

“I WAS TREATED LIKE A PERSON AND NOT A LOST CAUSE”

Young people’s experience of an alternative to school exclusion

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STUDY BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- Inclusive education - struggling to fulfill expectations
- 25% Icelandic students receive special education
- International Classification of Function & Disability (ICF)
- Hlidarskoli (Hlíðarskóli) – research opportunity
 - Students with Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD)
- To gain an understanding of the experiences of young people, when attending an alternative school that specialises in students with EBD.
 - *Young people's experience of being placed in an alternative educational setting because of serious behavioural issues.*

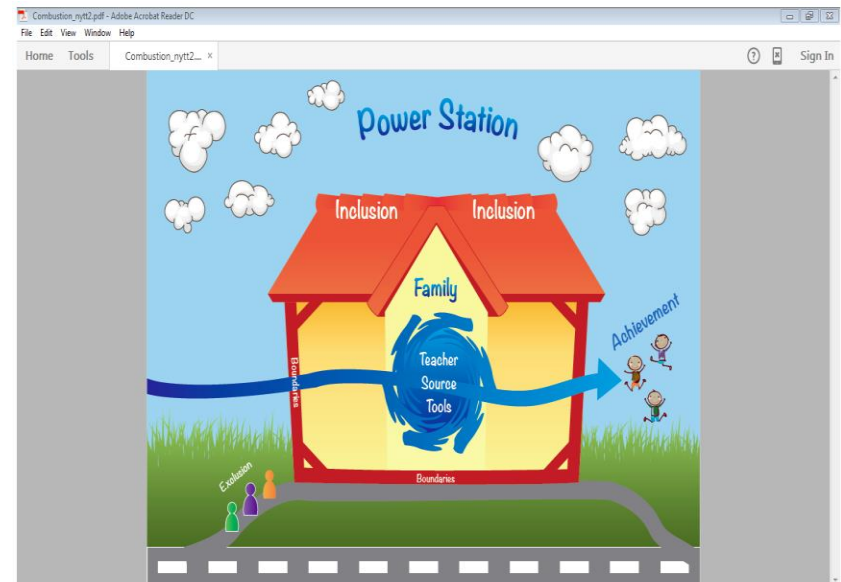
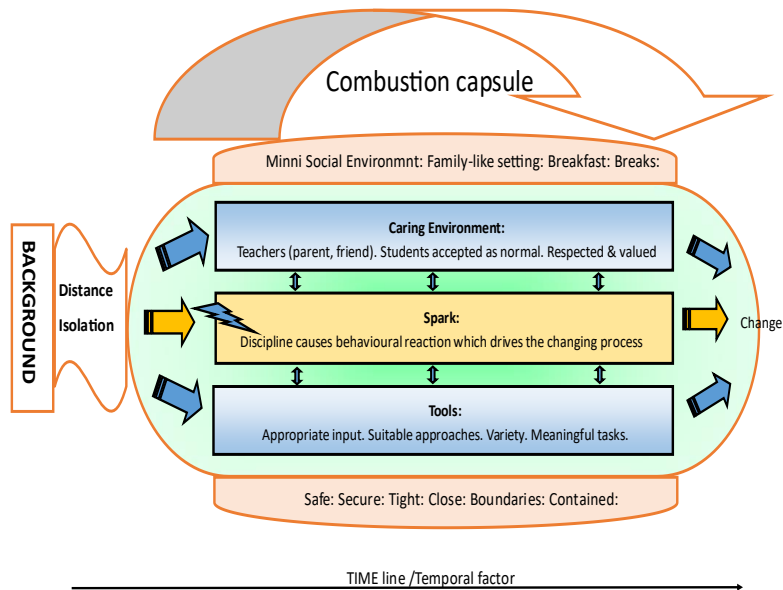


DESIGN, PARTICIPANTS AND DATA ANALYSIS!

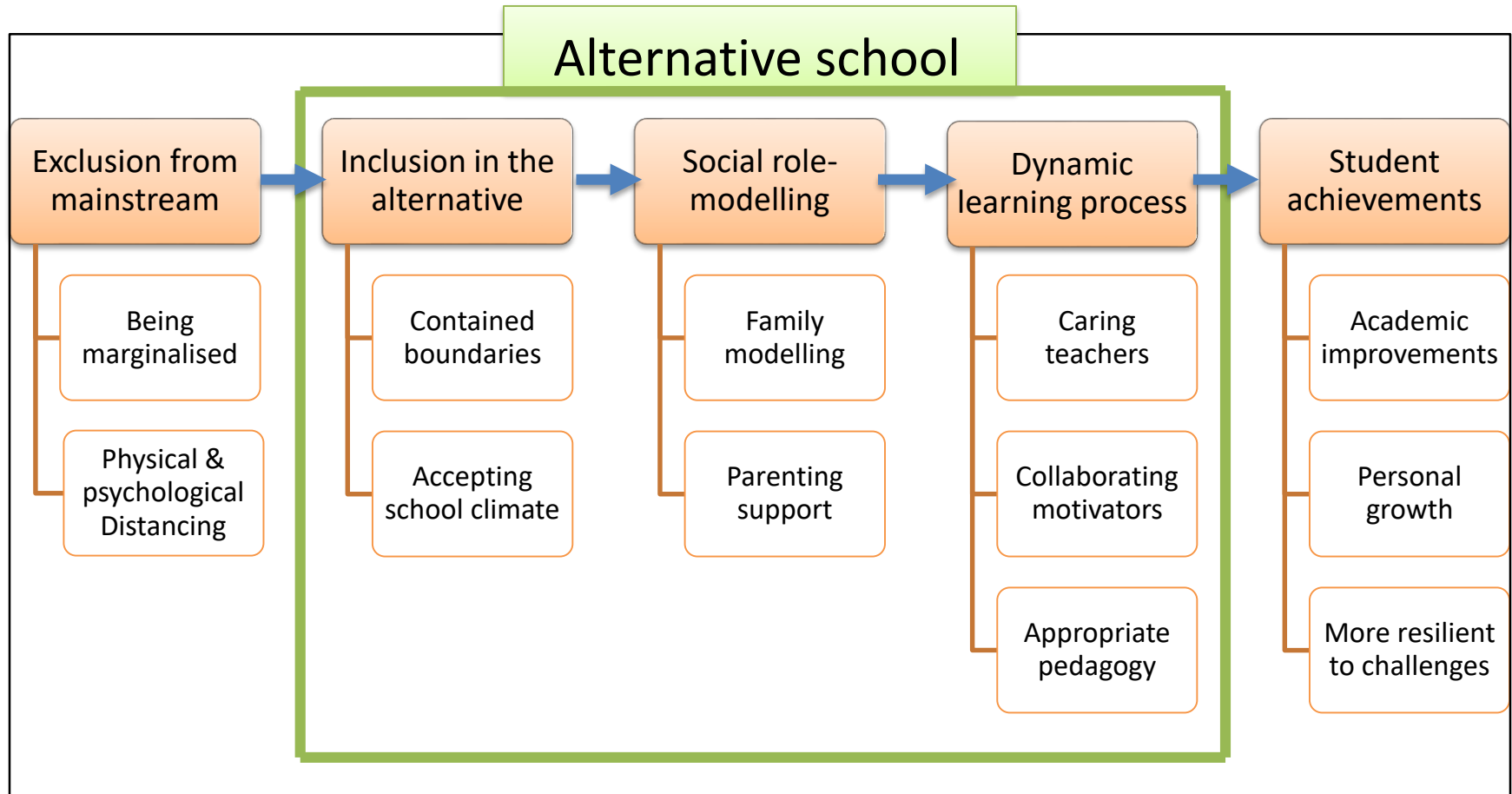
Interview study of 10 interviews

Nine former school students aged 20 – 24 years

Data collection 5. June 2014 – 11. June 2015



EDUCATION IS AN INTEGRATED PROCESS WITHIN A NOURISHING ENVIRONMENT



EXCLUSION FROM MAINSTREAM TO INCLUSION IN THE ALTERNATIVE

- *At compulsory school, I had already accepted that I didn't know a thing and that I couldn't learn. (Assa)*
- *One felt somehow that you weren't lost in some system or some large group. (Melkorka)*
- *If you forgot your swimming togs, it was no excuse, you were made to walk. You were driven out along a country road and had to walk back, no matter what the weather was...Ay, the disciplinary process y'see. Many of us boys needed a lot of discipline y'see. That's how I understood it y'realise? (Manni)*



SOCIAL ROLE-MODELLING & PARENTING SUPPORT

- *Naturally, all the staff were there during breaks. Though we were given our space.....we sat on the sofa knitting and they [the staff] sat around at the coffee table, no wall or anything, just an open area. It was like a social get together for twenty minutes or so. (Salka)*
- *I think they taught my mother a whole lot, y'see and my step-dad. I remember mostly that the situation at home improved a lot after I started attending Hlidarskoli. (Torfi)*



DYNAMIC LEARNING PROCESS

- Caring student/teacher relationships
 - *Y'see, the fact that I think about those teachers still today, y'know, it is far more than I did with any of my other teachers from compulsory school. Y'know one related to them much more and I mean if you didn't come to school they went and fetched you personally, so it was completely different y'see. (Frosti)*
- Teacher competence and diversity
 - *It was great that so many of them were so knowledgeable. Knew everything, especially [Funi, the teacher], I could ask him anything and he would know the answer to it, sort of an encyclopaedia. Yes, I could ask him anything and I loved it. (Snorri)*



THE SCHOOL SETTING (ENVIRONMENT)

- *Well, it's naturally someplace at the backend of beyond and isolated, but there were no worries out there. I personally found it much easier.....a small group, far out in the country somewhere with no outside harassments, nothing to bother one, so you could concentrate on what you were doing and it was peaceful. (Oddi)*
- *It was fantastic, for example, we had animals there. There were hens and such and we always went to get the eggs and feed them after breakfast and, and once a raven that had been shot but still alive though his wing was in pieces, we took it upon ourselves to look after the raven all winter long. It was fantastic y'understand? (Manni)*



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- *Um, what more did they teach me? Only that education really matters...put me back on my feet and that life is not in vain, you don't live for a short while y'see. So, respect and just learning to live life and appreciate it and that education matters, you want to **be** something. And they taught one to set goals and reach them. (Salka)*



KEY FINDINGS

- Positive experience
- Adaptation to environment can lead to changes in behaviour
 - Protection yet freedom in the same environment
- Importance of integration
 - Nurturing student/teacher relationships
 - Diverse teaching strategies and curricula
 - Supportive environment
- Student achievements – more social and personal



