



Erasmus+



Shift in Arenas

How to start a semester

This dialogue game has been developed as an exposure medium in case study 4 Erasmus+ The Mobile Ethical Laboratory Project

Heidi Tybjerg and Anne Bjerg Wemmelund 2021

VIA University College Holstebro Denmark



Clarification of concepts

Defence mechanisms

Defence mechanisms is a concept that has been used particularly in psychiatry and psychology over the last centuries. The Norwegian Senior Researcher and Sociologist Dr. Phil, Kari Killén (1991/2020) use the concept in her work and theory of neglect and most recently professional development. Killén describes a practitioner's survival strategies as follows: downplaying, problem displacement, role confusion, role shifting, reduction of complexity, withdrawal, distancing and projection of inadequacy (Killén, 1991, s. 61). When we in Case Study 4 use the concept defense mechanisms, we lean on Killén's definition of the survival strategies a practitioner may experience in cases of neglected children and families. We see a connection between Killén's survival strategies and the defense mechanisms found in educators in our collected empirical evidence.

Killén, K. (2020). *Omsorgssvigt. Praksis og ansvar*. 5th edition. Hans Reitzels Forlag

Killén, K. (1991). *Omsorgssvigt er alles ansvar*. Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Mentalization

In Case Study 4, when we use the concept of Mentalization, we draw on definitions from the Hungarian-born psychologist Peter Fonagy and Bateman, as they in recent decades have given the concept new life, so that today it is useful in an everyday meeting between educators and students, between teacher and pupils. Mentalization is defined as: "*A facet of human imagination: an individual awareness of mental states in oneself and in others – especially in relation to understanding one's own and others' behaviors. Mentalization involves perception and interpretation of emotions, thoughts, beliefs, intentions and desires that explain why people act the way they do. This implies an awareness of the other's circumstances, his or her previous patterns of behavior, as*

well as the experiences the person has had." (Bateman & Fonagy, 2019 s. 3).

Bateman, A. & Fonagy, P. (2012/2019). *Handbook of Mentalization in Mental Health Practice*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing

The background of the game

The game was developed as part of the Erasmus+ project "The Mobile Ethical Laboratory", Case Study 4: Shift in Arenas – How to start a semester. The project explores both sides of the host concept *hospitality*, i.e. both receiving and being received. The word hospitality is derived from hospes, which means both host and guest, herein meaning that both sides are strangers to each other. The project is based on the assumption that both parties experience being strangers, and that this can create uncertainty, feelings and defense mechanisms in addition to what one feels on normal working days. The game's cases and questions are created on the basis of empirical evidence from Case Study 4. This means that each question begins with empirical findings.

The purpose of the game

The purpose of the game is to expose educators, through conversations based on cases and questions, to their own emotions, reactions and defense mechanisms in the meeting with new students. At the same time, you are also exposed to other teachers' approaches and reactions. In this way, teachers can share knowledge and experience on the reception of new students. The intention is that the exposure contributes to an awareness of how we ourselves and/or others feel and act in the meeting with new students. Thus, the game is not intended to be dictating, scolding or directional. But the game should help to expose participants in a way that leads to mentalization that educators can use in the reception of new students, for example at the beginning of the semester.

Preparation

Downloaded version:

Cut out all the question cards and place them in the middle of the table in three piles by color.

Find a way to take time (1 minute).

Physical version:

Place the question cards in the middle of the table in three piles by color.

Take out the hourglass.

Participants

2-4 educators.

Educators are particularly exposed if the participants do not work together daily, for example if you belong to different cultures of educating, disciplines or educational institutions.

The game itself

The game is not about winning or losing, but about everyone participating in common reflection.

The cards are divided into three themes:

- **Red theme:** The students' statements about the good semester start and what matters to make them feel at home.
- **Blue theme:** educators' statements about the good semester start and what matters to make them feel at home.
- **Green theme:** educators' emotions and defense mechanisms.

You take turns picking a card and reading it out loud to the others. The participant who last celebrated his/her birthday starts. Participants choose which categories the cards are drawn from.

When the card has been read out loud, set the stopwatch/hourglass to 1 minute. This is because each participant must reflect individually (in silence) on the issue in relation to their own practice before the group discussion takes place.

A round is then done in which all participants individually answer the question. Then do a round of dialogue and reflection, where the participants ask each other questions, are curious, encourage elaboration and in other ways contribute to a good reflection initiated by the case/questions. To avoid repetition, a new card is drawn when discussions move beyond/away from the original question.

The game is framed by the group and can be completed in two ways:

- Participants agree in advance on a timeframe, for example 30-45 minutes. The game ends when the agreed time is up.
- Participants agree in advance on a number of cards to use. The game ends when the agreed number of cards is used. The group may agree on how much time is devoted to each question (for example 10-20 minutes).

The game can be played again, and preferably with others.

Enjoy!