Network Group for Psychodramatists Working with Children and Youth
3rd – 5th of February, Budapest 2017

Report of the meeting
Stefan Flegelskamp, Secretary of FEPTO

My grandmother told me a piece of wisdom in the sentence: “I will write you a long letter, because I have no time for a short one! “

Reducing so many emotional impressions in a short report is not an easy task.

Networking is the best way to enter FEPTO

The Kende Hanna Psychodrama with Children Association and the Hungarian Association invited the FEPTO network group Psychodrama with Children and Youth to Budapest and took care of the organisation of the meeting. 40 participants attended on Saturday and the 6 workshops held by the participants were an unbelievable success.

Thank you Bea, Hanna, Victoria, Daniel and Zsofia for your great hospitality and the warm welcome in Budapest.
After arrival the warm-up was led by Viktória Drinóczky. After this warm-up the group was able to include the tallest and the shortest, the youngest and the oldest, man and woman, newcomers and pioneers.

Hanna Kende presented her special way to use Psychodrama with children. Every participant immediately understood; here was a pioneer of the child psychodrama movement. Hanna Kende talked about attitudes for encountering children and understanding their special needs in playing.

Workshops:

Stefan Flegelskamp and Milena Mutafchieva presented Child Psychodrama project in Gaza and the Stabilization Program as an outcome of it.

The Psychodrama Project in Gaza

Projects and personal engagement often begin unplanned and spontaneously.

In May 2012, Agnes Dudler and Stefan Flegelskamp accompanied Ursula Hauser and Maja Hess to the Gaza Strip for the first time and assisted them in their work there. At the 2011 FEPTO Conference in Israel, the two professionals had lobbied for international support for the project ‘Psychodrama in Gaza’. A concept was developed; and after two trial seminars, a three-year project was conceived that would provide 25 Palestinian psychodramatists with advanced training in children’s psychodrama following the methods developed by Alfons Aichinger.

Any doubts that existed at the beginning of the project as to whether these therapy methods could also be applied effectively in the Palestinian treatment culture were soon laid to rest. Playing with children and following along with them in their child’s world of symbols also demands from the therapists that they endure desperation and helplessness within their roles – thereby broadening the children’s scope for play and instilling hope in them (see above). To accomplish this in Gaza of all places – the largest prison in the world, where the therapists are usually just as traumatised as their patients – is it possible? The faces of our participating colleagues – their increasingly relaxed body language and their feedback – all affirmed this. A few modifications were necessary, which we developed cooperatively – and the training helps the therapists themselves, their families and their work: “This means help for 100 x 100 children, what we are doing here.”
And the need is enormous. Fifty percent of the people in Gaza are below 18 years of age, and they all grow up – as did their parents and most grandparents – under siege and the repeated threat of deadly attacks and war. Having lost their home and land is the trauma most families have had to cope with. Not being able to leave the country and travel, the economic depression and dependency on outside help are further challenges.

Afterwards Milena Mutafchieva presented one important outcome of this project: The Trauma Stabilization Program.

A training program for stabilization of traumatized children in refugee and asylum-seeking and in immigrant families.

Description of the project: This Proposal is for development of a further professional training course for psychological and educational staff working in refugee aid and immigrant families, and to provide them with a manual for trauma stabilisation. Training groups for professionals, and pilot groups of child-parent-pairs and supporting youths are conducted in each participating country. Effectiveness of trauma stabilization program and learning process of professionals is researched. There are nine partners in three countries, and FEPTO is requested to be one of the partners. Project lasts 1.5-2 years, starting on September, 2017.

Funding: An application is submitted for Erasmus+-funding in March, 2017.

Initiators and contacts: Stefan Flegelskamp (Germany), Milena Mutafchieva (Bulgaria) and Reijo Kauppila (Finland)

Zsófia Tölgy-Molnár - Edina Sütőné Daragó presented the Child Psychodrama developed by Hanna Kende
Music in the Drama, Drama in the Music

In our workshop participants were able to experience Child Psychodrama with Music Making. Child Psychodrama as developed by Hanna Kende brings out children’s self-healing potential by fostering their creativity and self-expression through the magical world of fairy-tale like stories they make up and act out, providing a full body transformational experience.

In our groups most children have difficulty expressing themselves and connecting to others, either because they are too anxious and frozen or their behaviour is too disorganized and energetic. Therefore we use additional non-verbal ways of self-expression such as music making to free them up and help them connect with their emotions and their peers.

During the therapeutic process we provide children with opportunities to move back and forth between the different modalities and ways of self-expression best suited for their needs in the moment. With non-verbal ways of self-expression as well as improvisation we support children to become engaged in the creative healing process faster and to experience their emotions and a sense of connectedness deeper.

In the workshop we presented a former child psychodrama group, which had several children with severe communication difficulties such as ASD, selective mutism and language disorder, who greatly benefited from this approach.
Tünde Majsa-Hideg - Kata Erdei presented the “Bear Group” - Child Psychodrama with kindergartners

In our workshop we would like to show you why STORY DRAMA, a kind of psychodrama on the basis of children’s stories, is such an effective group technique for children between 4 and 10.

A unique feature of the technique is that participants take on animal roles that provides progressive regression to help them see the outlines of new future possibilities in their repeated past.
In our Teddy bear group after the initial verbal circle we prepare our role taking through collective story writing. After that children play and complete the story.

In a STORY DRAMA group everybody has the chance to play. Quiet or timid participants can take on supporting roles in which they can gain confidence for greater ones.

To give you first-hand experience we are planning to include a play where some of the workshop participants can play while others can watch from the circle.

Angela Sordano:

**How to use active imagination in the work with adolescent and the projection to the future?**

Adolescents in clinical situations bring in a psychotherapeutic group the question of the identity redefinition and of the separation-individuation from the parents’ representations (parents’ imago). The specific cognitive and emotive functioning (concrete thinking, narcissism) in this phase of life does not allow a work based on the past elaboration or on introspective reflection (the perspective of the third).

The projection in the future, made by the active imagination and the body movement through three psychodrama scenes (the past, the present and the future), can favours the change in the self-representation thanks to the group mirroring and to the leader’s help in discovering new potential personal aspects (personal project).
The Self-image in a new relational context, in which what is entrapped in the past can be overcome, is the basis for the construction of self-cohesion and of the feeling of the Ego continuity. The work through active imagination can have some dangerous implication, because it can let emerge destructive aspect in the personality, for this reason it must be used inside a good group climax and with a holding conduction.

Craig Stevens presented how to use the “Russian Doll” technique and other tools with adolescents.

My workshop looked at the similarities and differences using psychodrama with adolescents as opposed to adults. The groups I run with young people take as their premise that all adolescents want two conflicting and opposite responses simultaneously; - to be totally independent and treated as adults, while also wanting to be hugged and told that everything is going to be alright. In my workshop I tried to show how those two polar opposites can be managed through the psychodramatic method.

I demonstrated techniques that can be adjusted to be used with adolescents such as the 'Russian Doll' exercise.

Naturally I tried to sculpt and alter the workshop to the changing needs of the conference over the Meeting Resume:
Everybody left this second networking meeting enthusiastic and full of new ideas. Every participant wants to come back and continue in this group.

The FEPTO – network-group Psychodrama with Children and Youth will meet again from 2nd to the 4th of February 2018 in Torino, Italy. The local host will be Angela Sordarno.

Please save the date.

And last but not least the first international Psychodrama with Children and Youth Conference will take place 2018 in Budapest. Organized by the Kende Hanna Psychodrama with Children Association and supported by the Hungarian Association and by FEPTO.

Echo:
The Lion, The Witch and the Broken Wall.

In Budapest, I met an old woman with more energy, more life and a better appetite than me.

I found that I underestimated the resonance of our surroundings.

I saw psychodrama through play with younger children, and analytical and adapted psychodrama with adolescents and thought about the children who might be between those two approaches.
I was told during the weekend that Hungarian people are said to be pessimistic and negative. This was not my experience.

Any World That I'm Welcome to Is Better than the One I Come From.

Craig

We attended the international FEPTO network meeting for the second time – this time we were very warm welcomed in Budapest by our Hungarian colleagues who supported us with everything we needed to spend a time of dense professional exchange. We also had the honour to get to know Hanna Kende – a very impressing and warm-hearted expert of child psychodrama.

The group has grown and it was as nice to meet again fellow colleagues we already knew from our meeting in Berlin last year as well as getting to know new people from all over Europe.

Again it was very enriching to come into contact with different approaches to child psychodrama – and “on top” we had the chance to get in contact and talk also about the conditions of our profession in the different countries we are living, as well as our personal or professional attitudes, experiences and so forth. Especially in times with growing nationalism in many parts of the world we feel that these personal exchanges and encounters are even more important and valuable than before.

Many thanks to our local hosts, the organizing team of FEPTO and all colleagues participating and contributing to these three days of exchange!

*Thomas and Bettina from Munich, Germany*

**Last but not least:**

*We are very pleased to inform you about two very imported books concerning Psychodrama and children translated and published in English.*

*Alfons Aichinger, Walter Holl: Group Therapy with children*


*Hanna Kende: Psychodrama with children, healing children through their own creativity*

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