Developing Multiprofessional Working Skills in Art and Social Work

Abstract:

This paper introduces the idea of the project Modelling Multiprofessional Competences (MOMU) which was prepared in 2013 in cooperation with Turku University of Applied Sciences, Manchester Metropolitan University and two other higher education institutions. The project aims to define the competences in multiprofessional teamwork in art and social work. Its emphasis lies on dividing work between professionals while working together with young people and on the definition of genuine multiprofessional cooperation based on experiences from working life. It is important to define the job-specific and transversal skills and responsibilities of different actors in art and social work while working together to reach common goals and to avoid situations where people don’t understand the value of each other’s expertise.

In MOMU, multiprofessional work is seen as an integral part of basic teaching, instruction and education. In each partner country, lecturers of art and social work, as well as associate partners from working life with long-term experience from work with the youth, are committed to develop and pilot the existing studies of art and social work in order to meet the demands of multiprofessional teamwork in working life.

Art promoting the well-being of young people

Social exclusion of young people is a widely recognised problem in Europe. The EU Youth Report from 2012 calls for youth employment, social inclusion, health and the well-being of young people to be top priorities in Europe's youth policy. The report underlines that the European Union and Member States must do more to support young people, who have borne the brunt of the economic crisis. The situation of young people is extremely difficult in today’s Europe. The EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 proposes cross-sectorial approaches with both short and long-term actions involving all key policy areas that effect and empower young people in Europe. The main objectives of EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 are (1) to provide more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market and (2) to encourage young people to be active...
citizens and to participate in society. The strategy promotes social inclusion and solidarity. Emphasis is placed upon the idea that there must be a greater deal of co-operation on national, regional and local levels. In a rapidly changing world, new methods to tackle and prevent the social exclusion of young people must be created.

Problems that many children and young people are facing nowadays have become more complicated. This challenges professionals working with young people and requires development of new ways of working to support traditional working methods. At the same time there are artists who cannot employ themselves by practicing art and for that reason they need to expand their field of working. Large social and health care sectors offer multiple target groups for artists to use art for enhancing well-being. In order to prevent social exclusion, the need for multiprofessional collaboration is crucial in preventive work with children, young people and their families. More holistic ways to approach young people are needed. Traditional methods and professionals working with one aspect or problem are not efficient and the real issues might not be noticed at all. All children and young people, but especially those who are growing in difficult circumstances, need multiple ways to be seen and heard and to get in touch with their emotions (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, 2011).

The advantages of art and culture in promoting well-being has been recognized in Europe on a political level. For example the EU Youth Report from 2012 states that creativity should be nourished at all levels of education and training, since it represents an important set of transversal soft skills that facilitate the process of learning, the use of knowledge for creating innovation, cultural participation and the development of entrepreneurial and professional skills. The benefits of creativity in an individual level are associated with the development of personal aptitudes such as problem solving, experimentation, risk-taking and learning from mistakes, use of imagination and hypothetical reasoning, and a sense of entrepreneurship. The Cultural Learning Alliance (2011) has outlined five key research findings from large cohort studies that show that “learning through arts and culture improves attainment in all subjects, participation in structured arts activities increases cognitive abilities, students from low income families who take part in arts activities at school are three times more likely to get a degree, employability of students who study arts subjects is higher and they are more likely to stay in employment and students who engage in the arts at school are twice as likely to volunteer and are 20% more likely to vote as young adults”. 
Structuring and educating multiprofessional teamwork

There are artists who are willing to work in new kinds of environments. In the field of social work there is a growing will to apply art, but it is not always easy when different professional cultures confront. Artists might feel that they cannot get inside the community of social work professionals, who might be overloaded and feel that collaboration complicates their work. Examples of multiprofessional teamwork done by art and social work professionals naturally already exist, but working practices are not structured. The concept of multiprofessional collaboration is widely used, but not often specifically defined. The essential questions are: How can we clarify the roles of different professionals and structure multiprofessional work when working with young people? And how can we develop education of art and social work students so that their competences for multiprofessional co-operation are enhanced?

The project *Modelling Multiprofessional Competences* (MOMU) responds to these challenges by defining competences and skills needed in multiprofessional teamwork of art and social work professionals and by combining the existing knowhow and perspectives promoting the creation of innovations on the borderlines of art and social work. The project will also define the roles of professionals and the distribution of work between them. Simultaneously, MOMU affects attitudes to become more favourable towards collaboration. Real dialogue, understanding of one’s own skills, and the possibilities of collaboration will play a crucial part in answering future working demands. The idea of the project was developed in cooperation with Turku University of Applied Sciences (FI), Manchester Metropolitan University (UK), University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy (EE) and University of Castilla-La Mancha (ES). The project consortium attended to the EU’s Lifelong Learning Programme call for proposals in 2013, but the proposal was not accepted for funding in this call.

New working skills for professionals

The main objective of MOMU is to develop new multiprofessional working skills and environments for professionals in art and social work. These skills will respond to the needs of the European labour market in a rapidly changing society and meet the demands of different client groups. MOMU develops a model for the process of customer-orientated multiprofessional teamwork of art and social work professionals and defines the skills needed in well-functioning and purpose-oriented teamwork. When defining the competences in multiprofessional teamwork in art and social
work, the emphasis lies on division of work between professionals while working together with young people and on the definition of genuine multiprofessional cooperation based on experiences from working life.

In MOMU, multiprofessional working is seen as an integral part of basic teaching, instruction and education, keeping in mind that different actors have different goals and priorities and might also mean different things with the same terms. The aim is to reach an understanding between different professions about the skills and processes in well-matched multiprofessional teamwork when working in the field of preventative youth work. For example professionals of social work are used to cognitive working (working with your head) while the artists are used to more holistic working methods (working with your whole body and soul).

The MOMU project aims to develop the studies of art and social work in order to meet the demands of multiprofessional teamwork in working life on the European level. Each partner has working life representatives as associate partners to guarantee fresh opinions and well justified content to the development of a study module. In each partner country lecturers of art and social work as well as associate partners from working life will develop the module together. Development within the project consortium will be executed in the MOMU lecturer team. The target result is an enterprising curriculum responding to identified labour market demands and needs in multiprofessional teamwork competences. Multiprofessional teamwork skills are needed as part of working life skills already before graduation. Therefore supporting the professional growth and self-reliance of students of social work and art students is the most important goal when considering students as a target group. Preventive work with young people is the targeted coopperational field in working life. The multiprofessional student teams will be testing their skills and abilities with selected youth groups (in close guidance of their instructor and working life contact person). The goals of the youth groups will be set case by case through negotiations with working life representatives.

**Developing studies and defining competences**

The major activities of MOMU are: 1) defining preconditions (competences, division of work, process chart) and existing promising practices for successful multiprofessional teamwork between professionals of art and social work, 2) training the MOMU lecturers who will be responsible for the planning and implementation of the MOMU study module, 3) planning and piloting the MOMU study module in partner countries, 4) designing a common European study module based on the
experiences and results of a pilot course, 5) modifying and finalising the skill and work distribution definitions and the study module, and 6) disseminating the project outcomes.

Defining preconditions for multiprofessional teamwork starts by collecting existing multiprofessional practices in art and social work, examining the existing definitions of competences in these two professions, and finding out the commonly used working methods when working collaboratively with young people. In order to gain a good perspective of the needs and expectations of the field of art and social work, working life representatives will also be interviewed. These results will be used in the development of a training package targeted to MOMU lecturers who will be participating in the development of the new study module. The conducted research and interviews will be the core materials when defining the competences of art and social work professionals and the division of work in the context of multiprofessional work with young people.

The study module will be piloted in each partner organisation. The study module will partly have common European content, but in order to demonstrate the flexibility of the structure and content of the plans, the study module will be modified according to each partner country’s systems and needs. The basic structure of the study module consists of three different parts: theory, experimental part/method courses and practical training. Theory increases the students’ understanding of the field in which they are going to work with young people as a target group. For social work students the definition of art and its context is important and art students will benefit from learning group pedagogy, professional ethics and service systems. Experimental/method studies give the students a chance to familiarise themselves with those useful exercises and art-based methods that have been successful when working with young people. Practical training will be implemented in small multiprofessional student groups that will work on the field in close cooperation with the associate partners. At the end of the study pilot, the lecturers and students from different partner countries will meet in order to share experiences and evaluate the piloted module together.
Figure 1. Actors, roles and interconnections in the MOMU project.

Training future professionals

Higher education institutes in Europe are the ones to see to the future and to train future professionals to tackle the challenges of working life in the future. In addition to the development of professional and transversal skills of social work and art students, the new MOMU study module will teach them new ways of learning and help them to find and identify their own strengths as a part of multiprofessional team. For the students it is important to realise that they can reach a common goal by working together, making the most of their own knowledge and respecting the skills of others.

The lecturers of social work and art need to develop their own skills to answer the needs of the changing professional roles of the future. To be able to achieve that and to train professionals to answer the needs of working life the lecturers need to change their traditional way of thinking about education as means to one specific profession and also to acknowledge their role in multiprofessional training. For this, MOMU will provide education and training. Training and the practical experience from MOMU will give them new perspective to their profession and also to their essential role as educators.
Working life representatives will be involved in the process of planning and executing a new study module of multiprofessional teamwork in art and social work from first drafting to feedback, evaluation and modification. They can make an effect to the education of future professionals to their specific fields of expertise and they can also gain hands-on experience about the new ways of working through the activities organised to youth groups by the students of partner higher education institutions. The aim is to find all the youth groups from the framework of associate partners. The dialog between associate partners and partner organisations is the key to a successful and useful end result.

Bibliography:


