



PROMOTERS AND OBSTACLES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN A MERGED HE INSTITUTION FROM THE UAS STAFF POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract:

Universities and universities of applied sciences form the higher education sector in Finland. New HE communities in which both sectors cooperate were formed in the latest reform. Our interest is in community feeling and connectedness taking place inside four such new organisations. The research question is: which are the promoters of and obstacles to communality in merged higher education institutions in Finland from the university of applied sciences staff's point of view? The data is gathered from 42 key persons. The analysis is done in a qualitative way. As promoters, we found spaces, dignity, shared goals, and action. The obstacles were haste, lack of trust, unfamiliarity, and use of spaces. Spaces seem to play a big role: they serve as promoters and obstacles. They can serve as a source for recognition and one's meaningful share but also as a place to get to know each other and promote action towards goals. And vice versa. Anyway, feeling connectedness is an important source for creating social identity.

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1. Introduction

There are some signs that the higher education (HE) staff is not feeling well at their work. Jayman et al. (2022) report alarming data from the UK university staff and their mental health. They propose that mental wellbeing should be at the core when considering new and sustainable ways of working and a wellbeing agenda is needed. On the website of UCEA, there are nearly 20 cases considering HE staff mental wellbeing (see UCEA, 2021). Well-being at work is more than just mental: understanding well-being at work broadly, as being determined by various aspects of work, may function as demands or resources in various ways. (Bordi et al., 2018). There are trends, especially after the enforced remote work season during the COVID-19 pandemic, that different kinds of workplaces will remain: it is possible to work remotely, in hybrid ways, and using different kinds of working places (Etätyö, n.d.)

The work done itself is changing, too. There is a trend of fragmentation: Work fragmentation is related to a perceived increase in work pace and work intensity (Cajander, 2018). In Finnish society, the higher education (HE) work is added with the ideas of merges. When taking the total population into account, the amount of HE institutions is double compared to other Nordic countries (Kiesiläinen, 2018). In this setting, there is still a need to keep teaching and researching at a high-quality level. In addition to them, there is a need to increase RDI-levels and competence (OKM, n.d.d). In this setting, concerning multi-locational, multilevel HE-professional work, with teaching and searching for RDI possibilities in a new organization, connecting one's work to a bigger entity is a thing that could add meaningfulness to one's work and this could be a way to add well-being at work (Kuusisto & Rissanen, 2023).

All this fragmentation and change can lead to overheating of life. Work is only one part of the entire life span but if there is too much to do during work time and during spare time, there are too many contents to take care of, there is a danger of overheating (Väänänen et al., 2020). This overwhelming life and working life have brought the working life researchers to introduce a new concept, cognitive ergonomics, meaning how work affects the mind and vice versa, mind affects the work (Hollnagel, 1997). In studies of vocational education staff, the meaning of the work community is seen as important: the cognitive load is eased by feelings of coping, support by the employer, and rules on working habits (Tapani et al., 2023). These multiple changes in the working life, especially in the HE sectors, lay a starting point for studying the meaning of the community from the UAS staff's point of view. The research question in this study is: which are the promoters of and obstacles to communality in merged higher education institutions in Finland from the university of applied sciences staff's point of view?

2. Theoretical background

There are plenty of concepts that deal with organizational communities: we can see organizations through concepts such as organizational climate or culture (see Grobler &

Jansen van Rensburg, 2019). Organizational culture focuses on understanding of the perceived meaning and experience (by employees) of various organizational processes; organizational climate ranges to the underlying aspects of organizational functioning (Schneider & Barbera, 2014).

Starting from the early Maslow (see e.g. Mcleod, 2023), connection to others is one of the things that keep humankind, including organisations, going. Satisfaction of human basic needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, facilitates well-being and motivation at work (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Autonomy is about a sense of willingness, endorsement, and ownership (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Competence concerns confidence and effectiveness in one's actions, and feelings of mastery (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Relatedness refers to a feeling connected to others and of a sense of being accepted and understood as one is, in a two-way experience: It is about being treated well, but equally being able to contribute positively to other people's lives (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In this study, we concentrate on the relatedness and how it is created or not in a merged community.

2.1 Feeling of belonging

The reason for studying experiences and feelings of joint work has its roots in well-being at work. Grobler and Jansen van Rensburg (2019) noticed that job satisfaction in the HE sector significantly influences job performance, absenteeism, turnover, and psychological distress. Adding the feeling of belonging is one of the aims of Finnish education (see OPH, 2021) and thus it is important that staff do what they preach: if the staff feels well at work, it radiates to students as well. Meristo's (2021) results reveal the important role of the sense of community and belongingness between academic peers and colleagues within broader academic staff communities. In her study, it was noticed that belonging and feeling commonality influence the individual's experience of reforms in both directions: peaceful confidence and alarming apprehension. If employees identify strongly with their workplace, it has an impact on their wellbeing at work, job satisfaction, and motivation to work (van Dick, 2001; Ullrich et al., 2005).

In merged organizations, the feeling of belonging forms the base for the new collective identity: a new social structure for workgroups is formed through the feeling of belonging (Aarnio, 1999). Collective identity is composed of symbolic codes, beliefs, history, and past and the codes present something that is socially shared (Aarnio, 1999; Kaunismaa, 1997). Beliefs play an important role in society by reifying historical truths; some of them are only based on partial facts but they still shape narratives that are constructed on group members' identities, roles, and relationships within the profession and the profession's place in the society (Alleman et al., 2017). The basis of collective identity lies in noticing symbolic codes and verbal expressions related to oneself (Aarnio, 1999; Kaunismaa, 1997), historical notions of the collegium, collegiality's collective identity form, and relying on sameness (Alleman et al., 2017).

2.2 Social sources for identification

These days identification processes are more open and multiple: we have several identities and that is why our identification and sources of identities vary all the time (Hall, 1999). In the past, identities related to work were clearer and less fragmented whereas nowadays work identities form a range of possibilities for belonging and forming personal identity. As embedded in UAS context, we use teacher identity formation as an example. Teacher identity is a complex concept in which the surrounding context plays a big role: identity can be viewed not just in relation to the personal dimension of the self, but also with respect to the profession itself (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). A modern vocational teacher needs to be a subject-oriented teacher, guide, consultant, and sympathizer (Kukkonen, 2018); in total 53 skills were identified when a study on teachers' competencies was made (Tapani & Salonen, 2019). To form or maintain a coherent and consistent (teacher) identity a dialogical process with negotiations and interrelations with multiple "I" positions is needed (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). The study of teacher competencies (Tapani & Salonen, 2019) dealt with the reform of the educational field. When it comes to reforms in organizations, there will be questions about the personal place in the new organization: where I belong and whose identity remains after the merge (van Knippenberg et al., 2002). van Lankveld et al. (2017) found five psychological processes that were involved in the development of a university teacher identity: a sense of appreciation, a sense of connectedness, a sense of competence, a sense of commitment, and imagining a future career trajectory. They note that contact with students and staff development programs was experienced as strengthening teacher identity and the wider context of higher education was experienced as having a constraining effect.

In changing communities, it is important to remember how Handal (2008, 59) puts it: *"people who belong to a community of practice do not form their identities solely in negotiation with this community. They bring their "luggage" from other communities to which they have historically belonged"*. The new community is not created by changing the visual brand, it needs something more. What this "more" is, is the key point of this article. It calls for discussion of the word "we" in organizational context. Sometimes we describe our workplace using the word "we": "we did a good solution today", "we have noticed that...". We as a subject of action a thing that relates to time and space (Giddens, 1984); there is more and more need for situation and case-based interaction relations; forming teams or groups for sudden purposes (Jokivuori, 2004). Hall (1999) describes identity as a moving celebration because it finds new sources to draw the time; identity is always in process and there is always something imaginary in its unity. It always remains in process and develops all the time (Hall, 1999). There is no possibility to talk about identity anymore; instead, we need to talk about identities that are sometimes contradictory or even inconsistent because they are formed by different, multiple, and intersecting practices and discourses (Hall, 1999).

Forming new identities deals with representations: there remain questions, such as how we represent ourselves, how we see the desired future, what we would like to

become, and what we would like to represent in the new organization. Identity could be called a position that a person must adopt. The position is a meeting point to which persons are invited and in which they want to invest (Hall, 1999). Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) introduced a concept of boundary-oriented pedagogy which stands for the demands of learning in the twenty-first century and challenges school systems to focus on how to educate for boundary meetings and crossing of borders. The same idea could fit well to identity: we need boundaries of communities to constitute meeting points where dynamic identity formation is intensified (see Lövgren, 2019).

To describe the community in daily life connects easily with the word "we": if we talk about a community using the word "we" it gives the meaning that I am part of the whole and what "we" do in the community is done together and my share is important in it. "We" represents cosy communities where I feel at home. "We" concept is kind of linking the 'belongingness' and 'identity': it represents the cosy context and one's meaningful part in the wholeness. It is possible to differentiate communities to which we belong with our hearts from communities to which we belong in a formal way (Bauman, 1997). Bauman (2000) uses the concept of liquid modern to describe a situation where in some positions, like expert work, there are plenty of possibilities to join groups and find new sources of identity. Tapani (2009) describes the same phenomenon in making social groups and related situations unstable: there is a huge number of groups to choose from in order to form personal identity and survive in the changing society. It makes groups and communities unpredictable because there are plenty of possibilities and no need to commit if there is something better "on the other side of the fence".

Identification is an ongoing process: it can be lost or won, it can remain, and it requires that something is left outside, something that is not a source of identity and a goal for identification (Hall, 1999). Differentiation also connects to forming the collective identity: the signs of shared identity deal with borders that make the difference between "us" and "them" (Aarnio, 1999; Kaunismaa, 1997), and the worst cases of exclusion are experienced in the search for the community (Bauman, 2001; Day, 2006). According to the social identity theory, a group forms a positive base for self-perceptions: it offers a place to see oneself as identical to other group members and different from non-members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1978). The essential thing is joint membership and group cohesion which leads to a will to commit to the group and differentiate from others (Ullrich et al., 2005). It is important for a person to hold a positive self-perception (Giessner et al., 2006). Alleman, Cliburn Allen & Haviland (2017) named the place in which collegiality via trust, open debate, and prosocial behaviour is enacted as the collegium. The collegium is a cosy place where its members can feel at home.

3. Finnish higher education context

Finnish universities of applied sciences (UAS) have their roots in the 1990s (Varmola, 2021). The reason for establishing the new educational institutions was to fix structural defects in the educational system, take into account changes in society and working life,

and improve the quality of professional education (Rask, 2002). The Finnish Minister of Education of the time was Olli-Pekka Heinonen and his instructions for UAS rectors were not to look around but to create a distinctive higher education institution (Liljander, 2002). There were 29 universities of applied sciences in the beginning (Rask, 2002) and now there are 22 (OKM, n.d.a). Studies on mergers of two universities of applied sciences have shown that mergers have been relatively successful (Sutela & Cal, 2016). In the Finnish education system, higher education is provided by universities and universities of applied sciences. Universities' task is to conduct scientific research, provide education based on it, and offer Bachelor's and Master's degrees as well as postgraduate degrees, such as licentiate and doctoral degrees. Universities of applied sciences (UAS) provide more practical education which aims to respond to the needs of the labour market and offer Bachelor's degrees and Master's degrees (OKM, n.d.b). The history of Finnish universities is much longer than the UAS history: the first university, which is now called the University of Helsinki, was established in 1640 in Turku (Kuninkaallinen akatemia, 2021). Now there are 13 universities in Finland (OKM, n.d.c).

Based on this background, we come to current needs. It is said that the world is changing at a huge speed and the change will never be as slow as it is just now (see e.g. Kuitunen, 2019). There is a need for rethinking higher education in Finland to keep along with the change. For example, in 2019 the University of Helsinki was the only Finnish HE institution among the 100 best international universities (Siironen, 2019): there is a need to think about the quality of research but also about the quality on teaching. In this situation, universities are facing new challenges in staff identity and professionalism: Arvaja (2018) raises university management as the primary problem. The universities should seek and support plurality to preserve the development of cohesive individual identities but instead, they are trying to promote cohesion through unifying practices (Hermans, 2003). Support of plurality would promote well-being among the academic staff (Arvaja, 2018). Another theme that tears staff identities is competition between different tasks. If there is a constant competition between research and teaching and the main attention is paid to research, there is a great risk of fragmentation of professional identities, ill-being, and controversies in the academic community (Arvaja, 2018). Higher education's global changes based on the rise of a market-based model have influenced the way in which employees perceive their work environment, which results in the organizational climate becoming an important point of view (Grobler & Jansen van Rensburg, 2019). Tapanila et al. (2018) share the idea of the invasion of managerialism in universities: it has changed the prerequisites for academic work because academics' expertise-based decision-making and control over academic work have declined. There are worries about the loss of collegiality: since the university reforms in Finland, collegiality has lost its significance in decision-making in universities (Tapanila et al., 2018) and one does not need to look far, within or beyond the academy, to see that collegiality is challenged and is in short supply (Alleman et al., 2017).

The latest reform in Finnish higher education took place two years ago. In 2019, a new higher education community was established while the University of Tampere and

Tampere University of Technology merged to create the new foundation-based Tampere University which maintains close collaboration with Tampere University of Applied Sciences (Tuni.fi, n.d.).

The described historical situation, different educational aims, and brands make it interesting to study how the real daily work is done jointly and together, in cooperation but on which terms. In this study, we focus on promoters of and obstacles concerning feelings of belonging and try to see what kind of action should be needed to take the best out of the community.

4. Material and Methods

The material was collected in four Finnish universities of applied sciences (UAS) which have formed a community with academic universities in the past two years. The oldest community was created at the beginning of 2019 and the three others started in 2020. The main motivation awoke by a new UAS rector: he realised that there is plenty of talk of us and them among the HE community. He shared the idea that cooperation would be important but how it could be created if all members are not feeling as real partners in the wholeness. He raised the question if the same kind of perceptions could exist in the other three new communities, too. He was a key factor in starting the research design with other UAS rectors. We asked the mentioned rectors to consider the persons suitable for interviews, ten interviewees per organization. The rectors asked us what kinds of persons we would need for the interviews and in this way, we pointed to desired staff members. We researchers have been working for a long time in HE sectors so it made us possible to evaluate how suitable the interviewees were. There were two student body representatives among the interviewees, the staff members were heads of units, team leaders, heads of curriculum, heads of student, RDI, or international services. All four rectors were interviewed too. All these staff persons hold an academic degree. In total, there were 37 persons in interviews, and five persons asked about the possibility of answering the questions in writing due to lack of time. It was possible for the five persons who answered in writing to interact by email or phone. We emailed some possible time scales for the interviewees, and it was possible for them to choose the best time for them. We restricted the maximum size of interviewees to four to give everyone time and space to tell his/her opinions. This led to interview groups of one to four persons. The questions to discuss were delivered beforehand by email to all interviewees. The interviews can be described as semi-structured because the same questions were posed to all interviewees, but the order changed a little (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008).

Although the process was quite tight, we let the interviewees comment on each other's answers as much as possible. It created a little relaxed atmosphere during the interview. We chose the semi-structural interview because of the time: we had promised that the interview would not last for more than an hour. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom and they were recorded with the permission of each participant. All interviewees were informed by email about the research: they got the research plan,

privacy, and data management information in advance. Before the interview started, they were told about the research and its privacy politics, and they were given the possibility to ask to remove their sayings from the tape even afterward. They were also told that it is possible to stop the interview recording at any time. Nobody refused on recording and there was no one who would have liked to remove something afterward. There were all the time two interviewers (except for one interview) and the same person was in charge of leading the whole interview. After the questions, we made some clarifying questions. Sometimes we had time for chatting after the official interview, sometimes a whole hour was needed to discuss the aimed themes. The questions dealt with community, recognition, and stories about cooperation experiences. The ideas dealing with the community are discussed in this article. The first interviews took place during April - August 2021. The whole data consists of 500 pages of transcribed text (Calibri 11, spacing 1,15).

The data was analysed via qualitative analysis. We used the same analysis method for both oral and written material. HE institutions and their staff's experiences of lifeworld form the context for this study: lifeworld is a whole created by the meanings of individuals, community, social interaction, and values and how they are related to each other (Varto, 1992). The interviewers share the interactional type of knowledge (Silverman, 1993) while working in an HE institution. However, the interviewers also share the idea of a person being "another": as Levinas (1996) puts it, another person always remains another: the person is somehow mysterious. The other person always leaves the researcher somehow as an outsider: the person decides how words, motives, actions, and meanings find their foot in the lifeworld (Varto, 1992). The interviewers were teachers and thus the lifeworld of all interviewees was not familiar to them (because of interviewees' positions e.g. as educational leaders) and this made it possible to study the data from the outside and be open to wondering (Varto, 1992). To add reliability, we as a research team took part in pairs in interviews (except one). After the interviews, we shared ideas about what we had heard. We have analysed the data already in Finnish from other points of view: we have written two trade journal articles on the whole data, one concerning the narratives on cooperation and the other the feelings of belongingness. We have written reports to all participating organisations concerning their results. We know the data very deeply and, in this article, we have discussed them all day long about the findings, so the method is something like researcher triangulation that is used to add the reliability of this research.

In this study, we do not use background information about the interviewees because they represent positions that are occupied only by one person in the HE units and thus they could be identified. We are purely interested in their experiences and contributions to shared stories, which we call story types. In accordance with Grobler and Jansen van Rensburg (2019), our study extends beyond the deeper issues surrounding the identity and recognition of university employees from different occupational groups: the shared perceptions of the new workplace and new community experienced by chosen employees are considered, regardless of their occupational category.

In this research, we tried to hear the voices of the interviewees as authentically as possible. In this case, we use the term “voice” as the signal of the actual speaking (see Cook-Sather, 2020) of interviewed academic staff and their dialogue in the interview situations and with the interviewers. We did not create a real dialogue because of the promised one-hour interview time but tried to enable the interviewees to be in the main role and let their dialogue happen. In the analysis, we try to “hear” what the interviewees are talking about and be faithful to it. It is not possible for us to hear their voices fully authentically because there are traits such as prior knowledge in the analysis (Varto, 1992). The aim is not to test the theory but to open views to new possibilities to see the situation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Although we did not test any specific theory, we found an interesting peer research by Alleman et al. (2017): they raise five elements (employment equity, academic freedom and autonomy, flexibility, professional growth, and collegiality) as spaces for collegiality. This study formed a base to consider if these collegium-forming elements could also serve as a base for community feeling.

We are also aware that the situation has an impact on the “voice” used: Cook-Sather (2020) noted that when academic staff speak to and amongst themselves, their voice is framed somewhat differently than if they speak to prospective employers, recruitment committees, or review committees. We try to hear their voices as authentically as possible and be faithful noting that all talk is context-bound (see e.g. Karjalainen, 2003): all sentences demand that the listener knows many things in order to understand the sentence. Many things themselves are context-bound: Karjalainen (2003) uses as an example the concept of dirt: for example, sauce on the shirt is dirt but sauce in the pan is not – and clean shoes are considered dirty if they are on the table. One example of context-bound conceptions is the before-mentioned word “we”: in all interviews, there were comments that the use of the concept depends on the situation. In analysing speech and voices, we need to bear in mind the rhetorical views of spoken sentences: logos, pathos, and ethos (see Kakkuri-Knuuttila, 2002). In our case, both interviewers and interviewees share some points of the same life worlds. This can also be reinforced through arguments and their analysis: there is a need to make personal arguments as credible as possible. Logos, pathos, and ethos can be used to achieve it. Logos means the argument itself - how believable it is; ethos adds personal ways to share the argument and pathos brings along the receiver’s capabilities to admit the argument (Kakkuri-Knuuttila, 2002). In this case, it is much easier for us to “accept” the arguments because we have experienced the same type of life worlds.

The analysis process is described in Table 1. The table describes how we connected the research frame with data collection: when starting the research, we had some prior knowledge of the phenomena. After data collection, we wanted to see the data as such and find its main categories. After that, we came to the synthesis to discuss the prior knowledge and theoretical views.

Table 1: Research analysis (modified from Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008)

Research frame	Data collection
Analysis	Getting familiar with the data Identifying main categories by qualitative content analysis Combining themes as story types
Synthesis	Discussing results with theoretical perspectives

The way of analysing the data can be described as a narrative-discursive approach (Davies & Harré, 1990), or more accurately, a discursive-narrative approach that is based on qualitative content analysis (Syrjäläinen, 1994). In interviews (or written material), individuals talk about their experiences by means of words, concepts, and forms of speech which are suitable for the social and discursive reality of the shared narrative (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008). It is also important to note the concept of enunciation (Metsämuuronen, 2003), which means the storyteller’s relation to the text. In this case, the viewpoint is the HE educational context and its language and terms. The context (see Karjalainen, 2003) plays a big role: it is easier (for other interviewees and researchers) to understand the language and terms as members in the communities when the life worlds are shared.

The shared discussion was the starting point for us. We applied two-step analysis to the discussions: first, the categories of the same phenomena were identified, and then, hints of content analysis were used (see Silverman, 1993) in order to note how the expressions appeared in researched HE contexts. Some quotations of the original data are shown under recognised theme. The organisational names are anonymised as UAS 1, UAS 2, UAS 3 and UAS 4.

5. Results: promoters and obstacles of community

5.1 Promoters of communality in merged higher education institutions

As promoters, we found spaces, dignity, shared goals, and action. *Spaces* seem to play a big role in creating a community feeling. The informants talked about the need for joint spaces but also the need to know one’s own place. While all were forced to work remotely, it was also felt to add equality: remote workspace can add communality when all are in the same position.

“We need more spaces like living rooms where everyone can get together spaces are of importance as means to create dialogue.” (UAS 1)

“It is easier to cooperate when there is a possibility to meet. Face-to-face meetings are needed and missed.” (UAS 4)

“There is a need for “get-together” –places but the staff calls for personal working spaces: it is important to know the own space and share in the community.” (UAS 2)

“Remote work has increased the feelings of belonging while we all are online. There is no separation in that some are drinking coffee in the same space and others are just listening to it. Now we all work in remote spaces.” (UAS 3)

To feel communality, dignity plays a big role: it is important to recognize one’s own share and importance as a meaningful part of the wholeness and as a team member. Everyone’s action forms the entity and one can also develop the entity with own choices. The idea of “community first” was also presented. There is a must to respect one’s own doings; if that is not happening, it is difficult to wait for other’s respect.

“Everyone is of importance when creating communality.” (UAS 1)

“It is my choice not to join cheerless groups.” (UAS 1)

“Immediate team is a group where innovations are born.” (UAS 2)

“I try to behave as a representative of the wholeness and encourage the others do the same.” (UAS 3)

“There should be a must to prioritize the community in one’s work although there is all the time a lot to do.” (UAS 4)

“The UAS staff feels that they are not respected by universities. Universities do not accept this claim. What if we do not respect by ourselves what we are doing in UASs?” (UAS 4)

Shared goals but also shared problems create the feelings of communality and the need for everyone’s share in cooperation and achieving results. Shared goals create a feeling that all are needed and everyone’s share counts. It also forces us to try to figure out situations that benefit all.

“There is a need for win-win –situations.” (UAS 1)

“If there is shared problem there is a need to work in cooperation.” (UAS 1)

“Among the staff, there is a will for multisectoral cooperation.” (UAS 2)

Action, concrete work together calls for time and understanding of future needs and calls for the need of everyone’s share. Examples and stories of work done helps to get to know each other and one’s competencies.

“It is important to tell good experiences for example on team-teaching.” (UAS 1)

"It is important to tell what we are capable to do." (UAS 1)

"There is a need to discuss, discuss and once more discuss that everyone shares the profound ideas." (UAS 3)

"Working together adds possibilities to get to know each other and each other competencies and make some concrete results." (UAS 4)

5.2 Obstacles to communality in merged higher education institutions

As obstacles we recognized haste, lack of trust, unfamiliarity, and use of spaces. If the renovations are done quickly, in a *haste*, there is no time to adopt new forms of work and there are feelings that the focus is missing, and staff and students are left outside of discussions. There remain thoughts that they are left alone, and they are not aware of whose troops they are marching.

"too much speed in reform" (UAS 2)

"It would have been nice if the staff and students had been more involved in discussions." (UAS 2)

"Focus on all doings is missing: work is now disordered and it is difficult to pick the things where to concentrate on." (UAS 3)

"The expectations of how quickly the staff can adjust to reforms have been too high." (UAS 4)

"I feel like I am thrown away and nobody has caught me." (UAS 4)

"I do not know how to answer the phone." (UAS 4)

Lack of trust, recognition, and will play a big role in feelings of belonging. If there is a lack of them, it may be difficult to get the best out of oneself. The force is not the anyway the way to make the community work, a will is needed.

"We would need to be secure of each other: that we are full members, and the other partner is not playing its own games." (UAS 1)

"If there is no recognition there is no will to cooperate. These kinds of experiences have long marks." (UAS 3)

"If a person does not see the benefits of cooperation, there are no means to force it." (UAS 1)

"If there is no will or need to cooperate, it is not solved by ordering." (UAS 4)

When the staff is *unfamiliar* with each other, there remain beliefs and rumours about us and them. It is also hard for the new staff to get in if they do not know where they belong and who is there to help them.

"Rumours like UAS staff is not eager to participate with university and vice versa." (UAS 1)

"When we worked in a smaller entity, everything was much more effective, and the decision process was quicker." (UAS 4)

"For newcomers, it is difficult to enter the community because beside the formal orientation, there would be a need for informal discussion of the working habits. I feel there is no time for that because the staff is running from one meeting to another." (UAS 1)

Spaces were mentioned as remarkable in promoting communality, but they are mentioned as obstacles, too. The use of spaces plays a big role: Personal spaces and informal encountering count and the lack of them decreases the feelings of communality.

"Personal spaces reflect the feeling of belonging. When there are none, it is a sign of nonchalance." (UAS 1)

"It would be nice to meet people unofficially every now and then." (UAS 3)

6. Discussion

The aim of this article was to study which are the promoters of and obstacles to communality in merged higher education institutions in Finland from the university of applied sciences staff's point of view. As promoters, we found spaces, dignity, shared goals, and action. The obstacles were haste, lack of trust, unfamiliarity, and use of spaces. Discussion on spaces seems to be remarkable, it seems to be a promoter and obstacle in the feelings of belonging. It shows some dignity to a staff member if a personal place is pointed. In creating a community feeling shared spaces are remarkable in getting to know each other. To know each other, and to become familiar with others is in a key role when creating identities in the reformed community. To feel connectedness is an important source for creating social identity.

The personal reference group (Mead, 1962) comes to the social aspects of self and helps to create one's identity. Arvaja (2018) uses the concept of "dialogical self" meaning that the words of other people, groups, and communities enter a person's internal dialogues. In Mead's (1962) social behaviourist theory, significant others are of huge importance: they form construction elements of the personal identity but also are a source

of adjusting personal behaviour. It plays quite a big role in what words we hear in our surroundings. In such an inner dialogue, different points of view meet in a constant play of agreement - disagreement or identification - differentiation (Seikkula et al., 2012; Wortham, 2001). Members of a new community create something new and somehow attend the area on unknown: they are navigating a way forward, while still recognizing the influence of structural constraints and unexpected opportunities (McAlpine & Emmioğlu, 2014). This reminds me of entrepreneurial skills, such as risk-taking and tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity that could add to the agency of a person when connected with the often-emphasized intra-personal competencies of collaboration and empathy (Giangrande et al., 2019). Many of the feelings could be tackled with these skills if they were seen more as opportunities than threats (see e.g., Kyrö, 2005). The skills could and should also be learned but nobody should be left alone to learn and utilize them (see Kyrö & Tapani, 2007). To add identification with the workplace is important to add well-being at work, job satisfaction, and motivation to work (van Dick 2001; Ullrich et al., 2005). A sense of connectedness can also serve as a base for professional identity development (van Lankveld et al., 2017).

The community and belonging to it can also be seen as a start for something new. In a study concerning folk high school students who entered a totally new community (Lövgren, 2019), it was possible for students to set aside limitations represented by earlier identifications, leave room for modulation of identification and open for identity work that crosses borders. If this works with students, it can also work among staff if the base, aims, and vision are clear for all. It is very demanding and challenging for a unified group of people to experience and cope with changes if not professionally supported (Meristo, 2021). In our data, one meaningful element was oneself and even one's attitudinal choices: what to prioritize, how to think, and talk. In creating the new entity and new social identities everyone is in a remarkable role. Creating relationships is understood as exercises that benefit others especially the person himself or herself. In building relationships, there is a norm of reciprocity: a human being has plenty of persons around who have some duties towards a person, and at the same time he/she has duties concerning the others; the best result in creating new is achieved when the members are interacting with each other, not only for each other (Coleman, 1994; Gouldner, 1960; Lictermann, 2006). Reciprocity is well described by Handal (2008): people bring their "luggage" from other communities to which they have historically belonged to new ones. To bring one's luggage in is easier if there are shared goals or concrete actions where a person can use his/her pieces of luggage, for example, competencies, skills, and prior knowledge.

Tapanila et al. (2018) found in their study that too profound managerialist restructurings in a university might work against the original goals of university reforms. That is why the feelings of too much speed or lack of trust should be taken seriously. There is a need for high-quality work (see Tuni.fi., n.d.) but if there is too much speed and lack of trust, will, or goals, reforms are more like a burden to staff. Reforms in management systems may also reduce autonomy, which is needed by academics to

experience their work as meaningful (Tapanila, 2018). The same idea was noticed by Meristo (2021): lack of autonomy in work life increases negative attitudes towards reforms but an autonomy-supportive and open working environment supports coping with reforms in an academic institution.

In public speeches, it is often said that the staff is the main resource for the organisation. The staff also holds a great resource of social capital that is not owned by anyone but lies in social constructions, not in separate individuals (Coleman, 1988). There is a lot of social knowledge among the staff if there is room for it to become visible. What is left unsaid connects to socio-cultural knowledge (Tynjälä et al., 2020): when becoming an expert, theoretical, practical, and self-regulation knowledge are needed, but socio-cultural knowledge is something that calls for an organization membership. New organizations form their new socio-cultural knowledge which has to do with collective identity questions, too: whose habits and identity remain (Vaara, 2001). If someone has no access to socio-cultural knowledge and they feel left outside, they are not trusted, it may add the feeling of detachment. If employees are provided with an explanation for the need for changes, their feelings are acknowledged and some choice to implement the changes is given, it leads to increased acceptance of changes in work organizations and strengthens their affective commitment to the organization (Gagné et al., 2000). The feelings of being left outside, not being heard or taken seriously deal with the work position and there is the possibility for bias. The more communication and interaction are limited to a certain group of people, the more they are exposed to a biased point of view (Meristo, 2021).

The result shows also about the meaning of respect and dignity. Respect has become a familiar word that highlights social and organizational marginalization. It is not an original part of the traditional faculty demographics and labour categories (Gappa et al., 2007). An interesting point as regards respect is that its absence is a symptom of the widespread failure of our current paradigm of collegiality. Reformed collegiality could provide the motivation, via a shared recognition of different forms of expertise, for respectful actions as a by-product of collective faculty identity and purpose (Alleman et al., 2017).

Alleman et al. (2017), which base on Gappa et al. (2007), found five essential elements of how the collegium offers a space for faculty work experience: *employment equity, academic freedom and autonomy, flexibility, professional growth, and collegiality*. In our data one's remarkable share, dignity, could be connected to equity and that there is a feeling that each faculty member is treated fairly over time (Alleman et al., 2017). This is also connected with relatedness: about being treated well, but equally being able to contribute positively to other people's lives (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Personal spaces or lack of them are seen as important proof of one's value in the organisation and could construct a work environment that allows faculty members to have productive and fulfilling professional and personal lives (Alleman et al., 2017). Interestingly, remote work can also serve as a source of communality: everyone shares the same remote space. This gives ideas that face-to-face interaction is somehow more valuable and if one has no access to

that but needs to be for example alone in a virtual space it gives a meaning of being left outside of something.

Academic freedom and autonomy are shown in a more negative way: examples of unwillingness to cooperate may link to academic freedom meaning that faculty members are able to engage in their work in the way they want to: if they do not want to cooperate, it is a question of academic freedom.

Flexibility seemed to be more like a state of mind in this study. It seemed that there was free will among the staff. There are opportunities to consider how to react, in which groups be a member. Flexibility is connected with autonomy: if there is no will to cooperate and get familiar with others, it cannot be done by special orders.

Professional growth means that faculty members have opportunities to learn, be challenged, and develop new skills and knowledge over time (Alleman et al., 2017), which calls for trust, time, joint action, and shared, focused goals. In our study, haste was an obstacle to developing the community. Time is needed to get familiar with the new ones and their competences but also to demonstrate one's skills and competences.

According to Alleman et al. (2017), collegiality means being seen as a valued member. This showed up in our study in two ways: lack of trust and this way lack of sources for social identification leads to connectedness and offers not the possibility to access the shared, socio-cultural knowledge. But, acting together creates familiarity, getting to know each other and this way concrete work done together is a special seed for collegiality.

6.1 Recommendations

Our study shows the need for joint discussions and time spent together to get to know each other and each other's skills and competencies. From the university of applied sciences point of view, the concrete work toward shared aims seems to be remarkable. Future research would concern this communality from the university's point of view. It would also be important to share these results with the whole UAS staff and get more data from them, to go deeper in the existence of communality. This research anyway acts as a good starting point for creating the new community: promoters and obstacles can be discussed in multisectoral teams, and this can serve as an initiative to understand better "the others".

7. Conclusion

In this study, we were to find out which are the promoters of and obstacles to communality in merged higher education institutions in Finland from the university of applied sciences staff's point of view. From data collected from 42 key persons, we found four ideas that promote communality and four ideas that prevent it.

To conclude, we will come to Hall (1999) and his remarks on how the UAS staff represents itself, how they see the desired future, what they would like to become, and what they would like to represent in the new organization. The UAS staff seems to build

its identity on the social base: there is a need for joint and personal spaces. To have the possibility to communicate seems to be important. There is a need for recognition of one's competences and feelings of dignity, of being respected. It is important to keep the staff along and share the goals and visions with them. According to our data, the social element seems to be a key element in creating the communality: it is important to be together, share goals, and act together.

Hall (1999) asks, what kind of meeting points for new identities are needed and offered to in a new community: there is a need for meeting point to which persons are invited and in which they want to invest. According to our data, meeting points could be joint projects where everyone could do his/her share and this part is experienced important and building the entity. Joint action with shared goals helps to get to know each other and the competences. It helps to cut the wings of the rumours. What it demands is courage to come together with one's competences and as one is. As Ryan and Deci (2017) put it, there is a need to be treated well but at the same time, treat well and respect others. More joint work is needed to create broader community identities in a merged organisation. Using some time and giving possibilities to work together are important meeting points to increase communality. Communality is not formed by clicking one's fingers but there is a need for joint spaces, and discussions of shared goals and will. The main point is that there is a need for the staff to understand why communality and cooperation are important for HE future.

7.1 Limitations

As limitations, we name that this research was done in one special moment and time, it is a cross-sectional design done in the Finnish HE context. Experiences of communality are only from a few years and the informants are mainly in leading positions and they were called to the interviews by the rectors. They all hold an academic degree so the enunciation plays a role in the research setting.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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