


From Participants to Partners

Youth Collaboration in Mental Health Research

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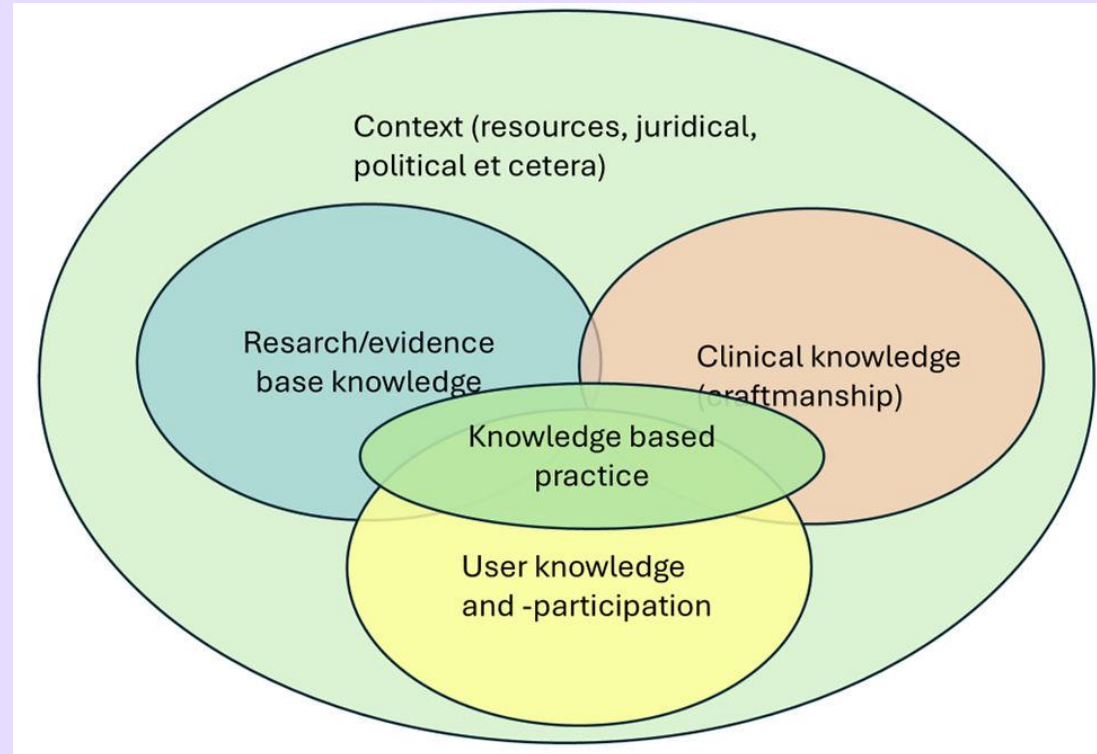
Mental health, lived experiences and collaborative research

- Mental health research has traditionally focused on professionals as knowledge producers
- People with lived experience were often treated as research subjects, not partners
- Critiques from service user movement challenged this:
 - From research *on* us to research *with* us
- This shift laid the groundwork for participatory and collaborative research

Knowledge-based collaborative research practice

Different forms of knowledge come together

Knowledge is created in relationships



Experience based knowledge is a necessary to understand mental health and well being

Collaborative research gives context to a wider societal missions and priorities

Figure of knowledge based practice (created Elisabeth Klæbo Reitan, based on [Kunnskapsbasertpraksis.no](http://kunnskapsbasertpraksis.no)).

Why involve young people

- Empowerment/Rights-based
- Policy, Practice, and Change
- Ethical
- Mattering



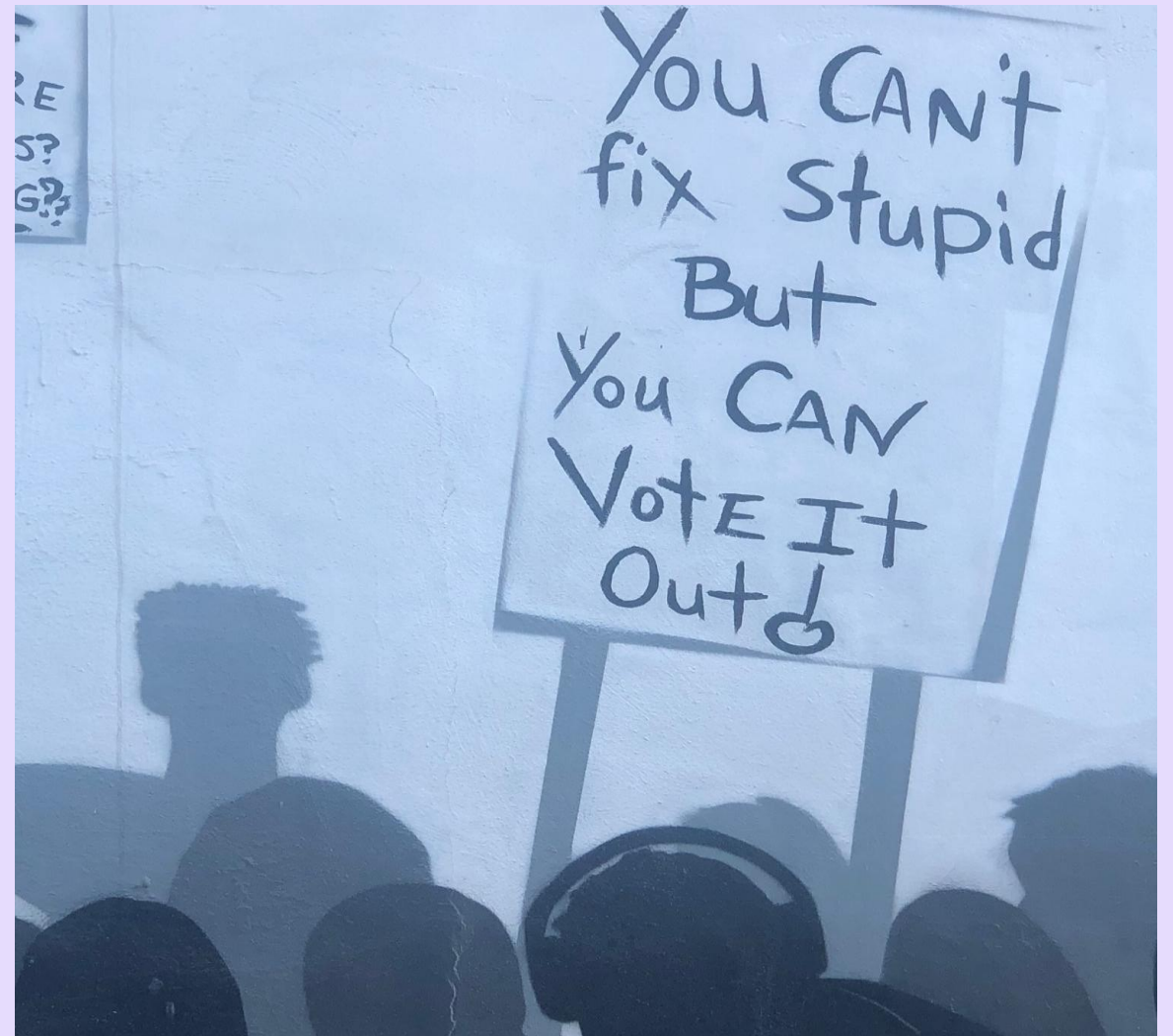
Empowerment

- Mobilizing: citizens, service users, students, patients
- Strengthening participation at individual and system levels
- Increasing control over decisions affecting one's life
- Rooted in human rights principles
- Involvement as means of agency and influence



Policy, Practice, and Change

- Democratization of research and knowledge production
- Supports policy-relevant and practice-oriented research
- Enables participants to set agendas and define priorities
- More relevant interventions and sustainable and context-sensitive solutions





Ethical

- A matter of rights to participation and influence
- Involves those who are directly affected
- Moves from research *on* to research *with* people
- Amplifies voices that are often unheard
- Participation is valuable in itself, not only for outcomes
- Ethical justification goes beyond improving research quality
- Focus on dignity, inclusion, and respect



Mattering

- Experiencing being valued and taken seriously
- Feeling that one's contribution makes a difference
- Promotes: empowerment, meaningful participation, and personal growth and mastery
- Strengthens belonging, community, and connectedness
- Requires genuine involvement
- Mattering emerges through how research is organized, how relationships are built, and how influences are made real



Mental health and well-being

- **A broad and inclusive understanding of mental health** (mental illness, mental health challenges, and positive mental health/well-being)
- Focus on both:
 - **Support and treatment** (specialized and community health services)
 - **Everyday contexts** (school, work, and community life)
- Mental health as closely linked to:
 - **Participation and inclusion**
 - **Opportunities in education and employment**
- The project we present reflect this breadth:
 - School-based mental health and well-being
 - Support for youth outside education and work
 - Social inclusion as central to mental health and well-being

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide features several overlapping, stylized hands in various colors including purple, pink, orange, and blue. The hands are positioned as if reaching upwards or outwards, symbolizing collaboration and youth participation.

Roles of Youth in Collaborative Research

- Youth as participants and consultants
- Youth as co-researchers
- Collaborative competence groups
- Youth panel

Youth as co- Researchers

The study: Teacher-student relationship, student mental health and drop out from upper secondary school

- Qualitative study
- Collaborative design
- Explored teacher- student relationships, student mental health and drop out from upper secondary school
- Interviews:
 - Students
 - Teachers
 - Parents



Youth as co-researchers

- A co-researcher with lived experience
- Discussed research theme
- Collaborated on interview guide
- Participated in the interviews
- Collaborated on analysis
- Participated in writing the article

'You notice that there is something positive about going to school': how teachers' kindness can promote positive teacher-student relationships in upper secondary school

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to obtain students' first-person perspectives of their experience of positive teacher-student relationships (TSRs) in upper secondary school. We also explored their experiences of qualities of TSRs concerning students' mental health and dropout from upper secondary school. We used a qualitative and participative approach, whereby key stakeholders were included as co-researchers. Seventeen students participated in semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups. Interview data were analysed via thematic analysis. Participants' experiences were clustered around five themes: (1) it takes two: mutual responsibility in TSRs, (2) don't be unfair: negative experiences challenge TSRs, (3) talk to us: bonding and problem solving through conversation, (4) help us: adapting to students' academic and personal needs, and (5) we need kind teachers: the importance of teachers' demeanour. The findings demonstrated the value of positive TSRs and illustrated the ways in which they promote students' well-being at school.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 20 April 2016
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KEYWORDS

Teacher-student relationship; dropout; mental health; upper secondary school

Background

This study explored students' experience of teacher-student relationships (TSRs) in upper secondary school. Qualities of TSR concerning students' mental health and dropout have also been explored. Positive relationships between adolescents and adults are perhaps the single most important ingredient in the promotion of positive youth development. As schooling is central to adolescents' lives, previous studies have highlighted the crucial role played by TSRs (Nordenbo, Larsen, Tiftikçi, Wendt, & Østergaard, 2008). TSRs have also been recognized as pivotal to students' well-being at school (Nordenbo, Larsen, Tiftikçi, Wendt, & Østergaard, 2008).

The TSR

The conceptual framework for understanding TSRs has been developed in the field of education and psychology. The original framework is attachment theory, which emphasizes the attachment between people. This theory has been applied to other relationships later in life (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Positive relationships are characterized by warmth, open communication, and support from teachers.

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Co-researcher: Natalia
Holter-Sørensen

Collaborative Competence Group

The study: *Support as Possibility – Lived experiences of support in the lives of young people with mental health problems*

- Explored support as a human experience
- Aim: develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of what support actually means
- Hermeneutic phenomenological study
- Interviews: 14 young adults (age 18-25) with experiences with mental health problems and being outside education and employment
- Collaborative design: Collaborative Competence group





Collaborative competence groups - what are they?

Composition

The CCG consist of stakeholders with relevant lived experience and competence related to the study

Diverse experiences

The method emphasizes the inclusion of diverse perspectives and dialogue among members with different experiences

Co-creation and collaboration over time

Ongoing collaboration between the CCG and the main research project

The CCP in the Support project

- **Composition:** 3 young adults and 3 professionals
- **Organization**
 - Met 2 times a year, 2-3 hours meetings
 - Focus on clarifying roles and expectations
 - Dialogical, relational, and supportive approach
- **Contribution to research**
 - Input on interview guides
 - Reflections on the interview situation
 - Participation in analysis and discussions of findings
 - Ongoing discussions relevant for the project





- **5 participating countries:** Denmark, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Norway
- To include a higher ratio of disadvantaged/marginalized young people into excelling in labor market, education and social life
- COSI.ed aims to develop a comprehensive model and a political strategy for social inclusion of pupils at risk of social exclusion and dropout

- **From 2021 to 2024**
- **Development of a European COSI.ed policy**

Welcome to
COSI.ed project
website

Co-created Education through
Social Inclusion



ABOUT THE PROJECT



Inclusion with social education

Collaborative competence groups CCGs across countries

Poland

Portugal

Denmark

Spain

Norway

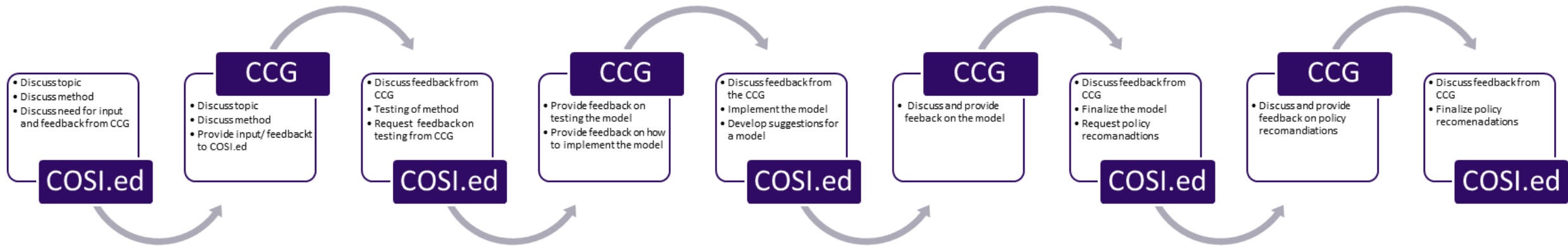
COSI Collaborative Competence Group

- Composition
 - 2 -3 young people
 - 1 teacher
 - 1 higher education student
 - 1 policymaker
 - 1 researcher
 - 1 facilitator
- Contribution to development of model
- Contribution to policy development
- Guests from the project were invited



Collaborative
competence group

Collaborative feedback-loop





International CCG

- Members Denmark, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Norway
- Participants: young people, teacher, HE student, researchers, policymaker, facilitators
- Discussed COSI.ed
 - 1 annual meeting for three years
 - Presented each country's context
 - Discussed themes and /concepts requested by the Consortium

SOBRU

- Investigate the association between socioeconomic inequality and regional NEET
- Identify and explore protective factors against social exclusion
- Explore how volunteer organizations and social entrepreneurs can reduce social exclusion
- Develop effective interventions to prevent future social exclusion

SOSIAL BÆREKRAFT OG REDUSERT UTENFORSKAP SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND REDUCED EXCLUSION



Photo: SOBRU research group



Youth Panel

- 5 young people (21-29 years old) with lived experience of social exclusion and NEET
- Collaboration throughout the entire research process
- Paid involvement on an hourly basis
- Meet 10-12 times a year
- integration of experiential knowledge throughout the research process

Terese, Simon, Sebastian, Mona, Marie and Erwan. (Anne is not present, but also a member of the panel)

Youth Panel Activities

- Meetings between the youth panel and researchers within the work packages
- Exploratory working sessions and discussions within the panel
- Podcast episodes
- Presentations at conferences
- Teaching in PhD course on collaborative research
- Participation in workshops organized by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) and the Research Council of Norway
- Co-authors of two scientific articles and a book chapter (Artic Youth)
- Interview with the local newspaper



How to run collaborative competence groups and youth panels

Recruitment: Recruiting the right group members is crucial for success. Networks and “gatekeepers” help identify engaged and suitable members

Thorough meeting preparation: A clear agenda contributes to effective group meetings

Meeting facilitation: Facilitation is essential to ensure safe meetings where all members can participate. Active work with the group process is important

Collaboration with the main project: Structured collaboration between the facilitator and the project team is essential



Key Lessons and Recommendations

- Challenges in maintaining member retention and group stability, should be addressed through compensation
- Difficulties in engaging all members and ensuring balanced participation while addressing power imbalances
- Clear structure and active management of the group process are essential
- The facilitator is critical to success and should receive proper training and guidance
- CCGs can facilitate co-creation thru interactions and dynamic processes between different stakeholders
- CCGs and Youth Panels are flexible and useful tools for co-creation across diverse projects



Why Youth Involvement Matters

- Youth involvement can promote empowerment and a sense of mattering by engaging voices that are often overlooked
- Youth involvement in mental health research can foster intergenerational dialogue and transform power dynamics between young people, service providers, and policymakers
- Youth involvement in mental health research, services- and policy development can lead to more useful outcomes by improving research quality and creating services better aligned with young people's needs

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