them considering their own actions and experiences of racism, teasing and discrimination. Young people stood up if they had experienced the statement read to them. They were also asked to look around when standing up to see whether others have shared similar experiences. The questions were not too personal so young people would feel safe about answering them truthfully. After all of the statements were read we would discuss about the feelings which arouse from this activity. Aim of the activity is to realize how all of us are a part of the reason why discrimination and racism still exists. By changing our own behaviour we are able to influence others positively and affect the general atmosphere of our surrounding community. The expla-

nations for social phenomena e.g. racism are found in the interactions between people. Daily social interactions and processes between people create us, as people and shape the world we live in (Burr 2006:4-5.)

This exercise was designed to encourage the young people to realize how their actions and social interactions affect their surroundings. The most crucial point in this exercise was to educate the young people about the fact, that the choices, decisions and actions they choose to use can make a huge difference in other people's lives as well. As long, as we as individuals, talk and behave in a racist and intolerant way, people will feel excluded and unequal. We would also discuss about teasing and discrimination and talk about whether it is hard to defend others and why. We also discussed what would make it easier to stand up for those in a weaker position. The aim was to create ways, together with the young people, to figure out how to tackle teasing and discrimination so that they would be more prepared when it happens. The point of family, friends, media, religion, location and other factors contributing to our behaviour was also brought up and discussed during this exercise.

Even though the exercise started with a silent part, the rest of it was done through dialogic discussion about each individual's behaviour being connected to the overall atmosphere of their surroundings. Young people were encouraged to share experiences they felt comfortable sharing and it became clear that all of them had had experiences regarding teasing, discrimination or racism. The realization that young people experience same unpleasant situations, lead the whole group trying to find solutions of how to avoid and prevent these situations from happening. In our opinion this happened in the spirit of social learning and dialogic process.

### 8.2.7 Closing

As a natural continuum from the previous activity we would ask participants to ponder what kind of changes they could make in their behaviour which would promote diversity, decrease discrimination and promote inclusion. Young people wrote these on a cardboard. The idea was to give the cardboard to the class, so that they can hang it on their classroom wall as a reminder of the workshop they experienced together.

Finally we asked if the young people had any questions or if something was unclear or bothered them. They were also asked to fill out a short questionnaire about the work-

shop, as feedback for us, to improve and develop the workshop. We thanked them for participation and wished them all the best and hoped they had gained something from the workshop.

### 8.3 Implementing the Workshop

As mentioned before we implemented the workshop in two schools, in the spring of 2013 and in the fall of 2013. We contacted the school in Helsinki ourselves and the school in Joensuu was organized by our working life partner. The workshops were organized for three groups of seventh graders (13 year olds) and three groups of ninth graders (15 year olds). Workshops in Helsinki were partly held in English and the workshops in Joensuu were in Finnish only. Initially we wanted more schools to participate in the implantation process but due to time constraints this was not possible. Even though we were not able to organize more workshops there was interest from several schools to have us come over.

After each workshop we collected feedback from the young people. This was done by handing out feedback forms which were anonymous. The feedback form consisted of questions such as “Did you feel that the workshop was useful?”, “What was the best part of the workshop?” and “What should be changed to make the workshop better?” We did this because we wanted ensure that we did not miss any potential developmental needs. Also we wanted to hear from the young people what were the parts they enjoyed most and felt were beneficial for them in the workshop. The feedback forms were labelled, for practical reasons, with a letter representing the city and with continuous numbering e.g. J1 for Joensuu and form number one. During the workshop we observed what seemed to work and what needed to be changed or refined in the workshop. After each workshop we wrote down our observations, feelings and ideas about the workshop. These notes were taken into consideration when we convened and pondered possible changes and improvements.

One of the changes we made was simplifying the cards in the statement card exercise. We noticed that the young people had difficulty understanding them. The words used in the cards were too complex and sophisticated for their age. We also made the cards more relevant to concepts of racism and diversity. There were no comments about the statement cards in the feedback we received, but it was clear just by observing the young people that they struggled with them.

We pondered the relevance of the friendship game and whether it should be removed from the workshop. We did not necessarily feel that the exercise had the same emphasis on diversity and racism as the other ones. The exercise felt more of a game about overall friendship and what we value in our friends and not so much about diversity. After some time had passed we looked back at the conversations had during the exercise and realised that there were useful elements in the exercise that encouraged dialogue about diversity. Through the conversations it seemed that the young people realised that even though we are different in many ways, it does not mean that we cannot get along with each other. After this realisation we decided to keep the exercise in the workshop. Also when we asked, in the feedback form, what was the best part in the workshop, many of the young people seemed to like the exercise.

One of the aspects of the workshop we felt needed consideration and thought was the facilitators' role. There was one case of a young person strongly disagreeing with the rest of group. This led us trying to ask why she felt that way, in order for us and the rest of the participants to understand where she was coming from. She took our questions as an attack against her opinion, which obviously was not our intention. This situation made us realize that we, as facilitators, should be more aware of how to handle these situations, even though the key of dialogue is to ask questions and understand the other view point. We had to reflect how to act in the future if similar cases came up, so that the person presenting a different view does not feel like their opinion is false. In the future we decided to emphasise that the questions we ask them, are not designed to dismiss their opinions, but to try to understand them even better.

Another aspect of facilitators' role had to do with silent moments. Sometimes silence emerged and we felt that there was not a natural way of progression out of it. That is why we decided to prepare some key points before hand for each of the exercises. These key points would be used when the conversation seemed not to flow. The key points were already in the workshop as content, but we decided to make a simple list with small phrases which would help us, as facilitators, to keep the conversation going. Silence is not inherently a bad thing but in our workshop we wanted to have the conversation going and moving forward, this is partly because of time constraints we had. It was also important for us to reflect in which ways the questions were best asked and how to support dialogue and young people's participation. Sometimes this meant that we had to stop following the workshop structure and focus on the conversation which

was flowing between the young people, even though it meant that we might have needed to skip some points or exercises we had originally planned.

During the implementation process we considered adding more exercises to the workshop but came to realize that it would not be possible in the time allotted. We also reflected whether some of the exercises should be changed but based on the feedback, observation and reflection we came to the conclusion that the current exercises were sufficient.

## 9 Evaluation

According to Vilkkä and Airaksinen (2003) one of the targets of evaluation is the idea of the thesis. This includes the theme, description of the problem, set goals, theoretical framework and target group. Meeting the set goals is the most important part of evaluating a functional thesis.

Another key target of evaluation is the implementation of the thesis which includes the means to achieve set goals and collecting material and data. In organizing events this means describing the means which were used to reach the set goals and the final implementation (Vilkkä & Airaksinen 2003:154-158.)

The aim of our functional thesis was to create a workshop on racism and diversity that could be used with young people in secondary schools. Goal for the workshop was to use dialogue in order to discuss ideas of diversity and racism openly. Our working life partner also had a need for a workshop regarding racism which could be used in their work with young people.

Throughout the process the topic of racism and diversity felt current and essential. This feeling was supported by the enthusiasm and interest we received from the schools we contacted. Many of the principals we contacted expressed the need for discussion of racism and diversity in their schools. The feedback from the participants was also overall positive and expressed the need for a workshop that tackles racism and diversity. Following are some examples from the feedback answering the question "Did you find the workshop useful or necessary?"

"Yes, I think it was very important for the whole class and it probably made everyone think about equality and racism." Feedback form H8.

“Yes, it was useful and I learned a lot opinions.” Feedback form H16.

“The workshop was interesting. It is important to discuss prejudice and opinions are interesting.” Feedback form J2. Translated from Finnish.

“In my opinion the workshop was useful, brought a lot to think about and new points of views.” Feedback form J5. Translated from Finnish.

The feedback also supported the idea of using participatory methods as a useful way of addressing these subjects.

“The best part was when the pictures were shown of different people and thoughts could be expressed freely, I noticed that I myself have prejudice.” Feedback form J5. Translated from Finnish.

“The best thing about the workshop was that we could do things ourselves☺” Feedback form J6. Translated from Finnish.

“The games (were the best part) because they were a fun way to talk about the topic.” Feedback form H2.

The process of developing the workshop started with us examining and going through already existing diversity trainings and workshops. Based on these ideas presented in them we started to plan our own workshop and choose methods which would work for our purposes. After the first draft was made and prepared the workshop was tested for the first time. When first implementation was done some changes were made but we noticed that it was quite challenging to question our own views and ways of improving the workshop since it is very easy to get stuck with a certain outlook. It was beneficial that there were two of us, so that we could reflect and discuss the workshop based on both of our opinions, which definitely was more enriching than it would have been when reflecting alone. We feel that during the process, the workshop developed and improved to be more useful for the purposes it was created for.

The feedback collected from the participating young people did not include a lot of suggestions for improvement. Mainly they would have liked to have more opinion games and said that the workshop was good the way it already was. Main improvements that was expressed in the feedback received from the workers at All Our Children Organization, was that in the first exercise where pictures of different types of people were shown, it would have been nice to know who the people really were. This is something

we thought about but we ran out of time to find pictures of people whose story would be far away from the stereotypical assumption people make when looking at their pictures.

“I thought that in the part where different types of people were represented and we pondered who they are, at the end it could be revealed who they really are...”  
Feedback form YL2. Translated from Finnish.

Another factor we could have improved was reaching out to the schools earlier. If we contacted schools earlier we could have had more schools to participate in the workshop and had more feedback and actual experience which would have helped in the process of developing the workshop. As mentioned earlier the schools we contacted were very interested in the workshop but now that we contacted them in a hurry, it was challenging to organize the visits to the schools. One factor we also discussed when implementation had been done was that the workshop could last longer than 1h 15 minutes. This would have ensured that there would have been more time for getting deeper in to the subject, open discussion, flexibility and reflective discussion at the end of the workshop. The feedback, of what would make the workshop better, from the young people also made a point of making the workshop longer.

“More time to use.” Feedback form H19. Translated from Finnish.

“More opinion games.” Feedback form H27.

“Could be longer” Feedback form J1. Translated from Finnish.

Making the workshop last longer would have required much earlier planning with the schools, in order to fit the workshop in to their timetable. Another factor considering timing was that we thought about the workshop overall and how it touches many topics regarding diversity. During the process we thought that should the workshop focus mostly on racism only, and whether the rest of the diversity topics should be left out. After pondering this, we came to the conclusion that the discussion of wider range diversity should not be removed. We came to this decision because diversity and racism are such close concepts that it would be hard not to discuss them together. We also strongly feel that all discussion regarding diversity and not only racism is very beneficial and important for young people because of their delicate stage of development. Also workshops and education about racism only, have been implemented many times in the past.

As previously mentioned the schools we visited were very different in a sense that the backgrounds of the students were very different. It should be remembered that young people are not a homogenic group. There are differences in schools based on the geographical location and the cultural backgrounds of the students. In our opinion these differences should be taken into consideration when implementing workshops in schools. We feel like this was something that we were not prepared enough for. This realization came to us only after we had finalized the implementation process. The background of the students and the present atmosphere of the school should be taken into consideration when planning the content and the emphasis of different subject matters. In our experience the final methods used in the workshop were suitable for the target group of young people. Young people participated in the exercises without major reservations and participatory methods worked well with them in raising conversation. The topics and exercises were not too hard for them to understand but did not underestimate their abilities either. Based on the feedback from the young people it could be easily seen that they definitely appreciated their opinions being listened to. For the most part and with a little encouragement, the young people expressed their personal thoughts.

One of our main goals was to raise open dialogue about racism and diversity and based on our experience, observation and feedback from the young people we feel like this goal was achieved. In hindsight we could have developed ways to encourage the more silent types to participate more in the workshop. There were situations where some participants were not participating in the conversation as much as others. The challenge is that one should take part in dialogue voluntarily. This is why we did not want pressure and coerce the silent participants to participate.

Throughout the process of creating the workshop we kept in contact with our working life partner in order to make sure that the workshop would fit in to their campaign. We also implemented the workshop for some of the workers of the All Our Children organization, so that they would really know what happens in the workshop. In the beginning we did not plan to implement the workshop for the workers but the interest came from the working life partner and we agreed that it would be beneficial for both parties. We also received feedback and ideas of improvement from them which were taken into consideration. The feedback forms were labeled in the same way as the ones collected from schools e.g. YL1. The final evaluation we got from our supervisors from All Our Children organization was positive. They said that the workshop was a very important



part of their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary campaign and that it gave a practical element to the campaign which, without it, could have been mainly just about raising awareness. They are planning on using the workshop in the future and train the workers to use it. We will consult them in the process and provide them with the necessary materials in order for them to make the most of the workshop. At the end of the process we also thought whether it would have been beneficial for someone from the All Our Children organization to implement the workshop with young people. If this had been done, we could have provided them with more information and instructions if they would have needed it. Regardless, we are continuing cooperation with them so we will be able to help them with using the workshop if necessary.

During the implementation process we learned that the idea of talking about racism and diversity with young people is very important. We feel that overall there is a need for this kind of workshop, not only in the school system but with young people in general. The feedback that we received supports this. We also realized that it is not necessarily that easy or straightforward to do. A lot goes in to planning and execution of a workshop that somehow creates an open environment for dialogue about racism and diversity. We learned that when facilitating a workshop one has to tolerate the feeling of uncertainty because one cannot know what is going to happen next. We learned that facilitators should have a good grasp about of their own ideas and attitudes about racism and diversity before discussing them further with young people.

Even though a workshop could be done in many different ways and be implemented differently, we are happy with our end result. Based on the feedback from schools and from our working life partner we believe that we have met our goal of creating a workshop that handles the subject matters of racism and diversity through dialogue.

“...the methods were excellent.” Feedback form YL1. Translated from Finnish.

“The best thing about the workshop was the diverse way of handling the subject. It was also nice that it was easy to approach and to implement and it was interesting to hear the opinions of other participants. Good was also that it is suitable for very different ages and people who are in different life situations.” Feedback form YL4. Translated from Finnish.

“...in my opinion the facilitators handled their role professionally...” Feedback form YL7. Translated from Finnish.

## 10 Ethical discussion

Ethics is described as a systematic thinking of moral operation. The deepest meaning of ethics is the pondering of good and bad, right and wrong. According to Aadland (1992:24-25) professionals working in the social field must consider the methods and techniques used when working and take notion of the laws, regulations and use the knowledge gathered from experience and intuition.

The Topic of our Final Thesis is closely linked to ethics and the promotion of human rights. According to Talentia 's ethical guidelines to social work professionals, social workers need to understand and defend the human rights of each individual. Talentia's guidelines also stress the obligation of professionals to prevent discrimination which is based on age, culture, abilities, race, social status, political preference, sex, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, economic status, or any physical traits. Recognising and respecting diversity is also a key element of ethics in the social field (Talentia 2005.) The professional social worker's duty is to promote equality and try to decrease structural oppression in the society (Banks 2006:13). The whole point of our workshop was to advocate these previously mentioned aspects that social workers should be promoting.

The topic of racism, discrimination and diversity can be a very sensitive and personal to topic to those who participate in the workshop. Depending upon the history and experiences regarding these matters, the workshop might arouse strong emotions in participants. The sensitivity of the topic is something that we kept in mind throughout the planning and implementation of the workshop. Our aim was to create a safe space where young people would be able to discuss and explore these subjects while feeling that their voice and opinions were accepted. Because of the sensitive nature of our subject matters we wanted to have a non-judgemental approach to the opinions and feelings that arouse during the workshops.

We also wanted to make the participants feel like their feelings and thoughts, regardless of their nature, were appreciated, respected and their contribution to the conversation was valued. Even though we discussed individual's part in putting people down racially or otherwise, our intention was not to make anyone feel guilty about anything. Young people were not forced participate in the conversation if they chose not to. The intention of the workshop was not to "brainwash" the young people to some kind of

ideology or thinking pattern. This was an ethical question that we considered before the implementation stage. Our vision was that the workshop should raise thoughts and awareness, not to force thoughts and ideas into young people's consciousness.

It was obvious to us that the identities of the young people that participated in our workshop were not revealed in the final thesis report. This is also why we did not disclose the specific details about the schools we went to, so that it would be impossible to identify individual participants. The feedback from the workshop was collected anonymously. This also helped to encourage the young people to give their honest opinion about the workshop. In order to keep the identities of the participants unknown we did not include the original feedback forms we got from them, because they are handwritten, so there is a chance, even though a small one, that someone might identify them.

It is the ethical responsibility of the social worker to train themselves and improve their professional abilities. Professionals must also familiarize themselves with alternative methods of working (Kananoja 2007:104.) This is why we reflected on the methods we used in order to decide whether they were the best ones to work with the target group. Ethically it is also very necessary for the workers to reflect the way they behave and engage with their clients. In our case we would discuss the workshop we just implemented and reflect on how we acted, responded and facilitated it. Through reflection we were able to better our actions and correct each other if we noticed that some situations could have been handled better. Luckily we did not encounter too challenging situations which we were not able to handle in a professional manner.

## **11 Conclusions**

Our process of making this final thesis started in the early spring of 2013. The process began with researching theories, previous projects regarding racism and methods that could be used in a workshop. After researching and planning the workshop we implemented the workshop in two secondary schools. Based on the feedback and our own observations we kept on improving the exercises and methods of the workshop.

The overall feeling, from the implementation process, is that there is a need for workshops that tackle issues of racism and diversity amongst young people. Workshops

have their own place in the working field, among other methods that tackle racism with young people. We feel that our workshop has its strengths, especially regarding the creation of an environment for dialogue and participation.

In the future our workshop could be improved and taken further. One idea of improvement could be that the workshop could focus more strictly on the issues of racism rather than diversity on a larger scale. Another idea would be to divide the workshop into e.g. three parts and visit the same group three times. This would give more time for the young people to process their thoughts and ideas and probably encourage participation, since young people would be more familiar with the facilitators. If the workshop was divided into three parts, time for more exercises and discussion would be ensured.

Even though we received a lot of positive feedback of our workshop, it is obvious that different people respond to different kinds of methods and exercises. This means that participatory methods might not suit everyone and they might benefit more from for example a lecture type setting. Our workshop cannot suit everyone which means that it is necessary to keep on innovating and planning many ways of addressing racism and diversity and promoting equality in the Finnish society.

It would be interesting to know if the workshop has any impact on the attitudes and thoughts of the young people who participated in our workshop. Obviously it is nearly impossible to measure the effectiveness of a single workshop but despite the fact it would be fascinating to know whether the workshop made an impact on the lives of the young people.

As described previously, we definitely feel like we have reached the aims of our final thesis. We created and implemented a workshop which tackled the issues of racism and diversity with young people. The workshop received a lot of positive feedback from the young people participating, as well from our working life partner. We are also very pleased that the workshop will be actually used in the future and will be implemented by our working life partner. We both wanted our final thesis to be practical and useful and it seems that this is something we have also reached.

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### Facts versus Opinions –statement cards

Gay couples are not allowed to get married in Finland	5,5 % of Finnish population are immigrants	First female president in Finland was Tarja Halonen	In the biggest genocide of Europe's history, it is estimated that six million people were killed because of their ethnicity
Studying in Universities is cheap in Finland	Africa is the world's second largest continent	Alcoholism is a sickness	Young people in Finland experience racism
Discrimination is one of the main reason for immigrants planning to move out of Finland	Equality is not mentioned in the Finnish constitution	The situation of immigrants in Finland is good	Still in this day, girls are forced to marry at a young age

Finland is a good place to live for everyone	Equality is not an important issue	Homeless people are lazy	Girls are smarter than boys
Wheelchair users feel sorry for themselves	Immigrants come to Finland because of the benefits they get from KELA	Finnish people are friendly	Immigrants do not work
Women are better teachers than men	Rich people are arrogant		

**Stepping Across the Line – Statements**

1. Boys should not cry in public
2. It is okay for boys to hit each other but not girls
3. I would not mind if the President of Finland was black
4. It can be challenging to date someone from another culture
5. It is harder for gay people to get a job
6. People who move to Finland should act the same way the majority does
7. Everyone in Finland should be fluent in Finnish
8. In your opinion refugees are welcome to Finland

**Friendship Game - Names and Personal Traits**

*Originally names and personal traits were presented in individual A4-papers.*

<b>Anna</b>	<b>Goth</b> A1	<b>Tall and Skinny</b> A2
<b>Finnish-Swedish</b> A3	<b>Gets along with everyone</b> A4	<b>Uses a Wheelchair</b> A5

<b>Julia</b>	<b>Vegan</b> J1	<b>Supermodel</b> J2
<b>From Russia</b> J3	<b>Gets Angry and Violent Very Easily</b> J4	<b>Straight</b> J5

<b>Ben</b>	<b>Parents are Rich</b> B1	<b>Short and Chubby</b> B2
<b>Finnish</b> B3	<b>Very Serious, Only Focuses on School</b> B4	<b>Bisexual</b> B5

<b>Max</b>	<b>Plays Computer Games Five hours a Day</b> M1	<b>Tall and Athletic</b> M2
<b>From Africa</b> M3	<b>Very Funny, Makes Jokes All the Time</b> M4	<b>Gay</b> M5

## Circle of Experience – Questions

### Stand up if...

1. You have ever heard someone being called names based on the colour of their skin
2. you or someone you know has ever called a girl ; slut, whore or bitch
3. have you ever seen anyone been treated differently because of their ethnic background
4. have you ever heard someone talk disparagingly about a minority or ethnic group
5. you have ever seen someone being bullied or harassed and done nothing
6. you have ever seen someone being picked on, bullied or harassed and done something
7. you or someone you know has commented on someone else's body parts
8. you or someone you know has used sexual orientation as an insult , like "you're so gay", "He's a fag"
9. you or someone you know was afraid to come to school because of bullying
10. you have treated someone differently based on their looks

## Feedback Form



### Feedback of the Workshop

1. Did you find the workshop useful or necessary?

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2. Did the Workshop raise new thoughts about diversity? If so, what were they?

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3. What was the best thing about the Workshop?

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4. What should be changed so that the Workshop would be better?

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5. Any other thoughts or feedback?

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Thank you!

## Permission Slip for Students to Participate



Työpaja osallistumislupa 2013

Annan lapselleni \_\_\_\_\_ (nimi) luvan osallistua

koulussa järjestettävään työpajaan \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_ 2013 jossa käsitellään moninaisuutta sekä suvaitsevaisuutta. Työpaja on osa Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulun sosionomiopiskelijoiden opinnäytetyötä. **Työpajassa ei kerätä eikä käytetä mitään osallistujien henkilötietoja ja työpajaan osallistuminen on täysin vapaaehtoista.** Opinnäytetyö toteutetaan yhteistyössä Yhteiset Lapsemme Ry:n kanssa.

Huoltajan allekirjoitus, nimenselvennys:

\_\_\_\_\_

Palautus opettajalle viimeistään \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_ 2013. Kiitos!

Lisätietoja:

Mikael Metsälä mikael.metsala@metropolia.fi

Heini Nygren heini.nygren@metropolia.fi

Workshop permission slip 2013

I give permission for my child \_\_\_\_\_ (name) to attend a diversity workshop held in school \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_ 2013. The workshop is part of a final thesis done by social services students from Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. **No personal information of the participants' will be collected or used in any way and participation is completely voluntary.** The thesis is done in co-operation with All Our Children organization.

Guardians' signature and clarification of signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Return to teacher latest \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_ 2013. Thank You!

More information:

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