



SURVIVAL CAMPS IN NATURE AS A FORM OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

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Abstract/Izvleček This paper presents survival camps in nature as a form of social skills training. The camps are aimed primarily at adolescents with behavioural and emotional difficulties. They comprise many everyday social skills where both the group and the individual in the group are important. Social skills are among the many skills we teach in survival camps. Participants become acquainted with the content, methods and skills, and they strengthen the competences that help them to better integrate and function in the society. We shall present to what extent and in what way the social skills of young people are strengthened at survival camps, how young people gain vital experiences and competences and develop their potential.

Tabori preživetja v naravi kot oblika treningov socialnih veščin

Namen prispevka je predstaviti tabor preživetja v naravi, kot obliko treninga socialnih veščin. Tabori so namenjeni predvsem mladostnikom z vedenjskimi in čustvenimi težavami. Vsebujejo veliko vsakodnevnih socialnih veščin, kjer sta pomembna tako skupina kot posameznik v skupini. Socialne veščine so ene od mnogih veščin, ki jih »učimo« na taborih preživetja. Udeleženci spoznavajo vsebine, metode in veščine ter krepijo kompetence, ki jim pomagajo pri boljšemu vključevanju in delovanju v družbi. Predstavili bomo v kolikšni meri in na kakšen način se na taborih preživetja krepijo socialne veščine mladostnikov, kako mladostniki pridobivajo življenjsko pomembne izkušnje in kompetence ter razvijajo lastne potencialne.

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Introduction

In most cases, a lack of social skills and the ability to make social contacts are present in adolescents with behavioural and emotional difficulties. The reasons for this can vary. Nevertheless, social skills can be learned through social skills training. Humans are social beings, and we all need social skills and contact with others. Adler (Adler, 2013) believes that without social games, the sense of belonging in an individual cannot occur.

Gomez and Kobolt believe that in today's society, which is constantly changing, the consequences emerge in the areas of the economy and values, as a product of globalization, thus making children and adolescents face new challenges and issues of how to survive in psychological, material and sociological terms. (Gomez and Kobolt, 2012).

Nowadays, we cannot offer the most appropriate forms of help to young people with behavioural and emotional difficulties or disorders with the old forms and methods of work. With regards to the needs of children and adolescents, different types of assistance need to be developed. In the 1930s, the pioneer of experiential pedagogy, Kurt Hahn, identified six types of decline which the youth of the time faced: decline in physical activity, in initiative and courage, in memory and imagination, skills, self-discipline, caution, and compassion. To treat these types of decline, Hahn envisioned four antidotes: fitness training, expeditions, projects, and humanitarian rescue activities (in Krajčan, 2007).

We believe that, in addition to formal education, young people need to be equipped with a range of social skills and competences that will help them cope with the unpredictable challenges of the present to the best of their ability. This unpredictability and uncertainty can be presented to young people at survival camps in nature, where they experience first-hand all the advantages and obstacles nature has to offer.

At survival camps, we wish for young people to discover their limits, take risks, face their fears, accept challenges, experience successes/failures, exercise, gain self-confidence, learn to take responsibility, and put off their desires and ideas, as well as to persevere in difficult situations. In extreme situations, an individual can get to know himself and others better. In the remainder of the article, we will describe the meaning of social skills training and survival camps in nature.

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In Slovenia, no major changes have been seen in the field of work with this type of population since the 1980s. Based on experience from current practice, adolescents need different approaches, which are related not only to everyday tasks and school, but also to their active participation, finding strong areas within individuals and strengthening them, empowering them, or focusing on individual resources, overcoming unpleasant situations, as well as developing other social skills. One attempt at a different type of work with adolescents with emotional and behavioural difficulties is the project of survival camps in nature.

Social skills training

In the future, the state, and especially schools will be unable to implement sufficient transfer of social competences. Even nowadays, these institutions are insufficiently able to provide that. The system itself is not in favour of social competences being introduced into society. Every human being will be or is already responsible for protecting him/herself from future social crises (Adler, 2013). One of the informal ways to acquire these competences is through social skills training.

During adolescence, an individual's relationships with others change both quantitatively and qualitatively. In social contacts, young people acquire new social knowledge and skills, try out different new roles, define their life goals, beliefs and values and thus also shape their personality and identity. Within the framework of social development, self-esteem, emotional response, aggression, and self-control also develop (Zupančič and Svetina, 2004).

Rozman (2006) believes that informal education is becoming an increasingly important part of learning, socialization, skills acquisition, social networking, etc. There is often not enough space in the school system for young people to learn real-life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, empathic listening, exploring their creativity, etc., so this informal part of learning is thus even more important and necessary.

Social skills enable appropriate social communication, if we consider our own needs and the needs of other people. They not only teach us facts and emphasize more than knowledge but also belong to the social field in the broadest sense (the field of communication, relationships). Mastering social skills enables an individual to effectively satisfy their social needs, while not benefiting from the people around them, but respecting and understanding them (Velkov, Klobučar and Pahovič 1998). This is exactly what is needed by adolescents with emotional and behavioural difficulties or disorders.

When it comes to social skills training, we are speaking of children, adolescents, or adults being trained in practical skills that are beneficial for their everyday life: appropriate communication, personal appearance, moral evaluation, overcoming unpleasant situations, resolving conflict situations, appropriate giving and receiving of criticism, expressing and accepting praise, relationships with others, gender relations, relationships with parents and authorities, group work, active participation, leadership, etc. Learning social skills is one of the important areas in adolescence, since it creates opportunities for an individual's life in a given society. Social skills can be learned by young people in different environments, within the family, school, peer group, extracurricular activities, etc.

Some young people lack any environment in which social skills could be learned and tested. If we look at it from the perspective of curative/preventive work with people, the acquisition of social skills is one of the main learning processes (Rozman, 2006). Adler (2013) believes that a healthy measure of responsibility gives a person the basis for business success and personal satisfaction. To achieve our goals, he provides the following twelve laws: responsibility, learning, will, taking the initiative, trust, reality, adjustment, leadership, equalization, growth, defence, and benefit.

The main feature of interpersonal relationships is the recognition of diversity and one's own thinking. Another important feature is the ability to give and receive feedback. Reciprocity of relations represents an equal mutual encounter of opposites, differences and similarities. In mutual relations, everyone has the right to personal expression/opinion and individuality, as well as the recognition of contradictions and their realistic resolution (Možina et al. 1994).

In short, the training itself offers the tools to help us achieve certain goals. The training is designed to empower and involve the individual and offer skills and opportunities for action. In most cases, training takes place in the form of workshops led by a qualified social skills training instructor.

Workshop participants sit in a circle, so that everyone can see each other. The leader - instructor also sits among them. In principle, an individual workshop should not last more than an hour and a half. There are certain rules for workshops that help improve the climate and the development of the group: work in a circle, only one person speaks, everyone respects everyone, we do not comment on the contributions of other participants, we all feel fine, there is possibility of non-cooperation if we do not feel like it, and trust. It is important that the workshop participants feel safe and accepted.

The workshops can be conducted in different ways. We can have pre-made workshops on certain topics, such as getting to know each other, relationships, gender relations, social proximity, drugs, problem solving, occupations, group work and values. We use different ways of presenting each topic in the workshops, with the help of various games, guided fantasies, role-play, pair work, group work, associations, reflections, conversations, etc. Workshops are not a strictly defined set of tasks or skills that an individual or group must solve, but leave a great deal of creativity, originality and adaptation to the group and the individual. At the end of each workshop, we conduct a short evaluation of or reflection on the workshop, where each participant has the opportunity to evaluate (reflect about) the workshop, the leadership, the group, themselves or just to say what they want.

According to Rozman, the goals of social skills training are as follows:

- Objectives related to relationships: acceptance of differences, communication, networking, expansion of acquaintances, learning within a group/community, learning tolerance, benevolence, acceptance of different opinions, etc.
- Objectives related to self-empowerment: self-evaluation, coping with oneself, taking responsibility, dealing with personal crises or crises in the society, etc.
- Objectives related to learning concrete skills: talking about different topics, using skills to work better, preventing problems in relationships, constructive conflict resolution, equipping with concrete skills: cooking, self-care, caring for others, the group (Rozman, 2006).

We believe that adolescents, especially those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, need clear rules, structure, clearly defined requirements, and as many positive experiences as possible to empower them to function successfully in today's society.

Survival camps in nature

Social pedagogical project work with young people and experiential pedagogical projects are based on experiential learning. David A. Kolb says that experiential learning is learning which is in direct contact with the reality that the individual is studying. It is a learning process in which knowledge is created through transformation of experience (in Pipan, 2008: 53-54).

Based on our experience, social pedagogical workers in Slovenian educational institutions and working alongside survival instructors have developed the idea and later the concept of offering young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties survival camps in nature.

One form of social skills training, greatly complemented with experiential pedagogy, is the survival camp in nature. The main purpose of survival camps is to teach participants how to survive in nature and overcome the problems we face in nature with as few resources (convenient, conventional) as possible and with comradely help. Experiential pedagogical survival camps have been implemented since 2011, mainly in the forested and mountainous areas of western Slovenia. In addition to the social pedagogical worker, the camps are run by three instructors from the Karantania Adventures association, who are trained for survival in nature. Throughout the duration of each camp, survival instructors teach participants survival techniques. They pay full attention to both the individuals and the group. Experiential learning methods take into account the holistic nature of an individual's personal experience. The camps are based on safety, professionalism, adventure and socializing.

The camps are implemented according to the pedagogical principle of interpretation - demonstration - imitation and practical work. The entire youth program consists of an initial and an advanced survival camp. The basic camp lasts four days and includes a three-day bivouac in nature. The main goal of the basic survival camp is for individuals to become acquainted with and learn a range of survival skills in nature and to learn about or adapt to group life, while the main goal of the advanced camp (more demanding level) is to test the individuals or the group in survival skills and group life in nature, learned at the basic camp, and to upgrade this knowledge with more demanding skills for survival in nature. In the structure, the advanced survival camp program does not differ much in structure from the basic camp.

The differences are in more demanding content, the duration (three days) and the location of the implementation itself. In the advanced camps, the individuals, and the group work more independently and autonomously, with less instruction from the instructors.

Krajnčan (2007) believes that experiential pedagogy for adolescents and teachers does not represent everyday situations. Experiential pedagogical processes can last only a few hours, a day, a few days, a week, a month to several months. All the organizers have in common the fact that they try to initiate learning processes as quickly, as extensively and as thoroughly as possible under special learning conditions and strive for long-term action by setting goals each time.

For each survival camp, there is a diverse, heterogeneous group composed of young men and women of different background, social status, and education, who are problematic, non-problematic, dropouts, unemployed, university students, high school students, etc. The participants were young people from the *Produkcijška šola* production school, young people sent to camps by social work centres, students who were doing their work experience or internships at the *Mladinski dom Jarše* youth centre, participants in programs of the *Zavod Bob* institute for education and cultural activities, young people who attended the *Youth Aid Centre Association*, visitors to the *Cona Fužine* community program for young people, young people who lived in residential groups at various residential treatment centres, young people from the district youth centres within the public institution *Javni zavod Mladi zmaji Ljubljana*, etc. In most cases, the participants of the camps did not know each other. The groups were composed in accordance with how the individuals applied to each camp; therefore, they were mixed, girls and boys aged between 15 and 26 years. The average ratio between boys and girls was 3:1.

The entire program of an individual survival camp in nature is psychophysically demanding; it takes place completely in the natural environment, under the 24-hour-vigilant eyes of professional staff. The staff is responsible for professional and safe organization, and the implementation of the program at each camp. The participants attend the camps voluntarily and at their own risk, in agreement with their parents. At the introductory meetings, future participants are presented with basic information about the camp.

Camp participants are expected to do their utmost within the scope of their abilities, i.e., to do their best. At the camps, the participants are constantly occupied, so there is no time to think about trivialities or the hardships of everyday life.

Each day begins with a morning workout and continues with a morning meeting where participants are introduced to the activities to be performed that day and asked about their well-being.

At the camps, in addition to survival and mountaineering basics (walking on the terrain, orientation, climbing, rope technique, knots, rope descents, etc.), the participants learn how to safely spend several nights in nature. With the help of survival instructors, the participants try to prepare different types of food from plants found in nature (identify edible and poisonous wild plants, bake bread, dry and smoke food, etc.), learn how to find or obtain drinking water by themselves and what to do in case of an accident or injury (how to act in the first minutes after the accident, basic first aid, signalling, reporting the accident; how to stop bleeding, immobilize limbs, make a stretcher, transfer the victim and other techniques). They learn to make an improvised backpack and shoes, start a fire the primitive way, make a torch, tools, a rope, etc. They learn many useful things that may come in handy in everyday life. Through work processes, as a group, they move from simple tasks to increasingly complex and demanding ones. Within four days of living together, relationships are established and strengthened among the participants, and a group is formed.

Problem solving is more successful when we focus on the problem and try to overcome it. We do not avoid problems but try to solve them. When we deal with our own problems, we become aware that we can control our own lives. Successful overcoming of problems contributes to a positive self-image and personal strength (Lekić et al., 2011).

In working with participants, the instructors use different forms of work, such as frontal, group work, pair work and individual work, as well as different methods such as explanation, demonstration, interview and practical work. A social pedagogical worker is present at the camp. His/her task is to supervise, help the camp participants and cooperate with the instructors (in case of any participant problems). The social pedagogical worker observes the functioning and development of the group and individuals from a meta position, monitors the group dynamics and discusses and agrees with instructors and participants on an ongoing basis regarding possible changes in the functioning of the group or individuals. Upon each completed day, an analysis/reflection of the day's work is performed, in which the participants have an active role. The evening analysis of the day is also performed by the instructors and social pedagogical worker.

A socially successful adolescent can be an adolescent who is aware of him/herself, the people around and the society in a broader sense. He or she has an established basic system of values, which in time were adopted as his/her own and made important, and to which he/she adheres in life.

The adolescent can set short-term and long-term goals, is willing to work for them and knows how to give up things which would hinder him/her from achieving the goals. He/she knows how to deal with the problems that come his/her way and is aware that they are solvable, that it is always possible to choose between several solutions and knows how to decide on the appropriate solution (Metelko Lisec, 2004).

Here are a few more points we think are important in the implementation of survival camps in nature:

- Change of environment for the individual - change in behaviour/performance is possible.
- No phone signal, no television, internet, games, Facebook, Instagram, etc.; we are disconnected, there are fewer distractions.
- The participant depends on him/herself or the group (no parents, guardians, relatives, teachers, peer group, etc.)
- Participants overcome situations that are unpleasant for them; they must overcome fear; they are constantly occupied.
- Participants work in stressful situations to which they are unused, and must adapt, be resilient, etc.
- Creation of trust, companionship, group work, leading the group.
- Getting to know oneself and others.
- Learning social skills and competences.

Methods

Research sample

The research was based on a non-random sample involving participants in survival camps. The total number of respondents was 40, aged between 15 and 26 years. Two-thirds of the respondents were male and one-third female (Kožar and Vuković, 2018). Data collection took place between 2011 and 2018.

Data collection procedures

For the purposes of data collection, we used a qualitative research method, and as a data collection technique, we used a survey in the form of a written questionnaire. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. We also obtained data for the purpose of evaluating the program by observing the participants and conducted interviews with camp participants after the camp to monitor possible changes in individuals.

Content and methodological characteristics of the instrument

The youth questionnaire that we compiled for the purpose of analysing the effects of the camps consisted of three sets. In the first set, there were 3 closed-ended questions. In the second set, there were 8 open-ended questions related to assessment of the acquired content and the evaluation of the work of the instructors. We were interested in what content the participants liked and what not, what they gained for themselves, what strengths they learned at the camp, which ones they would like to improve in the future and how they would deal with their weaknesses next time. In the third set, participants used a 10-point assessment scale to assess their own experience and the extent to which they did or did not achieve the stated goals.

Data processing methods

The questionnaire was first processed in a descriptive statistical manner. In the next phase, we combined and coded the respondents' answers. We defined the concepts and then the categories of the statements and answers we received and used them for analysis. In doing so, we tried to form categories substantively similar to individual research questions. The content of the interviews was analysed on the basis of research questions, starting from the codes that were formed in the coding process.

We are aware that from a methodological point of view, the research is incomplete and needs correction. We also see the absence of a control group as a shortcoming. By analyzing the responses of the survival camp participants, we tried to detect and determine whether and how participation in the survival camps affects the individual. What has changed in the adolescent? Berdajs (2017, p. 107) believes that it is important to know the quantitative and, above all, qualitative indicators of our work, based on which we can assess performance.

The objectives of the analysis are as follows:

- To determine to what extent and in what way the social skills of young people are strengthened in survival camps.
- To find out how individual skills learned and mastered at the survival camp affect the young person.
- To determine whether the new acquired skills are permanent or present/acquired only during the survival camp.

We asked ourselves the following questions:

To what extent and in what way are the social skills of young people strengthened in survival camps?

Are these skills acquired by adolescents in survival camps permanent or are they present/acquired only for the duration of the camp?

Are an individual's social skills tied to specific activities at the survival camp?

Does the approach of having to take care of yourself work in a comfortable society, where adolescents do not know how to take care of themselves?

How does the fact that the adolescent eats things he/she has never eaten in his/her life, sleeps under the open sky and does things he/she has never done in his/her life, affect the young person?

How do certain skills that the adolescents test at the survival camp affect them?

For the purpose of data collection, we used a qualitative research method, and a survey in the form of a written questionnaire as a data collection technique. The data for the purpose of evaluating the program were obtained by observing the participants. To monitor possible changes in individuals, we also conducted interviews with the participants upon the conclusion of the camp. We were interested in what had changed in the individual during and after the camp.

Mesec (2009) believes that evaluation in the narrower sense refers only to the achievement of objectives and the evaluation of effects. One of the objectives of the evaluation is to determine whether the program was successful and efficient or what its actual effects were.

The analysis - evaluation of survival camps is an attempt to evaluate the goals we have set for ourselves in terms of the individual's and the group's experience and progress. The evaluation includes reflections by participants, instructors and survival camp leaders.

The evaluation of survival camps was performed with the additional intention of obtaining feedback on what was good, bad and what should be improved in the implementation of future camps and their evaluations.

The evaluation of the work at each camp took place on several levels - ongoing (every day) and final (final evaluation of the participants about two to three weeks after conclusion of each camp). The final evaluation was performed by the instructors, who also performed daily evaluations after finishing all daily activities. All the evaluations, morning, evening and final ones, were kept by the camp leader or someone else pre-determined to perform this task. The circle method was used, meaning one speaks, the other listens, while avoiding general criticism.

In giving feedback, the instructors gave the participants feedback on their actions and behaviour, but not on their personality, in particular, trying to praise their strengths.

Upon completion of daily activities, a daily evaluation was performed according to the above-described method. Every evening, the participants would talk by the fire about the past day and receive feedback on their contribution to the common good of the group. The participants were expected and encouraged to give at least one positive and one negative "feedback" on the activities taking place during the previous day at the camp. They were encouraged to evaluate their own activity, well-being, behaviour, leadership and cooperation with others. Everyone was deeply engaged in solving ongoing problems if these occurred.

During the two camps, the instructors also used their assessment instrument on a five-point scale to experimentally evaluate the participants and present them with the overall assessments at the evening evaluations. They were assessed in the following categories: leadership, group participation, self-initiative and overcoming problems/fears.

The questionnaire for young people that we compiled for the purpose of evaluating the effects of the camps consisted of 3 closed-type questions and 8 open-type questions related to self-experience and evaluation of the content learnt.

We were mainly interested in what content they liked and which not, what they gained for themselves, which strengths they learned at the camp, which ones they would like to improve in the future and how they would deal with their weaknesses next time.

There were 2 scales of views in the questionnaire: the participants had to grade how they evaluated the work of instructors on a scale from -5 to +5 (the average grade was 4.5), and on the second scale they also had to grade from -5 to +5 to what extent had or had not achieved the stated objectives of the camp.

The final evaluation of each camp was performed a month after the end of each camp at the latest, when the participants were answering the questionnaires, of which the results of the analysis will be presented below. At the final group evaluation, we received many concrete information from the participants regarding their positive and negative experiences at the camp. We also encouraged them to try to identify how the experience and skills gained could benefit them in their daily lives. Upon the group evaluation of all the participants in each camp, the evaluation of the performers followed.

We also obtained feedback from the parents, guardians or educators of the participants (whether they noticed any changes in behaviour after the camp or not). In most cases, the parents' feedback has been very positive. Quite a few of them perceived positive changes in adolescents' behaviour/performance.

Findings

All the participants thought that it was good to have attended the camp. They all thought that participating in the camp was useful for them. Among the activities they liked the most were climbing (70% of participants), followed in some cases by being away from the world, preparation of food, setting up bivouacs and lighting a fire. There was no content that most participants disliked; two liked everything, while others mentioned killing a rabbit, walking, cigarette break, gathering food, equipment problems (too sharp or blunt knife) and strict supervision of instructors as the content they did not like too much.

Participants felt that they had gained a lot of knowledge, and their answers can be reasonably divided into the four most often mentioned categories:

1. technical skills (knot tying, preparing and making a fire, orientation, first aid, find and preparation food in nature and housing construction, climbing),
2. coping with one's own limitations (absence and overcoming fears (especially of heights), overcoming physical strains, overcoming unpleasant situations),

3. getting to know one's personal qualities (independence, autonomy, motivation, self-confidence, self-esteem, courage, modesty, patience, conscientiousness, ingenuity, self-confidence),
4. social skills (joining a group of strangers, teamwork, cooperation, willingness to cooperate to achieve a common goal, helping others).

The participants listed the following strong qualities which surfaced during the camp: absence of and overcoming fear (especially of heights), courage, teamwork, cooperation, modesty, patience, conscientiousness, willingness to cooperate to achieve a common goal, ingenuity, self-confidence, and helping others. When they had to choose one or two of their strengths they would like to keep at the current level or improve, they chose courage (12x), perseverance (6x), patience, confidence, cooperation, and modesty.

When asked how to achieve this, they replied they would achieve it gradually, by participating in or performing similar activities, by continuing courses, and by trying to complete things and appreciate what they have.

With some participants, we find courage problematic, since two stated that they would upgrade this characteristic by not thinking too much about the consequences and not being afraid of anything. Here it would make sense to open a discussion with the group and warn them of the possible negative consequences of being too brave and not thinking about the consequences.

We believe that the mountaineering elements at the camp are a welcome change, as they conjure up excellent tension and relaxation from other challenges, resulting in the individual's increase of energy.

When asked how they would deal with their weaknesses next time, however, they answered fairly unanimously: some would face them and do better or try to overcome them; they would be stricter with themselves and think first. Only one of the participants stated that he would treat his weaknesses the same next time.

In light of the answers, we feel that the participants felt part of the group during the camp, that they cooperated with other members of the group and talked to each other, considered, encouraged, rejoiced together and solved problems mutually. Some participants found the basic camp more strenuous in terms of group dynamics. We believe that through experience at the basic camp, participants in the advanced camp were at least mentally better prepared for camp activities. At the basic camp, the group and individuals are allowed to be more independent each day, and each day, both the group and the individual take on greater responsibility.

This enabled the individuals to become more and more connected and the group to become stronger. The very group dynamics and the development of the group from getting to know each other to cooperation is the field of observation and research, to which we want to dedicate even more attention at future camps. The aim is to survive in the wild with one another, taking care of the fire as caring for others, and leading a group.

According to the participants' answers, social skills and their strengthening at the camp are most connected to meeting new people, working in a group or pair, accepting and giving criticism in an appropriate way, in cooperation among individuals, and evening reflections of the individual and the group. One of the most important goals of the camp is for the participants to learn vital skills/competences and be able to transfer them to later everyday situations, to real life.

Through active engagement and work at the camp (learning by doing), young people gain practical knowledge, and through learning for life, also the skills that will benefit them in life. In camp evaluations, the participants themselves assessed that they had acquired considerable knowledge on how to survive in nature and be resourceful when losing everything, some social skills such as tolerance and cooperation, as well as getting to know oneself, the group and the environment. We believe that many skills were presented, but not all of them were mastered by individual participants to a satisfactory extent. The daily evaluations were too late, more guided self-reflection by individuals would be needed, also focused on everyday life and possible personality shift. The participants ranked various things among the strong qualities that surfaced during the camp. We also see the meaning of survival camps in nature in the fact that an individual, to survive, must do many things they otherwise would not do in life. At the camps, young people sometimes go through a "crisis", overcome fear, and after returning home, many people think about themselves, their lives and what is really important. At the camp, everyone also had time to reflect on what is genuinely important in their lives.

Most of all, we can observe the closeness and distance in interactions or according to social situations (for the living together to have an effect depends on their cognitive assessment of the given conditions - here voluntary participation plays an extremely important role), an insight into the impact of their energy and mood on the whole group, the specificity and intensity of individual problems, the level of

trust, taking responsibility for oneself and others; mutual competition and interactive work (several people perform one task) increase negative effects, create social conflicts, the social atmosphere created in the group plays an important role, influence - negative effect alongside the phenomenon of personal space (Krajncan, 2017, p. 126).

We think it beneficial to remind the individuals of self-reflection during the evening evaluations of the day, to think about their action in various situations, or how they would react differently in a different environment, and how they are affected by lack of sleep, food and comfort. It seems good for an individual to become aware of these things and learn how to react in stressful situations and how to adjust their actions/behaviour accordingly. We find that the participants gained new social experiences and skills very intensively. The experience of working in a group has enriched them, especially cooperation, i.e., working with others to achieve set goals. Preparation of fire, bivouacs and food connects the group; cooperation is necessary, as well as helping each other. Thus, the individual was able to learn a lot from the group itself and from other participants. The group became more important than the individual. Each day, individuals within the group became more connected, more supportive of and caring towards each other.

The group was formed on the first day, and over the following days, various roles were established in the group. In the end with a few individual exceptions, the groups were very coordinated and worked supportively, collaboratively. Everyone had to meet their boundaries and limits and overcome them, which was good for the group. Thus, for example, the participants at one camp spontaneously suggested that, given that there were two foreigners in the group who did not understand Slovene, all the communication during the camp should be in English. They felt that the foreigners were not on an equal basis with the other participants. In today's society, there is not enough cooperation, care for others; there is too much individuality and competition, which was revealed in the camps. The adolescents learned how important group spirit is, how much good a harmonious group can do, and how much harm a person dividing the group can do. We notice that those young people who were socially slightly weaker had difficulty integrating into the group and working with others at the beginning of the camp. The hardest part is the first day, when they start adjusting to the new reality.

From what we have heard, we believe that the first day is the greatest shock for the individuals, as they must do things they had never done before in their life, prepare and eat food from nature, not sleep in a warm bed but under the open sky and go without a telephone. It turned out that most participants were quite spoiled about food; most of them fantasized about pizza, burgers, steak, chocolate, etc. These delicacies cannot be found in nature, and some young people found this difficult to accept. Nevertheless, we believe that the attitude towards food among some young people changed at least a little, which is among the goals of the camp. Just thinking that food is not as self-evident as it seems to us within the embrace of a safe home is a big step in changing an individual's thinking. In civilization, everything is very self-evident, normal, but in the middle of the wilderness, other things are more important. Especially the first day and night, which presented a shock for the individual, as the instructors took away everything the participants did not need, there were new people, nature, a different authority, etc. In fact, all were on the same page; no one had more than others, which would give them an advantage. Also, the fact that there was no clock was a kind of ordeal, since they had to become more immersed in nature, observe the position of the sun and follow it.

At a certain period of time during the camp, each participant had the task of leading the entire group. Thus, some adolescents led a group for the first time in their lives. We believe that it is definitely a welcome experience for any individual to have the opportunity to lead and to be led. At the evening evaluations, we gave the individuals feedback on how we saw their leadership of the group. We believe that adolescents need a lot of positive and negative experiences and consequently, adequate feedback. Given their reflections and despite the fact that the leadership experience was difficult for some, we believe that it is necessary to enable individuals to have this experience at the camp. Quality group leadership is certainly an important social skill to which we pay too little attention. Leadership also shows how much and in what way an individual is able to communicate well with the group and identify and resolve conflicts appropriately.

The participants' answers also denote that the implementation of the camps was of high quality. The instructors were very well prepared and were extremely professional throughout the duration of the camp. Adolescents believe that they have been given a great amount of useful knowledge, and some will forever remember their saying: "The sooner it is, the sooner it's sooner for everyone!"

For many, their way of working was too different from the usual, namely authoritarian, which in situations where it is necessary to act quickly, can be the most appropriate. Their framework was clear and logical; from easier, to more difficult, from individual to the group. They required the individual to be focused, flexible and self-disciplined, which was certainly not an easy task for adolescents. Immediate feedback after completing a task or skill was also important. Preparation for the camp, which included a presentation of the camp to potential participants proved to be of key importance for effective implementation of the survival camp. The entire camp project was performed in a safe and confidential environment.

Conclusions

For the development of a young person seeking his/her own identity, a way to him/herself, formal education in today's confused moment of society is not by itself enough. The knowledge acquired in schools alone is insufficient for life success.

In Finland, the main goal of the school system is to serve as an instrument for achieving equality in society.

In schools, there is insufficient encouragement for the development of the adolescent's personality, which would be tied to his or her uniqueness and diversity and would equip the adolescent with skills to help him/her cope with the demands of the environment. Informal methods such as social skills training definitely make this possible. Social skills training can be an applied method for socialization of an individual, where participation of the individual means active action and cooperation, as well as co-responsibility in the process of one's own development (Marovič, 2017).

Social skills training has proven to be an extremely welcome and useful method in working with adolescents with behavioural and emotional difficulties. It helps young people to develop social skills. As an upgrade to social skills training, we started conducting survival camps in nature. We wanted young people to discover their limits, broaden their experience, take risks, face their fears, accept challenges and at the same time, experience success, exercise, gain self-confidence, as well as learn to take responsibility, put off their desires and ideas and persevere in difficult situations. We wanted to push them beyond their comfort zone, since extreme situations force people to get to know themselves and others.

We tried to encourage young people to participate as actively as possible in all the activities at the camps and to have as many positive experiences as possible.

Solving problems and challenges within the group and the possibility to choose are also part of learning social skills. However, we wonder whether and to what extent there is individual autonomy and freedom for group members?

Although all participants think the camp was useful for them, we ask ourselves if this is actually the case. What exactly is the connection between experience in nature and real life? Whether these experiences are permanent or only last during the camp cannot be determined.

Neither can we determine whether the skills acquired have had a positive impact on the functioning of adolescents in their lives. A few participants mentioned that when they found themselves in challenging situations after the camp, they remembered how difficult it was for them at the camp, how they overcame the unpleasant situation or effort and said to themselves, "If I could do it then, I can do it now!" We believe that overcoming unpleasant situations was a goal successfully achieved at the camps. Through various activities, individuals got to know themselves better and were able to push their limits.

Schröder and Kettiger (2001) presume that demonstrable processes of introducing change usually take much longer in practice than originally envisaged and planned, so that it is often not possible to construct a closed chain of action between the changed and the changing practices and between the desired or the achieved effects. This is mainly due to the delay in the effect of the changed foundation of the practice in question and its effects, which are estimated to show after four to five years.

Strong stimuli indisputably remain with us for a long time. For experiential pedagogy, however, it is essential that we retain what we have learned not only as "the property of memory" during the project, but also as material for later active use, in everyday life. Participants must therefore learn to transfer the result, translate it, use it under different conditions and in disparate situations (Krajnčan, 2007). Thus, we think it sensible to check the effects of the camps on an individual for one year or even longer after completion of the camp, which we have never done before. Consequently, we can only predict whether, for example, an individual's longer presence (14 days, one month or more) at the camp would have a stronger influence on the development of his/her social skills and consequently on a change in behaviour/performance. We assume that a longer stay would have a positive effect on the possible activation of the adolescent's potential.

It is difficult for an individual to make major changes in 3-4 days. We also think that at the camp itself, individuals could be left more alone with themselves, their thoughts, problems, fears, and boredom, alone with nature. With some individuals, breakthroughs were certainly visible at the individual level. Bogdan Zupančič and Krajnčan believe that: “Given that modern findings emphasize the importance of an emotionally receptive climate and personal relationships on the appropriate development of children and adolescents in various areas, we cannot take the relational and broader socio-emotional competence for granted or as something that just comes with education” (Bogdan Zupančič and Krajnčan, 2019, p. 67).

In view of the above findings and the opinions of the camp participants based on high average evaluation, we estimate that we have achieved the set goals and successfully performed individual camps. Almost all participants felt that the camps benefited them. Relatively low average evaluation occurred for features specific to the selected population, therefore not causing too much worry, but it would be reasonable to consider what other content could be included in order to maintain and develop the features that received lower evaluation scores, such as putting off their desires and ideas, solving problems, taking responsibility, being afraid and encouraging others.

In addition, we feel that more attention should be paid to improving perseverance and self-initiative in individuals. We especially tried to develop perseverance in lighting fires, hiking, orientation and treasure hunting.

We are aware that it would be methodologically more appropriate to daily measure the added value in various areas of developing social skills and competences at the survival camp, but this is extremely difficult, owing to the nature of the project, which takes place in the wilderness 24 hours a day. We would need an additional collaborator at the camp to focus only on this area.

We believe that the most reservations and opportunities for improvement in and progress of the project itself lie in the field of monitoring and evaluation of the project. Through evaluation, we could better determine the truly positive effects of the camp on the individual and the group. The evaluation and its tools should be developed into an appropriate methodology, since observation of individuals and groups in real time constitutes the true added value and calls for the use of an appropriate methodology, such as ethnographic research, for example. As well, individuals who prematurely left the camp should also be asked for their opinion on the survival camp.

The experience of spending time in nature, without the objects that often seem so self-evident to us, brings us closer to ourselves and others and offers many positive examples for the development of personal qualities. Survival camps represent a close connection to reality. We feel that in a comfortable society where adolescents are not well versed in taking care of themselves, the approach of having to take care of oneself in connection with participation truly works and is successful. At the camp, young people began to appreciate what they had done themselves and what they had. In our opinion it is thus very beneficial for young people to gather food and prepare their own meals, even their own accommodation.

The project of survival camps in nature can be an example of good practice for working with behaviourally and emotionally difficult adolescents. Survival camps are no longer a novelty in Slovenia, but they can be one of the novelties in the renovation of the entire system for working with adolescents with behavioural and emotional difficulties or disorders. Perhaps, similar survival camps could be experimentally performed with prison inmates, with the aim of training for life and increasing their competences upon release, as well as reducing the risk of recidivism (Mrhar Prelič, 2019).

The aim of this project is to become sustainable, comparable to similar projects in countries around the world, which would include both “problematic” adolescents and the population of ordinary adolescents from all over Slovenia and abroad. We will definitely try to extend each camp to a longer time frame, to offer even more content and experiences. By changing the environment and a different (unconventional) approach, we will try to influence positive changes in adolescent behavioural patterns. Adolescents should be encouraged to create a responsible life for themselves. For some of them, today’s rapid changes in adolescents and their problems require more radical and decisive forms of help. However, the question is whether survival camps can be intended for young people on the entire continuum of help, from the easiest to the most difficult cases.

Survival camps in nature are definitely a retreat from the crazy forces of globalization and a return to the nature, to genuine/primordial human relationships, framed primarily by nature. Intensive, socially isolated projects with attractive content and locations, as well as trained professional companions should be implemented in the education system. Such intensive programs would be very welcome for children and adolescents who find it difficult to cope with institutional rules (Krajncan, 2017).

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