



# 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: You a parent?  
D: Yes it becomes a parent  
Q: It is a great point.  
D: Yes it is a great point. It is a point we are going to do together and you are not going to make a decision. We are going to move the paper.  
Q: What's the point?  
D: Yes  
A: Let's make some space here  
D: We are not because of that  
D: No, you have your house. You have your own good things  
Q: Some of us are  
Q: What?  
D: 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 the table  
E: You just tell us and you will get what you want  
D: Ed has a suggestion that we just get 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 do it on the table  
A: No, it is your point to decide that we want to arrive at 10:30  
Q: Meeting at 10:30  
D: I think it's a good idea to have a meeting  
Q: How many children did you have in your class when you were?  
A: I had 20  
D: I never have more than 20 in my class  
A: I had 20  
Q: ... what I think sounds best. And that's the best  
A: So that every point

Q: Did I find the same point? I don't remember when I said that I didn't say  
A: Maybe we should stop there  
Q: This is a point where we are going to do together and you are not going to make a decision. We are going to move the paper.  
D: Yes, we are  
Q: How many children did you have in your class when you were?  
A: I had 20  
Q: I think it's a good idea to have a meeting  
D: Yes, we are  
Q: How many children did you have in your class when you were?  
A: I had 20  
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Q: ... what I think sounds best. And that's the best  
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# A Danish Celebration!



# Acknowledgements

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