

**Booklet Series
Volume 1**

Breaking the Silence of Marginalisation

**ENHANCE
LEARNER VOICE**

**The ENHANCE
Mini Booklets**



Publication coordinated by NHE



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ENHANCE LEARNER VOICE



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Contents

Enhancing Learners' Voices	4
Breaking the Silence	7
Sociodrama	9
Art Therapy: Personal Narratives and Reflections	11
Personal Stories	14
Art Therapy: Personal Narratives and Reflections II	17
Summary and Conclusions	20

Enhancing Learners' Voices

Breaking the Silence of Marginalisation

Introduction

The ENHANCE project is grounded in the belief that learners' voices are not only valuable but vital to shaping just, inclusive, and responsive adult education systems. This series of three mini-booklets was created to give space to those voices—voices that are too often ignored, undervalued, or actively silenced.

Each booklet focuses on a different theme related to how adult learners experience exclusion and how they reclaim space, visibility, and influence through education and community involvement:

- Breaking the Silence of Marginalisation, by NHE (Hungary),
- Reclaiming the Voice of the Systemically Excluded, by das kollektiv (Austria), and
- Creating Outspoken Learning Spaces for Action in the Community, by ABC Foundation (Netherlands).

Together, these booklets pursue five shared objectives:

- Addressing systemic barriers that prevent learners from being heard
- Amplifying learner voices in ways that are authentic and accessible
- Supporting inclusive adult education that adapts to learners' lives, not the other way around
- Making lived experiences visible and political
- Fostering solidarity among learners and between learners and educators

To achieve these aims, the booklets were co-created with learners through participatory workshops, using a range of creative, reflective, and experiential methods. These included sociodrama and art therapy (NHE), which allowed learners to process their experiences collectively through personal narratives, and learner-led interviews (ABC Foundation), which documented individual journeys of learning and empowerment.

Enhancing Learners' Voices

Breaking the Silence of Marginalisation

The third booklet (das kollektiv) used the photovoice method, which created space for learners to visually document and share and reflect on their learning experiences through photography and captions.

Each booklet emphasises not only what learners experience but also how they interpret, oppose, and reshape their worlds. Through storytelling, creative expression, and critical reflection, these booklets demonstrate the power of participatory adult education as a space of possibility and transformation. They are primarily intended for other learners—to offer inspiration, reflection, and a sense of solidarity, as well as practical insight into how adult learners can shape their own learning journeys and, in doing so, influence the communities and systems around them.

A list of resources and contact points are included at the end of each booklet providing ideas and tools for getting involved, taking action, or connecting with others on a similar path.

This booklet—**Breaking the Silence of Marginalisation**—documents the work of NHE in Hungary. Drawing on years of community-based outreach, the project worked with learners using sociodrama and art therapy to explore the emotional, social, and structural dimensions of exclusion in training settings. The process made space for symbolic storytelling and visual expression, enabling participants to reflect, reconnect, and regain a sense of agency and solidarity.

Enhancing Learners' Voices

Sociodrama and Art Therapy

The methodological foundation of the program is provided by two complementary approaches: sociodrama and art therapy. Sociodrama is a group-based self-awareness method that, through the creation of dramatic situations, makes it possible to explore tensions, role conflicts, and power dynamics in social interactions. Participants do not act out their own personal stories but experiment within symbolically co-created scenes, which reduces the risks of direct self-disclosure while still allowing their individual experiences to be reflected. Through role reversal, everyone can experience different perspectives, which fosters shifts in viewpoint and highlights structural problems. The strength of the method lies in offering both symbolic protection and intense experiential involvement, which become meaningful during group reflection.

Art therapy helps process intense experiences through nonverbal methods. Visual creation—such as painting, collage, or mixed techniques—allows for the expression of emotions and tensions, especially for those who find it hard to verbalise their experiences. Visual symbols provide access to unconscious contents, while the tangible nature of the artwork enhances a sense of control and reorganisation. Sharing the creations within the group offers collective validation: members recognise and accept one another's expressed experiences.

The integrated application of the two methods creates a complex arc of processing. Sociodrama brings experiences to the surface through interaction, while art therapy offers a symbolic space for transformation and integration.

Breaking the Silence

Methodological implementation framework

This combination supports awareness, emotional elaboration, and the mobilisation of resources, fostering individual self-reflection and stronger group cohesion.

Methodological Implementation Framework

The program was implemented over two consecutive days, each day forming an integral step in a single process. The first day took place within a sociodramatic framework, focusing on the symbolic dramatization of tensions and frustrations in learning situations. After an opening circle with short warm-up exercises to strengthen group cohesion, the aquarium method was used to construct a shared story that served as the dramatic basis. Selected scenes were enacted, and through position changes participants

explored situations from multiple perspectives, gaining insight into the interests and tensions linked to each role. Reflexive circles at different stages supported the awareness of experiences and the articulation of personal resonances, gradually creating a shared experiential foundation.

The second day was devoted to art therapy, offering a symbolic and nonverbal space for integrating the previous day's experiences. After a short recap and preparatory activities, participants worked with painting, collage, and mixed media to represent symbols and emotions of particular significance. exploring situations from multiple perspectives, gaining insight into the interests and tensions linked to each role.

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The close connection of the two days ensured that sociodramatic experiences were not left unresolved, but could be reorganised and integrated in symbolic-creative form. The implementation instead involved not separate exercises, but deliberately designed and interconnected phases whose continuity fostered the development, expansion, and integration of experiences.



Sociodrama

Personal Narratives and Reflections

The group's jointly constructed narrative placed a teacher-student conflict at its center: the situation of late arrivals confronted with a strict teacher. After enacting the scenes, participants first offered reflections from the different positions they had inhabited.

From the student's position:

"I felt humiliated, treated unjustly, and powerless. A small delay turned into a disproportionate punishment, and there was no way to defend myself."

"Even from the outside, I was overwhelmed by a kind of collective shame; it was embarrassing to watch the latecomers being called to account."

From the teacher's position:

"I had prepared for hours, and when someone arrives late, it is indeed disrespectful."

"I pitied the students, but I also understood the teacher. It was valuable to feel from the inside how difficult both sides are."

As a shared experience of absence:

"There was a complete lack of empathy; no trace of human consideration."

Sharing what had been experienced in these positions activated personal memories, and the cohesion created in the sociodramatic setting opened space for participants to voice them.

Personal experiences evoked by the play:

"In high school I lived through the same: if I was late, I was humiliated in front of the class. This brought back the vulnerability and shame I had felt then."

Sociodrama

Personal Narratives and Reflections

"When I have to answer for something beyond my control, I feel the very same unjust treatment."

"I was held strictly accountable both at school and at home, and I never had the chance to explain the reasons. I relived the same helplessness now."

"I know exactly how frustrating it is when someone fails to respect the effort I put in—though this time I re-experienced that feeling through the teacher's frustration."

"Oh, how many times I felt that rigid rules made people blind to the human being behind them."

As collective emotions:

"I felt as if a shared shame filled the room. It was as though the whole group blushed together in place of the latecomers."

The reflections revealed that the dramatised situations did not remain confined to the narrative itself. Participants brought forward memories from their own lives: experiences of unfair treatment, the impossibility of defending oneself, or the dilemma in which both discipline and understanding seem equally valid, yet never meet. The joint work thus simultaneously illuminated the vulnerability of the student role, the responsibility of the teacher, the experience of collective shame, and the absence of empathy—together with their deeply personal imprints.



Art Therapy

Personal Narratives and Reflections

In the creative task of the second day, participants expressed the central emotions of the previous session through colors, shapes, and symbols. Each corner of the paper was assigned to a particular theme such as futility, inspiration, misunderstanding, and appreciation with the centre representing well-being.

The images created were not only visual traces of the dramatised experiences, but also carriers of deeply personal life narratives.

Futility was often depicted with grey tones, faint or marginal forms. One participant explained: *"It is like in school, when I felt invisible—if I didn't know the answer, it was as if it would have been better not to be there at all."* Another painted a tiny dot at the edge of the sheet: *"This is me, someone with no place, who slips out of notice."*

"Others used a spiral or whirlpool: 'That's exactly how it felt when I couldn't keep up with the others—being pulled further and further down.'" Another reflection captured the frustration of helpless accountability: *"When I have to answer for something I cannot control, I feel the very same unjust treatment."*

Inspiration, in contrast, appeared in vivid and dynamic forms—lightning, sparks, stars. One participant commented: *"When I manage to create, I feel something ignite inside me, and it carries me forward."* Bright red and energetic shapes gave visual expression to joy, energy, and freedom. Misunderstanding was symbolized through walls, cubes, and parallel lines. As one reflection put it: *"This wall is when the teacher does not listen."*

Art Therapy

Personal Narratives and Reflections

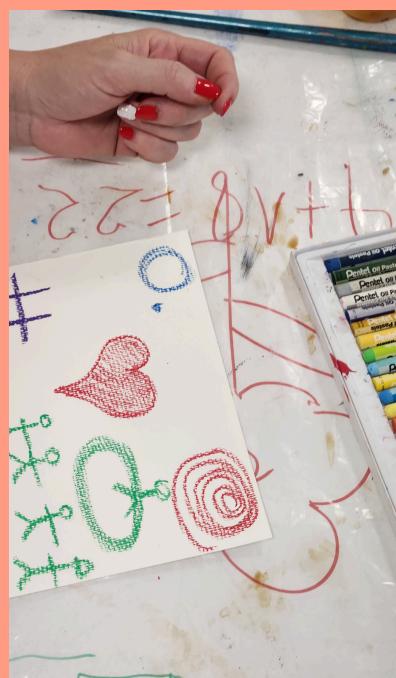
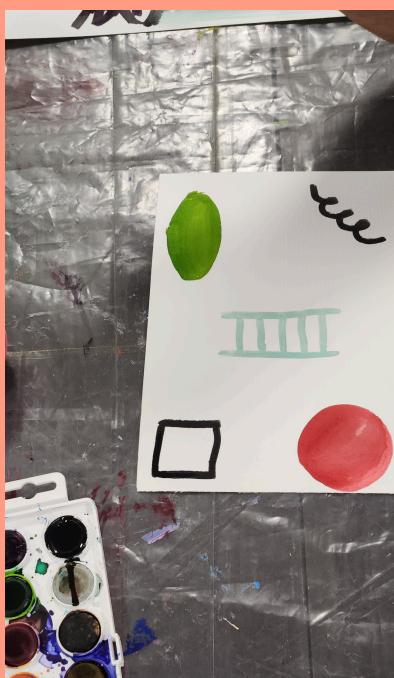
No matter what I say, it doesn't get through, and that is deeply frustrating." Another added: *"The cube is the school desk I sat in—confinement, immobility—and meanwhile the material rushed past me without making any sense."*

Appreciation was represented through natural symbols: a bush, a plant, a smiling sun. One participant explained: *"The plant means that someone cares for me, and so I can also grow."* Such images embodied nourishment, vitality, and connection.

At the center, well-being was expressed through positive and empowering motifs: a heart, the sun, birds, the infinity sign. As one participant concluded: *"Here, at last, I wasn't drawing about what is missing, but about what gives me strength."*

The reflections clearly showed how the dramatic experiences of the previous day could be transformed into a visual language, with each symbol anchored in personal memory. The greyness of futility, the walls of misunderstanding, the fire of inspiration, and the life-giving imagery of appreciation together mapped an inner journey leading toward the shared center of well-being.





Personal Stories

Peter's Story

"That morning I did everything I could to leave on time, but I still missed the bus. When I finally walked into the classroom, the teacher fixed his eyes on me: why didn't I respect the community? I tried to explain—the bus was late, my little sister was sick—but the words stuck in my throat. He didn't ask, didn't listen, just waved his hand and marked me with a failing grade. I felt as if my voice didn't matter at all.

The afternoon at home was no different. Without asking, my parents demanded why I wasn't more careful, why I wasn't trying harder. I wanted to tell them that I really had done my best, but again the words faded. Once more, I was the one to blame.

I stood caught between two worlds—at school with my teacher, at home with my parents. Both sides demanded answers, yet neither left space for my story.

I felt as though no matter how hard I fought, the system was stronger than me. The helplessness pressed on my chest like a heavy stone. What hurt most was that no one wanted to know why I was late, why I failed. It was as if my voice simply did not exist."



Personal Stories

Zoltán's Story

"I was always nervous before math class. At home I often sat for hours over my notebook, trying to understand the problems so I wouldn't fail. Yet one day, at the blackboard, I got stuck. The teacher snapped at me: "You never pay attention, you always make mistakes!" I tried to say that I had practiced all afternoon, but he saw only the error. My classmates laughed, and I wished I could disappear.

On the bus ride home I replayed the scene again and again: why didn't it matter how much effort I had put in? No one wanted to know how hard I had tried—only that I had failed. It felt as if all my work was invisible. To the teacher, the preparation meant nothing; to my peers, the mistake was only entertainment.

That was when I understood what it means to be invisible: present, struggling, but noticed only for what is missing.

I grew more and more afraid to speak up, worried that I would be caught out again. Slowly, it wasn't the math problems I feared, but the certainty that whatever I did, it would never be enough. That fear became stronger than any knowledge I had."



Personal Stories

Maria's Story

"I had to answer in Literature class about a required reading. The week before I'd been ill and hadn't been able to finish the book. I wanted to be honest — to say how far I'd gotten and that I understood what I had read. The teacher cut me off: "That's insufficient; if you're not prepared, that's your fault." I stood by my desk feeling all my efforts dissolve. I was ashamed in front of everyone, as if I had done nothing at all. Yet I had spent feverish nights reading as much as I could. No one seemed interested in why the assignment wasn't complete; they only saw the gap. That experience stayed with me: no matter how hard I try to be honest and show what I've done, if the outcome isn't perfect I'm immediately judged as at fault. So I learned to stay quiet, afraid of being shamed again."



Art Therapy

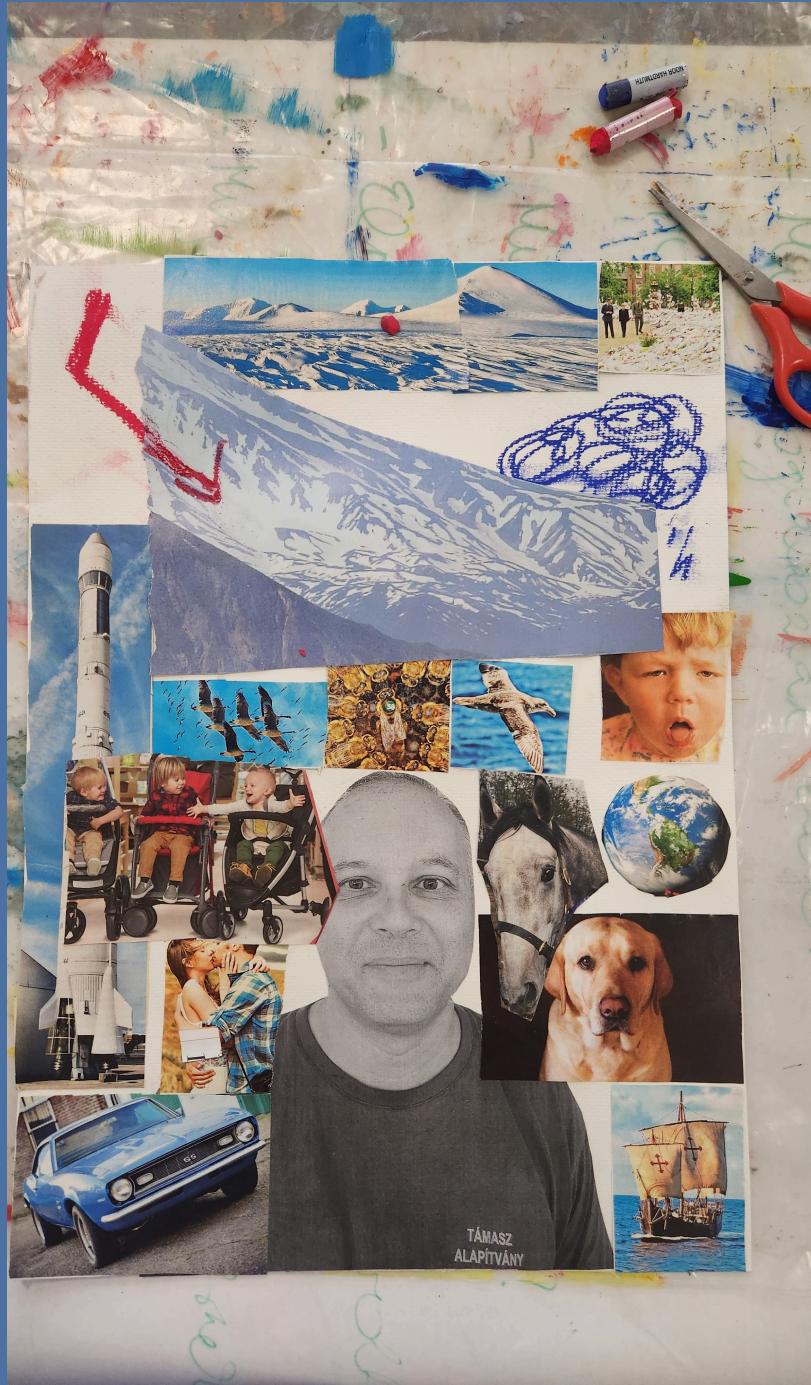
Personal Narratives and Reflections II

The instruction for the collage work was to depict previously surfaced frustrations and the ways of defending against them. The outcome, however, reached further: frustrations were almost invariably represented through broader, systemic images, while defenses appeared mainly within the private sphere.

In the upper sections of the collages, strong symbols emerged: "War, famine, the destruction of nature—all looming above us, beyond our control." Another participant reflected: "The flood of news is like when too much information rained down on me at school, and I simply could not take it in." The sense of moral decline was also present: "It feels as if the ground has slipped away—neither in school nor in the world do I find a stable footing." In the lower sections, defenses and resources appeared. "My home and my friends keep me safe—here I feel the security I never had in learning." For another, "Nature and

the closeness of my dog give me the strength to endure." Spiritual resources also emerged: "The Bhagavad Gita and meditation help me not to be overwhelmed by the overload."

A common pattern became visible: external pressures took on global dimensions, while defenses remained largely personal. "Stress and competition are everywhere, but when I go into nature, I feel free again." Collective strategies were almost absent, underlining that participants mainly turn to their private circles when facing large-scale challenges. The collages thus carried forward the feelings rooted in learning frustrations while expanding them to broader horizons. The tension between overwhelming external pressures and narrowly defined personal resources sharply revealed how participants live with both frustration and defense.





Summary and Conclusions

Breaking the Silence & Processing Experiences

The experiences of the program demonstrate that the combination of sociodrama and art therapy provides an effective framework for addressing frustrations encountered in learning contexts. The jointly constructed, fictional narrative in sociodrama created a safe, symbolic space for participants to process their experiences. Position exchanges enabled multiple perspectives on the same situation, reducing polarization between victim and authority roles. Collective experiences generated by group dynamics strengthened both cohesion and the validation of shared feelings.

Art therapy, through nonverbal and symbolic expression, surfaced unconscious emotions and thoughts. The artworks did not merely represent experiences but allowed their transformation and integration.

The creative process itself offered a sense of achievement, freedom, and resource activation, contributing to the alleviation of frustration.

The two methods, when combined, enabled multilayered processing on cognitive, emotional, bodily, and symbolic levels. Dramatic work supported the recognition and articulation of frustrations, while art therapy facilitated the reduction of emotional weight and the shift toward positive resources.

The approach is not limited to small, disadvantaged groups. It can be applied in vocational training, among ethnic minorities, women's groups, or migrant communities where verbal self-disclosure is challenging. Within educational institutions it may serve as a preventive and sensitizing tool, strengthening motivation and easing tensions.

Resources

The Application of Art Therapy in Adult Education

https://www.claudiuspress.com/assets/default/article/2024/08/21/article_1724239926.pdf

Art Therapy and Trauma

<https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/6682xc53p>

The use of sociodrama in social work research

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11620-025-00864-1>

Sociodrama as a “potential stage” for creating participative and transformative research on social work with families living in vulnerable situations.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7573865/>

The writers of this publication would like to remain anonymous.

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