

# Plan of Action



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## **Chapter one: Analysis of the begin situation.**

### **What is the question?**

What makes the Venture effective in the community?

Effective means in this context:

- People visit the Venture daily voluntarily.
- The Venture was built by the people of the community.
- The Venture has existed for over thirty-one years.
- The Venture has close contact with schools and other organisations.
- A lot of positive comments from the people that used to visit the Venture when they were little.
- The Venture has been a recipient of many prizes concerning Social Work.
- The Venture receives parties interested in the Venture's unique approach to Social Work from all over the world.



Community in this context means:

Caia park, where the Venture is situated. Caia park is an disadvantaged area in Wrexham, Wales. Caia park has coped with high crime rates and problems within families, such as; child abuse, drugs and alcohol abuse, high rates of unemployment.

The area in which the Venture is located has become an 'underclass' area throughout the years.

Whenever we speak about Caia Park to people from outside the estate, people are being very judgemental about the area, and most of the times they don't have anything good to say about the estate.

Robert Macdonald's defines the underclass as: *"a social group or class of people located at the bottom of the class structure who, over time, have become structurally separate and culturally distinct from the regularly employed working-class and society in general through processes of social and economic change (particularly de-industrialisation) and/or through patterns of cultural behaviour, who are now persistently reliant on state benefits and almost permanently confined to living in poorer conditions and neighbourhoods."* (Macdonald, 1997).

*What are the sub-questions?*

- What makes the Venture unique as an effective response to specific local needs?
- Which methods does the Venture use in response to the localised needs of the community?
- What different professions are present at the Venture and how do they complement each other and work together as a group?
- What makes the children and youngsters voluntary return to the Venture every day?

### **How did we come to form this question?**

We (Joran and Peggy) had our work placement at the Venture last year. What intrigued us was the unique way the Venture works, as it was so different from what we were used to in the Netherlands.

It is unknown to other organisations what the Venture does exactly. It is difficult to describe what the Venture is and our report will make it easier and more clear to people interested.

When we did our placement, we discovered that despite of the high amount of alcohol and drugs use, child abuse and neglect, the people from Caia Park were highly involved with the Venture. But besides that there was also a very strong bond between the members of the community. It really feels like you're entering a group instead of a community. People are involved with each other and they take care of each other. Even our tutor, Thoby Miller, described this area as an unique one. What the Venture concerns there is a great attachment, that was shown in the great numbers of people that showed up, to prevent the

Venture from closure. The children that visit the place now, have parents or even grandparents that visited the Venture when they were little.

### **Who is involved?**

- The Venture is the first party involved in our research. Our research revolves around the Venture and how (why) it works. The methods they use are very important for our research since we haven't seen anything like this. The Venture is very process-based (Jefferies & Smith, 1999) and puts a lot of effort in building up relationships with the youngsters and their families. We, as Social Workers, have been taught that you always have to maintain a certain distance in working with 'clients'. While working at the Venture we noticed that, the distance between staff and youngsters is handled very differently than we are used to. Staff at the Venture are very close to their 'clients'. This is a response to the needs of the youngsters. A lot of them don't have any/ or very rare psychological affection in their home situation. (Theory about the importance of touch).
- Our sponsor, Thoby Miller, is involved in the sense that he will keep in check whether we're on the right track with our research/report. Mr. Miller has close contact with the Venture and has guided both of us throughout our internships there last year. He also provides us relevant information and theories, we can use in our research.
- Malcolm King, the founder of the Venture and also chairman in the council of Wrexham. He is very important for our research, because he has been at the Venture from the start and has seen a progress from the small playground setting back in the 70's to the institution it has become today. He is also a Social Worker and has a degree in Criminology.
- The community because it is the heart of the Venture and all the services are based on what the community needs. The Venture always respond to the needs of the youngsters. They have a signaling role and with this information they try to meet the needs of the children. An example: A lot of youngsters, attending at the Venture nowadays, are having weight problems. A lot of youngsters are obese. The Venture has noticed these problems and made contact with a organization that provides information and help with health issues.
- We as students, because we are doing this research. And since we are Social Workers to be, we would value from this investigation.
- Hans Schreurs, because he is our guidance in the start of our project.

### **What are the differences and similarities between the involved parties?**

The main similarity is that everyone has an interest in the Venture. All parties differ in the ways they communicate and are part of the Venture's history and present.

For example, Malcolm King is involved, as he is one of the founders of the Venture. Thoby Miller is involved because he's guided students through their internships here. Their approach is very different, but they are both greatly invested in the Venture.

As far as Thoby Miller is concerned, he is a teacher at Glyndwr University, and is highly interested in the way the Venture works and how it affects the community.

### **What is the interest of the parties in finding the answer to the question?**

#### *Clients (micro level):*

Our research will mean something to clients directly. We will interview youngsters, parents and others who have used the Venture. We'll ensure they know their opinions are respected and valued. It will influence them directly because we will ask them about their opinions on the Venture and what they think can be improved. We will then notify the Venture about our findings and changes – if any – can be made. The Venture reflects the needs of the community. Without the community and their involvement with the Venture, the Venture would not be as it is today. Relationships with the community are very important and also needed. Without these relationships the Venture would not be able to survive as an organisation.

#### *Organisation (meso level):*

This research will greatly influence the team and organisation. The Venture has existed for thirty-one years and as such, it's only natural things have changed. We'll highlight these changes in our research and it's possible things will be changed based on these findings. We will interview members of staff. This is important for our research, as it will provide an intimate depiction of the way the Venture works. Furthermore, the research may have a positive effect on the work morale and play an affirming role concerning effective practise. It may also provide a fresh perspective on things and influence the way certain projects and playground-work are handled. Also the work at the Venture is very process-based (Jefferies & Smith, 1999) so a lot of work the Social Workers / Playworkers / Youthworkers are doing is not immediately visible, not only for funders but also for the colleagues themselves. It will affect them in a positive way, to get recognition for the work they are doing.

Macro level:

### **What is the social context of the question?**

The Venture is an open-access Adventure Playground in Wrexham, Wales. It was set up about 31 years ago with the main purpose to reduce the high crime rates in the area. In fact Caia Park supplied young people to most of the children's homes in North Wales and was unfavorably compared to the disadvantaged end of Marseilles in 'The Making of a Criminal' (Mayo 1970). As far as we know it started with building small bonfires where youngsters got together, just to sit and talk. From that point on it grew into the organisation it is today. The heart of the organisation is the open access playground, where everyone aged from 5 till 18 is welcome. Children below the age of 5 must be accompanied by an adult. The Venture is a wholly unique organisation. This is visible in many ways, for instance the fact that tens of children visit the playground voluntarily every day it's open. The Venture also organises a lot for both individual children and the community as a whole. This includes activities such as swimming lessons, trips to the Snowdon-area and the Christmas Float, driving through the whole of Caia Park. As mentioned above there is a real community feeling in the area. People know each other and care for each other. The relationships people have with each other are highly valued. These relationships are very important to the Venture, since they put a lot of effort in building up relationships with the people within the community. The Venture also values home grown staff, which means that children who visited the Venture when they were little, are given the opportunity to work at the Venture themselves when they have grown up. The combination of home grown staff and staff from outside makes the team very dynamic. Caia Park is not an area that scores high in the eyes of the people who are not from there. People outside Caia Park fear the people from there. The area in which the Venture is located has become an 'underclass' area throughout the years. Whenever we speak about Caia Park to people from outside the estate, people are being very judgemental about the area, and most of the times they don't have anything good to say about the estate.

Robert Macdonald's defines the underclass as: *"a social group or class of people located at the bottom of the class structure who, over time, have become structurally separate and culturally distinct from the regularly employed working-class and society in general through processes of social and economic change (particularly de-industrialisation) and/or through patterns of cultural behaviour, who are now*

*persistently reliant on state benefits and almost permanently confined to living in poorer conditions and neighbourhoods.” (Macdonald, 1997).*

When we just got to Wrexham, and we explained to people we were doing our internship at the Venture, they had comments like poor you etc. In the beginning we found ourselves a little bit afraid of the area, but none of the warnings came true. We were adopted by the community as we were one of them

## **Chapter two: A description of our goal(s)**

### **What is our target group?**

The target group is the community in Caia Park, the neighbourhood in which the Venture is located. Caia park is marked by high rates of unemployment, alcohol use and abuse, drugs use and is known as one of the biggest council estates, with one of the highest rates in child poverty which includes neglect and abuse. The organisation is an open access facility and all the kids and youngsters are welcome. The Venture is set up about thirty-one years ago with as purpose to reduce the high crime rates in the area. As far as we know it started with building small bonfires where youngsters got together, just to sit and talk. From that point it grew into the organisation it is now. The heart of the organisation is the open access playground, where everyone aged from 5 till 18 is welcome. Children below the age of 5 must be accompanied by an adult.

The children and the youngsters are the target group of the Venture. All ages up to 18 are welcome. There is also an early years centre for kids up to three years. Furthermore, there is a parents and toddlers group. The Venture wants to get in touch with the parents and get to know them through these groups. There are special projects for special target groups. For example, there is a YIP project, this is for the youngsters who are in danger of getting involved in the life of crime.

### **What are the measurable results?**

The main result will be a report on our findings on the origins and the work ethic of the Venture. This report will contain the knowledge on how the Venture first came to be and how this self-built adventure playground works. It'll contain our findings from the various interviews, observations and other projects we hope to take part in during the research phase of our plan.

It also contains the work methods the Venture are using and why they are so effective.

Play and playwork are very important to the Venture. Below a very important statement from the Venture.

***'The right to play is the child's  
first claim on the community.'***

***Play is nature's training for life.***

***No community can infringe that  
right without doing enduring  
harm to the minds and bodies  
of its citizens.'***

**David Lloyd George, 1926**

### **What is the relationship between the government policies and the goal of the research?**

There's a new trend in the UK, that involves Playwork as a major priority. We also discovered that within the UK different counties, have different approaches to Playwork and Social Work as a whole. An example is the funding of self-built playgrounds. In Wales self-built playground hardly get any funding whereas there are adventure playgrounds being built and funded throughout England.

The playwork principles are the basic philosophy from the Venture. They value every child and see the uniqueness in them. But they also allow the children and youngsters to make discussions on their own. They interests of the kids is highly important to the Venture. Since the Venture tries to provide the wishes and needs of the community. But also the children that visit there, once they get older can volunteer at the Venture, and maybe later even get a job there. They think that 'home-grown' staff knows best what the children and youngsters in the area needs. And that is what we find unique. A few members of the staff

were home grown, and known the community. Their expertise is necessary because they know the people in the area, and how to approach them. Not only that but they know the problems in the area.

**What is the relationship with the policy of the organisation?**

The Venture wants to provide as much help to the community as they can. Since we are going to take interviews with people from the community, our report will provide a greater insight in what the community wants and expects from the Venture.

As above the Venture believes in the chances, possibilities and uniqueness of each child/youngster, even if the behaviour is not 'correct'. They all get second chances. As we recall there was on youngster who attacked a staff member. After that he was banned from the playground for a month or so, then there is another meeting with the staff member that was involved and then they can get back to the playground, like nothing ever happened. I haven't heard of an organisation, who allows the youngster back on. (Brown, 2007).

**Which demands does the sponsor hold for our research?**

He hopes we gain information about the Venture, that we can sent to students that are thinking of doing a placement at the Venture. He wants to know what the Venture does and how come the Venture works the way it does. And other Social Workers/ Playworkers and Youthworkers can use this as a method in their own organisation.

**Which risks should be prevented?**

- That we make the research too detailed.
- That we lose sight of our main goals and priorities.



### **Chapter three: Demarcation.**

#### **Which constrains does the sponsor put upon our project?**

Our sponsor has put no constrains on our research. We've both worked at the Venture before and have good relationships with the people working there and Thoby Miller himself. Both parties have informed us they'll aid us in any way possible. If indeed there are any constrains on our project, they are set up by ourselves.

#### **What isn't part of the question?**

We haven't particularly rules anything out, if something is interesting/relevant enough, it will be part of our research. Things that aren't part of it, will only be those things that have little to nothing to do with the main goal of the research.

#### **Which parties will be involved in the project?**

This has been described under the header '*Who is involved?*', see above.

#### **Which parties won't be involved in the project?**

The parties that will not be involved in the project are of little to no consequence to the Venture. Our research will include every party we feel is important to the Venture.

#### **Which powers are given to us, as students?**

We have been given clear waters, meaning we can use any facilities provided by the Venture and Glyndwr University we need. No restrictions have been set to date.

#### **Will we work according to our distinct profiles, or according to the Social Work ethics?**

We will use the methods that represent Social Work as a whole. We will not use the methods distinctive of our personal profiles.

This is because we have different profiles. Peggy studies SP, while Joran studies MW. These profiles are both alike and different in the way they work. Because we will work together on this project, we've decided to use the methods we have both learned and are familiar with.

MW focuses a lot on the individual, one person at a time. This project involves an entire community.

SP focuses a lot on the upbringing of children, which this project isn't about.

We would like to investigate the methods, the Venture is using. This means we don't have to make a distinction between SP and MW. Also the methods are important to all of the Social Work profiles.

#### **Chapter four: The way we are going to work.**

##### **Who is the contact person of the organisation?**

The contact person within the organisation will be Malcolm King. He is also one of the founders of the Venture.

Besides working at the Venture he also is a chairman in the Wrexham council. He has a degree in Social Work and also in Criminology. We think he is an important asset for our research.

Especially because he was there since the beginning. He has a lot knowledge about the organisation and which factors are involved. Besides that he is very valuable for our research since he knows a lot of people, who maybe can help us further. And he has knowledge about policies, restrictions etc.

##### **How high of a priority is our research to our sponsor?**

Since our sponsor is Thoby Miller, a teacher at Glyndwr University, our project will be as much of a priority as the rest of the students studying at Glyndwr. We found Thoby Miller very helpful during our placement last year and we think he will be just as important to us during our research.

##### **Who will fulfil the role of leader of the research group?**

Since our research group consist of only Joran Eftting and Peggy den Brok, we will both be in charge of the project. We both will keep an eye on the product and the process of our research. This is also one of our learning goals.

##### **What will be the roles of the people in the research group?**

As there are only two of us, we will divide our tasks equally. Most of the research will be done in collaboration. There are no pre-appointed tasks within our group, we'll divide tasks as we go along.

We both see the value of working together. And since we both have another Social Work profile I think we can contribute, and share our knowledge.

## **Chapter five: Communication.**

### **Which are the moments in which the sponsor can decide how to continue the project?**

We will be in contact with the sponsor the entire length of the research. We have a meeting with the sponsor every two weeks to discuss our developments and achievements. Since we have to finish our report by the end of May we will have a meeting half way through our research to discuss whether we're on the right track. During this meeting, Mr. Miller can tell us what we have to alter or start in order to bring our research to a satisfactory conclusion.

### **How do we handle the information we gained from the research?**

We'll interview a vast number of people, whose answers we'll compare and add to our report. We'll also hold extended interviews with four people: Malcolm King, Hannah King, Colin Powell and Maarten Kuiper. These extended interviews will get a special section in the report. We'll also compare the information we gain from the interviews with information learnt from our literary sources. We want to link literature with our own findings.

### **How will the sponsor be kept informed?**

We will be in contact with the sponsor the entire length of the research. We have a meeting with the sponsor every two weeks to discuss our developments and achievements. We'll also provide our sponsor with the information we've gained from interviews by email, keeping him up to date at all times.

### **How will the other parties be involved in the project?**

The main parties involved will be:

- Malcolm King
- Hans Schreurs

Malcolm King will be kept informed through personal contact. We'll have regular meetings with him, in which we'll inform him about our progress. Since he works at the Venture, we will see him a lot.

Hans Schreurs will be kept informed via email. Every time we finish a chapter, we will send it to him for evaluation. As he lives in another country, personal contact is not possible.

### **How will the target group be involved in the project?**

Since we are taking interviews of the people in the community, the people will be involved as such. Caia Parc is an area that deals with a lot of issues – poverty, child abuse, substance abuse etc., but there's also a big feeling of social cohesion. People take care of each other. The Venture is very well-known and beloved within the Caia Parc community. As such, the target group is of big importance to our research. People from Caia Parc are very much involved with the Venture's well-being, as has been demonstrated many times in the past. The Venture reflects the area, in that the people from Caia Parc decide what the Venture does and becomes. If the inhabitants of Caia Parc want the Venture to do, or not do, something, they will make this known. The community has a big influence over the happenings at the Venture.

**Chapter six: Research and definition phase.****A global oversight of the timeframe during the research:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
January 7 <sup>th</sup> – February 8 <sup>th</sup>	Studying relevant literature (topics: adventure playgrounds, play work, youth and community, participation in the community, empowerment) Preparing interview questions Preparing in terms of choosing which people to interview
February 8 <sup>th</sup>	Arriving in Wrexham, start of research period
February 8 <sup>th</sup> – February 21 <sup>st</sup>	Taking interviews, saving information Attending Venture board meeting Extended interview(s) with Malcolm King
February 22 <sup>nd</sup> – February 28 <sup>th</sup>	Organising information gained from interviews
March 1 <sup>st</sup> – March 14 <sup>th</sup>	Gathering and organising information about Gwenfro Valley and Liverpool Adventure Playground Extended interview with Colin Powell
March 15 <sup>th</sup> – March April 4 <sup>th</sup>	Renewed study of literature, connecting to our findings Extended interview with Maarten Kuiper, his origins are in Holland, so this will be very interesting within our research.
April 5 <sup>th</sup> – April 11 <sup>th</sup>	Extended interview with Hannah King Comparing and contrasting information gained from extended interviews
April 12 <sup>th</sup> – June 6 <sup>th</sup>	Working on report Dealing with unforeseen circumstances

**Which theoretical information will be used in the research?**

The first few weeks of our research we will concentrate on finding relevant literature. Some of the information we need for our research is only available in Wales since the relevant course to which it is related, is not known here in Holland.

We're looking for literature about participating in the community. This is a very important part of the Venture's history, and it will be good to have some prior knowledge about the subject.

The Venture has released a booklet about their history, which was handed to us when we were doing our internships there last year. We've both read this booklet, which provided us with a lot of information and subject points to further build upon.

Hannah King, Malcolm King's daughter, has written a previous report on the Venture. We have access to this report and plan to read it when we're in Wales.

We're looking to find literature about play work, a method not known in Holland. Since a few members of the Venture are following the play work course, we think we can get a lot of information from them. They have been very helpful in the past, during our placement.

We're also looking for information about youth work, which is vastly different in the UK, compared to the way it's used in Holland.

What maybe also relevant for us is to find the reports and articles other people have written about the Venture. They Venture is well known in a lot of different countries. There was an American psychologist that has visited the Venture as well as a member from a big organisation in Japan. Maybe they have valuable information for us.

We found out that self built playgrounds originally came from Denmark. A pedagogic worker found that the children and youngsters were attracted to building sites to play. It was after the war, when there was a lot of damage in the towns. That is how she came up with the idea.

There is also a playground in which the kids, youngsters, community and staff building the entire year and in the end they burn it down and start again. The philosophy behind it, is that children and youngsters grow and will have different needs, also the new children will be involved in the building process that way. They create a playground that is built to the interest and needs of the children and youngsters involved. What kind of influence that has on the community, we don't know, we still have to find that out.

### **Chapter seven: Concept task.**

Our main product will be a report chronicling the Venture's vast history. We'll try to describe how it first started, how it grew to be what it is today, what influenced this growth and which people were involved.

We will try to answer the following question and subquestions:

What makes the Venture effective in the community?

- What makes the Venture unique as an effective response to specific local needs?
- Which methods does the Venture use in response to the localised needs of the community?
- What different professions are present at the Venture and how do they complement each other and work together as a group?
- What makes the children and youngsters voluntary return to the Venture every day?

We will collect these answers in an easy to read, complete report which can be used by anyone interested in Adventure Playgrounds. The report will not be limited to the Venture, but can instead be used by anyone thinking about starting an adventure playground of their own. Also other organisations can benefit from this report because we will describe the methods the Venture are using as an response to the needs of the youngsters.

The report won't be a blueprint on how to create an adventure playground, but will give a clear and to-the-point view on how this particular version was created.

With this research we want to capture all important points in how the Venture contributes to the community. This because we want to see which factors are involved to start an adventure playground.

- Brown, F. (2007). *The Venture: A case study of an adventure Playground*. Cardiff: Play Wales
- Jeffs, T. & Smith, M.K. (1999). *Informal education: Informal education- conversation, democracy & learning*. London: Education Now Books and YMCA George Williams College.
- MacDonald, R. (1997). *Youth, the 'Underclass' and Social Exclusion*. London: Routledge
- George, D.L. (1926) at the website from the Venture, consulted at 16-03-2010 at the World Wide Web.  
<http://www.the-venture.org.uk/>

Appendix 1:

### **Informal education**

#### **Chapter one: Being an informal educator.**

Remembering involves the past, understanding the present; and learning is orientated to the future. Page 12.

Education is concerned with all aspects of thinking. However, it is future orientated- it is about development and growth even when we are studying the past. Education takes us to the conscious world. It involves activities that are intended to stimulate thinking, to foster learning. Page 12.

The environment of learning can be seen as two different things:

- The actual environment, also called surrounding.
- But can also be seen as the environment of the group . Here the focus is on the relationships between people rather than psychical or material conditions. Those two can't be separated since they influence each other, the size and shape of the room, lighting, heating of the room will influence the way we feel and think about the activities we're engaged in. In turn, our social relationships will affect the way we view these things. Page 12.

Education, unlike the latter, embraces a commitment to:

- respect for persons.
- the promotion of well being.
- truth.
- democracy.
- fairness and equality. Page 15.

As educators we work with others to create environments for learning. Page 16.



## **Chapter two: Trusting in conversation.**

Conversation is central to our work as informal educators, yet we often undervalue it. (This is very important to the Venture, conversation and building up relationships is a main goal in working at the Venture. It created relationships with the youngsters. Maybe one conversation will mean more to them than a million activities. However, most of the times, the outcomes will not show themselves immediately but will have an impact on the youngsters' lives. Maybe their outcome will never reveal itself but it is there). The talk we engage in may seem fairly trivial –the everyday things of life- but that contact, that chance to interact, to be with others is affirming. We are a human with other humans. We are addressing each other. One of the most inhumane of all punishments is solitary confinement. Depriving people of contact can lead to breakdown.

### *Talk and conversation:*

The first and obvious, thing to say about talk is that it is a social activity. To talk with others involves thinking about their feelings, thoughts and needs. In turn, they too must think about you or me.

If two or more people are to communicate, they must:

- co-operate
- think about others feelings and experiences
- give each other room to talk

Second, conversation involves people agreeing about the topic.

Third, conversation involves an immediate response. There is not much of a time lag between the action of one and the response of the other.

Fourth, although conversation is all around us –it is a very sophisticated activity as Ronald Wradhaugh shows:

“You must have a well-developed feeling about what you can (or cannot) say and when you can (or cannot) speak. You must know how to use words to do things and also exactly what words you can use in certain circumstances. And you must be able to supplement and reinforce what you choose to say with other appropriate behaviours: your movements, gestures, posture, gaze and so on. You must also attune yourself to how others employ these same skills”.

Fifth, conversation entails certain commitments. For it to work, we have to trust in the others involved.

Sixth, talk involves us in interpretation – and in filling the gaps.

Finally we have to acknowledge that conversation is a complex, and perplexing activity. It embodies rules and etiquette.

### *Being with:*

To fully engage in conversation, we have to be in a certain frame of mind. We have to be with that person, rather than to act on them. To imagine we can see the world through other's eyes can be to kid ourselves. It can lead to us acting on what we imagine rather than on what we hear. In this sense, our task is less to understand others as individuals –than to appreciate what they are saying. Page 26.

### *Being open:*

Constantly being open to the possible truth of what others are saying. We have to enter conversations ready to change our view of things.

We will often check:

- We are clear about what is being said.
- The truth of statements.
- The sincerity of the people speaking.
- Whether what is said fits the situation. Page 27.

### *Conversation and activities:*

One of the big problems about conversation is that it has tended to be undervalued by welfare professionals and funders!!! (Very important, there has to be certain outcomes for funders. Also the registration of activities is measured. But there is no room in just having conversations with the youngsters. It can be that one conversation can be more important in a day than all the activities. However this can't be measured and is harder to account for).

The second major problem is that conversation is set against activity –and, in youth work for example, it is 'activity' that is valued in many settings.

By spending time with others we show that we are interested in them as well in what they have to say. (Also very important for the Venture!).

**Chapter three: Fostering democracy.**

When we talk about democracy here, we are not only concerned with a way of choosing governments. We look to it as a quality that runs through the whole of life, to the relationships between us. This entails moving beyond a focus on individuals. We are social beings. We are what we are because of our interactions with others. We achieve what we do because we benefit from their work. Thus, if we are all to flourish then we must:

- Recognize that we share many common interests.
- Commit ourselves to consider those interests (and hence the needs of others) when looking to our own.
- Actively engage with, and seek to strengthen, those situations and movements that embody democratic values and draw people together.

Think of Save the Venture campaign, the children were very upset about the treat of the Venture being closed. The youngster were involved in the campaign to save the Venture from closing, by writing letters to the council, demonstrating and help to get as many signatures from the local people in caia park. Also in developing posters and banners for the demonstration in front of the guild hall. The youngsters concerns were taking seriously and to engage them in the activities they feel like they can do something. They've been seen and been taking seriously by the staff and adults at the Venture.

#### **Chapter four: Exploring reflection and learning.**

John Dewey once wrote that the 'business of education might, be defined as an emancipation and enlargement of experience. As educators most of us can identify with these words.

By speaking of enlargement, we mean making something bigger- to extend its limits. Our task is to work with people so that they may have a greater understanding or appreciation of their experiences. (having experiences).

By speaking of emancipation we mean knowing we had them experiences. Not only on conscious level but they can also be unconscious. Page 48-49.

*The nature of reflection:*

When we use the word reflection we usually want to describe a process of thought that is active and careful. It is an activity in which people 'recapture experience', mull it over and evaluate it.

According to David Boud and his associates it involves three aspects:

*-Returning to experience- that is to say recalling or detailing salient events.*

Two things are especially worth looking at here:

First, looking back entails building an impression of what occurred. It is an active process.

Second, what we remember, the sense we make of things, is generally shaped by how we are feeling at the time. This is also being done at the Venture, when youngsters are banned from the playground, they have to talk to the staff first. They talk about what happened and about the behaviour of the youngster and enable them to use different behaviour options in the future.

*-Attending to (or connecting with) feelings- this has two aspects: using helpful feelings and removing or containing obstructive ones.*

*-Evaluating experience- this involves re-examining experience in the light of one's aims and knowledge. It also entails integrating this new knowledge into one's conceptual frameworks.*

### Chapter five: Working with process.

There are two very different approaches to educating. One is concerned with outcomes (a product approach) and the other with interaction (a process approach). The process approach can either be made formal via a curriculum or driven by dialogue. Page 60.

#### *Product approaches:*

These approaches are derived from ways of thinking that are common in industry and commerce. The basic product curriculum would look like the following:

Step1: Diagnosis of need

Step2: Formulation of objectives

Step3: Selection of content

Step4: Organization of the content

Step5: Selection of learning experiences

Step6: Organization of learning experiences

Step7: Determination of what to evaluate and of the ways and means of doing it. Taba, H. (1962).

*Curriculum development: Theory and practice.* New York: Harcourt Brace. Page 12.

The product approach has problems:

First, if we define closely what learners will learn before the encounter, then we limit the opportunity for dialogue.

Second, in conversation the focus can change and different things become important.

Third, product approaches can quickly slip, into educators defining outcomes for learners, and thus be antidemocratic.

We can see from this that product-based approaches tend to involve working on, not with people. The focus is on changing individuals in ways set out by others. It entails teaching them the skills and attributes which employers, politicians and opinion leaders hold to be desirable. Many of the activities that play, youth, and community education workers are responsible for are now product orientated. Programmes, such as the Youth Achievement Awards, and targeted efforts to tackle crime, truancy, drug usage, under-achievement, unemployment and social exclusion are examples here. They are not driven by dialogue. Page 61 and 62.

#### *A Process approach to curriculum:*

A process approach to curriculum does not specify outcomes in advance. It looks to the qualities of interaction that occur in an educational situation.

Rather than having objectives about what people should learn, as in a product curriculum, it has a general aim or intention.

Once the aims have been identified, the process curriculum needs a set of principles to handle:

- Planning for example, how to select and organize content.
- The study and evaluation of the process.

These help educators to think about what the best way of working might be. Page 63.

Today, a process approach to curriculum is largely encountered in those settings where attendance is voluntary. It cannot coexist with the sort of rigidity found in national curriculum areas.

#### *The process of informal education:*

We may be working with the residents association around their attempts to develop communal provision. There may be questions or issues that we would like to discuss, but we are dependent on the twists and turns of the conversation to see if we can or whether we still want to introduce them. (I think this will be important for our research, since the Venture depends on voluntary attendance and is in general a process based playground. It depends on the wishes and needs from the youngsters attending, and the needs and demands can change daily, or even faster). Informal educators have constantly to be thinking about their actions and the situations they encounter. They have to balance meeting competing demands and learn to allow conversation to develop and engage in such ways that express the values that underpin their work. Page 65.

Assess: We make an assessment of what may be going on and our role.

Engage: We engage in conversation.

Question: This raises questions.

Discern: We consider these in relation to what we discern makes for human flourishing.

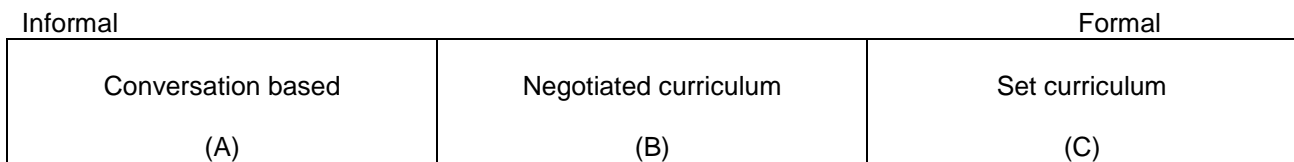
Develop: This enables us to develop a response...  
 Informal educators have some commitments , including: having a concern for, and respecting others;  
 being committed to the search for truth and wisdom; and working to extend democracy.

Three crucial aspects are implicit in figure 5.3:

<i>Act</i>	<i>Reflect</i>	<i>Learn</i>
	<i>Asses</i>	
	<i>Engage</i>	
	<i>Question</i>	
	<i>Discern</i>	
	<i>Develop</i>	

Page 66.

Informal educators can and must employ more formal approaches from time to time. AN example: Streetworkers, much of their work will be of conversation variety (A), but they also be running small projects and groups and perhaps organising residential (B). Here they may sit down with those involved and talk through the programme. They decide together what to do-they negotiate a curriculum. Our workers may also be interested in watersports. Here they may well organise a course on safety, where they decide the content and the process (C).



←-----→  
 (Process based organisation in a product society).

**Chapter six: Evaluating practice.**

Informal education is future orientated, concerned with development and growth. Therefore, as educators we must foster learning, which aids this. Looking towards the future and planning is vital but this must take place alongside reflection on what has happened. Page 71.

Three approaches to evaluation:

- Directed evaluation: In this approach external agents, often funders, set criteria. The focus is largely upon measurable outcomes and outputs.
- Negotiated evaluation: Here, the judgements regarding practice are made according to criteria agreed between different parties involved. There is debate and discussion.
- Dialogical evaluation: This approach places the responsibility for evaluation on educators and participants. It's purpose to enrich practise and it is part and parcel of practise. Page 73-74.

*Problems in evaluating informal education:*

First, the different things that influence the way people behave can't be easily broken down.  
 Second, those who may have been affected by the work of informal educators are often not easily identified.  
 Third, change can rarely be monitored even on an individual basis. (sometimes the work of an informal educator will only be noticed years after working with people, especially on the Venture, maybe there is no change at the moment but years after people who visited the Venture express how much the Venture and the staff has meant to them, in changing their lives.)  
 Last, there is an issue with timescales. Change of the sort with which informal educators are concerned does not happen overnight. Page 75-76.

*So how can informal education be evaluated?*

Here we might be asking questions about:

- Interactions
- Focus
- Settings
- Aims

- Strategies
- Outcomes.

## Chapter seven: Living with values.

Some of the core values of an informal educator are:

- Respect for persons. This requires us to recognise the dignity and uniqueness of every human being. (At the Venture all youngsters are being seen as a unique person, with each their own abilities and qualities. The staff enables the young people to explore and expand these qualities. They don't give up on youngsters, even though their behaviour is not acceptable, they always get a second chance. Mistakes are been seen as learning process. They also are not being looked down to, they are highly respected.)
- The promotion of well-being. We must work for the welfare of all. We must further human flourishing. (The Venture looks closely at the needs of the youngsters attending, and also responding to these needs, as an example signaling a lot of youngsters that are seriously obese, they feel like they have to do something about it to help the youngsters being more healthy and maybe stop bullying. They take action by developing projects for these youngsters).
- Truth. Perhaps the first duty of the educator is to truth. (Think of smoking, staff will never for bid youngster (of legal age) to smoke when they are smoking themselves, also swearing and bad language is not allowed, the staff will not use this either).
- Democracy. This involves the belief that all human beings ought to enjoy the chance of self-government and autonomy. ( The youngsters attending at the Venture have a lot to say in choosing their activities, outside on the playground they choose their own games etc. Even when situations are getting dangerous (in the eye of others) the youngsters are being enabled to explore their own boundaries, for an example some youngsters like to jump of the structure, but some of them were doubting if they could make it, and considering the age they probably wouldn't but they are given the freedom to explore this decision themselves. In the end the youngster I was talking about didn't do it after considering it for 15 minutes).
- Fairness and equality. Informal educators have a responsibility to work for relationships characterized by fairness. (All youngsters are welcome at the Venture). Page 81.

*Codes of ethics and codes of practice:*

Underneath this the rights clients have:

- be treated as an end i.e. that their interests are placed above those of the agency and the worker.
- self-determination.
- be accepted for what one is, and not merely belonging to a certain category.
- non-discrimination on irrelevant grounds, such as 'race'.
- treatment on the principles of honesty, openness and non-deception.
- have information given to the worker treated as confidential.
- a professionally competent service.
- access to resources for which there exists and entitlement. Page 90.

**Chapter eight: Organizing the daily round.**

Informal educators undertake six basic kinds of work:

- Being about: involves activities such as walking round the area, etc. (The Venture does this when they go on outreach, to reach the youngsters that are not attending the Venture, and also to build up relationships with them).
- Being there: involves informal educators setting time aside for responding to situations and crisis.
- Working with individuals and groups: describes more 'formal' encounters.
- Doing projects: varies from one-off pieces of work; through regular sessions over a three month or ten month period.
- Doing 'admin' and research.
- Reflecting on practice. Page 96-97.

*Some basic considerations:*

- We work where our target groups can be found.
- We make ourselves and our work known.
- We have a range of more organised activities into which people can feed.
- We have space to respond to situations.
- We attend to administration.
- We look to our own development. Page 97-100.



Appendix 2:

**Language and social disadvantage**

**Chapter one: The effects of socio-economic status on children's language acquisition and use.**

Social disadvantage is defined in terms of socioeconomic status (SES). It is more likely that children from low-SES backgrounds experience language delay than children from high-SES backgrounds. Page 9.

Social disadvantaged is defined in a number of ways, however in this book it is defined in terms of level of parental education (usual maternal) or occupation (usually parental). Page 9.

Poverty affects children psychologically. But also psychically. In terms of the psychical effects of poverty, poor health –particularly in the perinatal period for infants who were born prematurely- and nutrition can give rise to psychological or neurological deficits, as can exposure to environmental pollutants. Page 11. Researchers found significant correlations between level of maternal education and 3-years old children's receptive and productive language.

**Chapter six: Language, behaviour and social disadvantage.**

The association between SLCD (speech, language and communication difficulties) and EBD (emotional and behavioural disorders) from two perspectives.

The first approach examines the trajectories of children with primary speech and language difficulties who develop secondary EBD as they grow older. The second, more recent, approach is based on assessments of groups of children and young people with primary EBD revealing previously undetected SLC that are thought to contribute to the EBD. Implicit in these two approaches is the distinction between primary and secondary difficulties. Primary difficulties are those identified first, as the child is growing up, and therefore other difficulties identified subsequently are usually the consequence of, or secondary to, the primary difficulty. Page 93-94.

Source: Clegg, J. & Ginsborg, J. (2006). *Language and social disadvantage: Theory into practise*. West-Sussex: John Wiley & Sons LTD.

Appendix 3:

**A more equal society?**

Blair described social exclusion as:

about income but ... about more. It is about prospects and networks and life-chances. It's a very modern problem, and one that is more harmful to the individual, more damaging to self esteem, more corrosive for society as a whole, more likely to be passed down from generation to generation, than material poverty. (Blair, 1997b). Page 9.

Later, he would define it as:

a short-hand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. (DSS, 1999, p 23) Page 9.

The emphasis on work-based policies reflected Brown's belief that "the most serious case of poverty is unemployment" (Pre-Budget Report, November 1997) and that "the answer to social exclusion is economic opportunity" (1998 Budget Speech). Page 10.

Children who grew up in poverty are much less likely to succeed as adults... Childhood disadvantage has long term scarring effects. (HM Treasury, 1999, pp3, 26). Page 11

Starting from the commitment to tackle poverty and its causes, the report outlined what the government saw as the "complex, multi-dimensional problems" of poverty and social exclusion (DDS, 1992, p2). The key features were listed as lack of opportunities to work, lack of opportunities to acquire education and skills; childhood deprivation; disrupted families; barriers to older people living active, fulfilling and healthy lives; inequalities in health; poor housing; poor neighborhoods; fear of crime; and disadvantage or discrimination on grounds of age, ethnicity, gender or disability. Page 12.

Finally, OFA (Opportunities For All) contained a chapter on the importance of area-based solutions to social exclusion, identifying "the increasing polarization between thriving communities on the one hand, and deprived ones on the other" as one of the key problems of our society over the past 20 years"(DDS,1999, p11). The report promised area based- programmes to improve the quality of life in the most deprived communities by improving job-prospects, tackling crime, raising educational achievement and reducing poor health. Page 12

Opportunity for all and the child poverty pledge laid the groundwork for what has become a wide-ranging and ambitious set of policies. Page 13.

Concepts of poverty and social exclusion by Levitas.

He identifies three different approaches to social exclusion used in contemporary political debate, each with its own implication for policy solutions.

- The first, which Levitas labels the redistribution discourse (RED), sees social exclusion as a consequence of poverty: it is income that the excluded lack, so raising benefit levels would be one effective policy response.
- The second, the social integrationist discourse (SID), sees inclusion primarily in terms of labour market attachment. The excluded are those who are workless, leading to a focus on policies which encourage and enable people to enter paid work.
- The third approach is labeled by Levitas as the moral underclass discourse (MUD) and places responsibility for social exclusion on 'the moral and behavioral delinquency' of excluded themselves. Page 14.

BLP define social exclusion in terms of non-participation in key activities. For the UK in the 1990's, they identify four dimensions:

- Consumption: the capacity to purchase goods and services.
- Production: participation in economically or socially valuable activities.
- Political engagement: involvement in local or national decision-making.
- Social interaction: integration with family, friends and community. Page 15.

Participation in every dimension is regarded as necessary for social inclusion.

As far as the Venture concerns, they try to engage young people in the last three dimensions.

They organize activities for the youngster but not only for them, they also engage families and adults in their activities. The adults are the children of the past and the Venture wants to keep them involved in activities that are going on.

An example is that they try to enable the adults to become staff at the Venture. The value the knowledge they have about the area and the Venture as an organization. They know the children and families, and

know what is going on in the community. They give opportunities for youngsters to take part in new activities, and value their opinion.

The Venture is situated in one of the most deprived areas in North Wales, named Caia Park. Social exclusion is notable since when you speak of Caia Park to other people in Wrexham, they have a strong negative opinion about the area.

**Source:** Hills, J. & Stewart, K. (2005). *Introduction*. In: Hills, J. & Stewart, K. (2005). *A more equal society?* Bristol: The policy press. Pp 1-19.