



Developing Attunement through the Experience of Joy

Research Report for the JOY Model

Result 1

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Summary of the Project

Title:	R1 – Research Report
Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will provide the research and evidence required for the <u>development of the criteria</u> upon which the JOY-framework, -model and -methodology will be based, laying the ground for the formulation of JOY-interventions. • The development will be based on current practices, latest research in the field of the need of NEETs and the opportunities of the fusion of validation and valuing of existing competences, using the <u>CH-Q procedure</u> as red line with emotion-based methods such as drama, bodywork, storytelling, dance, reconnection with nature. • The impact of pleasant emotions such as joy, pride and resilience against unpleasant emotions such as anger fear will be in focus, as the analysis will include the <u>elaboration on overcoming possible barriers</u> to the implementation.
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Introduction to the JOY project and the JOY research

Ode to Joy is named after one of the positive emotions (joy, pride, contentment, esteem) which are catalysts for increasing people's satisfaction generally in their personal lives and professionally in their work. Joyful people are more motivated to act and participate, are much less likely to experience burn out, and have a better mental and physical health and are more resilient towards uncomfortable emotions. We want to achieve this through fusing experience-based methods together, such as drama, bodywork, dance, music, Symbolwork, storytelling, nature work, validation of competencies, CH-Q procedure, with more formal VPL methods, that help NEETs reconnect with their body and mind, increasing their ability to experience joy and to connect and through this experience develop a greater sense of attunement and joy, pride, contentment and esteem, and consequently improve their performance (e.g. success, quality, creativity) in work and life.

Ode to Joy aims to realize the following objectives:

- To equip adult educators with tools with which they can support their target audience in personal growth through increased awareness, motivation and positive emotions.
- To foster virtuous connection between NEET young adults (18-29 years old), the employment sector and the formal and informal learning environments.
- To provide Common Guidelines to implementing the project's model and approach of focusing on the fostering attunement and connection to one's emotion through experience-based methods.
- To provide recommendations for policy makers to embed the model and the process in the active labour market policies.

The main objective in this research is to lay the foundations for the development of the JOY Model, including evidence-based requirements and criteria, the generic JOY-Model and a guideline for a pedagogical methodology.

The NEETs - our primary beneficiaries

Who are NEETs?

The term NEET refers to young people between the ages of 15 and 29 who are neither in education nor in employment (Mascherini et al., 2012;). Based on the ILO definition (International Labor Organization, 2020), a person is classified as NEET if he or she fulfils the following two conditions: 1) they are not in employment (i.e., unemployed or inactive as defined by the ILO) (ILO, 2020a); 2) they have not had formal or non-formal education or training in the four weeks prior to the survey. A Eurofound analysis recognizes heterogeneity within the NEET group and, in contrast with the ILO, considers young people aged 15-34 (Eurofound, 2012). The NEET concept allowed the coverage of young people who became discouraged and gave up looking for work, as well as inactive people who could not or did not want to work, recognizing the difficulties they faced and the need for targeted interventions. In 2010, the European Commission identified young people who are NEET as an important target group for activation policies, including areas covered by youth policies. At the same time, it developed indicators and the methodology for data gathering and calculation of the number of young people in the NEET situation (European Commission, 2010).

Employment is a narrow-minded term and is often limited to paid jobs. A wider concept would give a better understanding to the need of NEETs. 'Work' covers a wider area, such as (paid and unpaid) volunteer activities, sabbatical period, social work, working as a parent with own kids, informal (grey/black) work. Choices are often well-thought-out, and the work done with high motivation and responsibility. Difference between unemployed (looking for work but cannot find it) and inactive youth (declaring themselves available to work, despite not having done an active job search), and youth who have carried out job search actions, but are not immediately available to work (i.e. Potential workforce NEET subgroup), and youth who have not looked for work and are not available to work (i.e. unavailable NEET subgroup).

'Education' and 'training' are also narrow minded terms and actually only a small part of lifelong learning. 'Not in Education & Training' doesn't mean that they won't learn. On the contrary, education and training is only a small part of the total learning. The types of informal learning (often linked to motives and emotions) supersede education (often longer periods of structured and certified learning) and training (often short term, programmed) in time and effectivity.

And that is exactly where Ode-to-Joy can intervene, helping the young adults being more valued (primarily by themselves, social/informal and formal) and improve their chances in participation, working and learning.

Why young people become or stay NEET?

Usually the NEET existence begins to emerge due to premature leaving from school by many different reasons. Lack of support from family or other people in their lives amplifies the process.

Inequality of opportunities due to a migration background, discrimination, and prejudices follows up with social exclusion and therefore having a higher risk of becoming a NEET.

One of the first NEET studies (Social Exclusion Unit 1999: 48) already points out that NEET young people are more likely to have grown up in homes with insecure, difficult employment histories (often up to three generations back). In addition, ethnic minorities are at above-average risk of becoming NEET. Bynner and Parsons (2002: 298) further show that an urban environment or public housing with signs of poverty, and families with low cultural capital (parents do not read to the children) are among the common NEET profiles. The social profiles of young people with and without NEET experiences differ significantly in this respect. Young people who have never been in the NEET status are more likely to have parents with advanced educational qualifications, who work in managerial positions, own a flat or a house as property and have hardly any unemployment biographies. Non-NEET youth have fewer negative experiences in the school system (truancy, suspensions) (Furlong 2006: 566, JKU Linz, 2013:15).

Young people with severe complex problems have typically been part of the 'system' for many years and have developed personal approaches to navigating in the system. The problems and their pathways vary widely from each other, but common needs and common motivations could be identified, also across countries.

It was found that all NEETs have dreams that can be transformed into goals, which over time can be within realistic reach. The pathways to their goals are to a certain degree unpredictable, but not coincidental. Young people are more likely to accept and engage in elements on their pathways, such as educational courses or individual-specific learning activities, if they make sense for them. Therefore, the NEETs should be involved in co-designing their own pathways. The elements on the pathways must lead to subgoals on their pathways. The pathways towards their personal final goals reflect the NEETs' progression towards the society-defined goal of self-support. In our given context, self-supply is understood as engaging sustainably in education or job. Attending to this required goal is part of the vocational maturity they need to achieve. **The NEETs show motivation, or possibly more likely, can become motivated for working towards their goals – if their motivational orientations are triggered. Here, motivation is constructed, dependent on changeable contexts as well as individual preferences and prerequisites. The analysis also revealed the NEETs' generally high degree of sensitivity to impulses from others (peers, professionals, family members etc.), which affects them emotionally.** This sensitivity calls for resilience and its strengthening. Professionals or other supportive resource persons play important and possibly game-changing roles in their lives - if the NEETs experience respect, trust, and confidentiality. Not unexpectedly, relationships have a fundamental importance for NEETs, for better or worse. All in all, a condensed picture of the needs of the NEETs has emerged, with many sensitive issues but also remarkable potentials. To transform this picture into operational personal development, professional approaches and support are required - last but not least to match given societal settings and requirements.

Along with the motivating support from social relationships and professionals, the NEETs spoke of **their own intrinsic motivation and empowerment** as important for their positive development: “It’s me who has helped myself. It’s about what you do yourself. Not the persons here at school. They tell you what you can and what you cannot do” and “Do something you’re good at”. The NEETs emphasized support for ‘self-help’ “in the area of setting goals and being self-motivated”, “in the area of **“helping themselves being in control of their lives, [...] to achieve a long-term goal”, “self-confidence, self-esteem, and how to not give up easily”, “how do develop positive habits and reduce the negative, destructive habits”**”.

In the case of prolonged NEET status, the literature (Bysshe et al. 2009: 14; Coles et al. 2010: 8ff; LSC 2006; LSN 2009; Simmons/Thompson 2011) points to a range of causes or multiple problems that have led to disintegration: These include difficult family circumstances or childhoods, traumatic events such as bereavement, learning difficulties, or dissatisfaction with school, social-emotional hardships, criminality, health problems, homelessness, drug or alcohol abuse, lack of support, and financial constraints. It is important not to equate cause and consequence in these problem situations (JKU Linz, 2013, 16).

Country-specific findings on the situation of NEETs

Hungary

EMCC (European Monitoring Centre on Change) had European research about NEETs in 2012. The conclusion of the Hungarian report was that there is no Hungarian strategy or concept treating the NEETS situation, there are only a few programs or organizations working with NEETS In Hungary, there is a high need of NEETs recognition and making them visible for the decision makers, mapping and identifying the issues of this group (Simon & Csókay, 2012).

Since 2012, the compulsory school age is lowered to 16 years, but the Hungarian students typically graduate at the age of 18. Partly because of this, the risk of a young person leaving school without a high school diploma and becoming a NEET is relatively high in Hungary.

The Hungarian state provides unemployment’s benefit for 3 months, which causes that many unemployed are leaving the institutional system after 3 months, and they will become invisible to the social sector. It makes it more difficult to reach the unemployed, including NEETs. The ratio of the NEETS is decreased in the last 10 years, but the decreasing stopped and still high (pic 1). The official unemployment rate (Jan 2021 – Apr 2022) among 15-24 years old is 10,0-14,5% which is much higher than the average (3,2-4,5%) (*Evolution of the Unemployment Rate for 15-74 Year Olds, 2022*).

As a way of addressing the situation of NEETs, from 1 January 2022, workers under the age of 25 will be exempt from paying personal income tax.

In the 2014-2020 EU programme, Hungary used funds from the European Commission’s YEI (Youth Employment Initiative) programme on the following areas: “job protection action plan”, as well as programs on acquiring work experience, on training and on becoming entrepreneurs. Youth

guarantee programme supports young people in gaining work experience and businesses in employing young people (<https://ifjusagigarancia.gov.hu/>).

Difficulties young people face

Disadvantageous socio-economic background in general constitutes a risk factor for becoming a NEET - housing problems - homelessness, financial issues, schooling issues all make it difficult for young people to continue their education. On the other hand, more personal reasons can become a risk factor too, such as health problems, socio-emotional disorders or substance-use. It is often too difficult to change their situation because young persons (mostly in the countryside) do not get proper information about their options or they are lack of the appropriate knowledge (Perényi-Harka, 2014).

Since COVID-19 pandemic students report lower level of motivation to learning, higher isolation and it is connected to increasing level of depression, social media, and videogames dependency (Suhajda and Kolozsvári, 2021).

Institutions and people working with NEETS – our main target group

Only a few organizations deal specifically with NEETs, and they tend to be in Budapest. NEETS are usually supported by career guidance offices, family assistance centres, vocational training centres or foundations: Pact4Youth Hungary established under the EU YEI programme (<https://www.pact4youth.hu/>), Integrom programme by the Autonomia foundation (<http://integrom.hu/>), Deviszont community space (<https://deviszontkozter.hu/>), Art-ravaló by Subjective Values Foundation and Factor Terminal Association (<https://artravalo.com/en/>).

Austria

Austrian young people's understanding of the present is divided: half of them has the feeling of permanent crisis, while the other half sees themselves as the "generation of new beginnings". In a research among 24.000 young people aged between 16-20 the following most important issues form concern of young people turned up („So Kann Es Nicht Weitergehen!“, 2022).

War is the biggest concern of young people (84%). Young people believe that crises of this kind can only be solved together - in Europe or worldwide (81%). In this context, they see Austria more in a mediating role and less as part of a military organization.

Covid-19 pandemic comes second as a source for worry (56%). However, whereas last year young people were mainly concerned about the lack of social contacts, the focus is now on the medium and long-term consequences: the vast majority believe that the quality of their education has suffered during the pandemic and that this will cause them lasting damage (69%).

Climate and sustainability: young people also have a fear of future regarding climate change and increasing economic inequality or care: between three-quarters and four-fifths of them denounce

major failures in these issues for the future. Young people see politics (69%), the economy (71%) and society with its lifestyle (71%) as equally having a role in them.

Gender equality: A total of 59% (and for 75% of young women) of young people still feel that gender equality is still far away in Austria. Young people also think of sex or gender in more diverse terms: for almost nine out of ten (88%), the time of role clichés is over and it is much more a matter of defining for oneself.

National regulations relevant for NEETS

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF): The Federal Act on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF Act) regulates the allocation of Austrian learning outcomes-oriented qualifications to one of the eight qualification levels of the National Qualifications Framework and the publication of the results of the allocation process in the NQF Register for information purposes. (Source: *What Is the NQF*, 2020).

The Austrian Training guarantee: It is a uniform training framework for supra-company vocational training that provides high-quality training up to graduation. (JKU Linz, n.d.)

Institutions and people working with NEETS

Education until 18: Ausbildung bis 18 is a national measure designed to prevent young people from dropping out of school at an early age. The aim of the initiative is to ensure that all young people under the age of 18 who live there permanently attend a secondary school or vocational training program after completing their compulsory education. It contains a procedure to prevent dropout, prevention practices as well as deterrence. (Klamminger, 2020, #)

NEBA: it stands for "Netzwerk Berufliche Assistenz", here various support services such as job coaching, work or vocational training assistance, and youth coaching are offered for young people between the ages of 15 and 24 and their guardians. The goal is to create an individual plan for the future for each person. Within the framework of the youth coaching, further offers such as VOPS and AusbildungsFit can be recommended. (Klamminger, 2020)

VOPS and AusbildungsFit: The offer Pre-module Production School, abbreviated VOPS, is considered a preliminary stage for the later measure AusbildungsFit. AusbildungsFit is also part of the NEBA offer and in cooperation with Jugend am Werk, the participating young people receive pocket money and travel expenses. For 6-12 months, young people can get closer to their training aspirations within the framework of creative offers, cooking, sports, and vocational orientation.

Italy

Young Italians find themselves in a situation of precariousness and uncertainty about the future. Youth employment dynamics have been affected by the pandemic due to the massive decrease in employment in sectors such as tourism, art, and culture, entertainment, and sports, and due to the spread of short-term contracts that do not guarantee the possibility of a solid future. The percentage of youth not engaged in education, employment or training is the highest in Europe while the phenomenon of early school leaving has also increased, leaving several youths in a particularly vulnerable situation in terms of poor integration into the labour market and social exclusion (Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2021). The educational paths currently offered are part of the problem: low level of orientation in school, very low practical experience, lack of both specific and transversal skills, poor preparation on how the labour market works; these are just some of the reasons that make it difficult for people under 35 to find a stable job, so much that over one in four fears to find him/herself without a job when they will be 45 years old (Rosina, A., 2020). The negative effects can be of various: the increase in educational poverty and social exclusion, the low participation of young people in political and cultural life, the continued impossibility of entering the labour market as well as higher costs for social benefits and social malaise. There are also individual costs: acquired skills and competences deteriorate, demotivation and frustration increase, leading to a passive attitude due to the lack of stimuli. This is why Italy is one of the countries with the most prolonged dependence of young people on their families and also, with a high risk of poverty for youth under 35 (Istituto Toniolo, Laboratorio Futuro, 2021).

The recent Covid-19 pandemic has had negative effects on all segments of the population. However, several studies have focused on the difficult situation experienced by young people who have been proved to be at risk of severe psychological distress. In fact, starting from 2020, limiting social, personal, and professional relations, have been important sacrifices for the population, especially groups in young age. Many adolescents and youth have experienced a sense of loneliness, isolation, and relational problems, characterized by a loss of confidence in future possibilities (Trovato, 2021). While 16.5% of the Italian population claims to have experienced depressive symptoms in the recent years, the amount doubles if we look at the youth between 18 and 25 years old, where the percentage reaches 34.7% (FIS, 2021). Other negative consequences of the pandemic were increased nervousness, reduced physical activity, reduced sleep, less healthy eating. Therefore, the general picture of Italian youth highlights a situation of widespread malaise among young people: negative repercussions on the ability to study, chronic fatigue, uncertainty and worry, irritability and anxiety, apathy and discouragement, these are just some of the widespread sensations recorded among young people and adolescents; for almost 6 out of 10 students (59%) their capacity of socializing has suffered negative repercussions, as well as their current mood (57%) (Osservatorio Nazionale Per L'infanzia E L'adolescenza, 2021). Equally worrying are the data relating to NEETs that worsened during the pandemic: according to the ISTAT report in 2021, the number of youth aged 14-19 not engaged in education, employment or training, is the highest in Europe, around 2.1 million (incidence of 32.6% in the South, 19.9% in the centre and 16.8% in the North). The number rises up

to 3 million considering the age group from 14 to 35 years old (ISTAT, 2021), leading to greater psychological repercussions and loss of motivation.

Germany

Germany has one of the lowest NEET-rates (OECD, 2021) for young people aged 15-29 in Europe (10,2%), after the Netherlands with 7,2% and Luxembourg 7,4%. The low NEET-rate in Germany is mainly caused by the dual-educational system, in which a significant part of the learning takes place at the workplace. This connects the young adult already in an early stage with work and connects to networks in the working environment. It also creates a higher awareness by the employers of the educational standards. General education in Germany is compulsory until the age of 15 or 16 (depending on the Bundesland) and is followed by a compulsory vocational education (at least part-time vocational schooling) until the age of 18. This means that NEET cannot legally occur by definition before this age. Until the present it worked well, although now more youngsters choose for a more theoretical (higher) education. Another reason could be the 'marginal employment', an employment relationship, with a maximum monthly income of €520,00. The employer pays a lump sum of 20% for social and health insurance and pension and that makes it attractive for young adults, to work parttime.

Germany has a strong federal system, and the NEET rate can differ per Bundesland. In fact, Germany has a national government and 16 federal governments, with their own ministries for education, labour and social affairs. This makes it difficult for a united approach toward the NEETs.

More than half of the NEETs are women, and for more than half of the women the cause of being NEET is motherhood.

Foreign-born school-leavers are more frequently in problematic situations (*long NEET*) and if they are successful in the end, they've reached their labour market integration via a quite unstable trajectory (*discontinuity or repeated NEET*) and not by classical institutionalized pathways (*long VET, short VET*).

Positive Pedagogy and Learning

History on positive pedagogy

In the history of pedagogy, already from the beginning of the 1900 the paradigm of education undergoes a shift from passive approach of teaching and learning, to an “active” model, which take into consideration the will of the pupils, and put them at the centre of the educational process. Even if the concept of “emotional education” is still far away to be considered as an autonomous approach and model, pedagogy starts to consider the importance of valuing the interests and talents of the students, to adapt teaching methods to the different age-ranges, channelling interests and considering the autonomous choices of the pupils.

Maria Montessori, the most famous Italian pedagogue, sought to give pedagogy a scientific guise. For Montessori, children have a right to study, in the sense of truly understanding what mechanisms of learning and socialization characterize them, exploring their personality maturation processes from their earliest years. Education is a mean for the realization of an inner "self," helping the child make use of its resources to express and develop itself.

The first pedagogical condition for accomplishing this child-friendly operation is the provision of a suitable environment, which Montessori calls the Children's House. In fact, in it the spaces are tailored to the educational needs of the little ones. Classrooms are few and housed in rooms that are not too large, with furnishings proportionate to the physical size of the children. The classroom is a "work room," tastefully furnished for pleasant living in, with materials (chairs, tables, shelves, cabinets, etc.) within easy reach of the children and easily used to move around, and act at ease, without the constant intervention of adults. Above all, the desk that holds pupils captive by forcing them to perform imposed work and exercises is abolished. Even the cleanliness of the premises is entrusted to the children themselves so that they are educated in order and decorum. The teacher is the one who advises, helps, stimulates, also tries avoiding the traditional reward and punishment system.

In this new environment, built on a child's scale, teaching materials take on a central function. The general goal of education, the central rule of the method lies in the defence of the child's freedom, the development of his or her experiences, preventing the adult from imposing his or her own interests and ways of learning and reasoning.

The Montessori “method” started from a simple but at the same time very revolutionary observation from that time, result of long and complex scientific elaboration: it is needed to arouse enthusiasm and joy in children for an effective educational intervention.

In the 70', Danilo Dolci made a similar experiment, with the experience of the “Mirto” educational centre, putting the children into the world's observation point.

The school, surrounded by nature, was built on a child's scale: each classroom has 3 entrances, all facing the countryside; the windows of the classrooms are all low, to allow students to see the

outside world; desks were arranged circularly, to facilitate the exchange of questions and answers typical of the RMA approach. Mirto school was born out of the wishes of the local population, who wanted a school that does not oppress and that grows individuals in and with the world, fostering the development of all those connections with others and with nature that can fully form future citizens of the world. In the 1970s the school was officially recognized as an experimental school by the state, and adds another other piece to Dolci's social and educational activities. All educational and working methods from Danilo Dolci put the person at the centre. He developed and experimented a method known as reciprocal maieutic approach (RMA): it is a process of question and response in which sitting in a circle each person tells the others his/her experience, his/her needs, and desires. In a world permeated by dynamics of prevarication, in which a few make the decisions for many, in which the strongest wins, RMA poses itself as a nonviolent alternative: through questions and answers the group come to define solutions that find the approval of the community. And the first question is always "What is your deepest dream?" for the need to connect with the inner wishes, needs and expectations of everyone. The Greek philosopher Socrates is the first to use the word "maieutic", which refers to the activity of the midwife, i.e., "giving birth": everyone can "put into the world" his or her own knowledge and give it to others, through questions, through dialogue, through one's own experiences and the reciprocity of relationships with others. Through countless meetings with farmers, fishermen, children, and parents, problems emerge and are understood, as well as the needs and desires of the community, its potential and the possibility of planning together a shared future for all, a future dreamed by all.

Vygotsky contributes to the dialogue on pedagogy reflecting on sociality as the characteristic aspect of development: the child grows in interaction with others, just as language is immediately a means of communication with the outside world. Central to his study is the social environment as a factor promoting development, whereby all intersubjective relationships with adults possess a strong educational value in that they are nonetheless cultural pathways without which humans cannot acquire their specific qualities and functions. Particular attention is paid to play. In play the child does what he or she most desires, since play is related to pleasure, on the other hand, he or she learns to act because in play he or she submits to rules and gives up what he or she wants.

Ferrière's conception recognizes the "vital and creative impetus" of which the child is the bearer as the force that moves the evolution of all living beings toward a spiritual end and is expressed in creative activity.

Another alternative pedagogy proposal comes from Brazilian Freire (1921), founder of the Brazilian Popular Education Movement and author of the famous "Pedagogy of the Oppressed." There is a need to overcome traditional education, which is teacher-centred and requires a passive attitude from the student. Instead, education must be based on educator-educated dialogue as both become co-authors and subjects of the same process in which they grow and form together. Traditional classrooms and school environments are replaced by open facilities: special places for formal learning (libraries, laboratories, etc.) and for direct learning through experience (workshops, factories, etc.); formation of working groups; creation of a "directory of educators" for choosing

experts to use according to one's needs. The whole project hopes for the creation of a "new conviviality" as a source of democracy, that is, the society becoming a place of exchange, comparison, and contact.

Recent scientific developments

The role of emotions in the learning process has been a growing topic of research interest over the past 20 years, and a specific focus has been given by neurosciences to the relationship between emotions, learning, and achievement. Importantly, research has revealed that emotion and cognition are reciprocally sustained thus interdependent, indicating that rather than interfering with learning, emotions are critical for it.

Actually, the study and the topic of emotions itself is quite new, especially in relation with education and pedagogy. The first author to question the concept of "intelligence" as a monolith, measured by IQ and strictly connected with logical and traditional academic aspects, was Gardner (1983) with his theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) which proposes eight independent modalities of intelligence type.

Later, in his book "Emotional Intelligence - Why it can matter more than IQ" (1995), Daniel Goleman – who has become the leading theorist of emotional intelligence - shared his ideas based on the scientific studies conducted over the previous 20 years. Goleman affirms that although a strong IQ can set the baseline for success in life, it is not a good indicator of prosperity. Academic intelligence, as Goleman shares, "offers no preparation for the turmoil or opportunity life's vicissitudes bring." (Goleman, 1995). In Goleman's second work on Emotional Intelligence entitled "Working with Emotional Intelligence" (1998), he suggests five domains for emotional intelligence.

They are described as follows:

1. Knowing one's own emotions: Goleman implies that self-awareness, i.e. recognising a feeling as it happens, is the keystone to emotional intelligence.
2. Managing one's emotions: Handling feelings appropriately is an ability that builds on self-awareness.
3. Motivating oneself: Containing, ordering, or controlling emotions while working toward a goal is critical for attentiveness, mastery and creativity. Being able to delay gratification, stifle impulses, and having emotional self-control underlies achievements of every sort.
4. Recognising emotions in others: One of the most fundamental people skills is to have empathy, the ability to recognize other's feelings based on having had similar feelings yourself.
5. Handling relationships: The art of relationships includes the skilful recognition and managing of emotions in others.

Daniel Goleman was the first to coin the term "Emotional Intelligence," thus finally giving respectable value to the deeper but less visible psychological aspects of the human mind and popularizing them to the general public.

Emotions contribute to learning successes, to the internalization of knowledge and meanings, and to the enhancement of the personal experience of the adult learner who transfers and applies in his or her professional sphere the results of when learned by engaging his or her emotional resources. For a long time, the dominant tendency in the education system has been to favour linear and curricular principles, ignoring the complexity of human beings and their distinctiveness. Today, thanks to numerous studies, it has been shown how important the emotional and affective aspect is in communication, social interaction, and school learning, because it has finally been understood that human beings are a totality of rationality and emotionality, and that from this perspective they must be educated and must learn to learn.

U.S. psychologist Daniel Goleman took up the concept of emotional intelligence which was already elaborated in 1990 by Professors Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer and demonstrated its value for all individuals, both small and large, in the relational, learning and work spheres. Goleman is fully convinced that emotional intelligence influences in daily life practices and is even responsible for a person's successes or failures. Enhancing emotional intelligence becomes, therefore, fundamental to psychological well-being, which is given by a person's ability to find a balance between positive and negative emotional states. The latter give meaning to life: the former allow one to learn and appreciate the more pleasant aspects, the latter allow one to learn, reflect and react.

Many other psychologists, philosophers and pedagogues contributed to the reflection about the importance of emotions in the learning process. For Vygotsky, learning is not mere conditioning and passive assimilation of pre-packaged content, but it involves a strong component of emotional-cognitive activation.

Jean Piaget argued that for the harmonious development of the personality of learners, an interaction between cognition and affectivity is necessary because of the close parallelism that exists in human thought between the affective and intellectual planes.

Gardner places great importance on the emotions the learner feels about a course of study: the student who enthusiastically discovers a new world and is stimulated in his or her curiosity will learn more successfully and with less effort than an imposed task that he or she considers uninteresting. The U.S. academic argues, in fact, that if certain knowledge is to be internalized and subsequently used, it needs to be placed in a context capable of arousing emotions. Conversely, experiences without emotional appeal will be poorly engaging and soon fall into oblivion, leaving behind no mental representation.

Psycho-educationalist Benjamin Samuel Bloom on the other hand, believes that there is a close relationship linking affectivity and motivation and learning, since affective and motivational

variables exert a relevant action in the processes of knowledge, understanding and socialization that take place in the school environment.

The crucial importance of emotions in learning is also highlighted by the link between emotions themselves and memory. In fact, emotions play an important role in cognitive processes related to memory, as the strength of memories depends on the degree of emotional activation induced by learning, whereby events/experiences experienced with a medium to high level of emotional participation are categorized in our minds as "important" (through the involvement of brain structures that are part of the limbic system, such as the amygdala and the orbitofrontal cortex) and have a good chance of being later remembered.

Since the 1990s, emotions and affect have gained a prominent place in pedagogy and, since then and increasingly, are considered fundamental and indispensable elements of education, to be considered in educational pathways and in a research perspective.

Best practices of positive psychology

Based on the previous theoretical background, during the research we identified 5 main areas of informal education where positive pedagogy approach is used: narrative and storytelling approaches, somatic and dance methods, nature-based methods, and art and drama methods. We also identified some basic approaches and methods which are widely used in other settings as well, such as the person-centred approach, other experience-based methods and mindfulness approaches.

In the following presently existing best practices were collected. It is important to state that the list is not full, and important techniques, methods are not mentioned. The important goal of the collection was to identify those criteria, which can be attributed to a "JOY method".

Narrative approaches:

Storytelling

A story is like a journey that takes the narrator and the listener to a completely new place. Telling stories is a form of knowledge that makes it possible to understand what is unique for one and universal for another. Through stories, we can connect with others, express our opinions, embrace those of others, formulate hypotheses, express desires, and share feelings and emotions. It makes it possible to reflect on oneself and on the behaviours of other, especially learners, thus achieving a continuous improvement of pedagogical actions.

Storytelling is the art of live presenting a story to an audience. A direct contact between tellers and listeners is made. That makes this art form an interactive process, where the teller will react to the verbal and mimic feedback from the audience. Oral or personal storytelling is also a co-creative process because the audience envisions the story in their own minds and, hence, give life to the described characters and scenes. Anyone who is able to share an experience is a storyteller. It does not necessarily require special skills and training and includes everyone in the process. Furthermore,

it is a very personal experience. One can convey their feelings and perceptions in a certain situation and the level of self-disclosure can be adjusted by the teller. Building and telling a story is a way for (re)discovering own's identity and communicating it to others, promoting awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence. Further benefits are the improvement of language, communication and social skills, development of understanding for different cultures and an increase in empathy, as one can gain new and different perspectives.

There are many ways to build and tell a story: stories can be build starting from anywhere, from a wide range of inputs such as cards (more abstract ones or with specific images, people, scenes, animals) or illustrated cubes (with images and numbers). These methods always use images for stimulating the imagination and the free association of ideas. Storytelling can be also facilitated through the use of characters, such as puppet theatre.

Creative Book Therapy

Creative Book Therapy or Bibliotherapy, practiced by non-medical professions, is defined as the 'creative and reasoned' use of literature and guided reading with the help of a Facilitator. Storytelling and reading help readers grow in self-awareness and think critically about their experience. Books have the ability to produce change in the individual, and self-care occurs through the use of reading as a tool to stimulate self-advocacy, emotional intelligence, lateral thinking, to promote self-awareness and interpersonal relationship skills.

During reading process, readers (Beach, 1993):

- *Become emotionally involved*
- *Construct alternative worlds and conceptualise characters, events and settings, create visual images*
- *Connect the text with their own experiences and evaluate their own experiences against what happens in the text*
- *Interact with the text becoming part of an intellectual and emotional process as each story unfolds.*

Bibliotherapy can be done with illustrated/picture books (with words and images) or silent books (only with images), a narrative methodology which relies on the artistic sensitiveness of the people involved. If traditional narrative uses words for supporting people in reflecting, describing emotions and describing themselves, illustrated and silent books have the power to stimulate a deeper reflection, giving more space to be filled in with the personal life experiences.

A picture book consists of two explicit narrative strands, and a third that remains unspoken until the reader makes it explicit. The first two strands are those given by text narrative and picture narrative. The implicit one is activated the moment the reader feels something resonate within him or her as he or she looks at the illustrations, reads the words, and lets the feelings flow.

Poetry Therapy

Originating in the early days of the world but spreading only recently, poetry therapy is an effective tool for achieving individual and group well-being. Poetry therapy is based on the premise that poetry writing has healing properties (Campbell, 2007). Indeed, proponents of the discipline claim that poetry writing and response-based interaction with other authors' poems enables people to express emotions, validate feelings, define ideas, contextualize experiences, sift through hypotheses, learn indirectly in contact with others, and become more aware of personal choices (Hynes & Hynes-Berry, 1994). Today, poetry therapy is used in a wide variety of contexts, individually and in a group, and is often likened to bibliotherapy (Berry, 1994), in which, with similar aims and techniques, non-poetic texts are also used; in this sense, poetry therapy is a specific and effective form of bibliotherapy, unique in its use of metaphor, imagination, rhythm, and other poetic figures, used for personal healing and development.

Symbolwork

During Symbolwork, counsellors work with their clients with the use of symbols, set out on the ground. During the counselling encounter, the very process of choosing and describing a symbol may be the source of inquiry by the counsellor, involving exploration of the emotions associated with the task of choosing the object, particularly if this had been difficult and the source of ambivalence. The counsellor may invite the young person to choose more than one symbol to adequately represent what they are feeling or thinking. Subsequently, the young person is encouraged to "describe the symbol and its qualities" to cultivate exploration rather than provide an interpretation, allowing the subconscious to be more readily accessible. A respectful and sensitive approach by the therapist is required when concluding the counselling session through inviting the client to tidy the symbols away or through the preservation of the client's work (Pearson, 2001; Geldard, 2016).

Symbolwork is seen to have the benefit of maintaining engagement, interest and enthusiasm with the young person and helps to access and disclose information consciously and to get in touch with, and explore, feelings, beliefs and thoughts.

More on Symbolwork with young people: www.symfos.eu.

Folk Tale Work / fairy tale therapy

"Let me go, my dear mother, to probe my fortune" - storytelling and folk/fairy tales had been guiding people's lives for generations in the past. Actually, they have also a lot to say about how to start an adult life, how to navigate in-between separation from parents, study and work for young people. Working with folk tales is a good coaching method to work with all the different issues around the life start of young people. Folk tales (and other parts of folklore like rhymes and folk songs) show a way how to look at the world around, but it is usually different. In folk stories there is no alienation from Nature – actually, other beings or imaginary beings are also important actors. If we look at folk

stories, we can see that their people live in good peace of nature, and if not, they face severe consequences (dragons, storms, wreath of the sun or the sea).

Ildikó Boldizsar, Hungarian folklore researcher and the developer of Metamorphosis Folk Tale Therapy method says that folk tales reflect upon different kinds of situations people face, and even more: all situations (life situations and conflicts) have their relevant folk tales. Our ancestors still had a close connection with the symbol system of folklore and therefore, when a storyteller chose a story, people did understand what it meant: what situation the story hero (protagonist) faced and how s/he solved it. This way folk stories worked (and still can work) as threads to solve personal problems, as patterns to learn from about connections and problem solving.

More on Metamorphosis folk tale therapy: <https://www.boldizsarildiko.com/en/meseterapia>.

Somatic and Dance methods:

Therapeutic methods

There are different dance and movement therapy types. All of them is built on developing our awareness of the body, dance and movement improvisation and their connection to self-reflection, thus on re-writing of behavioural patterns and self-healing. They can be used in clinical therapy as well.

Among others the following dance therapies are available in Europe:

Psychodynamic dance and movement therapy

It is mainly based on body-awareness and finding and analysing connections between our experiences of moving together and our relational patterns. The method was developed in Hungary, and it is among the rare group-based clinical dance therapies used. During a therapeutic session, participants share their emotions and what they come with, then after a longer (2-3 hours) of non-verbal structured movement process they also process all their emotions as well as interpretation. More about it: www.mozgasterapia.net.

Integrated Expression- and Dance Therapy

The key feature of this complex, interdisciplinary approach is that it uses multimodal expressive arts processes for self-knowledge, inner growth, personal development, trauma work, and other therapeutic goals. This feature derives from the idea that expression has healing power and we all have access to different ways, modalities, of expressions. The core of our work is movement and dance, but IED uses the integrating effect of other ways of expression, such as music making, visual expression and drama, 'authentic movement', imagination, poetry, personal symbols and rituals, and so on. The method is process oriented and helps one to find their self-healing potentials, hidden resources, and thus to improve the quality of their life. The process of creation and its meaning for its creator is more important than the aesthetic value of the end-product. IED works in groups – while immersed in artistic activities, the participants encounter each other in a deep way. Working

together, creating together, being together, feeling accepted and acknowledged. All this happens in a playful, joyful manner.

More about the method: [IKT Association – IKT Egyesület](#).

Authentic movement

Authentic Movement (AM) is a method originated from dance therapy used in holistic dance pedagogy and psychotherapy as well as in artistic processes. It offers insights and experiences into deep layers of the inner body (Soma) and psyche, new expressions, and abilities for the physical body (Physis) and the explorations and integration of its interconnections.

More about it: [METHODEN | Holistic Dance \(holistic-dance.at\)](#).

Non-therapeutic Somatic Methods

Contact Improvisation is a partner dance form based on the physical principles of touch, momentum, shared weight, and most quintessentially - following a shared point of contact. The form was founded in 1972 by Steve Paxton. Integrating his background as a modern dancer and his studies in the martial art form Aikido, Steve developed Contact Improv through explorations with his students and colleagues at the time. This dance practice explores the skills of falling, rolling, counterbalance, lifting using minimal effort, how to make ourselves light when being lifted, centring and breathing techniques, and responsiveness to our partners and surroundings.

Contact Improvisation is an honouring of every moment. There is a sweet surrendering that happens when our bodies stay faithful to what is happening now, and now... and NOW! One learns to recognize and differentiate subtle impulses in our movement choices and our partner's choices. We begin to decipher the cues that we give and receive which tell us when to lead or follow, when to go up, when to go down, where to touch, how to lift, when to slow down, and when to be still. In this form one learns to stay in integrity with each choice, never forcing, never rushing. When Body, Mind, and Spirit are united in their instinctive wisdom one finds ones-self at home in every moment expressing one's own true nature. (Moti Zelman)

More about it: <https://www.contactimprov.com/>.

Body-Mind Centering

Body-Mind Centering® (BMCTM) is an integrated and embodied approach to movement, the body and consciousness. Developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, it is an experiential study based on the embodiment and application of anatomical, physiological, psychophysical and developmental principles, utilizing movement, touch, voice and mind. Its uniqueness lies in the specificity with which each of the body systems can be personally embodied and integrated, the fundamental groundwork of developmental re-patterning, and the utilization of a body-based language to describe movement and body-mind relationships.

The study of BMCTM is a creative process in which embodiment of the material is explored in the context of self-discovery and openness. Each person is both the student and the subject matter and the underlying goal is to discover the ease that underlies transformation.

The Body-Mind Centering® approach has an almost unlimited number of areas of application. It is currently being used by people in movement, dance, yoga, bodywork, somatic studies, physical and occupational therapy, psychotherapy, child development, education, voice, music, art, meditation, athletics and other body-mind disciplines.

More about it: <https://www.bodymindcentering.com/>.

5Rhythms

5Rhythms is a dynamic movement practice —a practice of being in your body— that ignites creativity, connection, and community. While a seemingly simple process, the 5Rhythms practice facilitates deep and unending explorations, moving the dancer beyond self-imposed limitations and isolation into new depths of creativity and connection.

During a 5Rhythms class, participants dance with their own emotions and improvisations supported by different “rhythms”, types of music. The 5Rhythms – Flowing, Staccato, Chaos, Lyrical, Stillness® – are states of Being. They are a map to everywhere we want to go, on all planes of consciousness – inner and outer, forward and back, physical, emotional and intellectual. They are markers on the way back to a real self, a vulnerable, wild passionate, instinctive self.

More about it: <https://www.5rhythms.com/>.

Nature-based methods:

Adventure education, therapy:

Adventure programming uses the challenging adventure experiences in natural settings on cognitive, affective, and behavioural levels. The program is based on actions and activities in a new, sometimes unfamiliar environment. For many people, the all-natural environment is a challenge in itself. In this environment the facilitator offers high physical challenges. It does not mean only participating in a rock-climbing or rafting course. The participants depend on each other to learn and work together. The facilitator helps to keep the group safe, assess the capabilities and process the events. Adventure education and therapy usually promotes the feelings of self-efficacy, develops interpersonal skills, increases self-awareness and decreases anxiety and the feelings of depression.

Adventure programs are typically designed and developed around specific goals and populations, e.g., at-risk teens, children with special needs, deviant youth or families, etc...

More about it: <https://aspiroadventure.com/>, <https://www.outwardbound.net/>.

Shinrin Yoku - Forest bathing

Shinrin Yoku is a nature-related method originally from Japan. The method sees man as part of nature itself. It is therefore important that people integrate nature into their daily lives and cultivate a healthy relationship with it. The exercises of forest bathing are designed to enhance human health or wellbeing in a forest setting. Recognition of the forest environment, encompassing the five senses, forest walking and individual or group meditation in a natural scene could be part of a forest bathing session. These practices aim to rebuild the connection with nature which can also help in

reconnect with ourselves or reconnect with other people. These new connections to the nature, ourselves, and others could have healing effects, but at least the healthy relations cause increased mental health.

More about it: <https://www.scandinaviannatureandforesttherapyinstitute.com/en/home/>.

Animal assisted education, therapy

Animal assisted education and therapy includes animals in the treatment process. In this method the counsellor indicates, supports, and guides the interaction between the animal and the client or the group. The animals with the right temperament and training are suitable to build a safe and comfortable relationship with the client or group. Using this safe relationship, the counsellor can help the client in many ways. It can provide comfort and reduces level of pain or anxiety, improves movement or motor skills, develops social and behavioural skills and may increase motivation toward activities such as exercise or interacting with others.

More about it: <https://www.esaat.org/en/>.

Art and drama methods:

Holistic Art Therapy

As a multimedia approach, it offers time and space in a protective setting for contact with pictorial media like painting, drawing, modelling, and natural materials as well as with the performing media like improvisation, theatre, drama, poetry, photography, etc. As a result of experiencing very different materials, children often open themselves in a playful way, their conditions and emotions gradually finding expression as insights are gained. If one's own creativity and the joy of participating in shaping things result in a wider scope of action, resources are recognized and development becomes apparent. Careful therapeutic guidance, the autonomous taking of action right here and right now, the promotion of one's own potential, and the strengths of one's own capabilities lead to rewarding moments. Holistic art therapy does not battle symptoms, illness, or crises. It offers the rehabilitation and reconstruction of one's creative and social being as well as creative action. It is available for children, adolescents, and parents either individually or in a group.

More about it: <https://www.sterntalerhof.at/en/life-guidance/in-patient-care/holistic-art-therapy>.

Katalin Lábán's approach

Theatre techniques can be used to help people:

- To deal with emotions
- To express emotions
- To develop self-awareness
- To improve relationships

It can be used in case of depression, anxiety, trauma, substance use. Unfortunately, there is not too much research on the effectiveness of drama and theatre techniques. My experience is that all my

clients arrived to a better relationship with the quality of their life and all of them enjoyed the sessions.

Practically there is: storytelling, games, play, acting, improvisation, role playing, creative writing (haiku), vocal exercises, singing, dancing.

We always start and finish the sessions with sitting in a round circle, talking about basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, surprise. Then the acting part begins. We usually work in pairs and after each scene we discuss the emotions the audience feel. It is always non-judgmental. We talk not about the acting quality but the emotions they feel. The situations and the stories are usually fictional but sometimes real as well.

The members feel safe, trust is important during the whole sessions. Group work is not suitable for everyone. Some people need eye to eye sessions.

Forum Theatre

“Forum theatre is a type of theatre created by the innovative and influential theatre director Augusto Boal. It is one of the techniques under the umbrella term of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). This relates to the engagement of spectators influencing and engaging with the performance as both spectators and actors, termed "spect-actors", with the power to stop and change the performance. As part of TO, the issues dealt with in forum theatre are often related to areas of social justice with aims to explore solutions to oppression featured in the performance. (...) Forum theatre begins with a short performance, either rehearsed or improvised, which contains demonstrations of social or political problems. It allows spectators to collaborate in the experience by becoming ‘spect-actors’ (the audience that participates in the actual performance). Through a moderator (Joker) and a group of actively engaged spectators, Forum Theatre embodies dialogues, exchanges, learning, teaching, and pleasure. At the conclusion, the play will begin again with the audience being able to replace or add to the characters on stage to present their interventions; alternate solutions to the problems faced.” (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forum_theatre).

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Improvisational Theatre

“Improvisational theatre, often called improvisation or improv, is the form of theatre, often comedy, in which most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted: created spontaneously by the performers. In its purest form, the dialogue, action, story, and characters are created collaboratively by the players as the improvisation unfolds in present time, without use of an already prepared, written script.” (Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improvisational_theatre) “**Playback Theatre** is an original form of improvisational theatre in which audience or group members tell stories from their lives and watch them enacted on the spot.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Playback_Theatre).

More about it: <https://momentantarsulat.hu/oldal/english>.

Psychodrama

“Psychodrama is a type of experiential, action-based therapy in which people explore issues by acting out events from their past. This type of therapy incorporates aspects of role-playing, dramatic self-presentation, and group dynamics to help people gain greater understanding and insight into their lives and experiences. While it functions as individual therapy, it utilizes a group format. It is rooted in psychology, but it also incorporates elements of theatre and sociology.” (<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-psychodrama-5193006>).

Other methods:

Experiential education

Experiential education has common roots with adventure education. This approach does not need the natural environment, it can be implemented in a classroom, too. The facilitator invites the group into novel situations. In these situations, the usual resolution mechanisms do not work, the group is forced to communicate and cooperate. Planning before and assessment after the exercise have an important role during the process. During the evaluation the participants reflect on each other and themselves and draw general lessons from practice. The group and its development have an important role in this method, participants learn during the exercises work in a group, lead a group and let led by others. They learn to argue, pursue interests and accept other’s opinion and decision. The exercises help the participant to develop their social skills, emotional intelligence and push their own limits.

More about it: <https://www.pressleyridge.org/>, <http://www.kalandokesalmok.hu>.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness can be effective for young people as well. It brings our attention to the present moment. It can reduce depression, stress, anxiety. Helps people with special needs. It reduces rumination and worry. It can influence physical health. The immune system can work better as well. The origin of mindfulness is in Buddhist tradition, in Zen and vipassana meditation techniques. In practice you have to draw your attention to the present moment. It is not easy. There are guided meditations which can help you to achieve a better experience. In practice you can sit in a chair or cross-legged on a cushion on the floor. Close your eyes and focus on breathing in and out. When your thoughts come in you let them go and focus again on your breath. There is also body scan meditation when you focus on different parts of the body. You can also focus on sounds, thoughts, and feelings. Mindful eating can also be an exercise (raisin exercise: you close your eyes and start to eat very slowly, observing the texture, taste, and try to be present during the whole time).

More about it: <https://www.mindful.org/everyday-mindfulness-with-jon-kabat-zinn/>.

Rogersian encounter

The Rogersian encounter is very difficult to write about, it is a kind of state of being. The whole being together is extremely non-structured, un-structured. Trust between the facilitator and the members

and trust between the members is a core issue. During the course, the power of the group gradually grows and the influence of the facilitator decreases. The encounter has no structure. The personality of the facilitator is the key. That is why it is so difficult to write about the encounter groups. The only way to learn how to be a facilitator of an encounter group is not from books but observation, being part of a group and experience the atmosphere. There is a secret, a magic how intuition works, and it cannot be taught. The only way to teach it might be that I write about my experience when I was the head of an encounter group and this might help the new teacher to trust himself / herself that he/she is capable of having an encounter session as a facilitator and he/she can develop his/her own way of leading. The group works intuitively in an unstructured way. I think these are the key words beside the Rogersian definition empathy, congruence, unconditional acceptance.

More about it: <http://rogerskozpont.hu/component/k2/item/99-mitol-szemelykozpontu-egy-encounter-csoport>.

The voices from the field

As part of our analysis the JOY team reached out to practitioners, working on the field, youth counsellors and educators. In the four countries of the project we have interviewed altogether 32 practitioners (10-10 in Italy, Hungary and Austria, and 2 in Germany).

Impact of COVID-19 as seen by practitioners

Our interviewees reported the same as the results of the desk-research: a worsening situation of youth after COVID-19 pandemic regarding their mental health, self-confidence, self-esteem, hope in the future, and capability to meaningfully connect with others outside the online environment, with a difficulty to re-connect with their body, other people, and the nature. COVID has increased distance, so they experience some blocks, and the educators need to start slowly and gently to help them, creating a safe space for them to feel free to connect. Moreover, in our context, youngsters, especially in difficult neighbourhoods are totally cut off from any cultural opportunities.

Many adolescents and youth have experienced a sense of loneliness, isolation, and relational problems, characterized by a loss of confidence in future possibilities. Other negative consequences given by the pandemic were: increased nervousness, reduced physical activity, reduced sleep, less healthy eating. Therefore, the general picture of Italian youth highlights a situation of widespread malaise among young people: negative repercussions on the ability to study, chronic fatigue, uncertainty and worry, irritability and anxiety, apathy and discouragement. For educators, starting work again in the post-pandemic era was particularly trying. They have had to start working with people who have faced the trauma of the pandemic as well as their problems.

On the other hand, some practitioners reported back that Covid-19 gave the opportunity to create free space by not being steered by school programmes, class situations. Being blocked away at home also created free space for some of these youngsters.

Challenges Young People Face

Although the “typical client” of the practitioners we interviewed varied from young asylum seekers to urban youth and rural youth, the challenges the practitioners described were quite similar. There were two main issues for challenge for young people – themselves, and the circumstances they feel less control upon.

As for themselves they face the following problems:

- Feeling of powerlessness
- Negative thought spirals
- Feeling of dependence

- Too little confidence in one's own ability to act
- Finding one's own place, fitting in the society, finding an orientation
- Hard to deal with self-responsibility
- Having no long-term goals
- Lack of internal motivations

As about their environment, the following problems, challenges were mentioned:

- Fear of the future (crisis-related and climate related)
- 'Performance society' and finding one's place within
- Changes to short-term contracting for young people, less employment safety
- Low chances in rural areas (external steering...): bad infrastructure (long way to school, less buses), financial (renting a room during the week)
- Low level of trust in the "world of politics", of adults
- Cultural and linguistic difficulties for refugees and immigrants

As one youth worker said: "*Fear of the future* would be the slogan that applies to many of my young clients at the moment, which is not surprising given the current situation".

Skills needed for young people for carrier success

There are several skills that young people should acquire to be successful in their job life, but many of them are already in them, they only need to realize their strength and power. For this reason, the use of practices related to art becomes extremely important because it helps them to enhance their already existing features.

A long list of skills and competences were mentioned by youth workers as essential for being successful in jobs. These were: self-awareness, communication, cooperation, problem-solving, self-assertion, flexibility, creativity, digital competence, failure tolerance, responsibility, emotional intelligence, adaptability, resilience, self-esteem, self-awareness, self-acceptance, respect and empathy for others, honesty, critical thinking, tolerance, and willingness to learn.

One interviewee said: "every young person should be given a free year for social activities and take a trip around the world with a backpack and little money", which would be a good way to gain all these skills.

Challenges Youth Workers Face

Youth workers and practitioners have to deal with the sense of failure, fear and stress of young people experiencing such a difficult situation. They try to stress the importance to give time to the participants to overcome their barriers, going step by step, and creating a trustful and positive environment with the trainers and the group.

There is also the existing level of distrust and demotivation youth workers have to overcome. For that, they need a lot of internal strength, and also a lot of very different techniques, activities, they can offer for young people.

However, the environment youth workers face is not supportive either. They face the expectations from the educational or other institutions, which are usually not flexible to provide time and space for young people to nonformal / informal activities. The family environment of the young person is also often unsupportive. There is a lack of resources – mainly money and infrastructure – in youth work, and youth workers are often underpaid.

Combined with the increasingly hard way to reach out to young people, these negative environmental effects often leave to burnout and carrier-change, which prevents long-term work with young people.

How youth workers face these challenges?

Our interviewees reported to use several different tools to engage, motivate and empower young people (best practices described later). They agreed that youth workers' role is to explain and demonstrate that the focus is not the performance and the result but the process itself: "Be a learning facilitator instead of a mediator". Any learning opportunity, especially those that refers to the artistic field, are a powerful way for offering an exit strategy from difficult life conditions, to experience positive emotions and rediscovering a purpose in life. Experiential methods can be powerful to overcome personal blocks, and art is a universal language that everyone can experience to feel capable to express oneself without judgements, thus increasing self-esteem and a sense of agency for its own life. Doing art, anyone is free and able to contribute with its own talents and capabilities. Especially with particular target groups, from different cultures or different backgrounds it is fundamental that personal space, both physical and emotional has to be respected and very gently "touched".

Art serves to reframe all emotions: even negative ones can be reframed in a positive way. It is a privileged channel because usually the group is always present to act as a mirror and support. Emotions can emerge through the body without the use of verbal expression which is difficult to use with users in difficult situations. Since sessions always take place in a protected place, guaranteed by privacy, users feel safe to express themselves and work on their emotions starting with a sensory experience and then (when possible) personal and group reflection. This leads to the promotion of positive emotions and better management of negative ones.

As about assessment, there are very differing practices from formative and formal (such as e.g. the HAMET method) to totally informal through speaking to the young person, observation in activities. As one practitioner said: “In some cases, youngsters over-value themselves (by parents, teachers...), that they are the best, and they have to experience in a practical way that they still have to learn a lot.”

Conclusions from the field research

Young people in our countries have faced large challenges before, but with climate change crisis, and the COVID-crisis, these increased to a whole new level. Youngsters feel lost, control-less, helpless, which leads to an increasing level of demotivation, and they are also harder to reach.

Practitioners therefore are forced to look for new and engaging methods for reaching out to their clients, increase their level of agency and control. These are techniques, where young people themselves are in control of their learning, are creative, and provide a feeling of success.

Valuation of Prior Learning and its use in JOY Pedagogy

Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) is an ad hoc process of identifying, documenting, assessing, and certifying the learning outcomes of individuals acquired within previous formal education and training. It gives visibility and value to all forms of learning and seeks to uncover and unlock latent talent in the workforce and in society.¹ The European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning (Cedefop, 2015) are leading in the implementation of VPL in Europe.

After 20 years implementing VPL in Europe, the results are limited. In the 'European Inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning' (Cedefop, 2018) it is stated that "... the use of validation still appears to be limited. This is especially so for disadvantaged individuals, who are, in many countries, still not using validation initiatives".

The thematic report 'Monitoring the use of validation of non-formal and informal learning' (Cedefop, 2016) states more clearly: "The results show a lack of comprehensive national statistics on validation, exacerbated in many countries by a lack of a clear regulatory framework on validation and/or mandate for organisations responsible for validation to build up integrated databases or release annual data. A further challenge is the fragmented offer of validation opportunities", and some findings within the EU (Cedefop, 2018) are 1) no uniform legal framework to regulate validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (AT), 2) no general individual right for individuals to access validation initiatives. validation initiatives and arrangements were already available, often linked to the sector of adult education (AT), 3) known in a narrow circle, especially among the experts dealing with the topic (HU), 4) No studies on the benefits of the various validation procedures (DE).

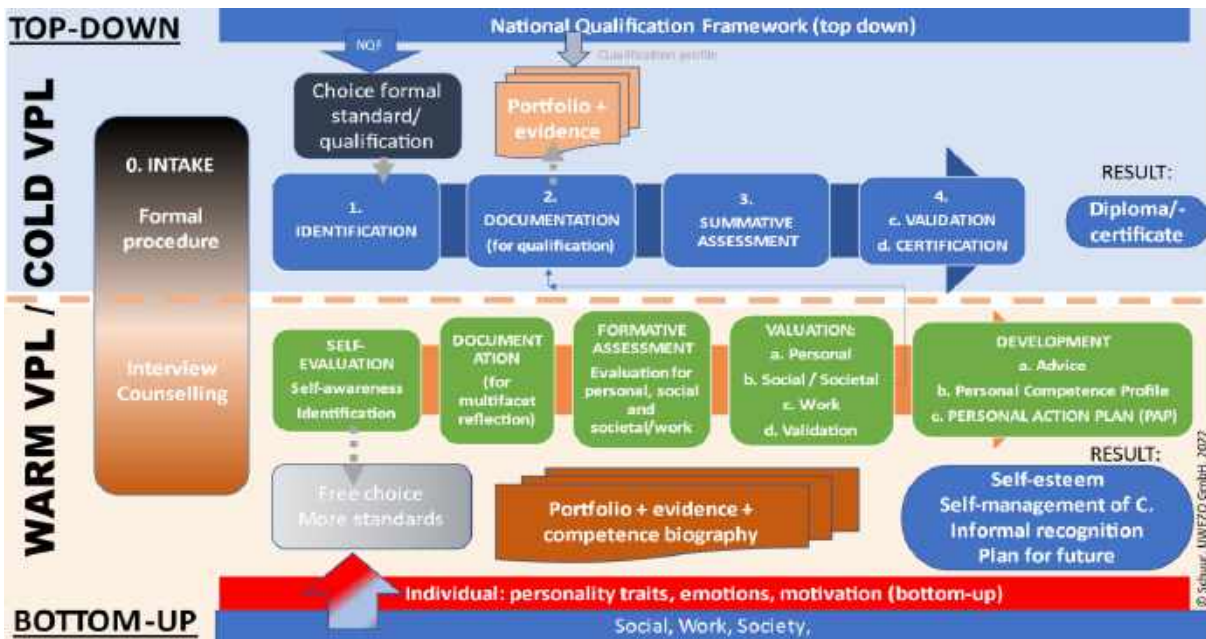
What is missing?

All above mentioned EU-instruments aim at a 1) a formal recognition of competencies, 2) a standard procedure for the validation process, 3) standardising the certificates, diplomas, credits, occupational standards and 4) fitting in the above-mentioned frameworks (e.g. EQF, NQF, ECVET) and instruments like Europass.

This standardised process and its instruments leave little space for the uniqueness of a person, the personality traits, the emotions, motivation, the informal self- and social recognition and the power of the diversity in learning and valuing the outcomes of learning. And yet, this is what an individual need is (e.g. closer to his/her own needs, reducing stress, increasing resilience), what employers are asking for (rather a high-motivated, practical and learning employee, than a high-certificated, more theoretic, manager).

¹ Berlin Declaration on Validation of Prior Learning, 08.05.2019

The scheme below describes the formal and the informal recognition of competencies. The top part of the drawing shows the Cedefop standard of 4 steps in a formal validation process: 1) Identification, 2) Documentation, 3) Assessment, and 4) Validation/certification.



The bottom part of the scheme describes the more informal multi-valuing of competencies.

The findings in the monitoring shows the low effectivity of cold VPL. An example is the VPL for the 280.000 Childminders in France. In 2019 around 5.000 persons showed interest in VPL, 188 candidates have enrolled in a VAE (French VPL) procedure and 111 have successfully obtained the childminder diploma. The other 4.800 (and more) were more interested in self-evaluation, self-esteem, support for and improvement of their informal learning and other ways of recognition (social, professional).

Facts are that 70-93% of learning by individuals is informal and that recognition mostly comes from informal valuing. For example, the selection of employees (recognition and valuation) is mostly done through informal channels and networks. The outcome of a research done by the Institute for The Future for DELL Technologies it was expected that 85% of the jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't be invented yet. Present vocational and academic certificates and diplomas will not be enough or even not valid anymore.

JOY intends to merge elements of the warm (formative) VPL with element of the cold / summative. The JOY project connects the informal valuing processes with the for VPL system, whereas the valuing process of the individual is leading and where s/he has the power of control over their own development.

As JOY pedagogy methods are experience-based, informal valuing, evaluation is usually built into the process itself. For JOY methodologies we suggest including a provision of certificate describing the experience and the competences developed through those experiences.

Conclusions of the Research

During our research – both based on previous research and through the feedback of youth workers, we have found that many young people lack a clear personality profile and place in life. They suffer from sadness, tiredness, lack of drive and motivation, lack of interest in hobbies and friends, fear, feeling of inner emptiness. And external circumstances increase the pressure on these youngsters, like the accelerated speed of change in this world, a high pressure to perform, decreasing role of family structures, and social contacts mainly via the Internet.

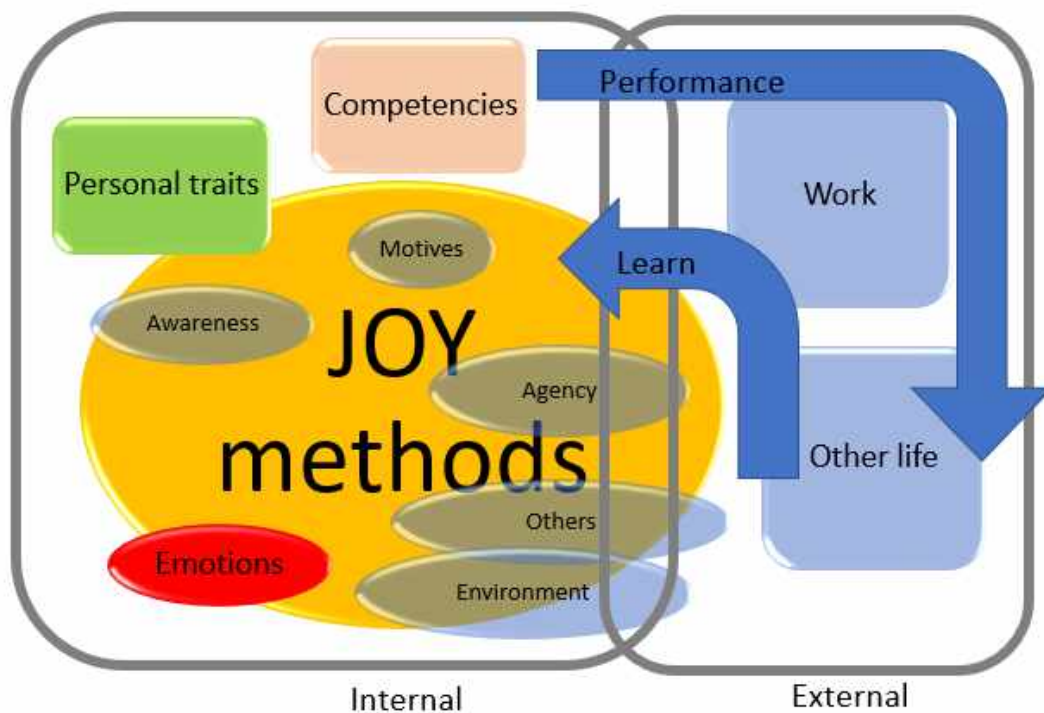
At the same time, we learned that the role of emotions in the learning process has been a growing topic of research interest over the past 20 years, and neuroscience has a specific focus on the relationship between emotions, learning, and achievement. Importantly, research revealed that emotion and cognition are sustained together and thus interdependent, indicating that rather than interfering with learning, emotions are critical for learning.

During our research we identified the following other factors related to outputs in well-being and work performance:

External: work and other life areas, physical environment, personal relationships.

Internal: personality traits, emotions, awareness of emotions, agency, motives, competences

Based on these we have developed the following JOY model of interacting factors:



The model is described in more detail in our GUIDE for Developing Attunement through the Experience of Joy.

We cannot change the full social environment for young people. Therefore, we have to act at the personal level. We have been collecting practices, which involve, motivate people, where people experience growth and learning.

Based on all these findings, we have concluded the following:

- It is important to base our pedagogy on Rogers' view of a person, who is always capable of growth in a supportive environment;
- JOY methods are used in a "transient space" - safe environment;
- JOY methods are experience-based and used in groups;
- JOY methods lead to learning outcomes that are tested / used in the real life;
- JOY methods very much focus on the actual state and awareness of people (mindful approach);
- JOY methods increase level of agency – personal feeling of control over one's own life, and empowerment;
- JOY methods recognise emotions, validates them, and increase emotional intelligence;
- JOY methods support self-valuation, external valuation and feedback and self-reflection (containing relevant parts and exercises);
- JOY methods help to create and maintain healthy relationships;
- JOY methods help to be aware of our physical environment, both built and natural.

Based on these findings we have developed the JOY Criteria and guidelines for JOY practice, also described in our GUIDE for Developing Attunement through the Experience of Joy.

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Annex 1: More characteristics of the young generation of the present

Our target group, the NEETS, are children of the Z-generation, with parents mostly from the Y and partly from the X-generation.

[Prof. Dr. Martin Schröder](#) describes these generations as follows:

Important for the Z-generation (born 1995-2009) is the fear of loss of wealth, smartphones, social media, parents as best friends, permanent sense of crisis (economy, social, politics, environment, psychological, etc.), terror. Typical behaviour is: Dating via apps and social media, addicted to feedback/recognition, fear of the future, difficult decision-making, concentration as in radar surveillance, top priority "family cohesion", trust through ratings and likes, difficulties in personal life communication. Their attitude to work is: Here is the work and there is my life.

Their parents are mostly children in the Y-generation who focus on prosperity, e-mail, mobile phone, parental saying "do what makes you happy", freedom, end of compulsory military service and their typical behaviour is: freedom-loving, egoism, first self-realization - then family planning, living for the moment (pension, what's that?) and attitude to work: first life then work.

Many young people lack a clear personality profile and place in life. They suffer from sadness, tiredness, lack of drive, lack of interest in hobbies and friends, fear, feeling of inner emptiness. And external circumstances increase the pressure on these youngsters, like the accelerated speed of change in this world, a high pressure to perform, decreasing role of family structures, and social contacts mainly via the Internet. And this all happens in the period in their lives in which they should build, based upon trust and security, their 'career' in life and their 'career' in work.

European and national policies are increasing this pressure, like the Bologna goal that 40% of the young adults must have a tertiary education and the increasing chasing for certificates / diplomas, including the validation (VPL). Also, the increasing speed of change makes it more difficult for NEETs to match the market demand for higher educated persons and less in the middle range, implying a lower chance on the labour market.

Dr. Rainer Funk explained in his presentation (2008) "Verbunden sein ohne Bindung: Psychodynamik eines neuen Charakters" that more than 20% of the youth was already narcissistic, and the trend is rising. It seems that there is a mismatch between normal, social, societal, developmental behaviour and the behaviour of youngsters, demonstrating that they are the best, above the others. There is no visible link anymore between their inner-self (emotions, motives, real personality traits) and the person they show to the outside world.

Annex 2: Unemployment rate and NEET rate

NEETs were explicitly mentioned for the very first time in the European policy debate during the flagship initiative "Youth on the Move" by Europe 2010. The term included the 15-24 age group and was later expanded to cover 15–29-year-olds. The concept has evolved an important part of policy dialogue at the EU level. In 2019, 12.6% of the population aged 15-29 were NEETs, which was the lowest level in a decade, but after the COVID-19 pandemic, this proportion increased to 13.7% in 2020.

(NEETs | Eurofound, 2021)

The following table shows a comparison of the NEET rate and the rate for unemployed young people in the EU27 area.

Country	NEETs	Unemployed youth
	Rate (%)	Rate (%)
EU27	12,8	14
Belgium	10,5	15,5
Bulgaria	18,1	14,9
Czech Republic	11,0	7,8
Denmark	9,9	10,2
Germany	6,4	5,7
Estonia	10,7	19,3
Ireland	13,4	12,6
Greece	18,1	31,1
Spain	15,2	29,8
France	13,3	16,4
Croatia	14,6	18,3
Italy	22,0	24,2
Cyprus	13,6	16,8
Latvia	11,2	10,3
Lithuania	13,1	11,5

Luxembourg	6.2	14,5
Hungary	14.7	10,7
Malta	9,0	10,5
Netherlands	5,2	7,3
Austria	7.1	9
Poland	12,9	9,1
Portugal	10.8	19,9
Romania	16,6	22
Slovenia	8.5	10,1
Slovakia	15.2	18,8
Finland	10.1	15,2
Sweden	6.4	22,4

(Eurostat, 2021)

Annex 3: EU instruments relevant for NEETS

Several initiatives have been created to improve the transparency and recognition of competencies and qualifications across Europe. These include:

- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) helps in comparing national qualifications systems, frameworks, and their levels to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe.
- Europass, a set of five standardised documents and a skills passport available for free in 26 languages, designed to enable users to present their skills, qualifications, and experience across Europe. See <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>
- Credit systems: ECTS for higher education and ECVET for vocational education and training
- Quality assurance arrangements in higher education and vocational education and training (European Education Area)

The European Union (EU) has multiple common tools to help people transfer, recognise, and accredit their evaluated learning achievements, obtain a qualification, or participate in lifelong learning. The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is one of these tools; it uses flexible and personalized learning paths, including transnational mobility.

What ECVET does

ECVET allows learners to acquire, transfer and use their learning in units once these units have been achieved. In this way, learners can build a qualification at their own speed from learning achievements obtained in both formal, non-formal and informal contexts in their own country and abroad. The system is based on units of learning achievements as part of qualifications that can be evaluated and verified.

It provides a framework to enhance learner mobility and transferability of qualifications by establishing principles and technical specifications and using existing national legislation and regulations. It applies to VET qualifications at all levels of the European Qualifications Framework.

ECVET complements and builds on the concepts and principles of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Europass and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF).

What Cedefop does

In cooperation with the European Commission, Cedefop monitors the application of the ECVET Recommendation at EU, national and sectoral levels and delivers technical and analytical support. It researches and analyses qualifications and qualifications systems and the links among European tools for education and training (ECVET, ECTS, EQF, FQ-EHEA, Europass, EQAVET).

Cedefop also organizes and participates in ECVET-related events, including ECVET User Group meetings, the annual ECVET Forum and peer learning activities.

(European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET))

The Europass

The purpose of the Europass is the easy comparability of qualifications, experiences, and achievements in the EU area. It makes easy for users to document their skills and qualifications and to submit an application that can be understood and evaluated throughout Europe. Through further documents such as the Europass Mobility, the Europass Certificate Supplement, and the Europass Diploma Supplement, you can document your competencies even more precisely and subsequently present them to the desired job/training position.

(Der Europass: Dokumente, n.d.)



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