Empowerment & Connectedness: An Evaluation of Boostcamp

A Camp for Young Autistic People

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"One of the most important things I got from the Boostcamp was that I found others I could relate to. I got those in the role-playing group [at the Boostcamp] as friends, and then I have a neighbor, whom I have known since 2nd grade, and then I have a friend who lives in Skive, and those are the friends I have. So already after just one Boostcamp I have more friends in that group I can relate to, than I had in total before - that's why I say it's a big thing."

(Participant at the Boostcamp)

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1. Introduction

"Often when you go to events and things that are about autistic people, there are actually no autistic people involved in running it at all, so it is all those neurotypicals who cannot really speak on our behalf, but they do it anyway"

(Participant at the Boostcamp)

In 2020 Special Area Autism has tested a new initiative in collaboration with Viborg Municipality: Boostcamp. Boostcamp is a Folk High School-like course targeted at intellectually normal / gifted autistic young people who are on the verge of employment and / or at risk of social isolation. The purpose of Boostcamp is empowerment, and the long-term goal is that young people can achieve increased networking skills, greater quality of life and gain a foothold in the labor market.

As part of the test run of the Boostcamp, an evaluation has been made to become wiser on not only 'whether the Boostcamp works' - i.e. whether Boostcamp provides the expected benefit for the participants - but also 'how the Boostcamp works'. We want to investigate which elements of the Boostcamp have been particularly beneficial for the effect of the camp.

The evaluation was carried out by the Special Area Autism in collaboration with DEFACTUM - a research and consulting unit in the Central Jutland Region. The evaluation is co-financed by the Central Jutland Region's Research and Development Pool in the social area.

The report consists of 7 sections. First, the background of the Boostcamp and its content is described (section 2), and the theoretical and methodological basis of the evaluation (section 3). Next, it is analyzed to what extent and how the set goals for the Boostcamp have been achieved (section 4). It also focuses on what the data material says about the length and intensity of the camp (section 5).

Furthermore, it is analyzed to what extent and how it has been possible to anchor and transfer learning to the participants' everyday lives (section 6). The report finishes with a conclusion that contains both a summary and several forward-looking recommendations (Section 7).

2. What does the evalutation show?

The most important findings in the evaluation are summarized in the box below. They will be reviewed and elaborated on throughout the report.

The significance of the Boostcamp for…

… Experiences of participating in social contexts
- The majority of the participants at the Boostcamp have had positive experiences of participating in social contexts
- The courage and desire to participate has been supported by the fact that participants at the Boostcamp were autistic young people
- It is important to support unity, trust, and security right from the start.
- The framework, including the two consistent employees, has helped to create calm and surplus energy to participate in the social activities.

- There is a need for increased awareness of whether everyone feels part of the community during the camp
- The participants' ability to maintain relationships from the Boostcamp seems to be supported by the fact that all participants live in the same municipality.

… Inspiration and greater motivation to find the way forward in relation to employment or education:
- Participants were already motivated for employment even before the Boostcamp
- The boost camp has contributed to increased ownership and action in relation to employment
- The social boost at the Boostcamp has given increased courage to dare seizing the opportunities in relation to employment
- The Boostcamp has given the participants greater insight into their own strengths, challenges, and support needs in relation to employment

… Greater self-understanding and taking charge of one's own life

- The Boostcamp has contributed to increased self-understanding among the participants
- The Boostcamp has contributed to increased empowerment and that the participants can take more charge of their own lives
- The autistic teachers at the camp inspire and act as role models
- Autistic representation among the teachers is important for the participants
- Participants can reflect on and be inspired by each other
- The Boostcamp has provided increased insight and concrete tools

About the length of the Boostcamp
- Teachers and pedagogical staff at the camp assess that the length of the Boostcamp of 8 days was appropriate
- Several of the interviewed participants experience that the program has been very intensive and are annoyed that they did not manage to participate in all activities
- Several of the interviewed participants and contact persons suggested e.g. splitting the camp into smaller 'chunks' or to add some days off

About anchoring and transferring learning to the participant's everyday life
- The personal folder / diploma handed out for completion of the Boostcamp can have an important signaling effect, because it becomes a concrete proof that the participants have succeeded in completing an activity
- There is a need for increased focus on anchoring learning in the participants' everyday lives
- There should be even more focus on who is appointed as the contact person and reconciling expectations in relation to their role
- For those participants where the collaboration with the contact person has worked well, the collaboration has helped to maintain learning and integrate new tools into the participant's everyday life.

3. Boostcamp – background and contents

The following describes the background for the development of the Boostcamp. The purpose of the Boostcamp and its contents are hereafter described. It is possible to read more about the

structure of the Boostcamp in a separate concept description, which reviews the content and structure in more detail.

3.1 The Background for The Boostcamp

In Special Area Autism, we see a need to look in new directions when developing offers in the attempt to support autistic young people gaining a foothold in the labor market. The background for this need is that studies show that autistic adults are significantly worse off in terms of employment, quality of life, loneliness, and independent living. Not only more disadvantaged than the population as a whole, but also seen in relation to people with other mental disabilities (Vogeley et al. 2013; White et al. 2016; Lasgaard et al. 2010; Locke et al. 2010; Roux et al. 2015;). In addition, a group of interviews with caseworkers from job centers and government departments conducted by Special Area Autism in 2016 sheds light on the fact that it is especially time-limited offers for the group of normally and gifted autistic young people that are in demand. The young intellectually normal and gifted autistic young people have other resources than autistic people with developmental disabilities and are therefore met by other demands. Their challenges may appear less visible but are nonetheless pervasive. This means that it is difficult to find employment-oriented offers that can match the needs of this target group.

However, it is not just about being part of the labor market, but also about preventing loneliness and social isolation. Previously, the autism field was characterized by a perception that autistic people had no desire and need for relationships. Today we know that this view does not correspond to reality. It is nevertheless the case that autistic people often have a very flimsy social network. For instance, a study shows that only 8% of autistic adolescents had at least one close friend, while just under 21% had a relationship with a peer which involved some form of joint activity (Orsmond et al. 2004). Another study with autistic adolescents shows that over 55% have never been with a friend (Liptak et al. 2011). Furthermore, research shows that loneliness in autistic people leads to higher risk of anxiety, depression, and decreased self-esteem (Bauminger et al. 2004; White & Roberson-Nay 2009; Mazurek 2014).

At the same time, both research and practical experience indicate that interests are of great importance to many autistic people and can play a significant role in relation to learning / outcome for the target group. One study suggests that autistic people, to a greater degree than a neurotypical control group, are motivated by internal factors such as interest, knowledge, and commitment. For autistic people to achieve the best effect of a learning process, it is therefore essential that it is motivated through interests.

Several studies also indicate that special interests are associated with enthusiasm, pride, joy, and increased self-confidence (Grove et al. 2016; Koegel et al. 2013). In our daily practice, we also see that interests can be a path to socialization, increased social engagement and interaction with peers, which can help prevent and possibly also break social isolation.

3.2. Content in The Boostcamp

Based on the above, we have developed the Boostcamp in the Special Area Autism.
In short, Boostcamp is an intensive, Folk High School-like course of 8-12 days targeted at intellectually normal and gifted autistic young people who are on the verge of employment and / or at risk of social isolation. The purpose of the Boostcamp is empowerment, or in other words; that the Boostcamp helps to create hope, spark, and action in young people.

The Goals of Boostcamp:

In the short term, the goals for the young people's participation in the Boost Camp are:

- that they have positive experiences of participating in social contexts
- that they achieve a more positive self-understanding and are enabled to take more charge of their own life
- that they get inspiration and greater motivation to find the way forward in relation to employment and / or education

The long-term goal is that young autistic people can achieve increased networking skills, greater quality of life and gaining a foothold in the labor market.

Target group

Inclusion criteria for participating in the camp are defined as young people who:

- are autistic and aged 18-32 years of age
- are intellectually normal / gifted
- are not in employment / on the verge of employment, and / or at risk of social isolation
- do not have an extroverted behavior
- do not have severe comorbidity, such as depression
- do not have current abuse of alcohol or drugs

Pilot test and further development

Boostcamp was developed and pilot tested by Special Area Autism in 2017. In collaboration with Viborg Municipality, the concept was further developed in 2019-2020. In the further development, we have been particularly concerned that the effort should - to a greater extent - support the young people's experiences of empowerment being anchored in their everyday life after the camp. At the same time, efforts have been made to strengthen information and preparation of the young people prior to the camp, partly to succeed in recruiting a sufficient number of participants within the target group, and partly to ensure that the young people had the best possible experience and further that most of the young people could complete the entire camp. Finally, it was our ambition that the classes at the camp should be more engaging, i.e., encourage young people to participate actively.

Folk High School-like: What does it mean?

The Folk High School idea implies that the participants stay at the Boostcamp around the clock, and that every day there is a program that covers both classes, shared meals, and social activities. In addition to the participants, two educators also stay at the camp around the clock throughout the course. The educators participate partly for the purpose of supporting everyone in relation to participation, security and well-being, and partly to help build a community at the camp. There is a strong focus on the camp being characterized by equality between participants and teachers.

Feature subjects

Virtually every day, the so-called 'feature subjects' are on the program. At the 2020 Boostcamp the features subjects were 'animation film' and 'board role-playing'. The feature

subjects are practical workshops where the young people themselves are active, and the young people are free to choose which of the two subjects they want. With the feature subjects we strove to choose subjects that would motivate the young people – with the intention of it being a path to joy and confidence - and additionally, a shortcut to social engagement and fellowship with like-minded people. The feature subject classes are taught by two experienced teachers in each of their fields, who also have experience working with autistic youths.

Classes with a focus on empowerment

In addition to the feature subjects, the camp's program consists of involved teaching. The common thread in the teaching is 'empowerment'. Empowerment is about strengthening the individual's belief in themselves and their own power of action, and creating an opportunity to unfold this (Socialstyrelsen - the National Board of Health and Welfare 2017). For young autistic people, many things may make it hard for them to believe in themselves and to experience opportunities to act on their own accord. It may be due to their own or others' view on autism, or it can be about bad experiences and defeats e.g., in relation to social relationships or employment / education.

The lessons have these headings:

- Autistic identity and self-understanding
- Autism and senses
- Robustness: A program based on metallization
- Opportunities for jobs and education in Viborg Municipality
- Experience with jobs and education
- When the IQ overshadows: What is diagnosis, what is laziness?
- Citizenship and self-determination

The teachers are autism specialist employees from the Special Area Autism (educators, pedagogical consultants, and psychologists), speakers from the Viborg Municipality Unemployment Center and autistic teachers / speakers.

Autistic role models

At Boostcamp 2020, there were four different autistic educators. This is a priority in the hope that meeting autistic role models will mean something special to the participants, which they can reflect on and be inspired by. Work has also been done to create classes that foster involvement and where participants are invited to be very active. This is based on experiences from the previous camps where the most succesful classes were classes where the participants had the opportunity of being active during the lessons.

Other activities at the camp

As mentioned, there are other activities at the camp in addition to the classes. For example, at Boostcamp 2020 there was a joint shopping trip, card games, movie night, and walks with the dog that one educator brought with him to camp.

Information and start-up talks

Viborg Municipality is a key player in communicating the offer of Boostcamp 2020 to the young people in the target group. In order to prepare the relevant employees from Viborg Municipality, a leaflet has been prepared for the young people and an information material for the employees. In this information material it is stated that the young people must each have a municipal contact person and this can be the young person's supported living assistant or caseworker. Additionally, the role as a contact person and what that entails is described in the material. The young person and the contact person are invited to a start-up interview where the educators who are present at the camp inform them about how the camp will progress and how the educators can support and guide them along the way. At the same time, the young person is asked about his well-being, his network, his experiences with and wishes in relation to jobs and / or education, and about his goals of participating at the camp. In addition, the young person is asked for consent in relation to various conditions at the camp.

Personal folder and diploma

At the Boostcamp, the young people get a personal folder to store material from the lessons or from conversations with the educators, as well as the diploma that is handed out when the camp is completed. The idea is that the young person will have a 'memory' from the camp, which the young person can also choose to share with his network and / or his municipal contact person and which can thus also support the anchoring of new knowledge / new discoveries in everyday life after the Boostcamp.

Handover talks

The young person's contact person will be invited to a handover interview on the penultimate day of the Boostcamp. In addition to the contact person, the young person and one of the educators from the camp participate. The purpose is to enable the young person's contact person to follow up with the young person on the young person's observations and experiences of participating in the social communities at the camp, the young person's learning from the lessons, and the young person's thoughts about the future path in relation to employment and / or education.

4. Theoretical and methodological basis of the evaluation

4.1 The Change Theory of the Boostcamp

The evaluation is carried out as a theory-based evaluation, i.e., that it is based on an input theory. The relevant professionals associated with the Boostcamp have therefore been gathered prior to the Boostcamp and have worked together to find out the core elements of the Boostcamps and to clarify the professional assumptions about the connection between resources, activities and expected results.
This has resulted in a Change Theory, see Appendix 9.2.

The theory of effort describes the key activities / elements in the Boostcamp and the connections between these and the expected results of the effort. The change theory thus also contains the elements and possible contexts that we are particularly interested in keeping an eye on in the evaluation.

A theory-based evaluation is a basic test of the hypotheses / assumptions behind the presumption that the effort will lead to the desired results. A theory-based evaluation should focus on two issues:

- whether the desired results have been achieved with the prescribed activities
- whether the various resources and activities described in the theory of effort are present and implemented, i.e., whether the implementation has been completed as desired.

In terms of evaluation, a distinction can be made between 'implementation errors' and 'theory of errors'. If the desired results are not achieved in connection with the effort, it may be due to the effort not being implemented as intended, or that the theory, i.e., the hypotheses about the connection between resources, activities, and goals of resp. short and long term, is not sufficient. Thus, in the evaluation we will pay special attention to any implementation and / or errors in the theory, if the assumed results have not been achieved.

It is especially the short-term goals that we are interested in, and which also form the basis for the research questions. Additionally, we are naturally interested in whether the described activities have been carried out with the described resources, in order to find out precisely whether the hypothesis that an effort in the area leads to the described results in terms of gaining positive experiences of participating in social contexts, to achieve greater self-understanding and see oneself as taking charge of one's own life and finally to get inspiration and greater motivation to find the way forward in relation to employment and / or education.

Doing an evaluation based on the Change Theory means that we are not only concerned with whether the expected results have been achieved, but also how they are achieved and whether there are any elements in the effort that are particularly significant. In other words, we also want to know more about how the efforts can be improved in the future.

4.2. Basis of the data

The evaluation is based mainly on qualitative interview material and on registrations of the participants' attendance at classes and other activities at the camp.

Recruitment for interviews

In connection with the final interview at the Boostcamp, the participants will have the opportunity to give consent for us to subsequently contact them regarding an interview about their experience and benefits of the Boostcamp. In addition, the participants can give consent for us to contact their relatives and / or the contact person from Viborg Municipality who is associated with their Boostcamp course. For various reasons, however, not everyone was presented with the consent form at the camp. We therefore subsequently contacted the participants' contact persons and asked for help to pass on the consent statement. Based on this, telephone interviews were conducted with the following:

- Four participants
- Two relatives
- Five contact persons

In addition, we interviewed two autistic co-teachers and conducted a focus group interview with teachers and educators from the Boostcamp. A total of 20 contributors have been part of the evaluation, divided into 14 interviews.

Interview with participants, relatives, and contacts

The interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews per. telephone. The focus of the interviews with the participants was on:

- The participants' experience of the Boostcamp, including the importance of the feature subjects
- The autistic co-teachers
- The folk high school form with the regular educators and the other participants with autism
- The benefits of the Boostcamp
- The collaboration with the municipal contact person
- Social network, self-understanding, and well-being

The relatives were asked about:

- Their general impression of the participant's experience and benefits
- The feature subjects and other subjects at the camp
- Social network and activities
- Self-understanding
- Work / education
- Viborg Municipality's follow-up
- Being related to a person with autism

The contacts were asked to address issues regarding the following themes:

- Knowledge of the citizen
- Citizen's experience and benefits
- Follow-up with a citizen after the camp
- The role of contact person

- Focus group interview

In addition, a longer focus group interview was conducted with the participation of the two educators at the camp, the two feature subject teachers and three teachers in the other subjects. The focus was on extracting learning from the course in terms of:

- The feature subjects
- The rest of the classes
- The folk high school form and other frameworks around the Boostcamp
- The collaboration with the municipal contact persons
- Special experiences in relation to the participants, including the participants' interaction, activity level, motivation, and possible development

Interview with autistic co-teachers

Finally, two interviews were conducted with autistic co-teachers. One teacher chose to conduct the interview in writing.
The teachers were asked about their experience of:

- How the classes worked
- What the participants gained from the classes
- What does it mean to have autistic co-teachers at the camp?

Processing of qualitative data

All interviews are audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interviews are then coded in the data processing program NVivo, which is particularly suitable for analysis of qualitative data material. The interviews are coded based on the resources, activities and goals set out in the Change Theory so that we more easily can deduce whether the professional assumptions about the connection between these are correct.

5. Did we achieve our goals with the Boostcamp?

We will now take a closer look at whether the Boostcamp has contributed to meeting the goals that we expect can be achieved in the short term.

The short-term goals are as previously mentioned:
- that the young people have positive experiences of participating in social contexts
- that the young people get inspiration and greater motivation to find the way forward in relation to employment and / or education
- that the young people gain greater self-understanding and feel more like being able to take charge of their own lives

In the following, it is examined whether the goals seem to have been achieved and - if the goals have been achieved - which elements, cf. the Change Theory in Appendix 9.2, seem to have contributed particularly to the achievement of the goal.

5.1 The significance of the Boostcamp for the participants' experiences of participating in social contexts

The section shows that:
- **The majority of the participants at the Boostcamp have had positive experiences of participating in social contexts**
- **The courage and desire to participate has been supported by the fact that all participants at the Boostcamp were young autistic people**
- **It is important to support unity, trust, and security right from the start**
- **The framework, including the two consistent educators, has contributed to creating peace and participation in the social activities**
- **There is a need for increased awareness of whether everyone feels part of the community during the camp**
- **The participants' ability to maintain relationships from the Boostcamp seems to be supported by the fact that all participants live in the same municipality**

> *"It is always fun to meet someone else with whom you have a common interest. And then you have some relevant subjects as well. And then, no matter how much we claim that we do not need all that social stuff, it's actually nice to go out on such a mini vacation."*
>
> *(Participant from the Boostcamp)*

As described initially, one of the goals of the Boostcamp was that the participants gained positive experiences of participating in social contexts. Three of the four interviewed participants at the Boostcamp emphasize in the interviews that they have had positive experiences of participating in the social community at the camp, which is also exemplified by the above quote. This is supported by the interviewed relatives, contact persons and the Boostcamp's employees, since most of these pinpoint the social aspects when they are asked to assess where the individual participant has received the greatest benefit from the camp. The majority of the interview material thus gives clear indications that the goal of the young people gaining positive experiences of participating in social contexts has succeeded. However, one of the interviewed participants does not experience having been included in the social community.

In the following, we will highlight the elements that, according to the analysis of the interview material, seem to have contributed particularly well to the goal achievement regarding social relations. Additionally, we will examine what learning we can extract from the participant where the goal did not seem to be achieved.

An autistic community

Several of the interviewed participants indicate that it has had a positive effect on their desire and courage to participate in the social community that the Boostcamp has been for young autistic people only. It has provided a special framework for the togetherness and a special cohesion and understanding among the participants. One participant emphasizes that the benefits would not have been the same if there had been a wider target group, because autistic people in the participant's own words: 'know autistics' and understand each other and each other's boundaries. Another participant puts it this way:

> *"There is a little more understanding among other autistics that: now it's going to be just too much, now I need to be on my own […]. It's easier to be together our way. […] We do not have to drink 46 liters of vodka to think we are social, or, we do not even have to talk to each other to be social, just the fact that you are in the same room is, occasionally, enough, and for that matter take into account that you are talking about some nerdy things.*
>
> *(Participant from the Boostcamp)*

The quote thus indicates that the camp has succeeded in creating a framework where it has been possible to participate in the social community in a way that makes sense and space for the individual.
This is confirmed by a relative, who in the interview expresses the following:

> *"In such big contexts, he usually sits down in a corner, I do not have the impression that he has done so [at the Boostcamp]. At least he did not say so, he told me that he had taken part. […] It was somehow a social space where he… He at least chose not to sit in a corner but participated. He dared to be there, yes."*
>
> *(Next of kin)*

Several of the interviewed teachers at the Boostcamp emphasize, in line with the relative in the quote above, that they have an experience that a sense of security is established in the group early in the process, which makes the majority want to participate in and contribute to the community - also in class contexts where there is great commitment from the participants. Asked what may have contributed to the establishment of this sense of security, it is pointed out that the getting-to-know-each-other-event, which is carried out on the Boostcamps first day by an autistic teacher, has had a great positive impact on the establishment of the group, because it allows participants to be open to each other right from the start:

> *"They go from being 12 individuals to having a little bit of that team spirit, […] you just open up a little bit and share a little bit, and you can create some cohesion, which means that if you did not know better, you could easily have thought that [the participants] came from the same place and that they were used to interacting with each other. That it is a foundation on which to build. Because it's a place start. Because if you have 12 individualists sitting like this: 'Hmm, I'm not sure I dare say anything because people never listen to me anyway', then it's hard."*
>
> *(Teacher)*

The quote seems to indicate how important it has been for the success of the Boostcamp, that a good foundation has been created right from the start in the form of cohesion and security between the participants. Several of the participants emphasize, in line with this, the positive experience in the fact that the autistic teacher, who was responsible for the social event in question, was open about his own autism diagnosis, and that this helped to create a space where the participants themselves wanted to contribute with their own perspectives and experiences.

At the same time, however, it is also pointed out on the positive side that the conversations were not exclusively about having an autism diagnosis, but about so many other things. A participant puts it this way:

> "[The autistic teacher] did not tell his story, he was just someone who had a diagnosis who wanted to talk to us: […] He was more interested in us than talking [about his diagnosis] for two hours"
>
> (Participant)

The above quote seems to be interpretable in several ways: One interpretation is that it is not just having autism that creates a community between teacher and participant, but just as much experiencing a sincere interest on the part of the teacher for the participants. Another interpretation is that it may be easier for an autistic teacher to intuitively know how to show genuine interest in the autistic participants.

A social interaction in a safe space

In addition, it is emphasized by participants as well as teachers, and staff at the camp that the framework, as described in section 2 of the evaluation, where there is a clear program for the week and two educators who are there throughout the week, has just helped to give the participants peace of mind and energy to be able to participate more in the social community. A participant puts it this way:

> "You did not buy food when you were out shopping [at the Boostcamp], because you wanted to join their communal meals. Because they all talked well together and there were no conflicts, so it was really, really well set up and autism friendly, I would say."
>
> (Participant)

With the word choice: 'autism friendly', the participant seems to approve of the setting at the camp, which for the participant contributed to e.g., have energy and desire to participate in communal dining rather than choosing to eat alone. In this context, it can also be mentioned that several of the participants highlight the home-cooked food and the three daily communal meals as a positive thing at the camp.

The two consistent staff themselves point out that one of the main reasons for succeeding in creating a safe environment among the participants, must be found in the fact that it is the same staff who are at the camp all the way. An educator puts it this way:

> "We [the general staff] are part of the framework as well. And the fact that we are consistent, gives a calm environment almost from day two, where they wake up and 'Hey, it's them again, we met them yesterday. Oh okay, they say they'll stick around, then we can just relax. ' And they have also found out on day two that we would like to help, if there is anything - if there are any questions. So, of course, it works really well."
>
> (Educator at the Boostcamp)

This is backed by several instructors at the camp. Among other things, one of the interviewees describes the consistent employees as one of the 'secret ingredients' that are important for understanding the success of the Boostcamp, because they help to create a safe space that is nice to be in.

The consistent educators are described by the participants, among other things, as 'understanding',' not pushy', 'someone to talk to when you needed to talk', just as it is emphasized by a participant that 'they had a sense of what they were doing and they did not push so hard that it stopped us completely'. Another participant highlights, as an example of why he liked the employees, the positive fact that one could come up with a suggestion for lunch and that it was then served the following day. These descriptions suggest that the desire to create a camp with a focus on equality, respect and non-custodial interaction between participants and employees has succeeded. The employees also welcome this kind of togetherness. An employee describes it as follows:

> *"And then it's cool, when I normally work as a social educator at a residential care unit, to try to be a social educator in this context, because it's not me who has to monitor if they have to go on a diet and how often they take a shower. I don't have to relate to that at all. For me, it was about creating peace and security so that they feel like being there and wanting to stay there. That was why I was there. It's a different way of being a social educator than what I am on a daily basis. That was nice. […] That was why I studied to be a social educator in the first place."*
>
> *(Employee)*

The employee thus points out that the Boostcamp is exempt from some of the requirements and guidelines in several different areas that you are otherwise subject to as an employee on a residential care unit, and that this release opens the possibility of creating another relationship with the participants and that you can work in a different way and emphasize other things in the effort than usual.

As an employee in a residential care unit, you often handle a broad portfolio of tasks, where there may be different goals, requirements and wishes. The citizen must receive support based on their own wishes and needs and the support must be helpful to the individual. At the same time, requirements, expectations, and guidelines in e.g., the municipality's order, the National Board of Health and Welfare's quality model, the Danish Quality Model and the Danish Agency for Patient Safety are of course complied with.

To take the 'health example' in the interview, as an employee of a residential care unit you are obliged to work with the citizen's health and document this work, but at the same time respect the citizen's right to self-determination.

It is not uncommon for the employee to one moment work with relationships, networks and social skills and the next help the citizen to clean, wash clothes, remember to take a shower and take medication. In other cases, the citizen is supported in relation to any difficult issues such as anxiety and depression or contact with public authorities. At the Boostcamp, there are fewer and less conflicting requirements and expectations, which is emphasized by the employees as a strength of the Boostcamp in relation to the goals of this particular effort.

Points of attention in relation to inclusion in the community

However, one of the interviewed participants expressed that he did not feel like he had become part of the community at the Boostcamp, even though the participant had wishes to the contrary before the start of the camp. The participant puts it this way:

> *"There was a day when the only sentence I said in a whole day was 'Yes, you may borrow my pencil', otherwise there was a whole day where I did not say anything. I talked better with the teachers than I did with any of the others, so I got on really well with the teachers, but 'you know', I did not feel good."*

> *(Participant)*

Unlike the other interviewees, this participant experiences the autistic community as difficult to navigate. The participant experiences that autistic people generally have difficulty with 'small-talk' or in the participant's own words: 'just go to a stranger and talk, especially if you have not seen each other before '. According to this participant, this makes it difficult to get to know the others and create bonds with each other at the camp. At the same time, however, the participant observes that the other participants, through joint activities, quietly create bonds with each other, but that he or she does not experience becoming part of the communities that arise. Asked whether the Boostcamp could have been organized differently so that the participant would have felt more included, the participant points to the possibility of meeting the participants prior to the start of the camp:

> *"I think if we could all meet one afternoon or one morning at the place where we all had to be for a week and get to know each other, then I think it would have been easier, because then I knew well who I should, or not who I should talk to, but who was there and who was not"*

> *(Participant)*

An increased knowledge of the other participants prior to the camp thus seems to this participant to support the possibility of being part of the communities at the camp. In addition, the participant mentions a desire for more 'get-to-know-each-other' events during the camp, so that dialogue and togetherness between the participants was more supported.

The interviewed employees also point out in the interview that one participant did not seem to be part of the community and that the employees in a few cases came to interpret non-participation in the joint activities as lack of desire or energy to participate in the social activities. The employees themselves point out that it would have been beneficial to have held mid-term discussions with the participants to better spot the participants' well-being at the camp and whether some needed support to be part of the social community. In the planning of the Boostcamp 2020, the intention was that these mid-term talks should be held, but in practice this did not happen, as the talks were not scheduled and therefore were not prioritized in an already tightly packed program. However, this seems to indicate that midterm talks should be planned and held at future Boostcamps.

Feature subjects as a short cut to social engagement and sense of community

Teachers and educators point out that the feature subjects have had a positive effect on social cohesion because it has been possible to create a community by virtue of common interests. Several of the interviewed participants also stated that they bonded with each other because

to their common interests, which became a natural topic of conversation. This thus indicates that the feature subjects, as hoped, have functioned as a short cut to social engagement and fellowship with like-minded people. Several of the interviewees point out that especially role-playing seems to function as a good framework for social interaction, because the role-playing is based on interaction between the participants, taking on roles with clear and unique characteristics and a game leader who leads, supports, and gives instructions along the way. At the same time, several teachers emphasize that they have been surprised by the empathy that the participants have shown during the game. The role-playing teacher says that he was impressed with the participants' motivation and ability to live up to the character they had been given:

> *"For instance, there is a priest - he has the quality that he is merciful because he is very forgiving, but he also has the quality that he is timid. […] And it was such a lot of fun, because the participant who got the role, he realized it right away. And even in situations where it would be more beneficial to just forget it and go full speed ahead, he actually played on it. […] And when he says, "Arh, I'm actually not sure I should go," "Arh, come on, you can do it," the others grabbed it, and were kind of supportive […]. And this is what is called role-playing. So otherwise, you might as well play board games.*
>
> *(Feature subject teacher)*

The quote emphasizes both the participants' ability to take on their own role, but also their ability to support each other and show care along the way. Several of the interviewed professionals emphasize that the role play with its clear framework may have helped to alleviate some of the challenges the autistic persons may otherwise experience in the social interaction. At the same time, it is pointed out that it can be easier to express oneself and dare more than usual in the social field when one wears a mask in the form of the role-playing character. The teachers express hope that the social learning that has arisen in the role play can be transferred to other contexts - and if not the concrete skill, then the 'feeling of success', as a teacher at the Boostcamp puts it.

Increased networking skills?

While the short-term goal is for young people to have positive experiences of participating in social communities, the long-term goal is for them to achieve increased networking skills. As the data collection for this evaluation took place approximately three months after the end of the Boostcamp, it is not possible to definitively assess whether the long-term goal has been achieved. However, there are indications that the goal of increased networking skills for several of the participants has been achieved. Three of the four interviewed participants thus say that they still have contact with several of the participants from the Boostcamp. Several have already met or have plans to do so[1], and two of the participant's experience having established definite friendships at the camp. A participant says the following:

> *"[One of the most important things I got from the Boostcamp] was that I found others I could relate to. I got those in the role-playing group [at the Boostcamp] as friends, and then I have a neighbor, whom I have known since 2nd grade, and then I have a friend who lives in Skive, and those are the friends I have.*

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[1] However, several express that the COVID-19 has been a challenge in relation to meeting physically.

So already after just one Boostcamp I have more friends in that group I can relate to, than I had in total before - that's why I say it's a big thing."

(Participant)

For this participant, Boostcamp participation has thus meant a significant increase in the network. Here, too, the role-playing game seems to have a positive impact: Several of the interviewees - both participants and contact persons - thus report that work is being done to establish a role-playing club where the participants can meet to play. Again, the community of interest seems to play a positive role with regards to maintaining relationships from the Boostcamp, the collaboration with Viborg Municipality also seems to play an important role: That all participants come from Viborg and the surrounding area provides a better opportunity to meet even after the Boostcamp ends. Here it can also be noted that one of the participants' contact persons has assisted in finding a suitable role-playing room where the participants could meet.

5.2 The importance of the Boostcamp for the young people's inspiration and greater motivation to find the way forward in relation to employment and / or education

The section shows that:
- **Participants were already motivated for employment even before the Boostcamp**
- **The Boostcamp has contributed to increased ownership and action in relation to employment**
- **The social boost at the Boostcamp has given increased courage to dare to seize the opportunities in relation to employment**
- **The Boostcamp has given participants greater insight into their own strengths, challenges, and support needs in relation to employment**

The second goal set for the Boostcamp was that the participants should get inspiration and greater motivation to find their way forward in terms of employment and / or education. This means that employment as mentioned in section 2 has also been a focus area at the camp - among other things via a presentation from Viborg Municipality about the employment area as well as a presentation from an autistic teacher, which dealt with the person's own experiences with internships, jobs, and education.

The interviewed participants have all been asked what the Boostcamp has meant to the individual's desire and courage to start an education or a job. It is thought-provoking here that several say that even before the Boost Camp they were motivated to get an education or work. A participant puts it this way:

"I have always wanted to start an education, but the problem is that if it is a regular education, such as something where you sit in a room, i.e., four men in a row with a computer, it would go off the rails fairly quickly. […] I've always wanted to, but I just haven't been able to."

(Participant)

According to the participant, it is not the desire for an education that has been lacking, but rather the right framework. The desire for an education is in line with the other interviewed participants. This indicates that the Boostcamp does not seem to have significantly increased the young people's motivation for employment / education, as this motivation was also present prior to the camp. Rather, the interview material indicates that the Boostcamp has had a positive effect on the young people in relation to (daring to) act on this motivation. There are thus several examples of increased action among the young people, where the individual has moved towards becoming a more active player in the desire to achieve employment.

As an example of the above, one participant says that it has been a great inspiration to hear about Viborg Municipality's job barometer, which the participants were presented with at the Boostcamp. The job barometer is a tool that maps in which industries / occupations there is a need for increased labor. Being presented with it at the Boostcamp has given the participant greater ownership in relation to the job search:

> *"I still really want to go out and get a job. […] That is still the goal. [the Boostcamp] has provided some tools that might make it easier. It might have come anyway, at least that job barometer, but […] it was not the municipality that had to remember to tell me that, it was something I have been told elsewhere, that sometimes makes it a little easier."*
>
> *(Participant)*

This experience of increased ownership and power of action is confirmed by the person's contact person:

> *"He just came back with like a new energy, and I also think that he returned with a feeling that he could teach me something when I was out on follow-up talks, that he sat like that and told about: 'This, this is such and such and such', that I really think it has just fueled a successful experience, which has made it a little easier to continue working with. "*
>
> *(Contact person)*

The quote thus seems to emphasize the importance of the participant's newfound empowerment in relation to employment, where the participant in the example above becomes the active party. There are also other examples in the interview material that the participants have strengthened their independent ability to act in relation to jobs and education. For instance, it tells the story of a participant who, halfway through the Boostcamp, contacts his residential care unit because he or she has decided to change his / her goals so that he or she will instead work purposefully towards resuming and completing 9th and 10th grade. The participant has also considered how he or she will organize this so that it is more likely to be successful: The participant will take fewer subjects at a time and will cut other activities to achieve sufficient energy for the school. The participant believed that it would be successful, since, according to his own statement, it was not the participant who had been unsuccessful in primary school, but the primary school which had been bad for the participant. The example thus seems to illustrate that the participant at the Boostcamp has taken greater ownership of both the goals that have been set and the story of the time in primary school, so that it is not about the person's own inability, but about the (deficient) framework that has been present.

Social boost and increased self-insight as a starting point for increased power of action

Several of the interviewed contact persons point out that, among other things, it is the social boost that the participants have received at the camp, which has given more people the increased courage to seek work / education. Several thus say that the Boostcamp has given the young people a push to seek out or dare to seize the opportunities that arise. Two contact persons provide examples of participants who, after the Boostcamp, are on their way from sheltered employment to ordinary employment with a limited number of hours. A contact person hereby emphasizes that the fact that employment and education have been in focus at the Boostcamp has given a boost in relation to the subsequent efforts. However, several emphasize, as the primary thing, that it has been the positive experiences in the social space that have been important. They explain this by saying that the experience of succeeding in a course with several unknown young people has been transferred to other contexts, where the participants have gained a greater belief in themselves and trust in others - and thus also a greater courage to take the jump into something unknown.

Several of the interviewed Boostcamp contact persons also emphasize that the Boostcamp has contributed to a greater self-insight among the participants in relation to employment and education - not only in relation to what they can do, but also in relation to what to pay special attention to in relation to employment. A contact person tells, for example, the following about a participant who before the Boostcamp had a desire to become a hairdresser:

> *"The hairdresser tells her what kind of tasks you have as a hairdresser, both when you are in an internship, but also during your apprenticeship and after graduation. [The participant] actually manages to say: 'well, I cannot do that, because I have actually learned this about myself that I cannot deal with being in relation to customers. (…) There she seemed to realize that hey, she had actually learned that she could not, so therefore she could not actually work in this profession, even though she might be able to complete an education (…) here she managed to connect some of what she had learned with reality."*
>
> *(Contact person)*

The contact person thus experiences that the participant at the Boostcamp has become wiser in relation to her own strengths and challenges and that she has managed to take this learning with her from the Boostcamp and be able to transfer it to other situations. Others also mention that they have gained greater insight into and / or have become more curious about their own strengths, challenges, and support needs at the Boostcamp. A participant highlights the presentation: 'When the IQ overshadows: What is autism and what is laziness?', Where the participants are presented with what a VISO course[2] consists of, as one of the presentations that has had the greatest impact on the participant in relation to employment and education.

The participant emphasizes that such a course will be able to contribute to a greater understanding of what it takes to be successful in a job:

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[2] VISO is a part of the National Board of Health and Welfare and offers counseling and knowledge to citizens with complicated issues where special counseling is needed. The advice is given by specialists in the given field.

> *"Where can we act, and what am I good at, and where can we strengthen something. In work situations, you can come out and say, 'Well, this is how it works, this is how we work, and that is where I need assistance.'*
>
> *(Participant)*

In the quote, the participant emphasizes that the course will not only be able to contribute to greater insight into what the person must do to succeed in a job, but also knowledge of what framework must be present for the competencies to get the best possible scenario. Again, there seems to be a movement towards a higher degree of empowerment in the participant, where there is not only a focus on the participant's independent ability, but also on how the environment is important and can contribute.

At the same time, the analysis of the interview material suggests that it is not only the participants who have gained greater self-insight at the Boostcamp. In several cases, the associated contact persons have also gained greater insight into the individual's challenges and needs. In this connection, a contact person mentions e.g., the tool: 'The Battery Model', which the participants were presented with at the Boostcamp. The Battery Model is a tool that will help the individual to get an overview of how much energy each individual activity in everyday life costs. The contact person says that the Battery Model has now become a common frame of reference in the collaboration with the young person, and that it has not only helped the young person to get a better overview of his/her own energy consumption, but has also given professionals around them a greater understanding of what respectively gives and takes energy in everyday life as well as how they can better organize everyday life together, so that, in the long run, there is more energy for employment.

5.3 The importance of the Boostcamp for the young people to achieve greater self-understanding and to a greater extent taking charge of their own lives

> *I've had my diagnosis for four years. [When I got my diagnosis] I was not told much other than: 'You have Asperger's.' […] So, what does that really mean? So, you are left thinking about it. [At the Boostcamp], you sit there and think: Huh, that's why I feel this way"*
>
> *(Participant)*

The ultimate goal of the Boostcamp was that the camp should contribute to a greater self-understanding among the young people, and that they should feel more like being able to take charge of their own lives. If we look across the qualitative interview material, this goal seems to have been achieved, as both the young people, their contact persons, and the employees at the Boostcamp express, or provide examples of, how the participants have achieved greater self-understanding and / or action.

In the interview about a participant a teacher mentions a participant who made a special impression on him. In one of the introductory sessions at the Boostcamp, the participant referred to the supported living assistance he received in his own home as: 'Someone comes to my house'. The participant further reported that a note was put up on the refrigerator for the supported living assistant, with tasks that had to be completed, but which he or she had no influence on. During the conversation, however, the teacher experienced how the person

went from perceiving himself as being passive to being able to take charge of his own life and expressing wishes about what he wanted support for and to work with henceforth.

The fact that the Boostcamp has contributed to increased self-understanding among the participants also seems to be emphasized by the introductory quote in this section, where a participant describes how the person's understanding of his autism and the implications it has, has grown significantly at the camp. in line with this, several of the interviewed participants emphasize that the Boostcamp has partly provided increased insight into what autism means to the individual, and partly has presented concrete tools to tackle the challenges or needs one may have in everyday life. In the following, we take a closer look at what has been of particular importance for the goal of greater self-understanding and increased actor in one's own life to seem to have been achieved.

Speaking on your own behalf and not on behalf of others

Several of the interviewed participants and staff at the camp point to the autistic teachers as one of the elements that have particularly contributed to increasing the young people's self-understanding. A participant expresses the value of the autistic teachers as follows:

> *"It gave us a way to recognize it in ourselves. Because then, it may be that there are a lot of people who want to help us autistics, but a lot of times when they help, they help in the wrong way, because they do not understand it. They think they understand, but they do not always do so."*
>
> *(Participant)*

In the quote, the participant points to the positive in feeling seen and understood: to be able to mirror and recognize oneself in others. This is backed up in several other interviews. The very representation of autistic people as teachers at the camp and the recognition in this also seems significant to the participants. Among other things, a participant highlights the following:

> *"Often when you go to events and things that are about autistics people, there are actually no autistic people involved in running it at all, so it is all those neurotypicals who cannot really speak on our behalf, but they do it anyway"*
>
> *(Participant)*

Hence, it seems to be important and a new experience for the participants to listen to teachers who speak on their own behalf and not on behalf of others. Several of the interviewed participants also point out that it is easier to relate to, understand and transfer points to one's own life when it is not professionals who (second-hand) mediate, but autistic people with lived experiences who teach. One participant describes it as follows:

> *"I do not know if I want to use the word tiring, but when it is professionals who teach, they can often say, sort of, it is the theory behind it. Then it's easier to relate when it's someone who […] has autism. […] Many of the things [that an autistic teacher] talked about, you could relate to, and many*

of the little things he does to help himself, it's something you think like: Oh yes, when you say it like that, that was a good idea!"

(Participant)

These inside perspectives thus seem to affect the participants in a different way than usual. Several of the interviewed participants emphasize in the interviews how significant it is to to see their own stories and experiences reflected in other autistic people. A participant says the following:

"I think it was good that someone came and told his story about how he has handled his autism, because there are some who cannot really move on in their lives, right, so I have been sitting around and staring into space for the last four years, so well, it's that little bit, no, well I mean, I'm probably halfway through what he's been through. […] He then at least made me want not to give up […] that is, that he has moved on and is not so much stuck anymore, it helped a lot. […] It gave some hope. I was very close to giving up before the boost camp. Very close."

(Participant)

In the quote, the participant thus expresses that listening to another autistic person's experiences has given a belief in, and a hope, that the person's own life in the long run can go in a more positive direction. However, there is also another interviewed participant who points out that the autistic teachers' stories can be harsh because their stories can hit so close to home and the challenges one may be in the middle of. However, it is emphasized that at the same time it provides an experience that one is not alone in experiencing such challenges.

Mirroring and exchanging experiences with other autistic young people

"The first day I was there, I was very negative, but that was only because I did not know what was going to happen. [I think the reason I stayed there anyway] was that of being with other people who could relate to one's situation. Those were some of the things that were talked about."

(Participant)

One of the other elements that is highlighted across interviews with both participants and professionals is the importance of having been with other autistic youths. Thus, it is not only the autistic teachers who have had a positive impact on the young people's self-understanding, but also the conversations that have taken place between the participants, which is also emphasized by the participant in the introductory quote. The interviewed participants emphasize, among other things, the positive in being able to exchange experiences with each other about what it is like to be an autistic person in non-autistic contexts, but also the challenges you may experience by needing support in everyday life and / or experience being on the edge of the labor market and thus being in contact with several different public bodies. Several interviewees thus express that it is nice to know that you are not the only one who may experience challenges regarding this. The teachers also emphasize that there was a high degree of exchange of experience between the participants during the classes.

The interviewed professionals in particular highlight the inspiration the young people have given each other, as well as having shown great helpfulness and understanding for each other at the camp. A contact person points out in this connection that it has been positive to meet others with similar challenges, but who have tackled it differently, or who are somewhere else in life. This can give courage and belief that you as a participant can move yourself.

Classes at the Boostcamp: Increased insight and concrete tools

Finally, the teaching of the subjects that were intended to support the participants' empowerment seems to have contributed positively to both self-understanding and to taking more charge of their own lives. This both in the form of increased insight into and knowledge of own diagnosis as well as in the form of concrete tools that you have been presented with and can take with you from the Boostcamp.

If we look more closely at the increased insight first, several emphasize that in the classes they have been introduced to and have gained insight into several factors that have contributed to a greater self-understanding and self-acceptance. For example, a participant highlights the subject: 'When the IQ overshadows: What is diagnosis and what is laziness?', Which as previously mentioned is about the challenges you can have with an invisible disability and how to uncover the individual's challenges, support needs and strengths:

> *"The last lecture they had was: 'when the IQ overshadows' […] and it's unbelievable, even though I have understanding parents and understanding siblings, then once in a while they are like:' you not just lazy? ' And it's nice to be able to put into words that there is actually something else behind it, and it's not just… because I could get caught up in it myself, that, 'it's just because I'm lazy,' so it was something I could use and something I am in the process of working on with my social worker and getting it mapped out."*
>
> *(Participant)*

The above quote thus becomes an example of how the participant can reflect on what he or she hears and thus gain increased self-insight while the participant seems to distance himself or herself from the negative (self) narrative about himself or herself as lazy. At the same time, the participant is presented with a concrete tool - a report - which he or she, in collaboration with the professional actors it, is in the process of investigating further. An important point here is that the participant later in the interview also expresses how important it is to focus on the person's strengths, because in many contexts there is a focus on the challenges you can have as an autistic person.

Another participant talks about the increased self-insight that he or she has gained by participating in the classes about autism and senses:

> *"I found that it is obviously common for autistic people to have 1-3 sensory disturbances per person, we talked a lot about that. It was actually nice to know I was not weird that way. It was within the ordinary scope of an autistic person. I was not, how to put it, the outsider. But we talked a lot about it, and it was something I was very happy to know."*
>
> *(Participant)*

In the quote above, the participant expresses the importance of finding out that a given trait is normal for autistic people and that the person in question does not stand out (negatively) as an 'outsider'.

An important point in relation to whether Boostcamp has contributed to self-understanding and action is also that one of the participants, who did not complete the Boostcamp, but went home ahead of time, explains that he got the courage to listen to himself and his own needs by hearing one of the presentations at the Boostcamp:

> *"I have become better at listening to how I really feel. The last lecture I attended, I think it was called 'Autistics and IQ' […]. There was a time when [the teacher] mentioned that there were a lot of autistics who could have a very hard time actually acting on how they are feeling. Even though they knew well that there was something they could not handle, they tried anyway, and it was also often that it did not end so well. And it would be a good idea to listen to how you feel. And it helped me a lot because I actually found out that I was really feeling bad when I left, and after I had that lecture, I was like, a little bit: 'Yeah, I'm going home […] I am not feeling well', and I have also taken it with me later that I know that I may have a hard time saying what I really can and what I cannot, but I am starting to get better at that. […] It's sad, it did not end up being mega-positive, but it's positive now, that with that lecture."*
>
> *(participant)*

To end the Boostcamp ahead of time was thus, in the participant's own eyes, not only a defeat, but partly also a victory, because it became an expression of listening to oneself and following one's own needs rather than suppressing them and trying to persevere.

6. The Length of the Boostcamp

The section shows that:
- **Teachers and pedagogical staff at the camp assess that the length of the Boostcamp of 8 days was appropriate**
- **Several of the interviewed participants experience that the program has been very intensive and are annoyed that they did not manage to participate at all**
- **Several of the interviewed participants and contact persons suggested splitting the camp into smaller 'chunks' or to add days off**

Boostcamp 2020 lasted eight days, while the previous Boostcamps lasted 12 days. The reason why the duration has been reduced is the experience from the pilot test in 2017, where the assessment has been that it has been difficult for participants to deal with or complete such a long camp.

13 young people were registered for Boostcamp 2020. However, two participants did not show up, and there were therefore 11 participants at the camp. Of the 11 participants, 9 participants completed the entire camp. Two participants thus ended their stay prematurely.

During the camp, it is registered whether the participants at the camp have participated in the classes. This is summarized in the table below.

	Number present at the camp	Number of participants at feature subject classes	Number of participants in other classes (average)
Monday	11	No feature subject	11
Tuesday	11	11	11
Wednesday	11	11	9 + 2 partly present
Thursday	10	7	6 + 2 partly present
Friday	10	No feature subject	8
Saturday	10	No feature subject	8 + 1 partly present
Sunday	10	9	9
Monday	9	9	No tuition
Tuesday	9	No feature subject	No tuition

Table: Participation in Boostcamp 2020

The table shows that generally there has been a good turnout for both feature subjects and other classes.

The employees and trainers who have also participated in the previous Boostcamps express that they believe that the Boostcamp this time has had a suitable length. A teacher puts it this way:

> "Well, I can at least say that it was reasonable - they had gas left in the tank on the last day of class, which they definitely did not have it the previous two camps."
>
> (Feature subject teacher)

However, several of the interviewed participants and contact persons say, that it was demanding to complete the Boostcamp not only due to the number of days, but also due to the content of the days, which most days have been scheduled from 9.00-21.00, but with breaks along the way.

Several of the participants also express an internal division in relation to this: On the one hand they experience that all content has been relevant and have difficulty choosing something over another. But at the same time experience that the program has been very intense and that they were very worn out at the end of the week. One participant says the following in the interview:

> "I would say it was a bit annoying because I wanted to be there on Friday, but I was so exhausted, so I was actually a little sad that I was not involved in those things. […] But I was simply so exhausted, so I think it was a bit annoying to miss some of the subjects because I was too tired."
>
> (Participant)

This participant thus expresses annoyance at not being able to cope with participating in all subjects, as he or she finds the content relevant. Several of the interviewees emphasize in this context that the reason why some participants went home prematurely was not failure to thrive at the camp or dissatisfaction with the camp, but that the participants were too exhausted to participate. As one participant says of one of those who went home: "the participant wanted to stay but could not endure".

Based on the above, several of the interviewed participants and contact persons express a desire to, for example, split the camp into smaller chunks or take days off where the participants have the opportunity to recharge their batteries. In this connection, it should be

mentioned that in relation to previously held Boostcamps, there have been several breaks, but with the possibility of joint, social activities for the participants who may wish this.

7. Anchoring and transferring learning to the participant´s everyday life

The section shows that:
- **The personal folder / diploma handed out for Boostcamp can have an important signal value, because it becomes a concrete proof that the participants have succeeded in completing an activity.**
- **There is a need for increased focus on anchoring learning in the participants' everyday lives**
- **There may be even more focus on who is appointed as the contact person and expectations reconciliation with this**
- **For those participants where the collaboration with the contact person has worked well, the collaboration has helped to maintain learning and integrate new tools into the participant's everyday life.**

As mentioned in section 2, some of the learning we have been able to extract from previously held Boostcamps needs an even greater focus on how learning and development at Boostcamp can be anchored in the participants' everyday lives. This has thus been a special focus point in connection with the camp in 2020. As described in section 2, we have therefore launched various initiatives to support the anchoring and retention of knowledge: A personal folder for all participants for personal notes and material from the classes, and partly a close collaboration with contact persons before and during the camp. In this section, it is evaluated whether these initiatives have had the desired effect in relation to anchoring and retaining knowledge.

The personal portfolio

All the interviewed participants confirm that they still have the personal portfolio that they were given, but the majority say in the interview that they have not used it or looked at it since the end of the Boostcamp. The suggestion that the folder has not been used subsequently is reinforced by the interviewed contacts and relatives, where the majority do not know the portfolio exists. This thus indicates that it has not been sufficiently successful to use the personal portfolio as part of retaining and anchoring knowledge. The interviewed staff and teachers confirm that there is a development potential here. The employees at the camp point out that some participants used the folder a lot for notetaking, but that it was not used by the majority. Several teachers point out in this connection that they could have thought of how they could have used the folder as part of their teaching, for example by handing out handouts, supporting notetaking or the like with the focus on retaining knowledge with the participant. Thus, it would be beneficial to make this a special focus area for future Boostcamps.

Even though the personal portfolio does not seem to have contributed significantly to the anchoring of knowledge, its symbolic value nevertheless seems to have had significance. A participant thus highlights the following in the interview:

> *"I saved the folder because I just thought it was a reminder of something that I succeeded in, because there are two things that have been successful in the last four years, one is conscription to military services, and then there is the Boostcamp. The rest, it's been error upon error, so I'm saving this to say, 'Yes, it worked, do something like this again.'"*
>
> *(Participant)*

It is therefore worth emphasizing that even though the folder has not been sufficiently filled with concrete content, notes, tools, etc., it can still be of great importance to the individual participant. The quote thus shows that the folder for this participant becomes a concrete proof of having completed an activity successfully and a call to throw themselves into similar challenges in the future. In this context, it is relevant to note that one of the activities that was planned but not carried out due to COVID-19 was the celebration of the participants' completion of the Boostcamp and the presentation of a diploma for completion with the participation of guests. Despite the cancellation, all participants were still given a diploma, but this section indicates that the celebration is an activity that could have had a positive effect on the participants' self-esteem in line with personal portfolio and diploma, because they would have had the opportunity to share with their network what they had experienced along the way and what significance it had to complete the course.

Collaboration with contact persons

Another way in which work has been done on anchoring and retaining knowledge is, as mentioned, through the appointment of and collaboration with a Boostcamp contact person for each individual citizen both before and at the end of the camp. However, the interview material shows that it varies how close the collaboration has been between the citizen and the contact person associated with the Boostcamp - especially in connection with and after its completion. The employees at the Boostcamp thus say that some contact persons have been very committed, while others were less involved, and some did not show up at all for the final interview at the Boostcamp.
Among the participants where the collaboration with the contact person has worked well, it is clear that this collaboration helps to maintain knowledge and integrate the new tools into the participant's everyday life or support that the participants maintain the social relationships they have achieved at the camp. Here, a contact person mentions, among other things, that it has been of great importance to participate in the final handover interview:

> *"If I had not been there and had heard [the participant] talk about those things or if I had just gotten it in writing, then I do not think I would have taken it in in the same way, and when you go there and can say to [the participant]: 'it sounds really nice, I will call you in two days with a new appointment for next week.' It becomes much more concrete when you are kind of part of it: 'It makes sense, what you have been through, I would really like to follow up on that immediately '. So, I think that the handover conversation makes very good sense."*
>
> *(Contact person)*

According to the contact person, it seems crucial to get a sense of the significance of the Boostcamp by meeting with the participant at the camp itself rather than receiving written material afterwards. At the same time, it makes it easier to arrange a quick follow-up in connection with the end of the camp, so that you can quickly get follow-up initiatives launched.

Among the participants where the collaboration has not been sufficiently established or followed up, it seems to have been more difficult for the individual to maintain the positive development. A relative puts it this way:

> *"[The Boostcamp course] was really good, he came home and felt like trying some new things, and he had made some new friends. But then, it only lasted a week. […] He has sunk back and has given up on it all again. […] None of it has been followed up, so it quickly dies out again."*

> *(Next of kin)*

In the quote, the relative thus expresses annoyance at the lack of follow-up, because he or she experiences that the positive development can thus not be maintained, and that the participant instead 'sinks back' and 'gives up'. As mentioned in section 2.2, it was possible to appoint who should be the contact person at the Boostcamp. This could e.g., be a caseworker, a supported living assistant, a residential care unit employee or the like. In practice, a number of job center employees became contact persons because it was these employees who were responsible for registering the participants for the camp.

The analysis of the interview material indicates that it is of great importance, for the follow-up, who is initially appointed to be the contact person, and that it is an advantage to appoint the contact persons who have the closest relationship with the citizen. One of the interviewed contact persons thus points out that it should have been the participant's housing support that had been designated as the contact person – the reason being that they have a more frequent and closer collaboration in everyday life, which makes it easier to integrate knowledge and tools into the participant's everyday life as well as support the relationships from the Boostcamp.
This point is emphasized by an interview with a supported living assistant who was not designated as a contact person, and who expresses annoyance at the person's limited knowledge about the Boostcamp:

> *"[It] could be something I could wish that, if there was a next time, I got a little more information about, because then I could have supported him on the other side, right. […] Everything else [than the feature subject] I have no information about, and I know that he has not heard from others. So, there is no one who has followed up on it, at least. […] It's a little annoying to do a lot of work, and then it really just falls to the floor, right? And just what has happened and how, I simply know nothing about why it has not been followed up. "*

> *(Supported living assistant)*

According to the contact person, the lack of involvement has thus meant that the person in question has not been able to support the participant's development to the same degree after the end of the camp and the person in question experiences this as unsatisfactory and annoying.
The above thus indicates that a point of attention for future Boostcamps is a greater focus on who is appointed to be the contact person and a clearer alignment of expectations in relation to what this role entails. This is backed up by the interviewed relatives, who express annoyance that the Boostcamp has not fully been the turning point they had hoped for, partly because there has not been sufficient follow-up. Something similar is pointed out by two of the interviewed contact persons, who emphasize that it is difficult to translate the learning that has

taken place at the Boostcamp into real changes in everyday life. In this respect, it is noteworthy that some of the activities in the Change Theory that were not carried out as planned were precisely linked to the role of contact person: Thus, due to a misunderstanding, no initial information events were held, nor was an independent match of expectations conducted with contact persons. However, the contact persons participated together with the participants in an initial meeting with the camp's general staff, where they received information about the content of the camp and where they also discussed what the expectations were for the contact person. However, the present evaluation indicates that there could have been even more focus on this in relation to achieving a better anchoring of the learning that has taken place at the Boostcamp in the participants' everyday lives, just as further, new initiatives could be launched to support this.

Other initiatives that can maintain the positive development

Several of the interviewed contact persons and relatives also point out that it would be beneficial to do even more to follow up on the camp in order to help maintain the positive development of the participants. This is not only to strengthen the role of the contact persons, but also in relation to implementing other initiatives. In the interviews, several emphasize experiencing the participants coming home from the Boostcamp with renewed energy and vigor, but that it has subsequently been difficult to convert this into a change in their everyday life. Several therefore point out that it could be positive if a reunion was subsequently arranged among the participants in order to maintain the relationships and the knowledge that the participants gained at the camp.

Additionally, several point out that it would have been positive if one could make even greater use of the fact that the participants had completed a course with autism-specialized staff and teachers. For example, a form of knowledge gathering prepared by the participating professionals with advice on how future efforts could be organized. It should be noted here that one of the activities that appears from the Change Theory, but which was not carried out, was precisely a closure report. The evaluation thus indicates that this activity could, with advantage, be carried out at future Boostcamps.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Summary

The evaluation shows that the set goals for the Boostcamp seem to be largely achieved based on the data material that has been available. The majority of the participants have gained positive experiences of participating in social contexts, and the Boostcamp seems to have greatly contributed to increased and positive self-understanding among the young people as well as having supported ownership and action in relation to employment. The evaluation thus also seems to confirm the Change Theory´s professional assumptions about the connection between resources, activities and expected results, as the set goals for the effort in the short term seem to be met.

We would like to highlight, in particular, the findings of the evaluation that the community that seems to have emerged among young people. This community has been greatly assisted by the fact that the camp has been targeted at autistic youth. The young people have been able to mirror each others´ stories and experiences and to unfold in a safe environment where they have not felt out of place. The Boostcamps framework has also been an important component

in making the community flourish. Here, the consistent employees and an approach characterized by equality, respect and empowerment can be particularly emphasized.

The autistic employees also seem to have had a special significance. These co-teachers have acted as inspiring role models, which at the same time contributed to a strengthening of the individual's self-understanding and self-esteem. In addition, the representation itself has had an important significance: The autistic co-teachers do not speak on behalf of others, but on their own behalf.

At the same time, the evaluation shows that there is still a potential for development in relation to ensuring that the positive experiences from the camp are subsequently anchored in the young people's everyday life. It is interesting that it is precisely in relation to anchoring that the greatest challenges are experienced, as it is also in relation to this part that there have been the most so-called 'implementation errors', cf. section 3 on Change Theory. Several of the activities that were not carried out as planned are thus linked to the desire for anchoring. The challenges in relation to anchoring can thus also be because parts of the effort associated with anchoring are not fully implemented as assumed. However, there may also be other initiatives that can strengthen the anchoring of the participants. We describe this in more detail in the section below on recommendations for the future.

8.2. Recommendations for the future

As we have also highlighted in the conclusion, based on the findings of the evaluation, we recommend that future Boostcamps maintain a focus on and possibly implement new initiatives that can support anchoring the results in the participants' everyday lives. This both in the form of supporting the maintenance of relationships and / or interests and in relation to supporting learning from the camp.

One of the potential ways to help the effort take root may be through a higher degree of involvement not only of the professional network (in the form of contact persons), but also of the individual's personal network. An involvement of the personal network will be able to support that each participant has someone to talk to and remember what he or she has learned at the camp - even when the participant is back in his or her everyday life. Involvement of the network could, for example, take place via participation in selected activities at the camp and / or in the final handover interview, where the participant, in collaboration with the camp staff, passes on significant learning points from the camp.

Additionally, it is recommended to consider whether the Boostcamp - rather than being a stand-alone event - should run over a longer period. This either in the form of the camp being divided into smaller chunks, or as a recurring event where the participants meet again one or more times. This will enable support of the relationships that have arisen at the camp, just as it can support learning and anchoring because the participants return and are reminded of what they took with them from the camp. A division of the camp may also ensure a greater benefit among the participants in view of their experience of being very exhausted and having difficulty accommodating more learning on the last days of the camp.

9. Appendix

9.1 List of literature

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Change Theory: Boostcamp

PERSONNEL AT THE BOOSTCAMP

- Teachers
- Autistic teachers
- Pedagogical staff

VIBORG MUNICIPALITY

- Actors from Viborg municipality
- Pedagogical staff from Viborg municipality
- 10-12 participants from within the target group
- Knowhow from previous camps
- A brochure about the camp

FRAMEWORK

- The physical environment which holds both teaching and dining facilities and accommodation
- Finances
- Alcohol policy
- Opportunities to hold spontaneous activities

ACTIVITIES BEFORE THE CAMP

- Information meeting
- Matching expectations + recruiting participants
- Recruitment in August / September
- Selection of participants within the target group + collecting consents
- Preliminary interviews w. participants
- - asking about well-being, network*, employment + goal for the camp + ask about strategies in case of burn-out + matching expectations
- * daily resource persons

DURING CAMP

- Didactics: Inclusive teaching, activities, an autism friendly approach
- Highly motivating feature subjects
- Subjects that help autistic people to become part of society
- Contact persons from Viborg participate in part of the course regarding robustness
- Pedagogical activities
- Approach, equality, authenticity, not guarding, building relationships, predictability
- Get-acquainted-activities
- Voluntary social activities
- Celebration with diploma and guests
- Half-way interview:
- -Pin-pointing ressources
- - conveying learning to other contexts
- Creating personal portfolios with links and a final report
- Hand-over to professional network + preparing the strategy for the next move after the Boostcamp together

SHORT TERM GOALS

- Positive experiences with participating in social activities
- Gaining a more positive self-understanding
- Feeling of being a primary actor in one's own life
- Inspiration and greater motivation in moving forward withs regards to employment/education
- Wish for a greater degree of independence
- Wish for a personal network

LONG TERM GOALS

- Increased networking abilities
- Greater quality of life
- Stronger foothold in the labor market
- Greater degree of independence

9.3 Guides for interviews

9.3.1 Guide for interview – participants

Themes	Guide for interview – main questions	
Feature subject	Which of the two feature subjects did you participate in at the Boostcamp? (Role play / Animation)	
	[If Animation:] Would you like to show me your movie / one of your movies? Tell us about the movie and the thoughts behind it? What was it like to make it? Did you learn anything new? Did you learn anything new about yourself?	[If Role play:] Tell us a little about the character you played in the role-playing game? Tell us what it was like to play the character. Can you recognize some of these traits in yourself? Did you learn something new? Did you learn something new about yourself?
Other subjects	In addition to the feature subject, there were also some other subjects. Choose the 3 you remember best? What do you especially remember from there? Did you learn something new? Did you discover anything new about yourself? Are there any tools you have been able to use after the camp? Which ones? What did you think of the teachers? What did it mean to you that there were autistic teachers at Boostcamp?	
The folk high school concept	Think back to before the Boostcamp. Was it hard to leave home? If so, how did you get started anyway? What was it like being at the Boostcamp? Was there something that was difficult about being at the Boostcamp? Was there something that was easy to participate in? What and why? How did your collaboration with Morten and Pia work? What do you think about being with other young autistics? Do you think it would have been different if it had been with other young people who are not autistic? If so, why not?	

Output	What do you think is the most important thing you have gained from being part of the Boostcamp?
	Have you told others about the Boostcamp after it was over? What did you say? To whom?
	Have you looked at your personal portfolio that you got at the Boostcamp after the camp was over? If yes; what have you been looking at? Have you shown the folder to others, or talked about it?
	Did you have any personal goals for being at the
	Boostcamp? Have you achieved your goals?
Cooperation with the contact person	You had a contact person from the municipality (name, function).
	Was your contact person present for your first interview (start-up interview) with Morten and Pia?
	Was your contact person involved in a "handover interview" at the Boostcamp? If so, how was it?
	Have you and your contact person talked about the Boost Camp after the camp was over? If so, what did you talk about?
Employment/Education	Are you at work or in education?
	If yes; has the Boostcamp given you new knowledge or new attitudes and ideas about being at work or in training?
	If not; has the Boostcamp meant something to your desire and courage to start an education or a job? Has Boostcamp given you ideas for what you can do if you want to work / be educated?
Social network and activities	Has the Boostcamp affected your desire and courage to be with other people?
	Do you see new people after you have been at the camp?
	Do you participate in activities more often (or in new activities) after you have been to the Boostcamp?
	Do you still have your interest in the feature subject?
Self-understanding / self-determination	Are there any things you do yourself today that you have been helped to do in the past? Do you think it has something to do with the Boostcamp?
	Has the Boostcamp changed your mind about what you can decide for yourself in your own life? If yes; can you give an example?
	Has the Boostcamp changed how you feel about having autism? If so, what does that mean to you?

9.3.2 Guide for interview – Contact persons

Theme	Guide for interview
Knowledge of participant	What role do you have in relation to the participant for whom you were a Boostcamp contact person? (Supported living assistant, case officer, contact person for residential care unit, other)
	How well do you know the
	participant?
	How often are you in contact?
Participant's experience and benefits	Were you involved in recommending the participant to go to the Boost Camp? If yes:
	Why did you recommend the participants to go to the Boost Camp? Was it difficult for him / her to go to the Boostcamp?
	If so, how did it succeed anyway?
	At the Boostcamp, there were both feature subjects (role play / animation) and several other subjects. Has the participant said anything about any of them? What have you heard?
	What do you think is the most important thing he / she has gained from being part of the Boostcamp? Why?
	Is there something that the participant does himself today or with less help than before? If so, has Boostcamp had an impact on it or not?
	Do you experience that the Boostcamp has had an impact on the citizen's desire and courage to be with other people?
	Is the citizen in work or in education?
	If yes:
	Has Boostcamp given the participant new knowledge or new attitudes and ideas about being at work or in education?
	If no:
	How is his / her desire and courage to seek out, consider or try out opportunities in relation to work / education?
	Do you have an impression of whether the Boostcamp has had an impact on it or not?
Follow-up with the participant after the camp	Have you followed up with the participant on the experiences of the Boostcamp
	after the camp? If so, in what way?
	Has he / she shown you his / her personal portfolio he / she received at the
	Boostcamp? Or told you about it?
	If so, what has he / she told?

The role of the contact person	How did you experience being a contact person for a participant who was going to the Boostcamp? How did the information work for you as a contact person before the camp? What was it like attending a "handover talk" at camp? Have you noticed anything in the process that you think was particularly good? Or is there something you wonder about, or something you think should be done differently?
Recapitulation	If another Boostcamp was held, would you recommend the citizens in the target group that you work with to participate? Why / why not? Do you have more on your mind that we need to include in the evaluation?

9.3.3 Guide for interview - Focus group interview with employees

Opening question (20 min.)	Think back to the Boostcamp. Is there an experience with one or more participants that you remember in particular? Describe what you experienced. Explain why you think it was significant. The interviewees get 3-4 min. individually to reflect and note key words on Post-Its or similar. Then they present the experiences to each other in plenary - standing at a blackboard (approx. 2 min. Each).

Theme	Target group	Question
Feature subjects (20 min.)	Teachers of the feature subject	How do you think your feature subject worked? Can you give examples of when the classes worked well? What do you think was the reason? How did you experience the participants' interaction and level of activity?
	Pedagogical personnel + teachers of professions	When you hear this, what reflections does it give rise to in you?
Other subjects (35 min.)	Teachers of professions	How do you think your classes worked? Can you give examples of when the classes worked well? What do you think was the reason? What did you experience that the autistic co-teachers / presenters contributed?
	Pedagogical personnel	You also participated in the classes. What was your impression of the participants' experience? What worked well? How? What worked less well? How did you experience the connection / flow between the different subjects?
Break 10.25-10.45 (20 min.)		

The folk high-school form (35 min.)	Everybody	What is your impression of the participants' experience of "everyday life" at the Boostcamp (the structure with fixed hours, meals, classes, social activities, pedagogical personnel)? What worked well? How? What worked poorly? How did you experience the participants' interaction and motivation to participate? Have you seen signs of development among the participants during the Boostcamp? If so, can you give some examples?
The collaboration with the contact persons from the municipality (15 min.)	Pedagogical personnel	How have you experienced the collaboration with the participants' municipal contact persons (from Viborg Municipality)? (in start-up interviews, in handover talks) The personal portfolio for the participants, how was it used? How did it work?
	Teachers of professions + feature subject teachers	When you hear this, what reflections does it give rise to in you?
Practicalities (10 min.)	Everybody	All in all, what do you think are the three most important experiences from Boostcamp 2020? (brainstorm each for a few minutes and then pick up in plenary) Is there anything else you have in mind that we have not been asked?
Recapitulaton (15 min.)	Everybody	All in all, what do you think are the three most important experiences from Boostcamp 2020? (brainstorm each for a few minutes and then pick up in plenary) Is there anything else you have in mind that we have not been asked?

9.3.4 Guide for interview – Autistic co-teachers

1. Think back to your classes at the Boostcamp. How do you think your classes worked?
2. Can you give examples of when the classes worked well? What do you think it was due to?
3. What did you find that the participants were particularly interested in hearing about / asking about?
4. What benefit do you think the participants have received from [subject]?
5. What do you think it meant to the participants that you as a teacher have autism?
6. Do you have anything else you would like to tell about your experiences classes at the Boostcamp?

9.3.5 Guide for interview – Next of kin

Theme	Guide for interview
General impression of the participant's experience and benefits	How did you experience the Boostcamp stay for your son / daughter? Was it difficult for your son / daughter to go? If so, how did it succeed anyway? What do you think is the most important thing he / she has gained from being part of the Boostcamp? Why? How do you think your feature subject worked? Can you give examples of when the classes worked well? What do you think was the reason? How did you experience the participants' interaction and activity level? When you hear this, what reflections does it give rise to in you?
Feature subjects and other subjects at the camp	At the Boostcamp, there were both feature subjects (role play / animation) and a number of other subjects. Has your son / daughter said anything about any of them? What have you heard? Has your son / daughter shown you his / her personal portfolio he / she received at Boostcamp? Or told about it? If so, what has he / she told?
Social network and activities	Is it your experience that the Boostcamp has had an impact on your son / daughter's desire and courage to be with other people? Does he / she see any new people now? Does he / she participate more often in activities (or in new activities) after he / she has been to Boostcamp? Does he / she still have an interest in the feature subject?
Self-understanding	At the Boostcamp, your son / daughter was with a group of other young autistic people, and he / she also met a number of autistic teachers. Has your son / daughter talked about this? Do you find that your son / daughter looks at themselves, or at their autism, differently after the Boostcamp? If so, can you give examples of how this is expressed?

Work / education	Is your son / daughter at work or in education? If yes: Has the Boostcamp given him / her new knowledge or new attitudes and ideas about being at work or in education? If no: How is his / her desire and courage to seek out, consider or try out opportunities in relation to work / education? Do you have an impression of whether Boostcamp has had an impact on it or not?
Follow-up from Viborg Municipality	Do you know if your son / daughter's contact person from Viborg Municipality has followed up on your son / daughter's participation in the Boostcamp? If yes; do you know how it has been followed up? How do you think it worked?
To be next of kin	How do you think it has been to be a relative of a son / daughter who was going to Boostcamp? (Before, during, and after camp)? Have you spotted something that you think was particularly good? Or on something you wonder about, or something you think should be done differently?
Recapitulation	If a Boostcamp were to be held again, would you recommend it to other relatives of young autistics? Why / why not?