



# Photographic Engagement with People with Dementia

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# VUK

- ▶ VUK (School for adult education and communication)
  - ▶ Compensatory special education for adults
  - ▶ Lifelong learning
- ▶ People with early-stage dementia
  - ▶ Training and stimulation
  - ▶ Music and art therapy
  - ▶ Woodcraft



VUK, Aalborg Municipality, Denmark



# Photography and Storytelling Project

- ▶ Aim: To explore the student's experiences of being a student at VUK
- ▶ 10 students
  - ▶ (5 M/5 F – Aged 67-83)
- ▶ Given a camera with instructions
- ▶ Four weekly sessions (camera for 1 week prior)



# Session Plans

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- ▶ Group Poem
  - ▶ Being a student
  - ▶ Arriving at VUK
  - ▶ Other students
  - ▶ Teachers
  - ▶ Breaks and Activities
- ▶ Storyboard of a 'typical' day at VUK
- ▶ Home and family life
- ▶ Celebration and review



# Taking & Talking about the Images

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- ▶ Taking the photos
  - ▶ Support and help
- ▶ The sessions
  - ▶ Open questions
  - ▶ Focus on feelings rather than memory
- ▶ The student's engagement
  - ▶ Recall of pictures
  - ▶ Sparked memories
  - ▶ Enhanced the discussion
  - ▶ The process was a *'gift'*

***'You can put a lot  
without using many  
words...'***



# Attending VUK – Structure of the day

- ▶ Cognitive training classes
- ▶ Music and art
- ▶ Woodwork
- ▶ Computing
- ▶ History



# Attending VUK – How did they experience it

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- ▶ Look forward to what the day brings
- ▶ Meeting new ‘challenges’
- ▶ Succeeding in tasks
- ▶ ‘Positive learning’
- ▶ Identity and contribution
- ▶ Friendships

*‘It is about being together and new experiences. The unique thing is that you are fed with things that you have forgotten.’*



# Experience of Dementia

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- ▶ Humour
- ▶ Openness
- ▶ Insight
- ▶ Isolation and frustration



*“It can also be a challenge just to come here and get out of the door, the door step can get higher and higher to get over ... if you don’t get out much.”*





# Speaking Denglish!

- ▶ Speaking English/Danish/English/Danish...
- ▶ Cultural differences sparked conversations
- ▶ Value of non-verbal communication

Q: It's a puzzle.  
D: Yes it becomes a puzzle.  
Q: It is a great game.  
D: Yes it is a great game. It is a puzzle we are going to do together and you are not going to make guesses. We are going to move the papers around.  
Q: What's the puzzle?  
D: Yes.  
A: Let's make some space first.  
D: We are not because guess?  
D: No, you have our names. You have written your good things.  
Q: Some of us are.  
Q: What?  
Q: Yes, we are also that. We have also good things.  
D: (to Ed) Talk to me to take paper out of the bag.  
A: So we can see the table.  
D: Good.  
A: Good.  
D: I think Adam has an order for what the table is.  
E: You just tell us and you will get what you want.  
D: Ed has a suggestion that we just put it all and we decide.  
A: Oh let's do it! We can do that.  
Q: It's really an idea.  
A: Oh yes, so you decide.  
Q: We don't know how to do it.  
A: No, it is your game. You decide what we want with arriving at 10:30.  
Q: Nothing at 10:30.  
A: I think it's a puzzle. We are not going to do it.  
Q: How do you do it?  
D: I suggest how to do it.  
A: Help Ed.  
Q: ... what I think sounds best. And that's the answer.  
A: So that every game.

Q: And I found the same puzzle. I don't remember when I said that it was a puzzle.  
A: Maybe we should stop there.  
Q: This is a puzzle. I don't remember when I said that it was a puzzle. I don't remember when I said that it was a puzzle.  
D: Yes, yes.  
Q: I don't remember when I said that it was a puzzle.  
A: I don't remember when I said that it was a puzzle.  
D: Yes, yes. It is different when you are a parent first. And then when you travel with your class teacher that you have to be closer than when you are with your parents? (to Ed)  
Q: I think so, yes.  
D: Yes.  
Q: There are told (to Ed).  
D: Yes.  
Q: And the teacher is going to take care of them, yes.  
D: And the parent's area's that (to Ed).  
Q: And I have to come home with everyone, yes.  
D: You have the responsibility to be a teacher. (to Ed).  
Q: Yes (to Ed).  
Q: The teacher is better to look after a whole group of people (to Ed).  
Q: Yes.  
Q: We only have. I only had one child and that was even difficult to control her (to Ed).  
A: I don't know.  
Q: I don't know.  
Q: It's more difficult with a great child than with older ones.  
Q: How many children did you have in your class when you were? (to Ed).  
Q: I don't know.  
Q: I don't know.  
A: No.  
Q: And to be a teacher is very hard.  
Q: Yes (to Ed).  
A: That's a nice thing to do as a child though to go abroad with your fellow students.

# A Danish Celebration!



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