EUROPEAN ACADEMY ON YOUTH WORK - WORKSHOP REPORT

Youth Work Growth Cycle

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KEYWORDS / TOPICS DISCUSSED	

- **Groups of young people in youth work.** Should youth work be seen as a series of interventions / events / meetings or as a support of sustainable groups of young people?

- **Impact of the 4th Industrial Revolution on Youth Work.** How does regular use of innovations such as mobile devices, internet, big data and social networks influence the needs of young people to form sustainable groups?

- **Quality of youth work.** How does the quality in youth work look like if we see it from the perspective of supporting sustainable groups of young people?

METHODOLOGY

Method	Time	Notes
Introduction of participants	5'	Share your name, country and a group (possibly in youth work) that made a big impact on your life pathway.
Introduction to the workshop	5'	• Understanding each other • Input about the tool: Youth Work Growth Cycle • Practical experience with the tool • Reflection
Where do you stand?	10'	Input sentences: • To do good youth work we need to measure some indicators. • Sometimes youth work would be of better quality if youth workers were able to develop their own indicators and ignore those set by decision makers. • I observe a trend of decrease of "deep social skills", such as establishing deeper friendships, engagement in long-term groups etc. • Permanent youth groups usually deepen youth participation and have a bigger impact on young people.
Input about quality in youth work	10'	See presentation attached.
Input about the tool: Youth Work Growth Cycle	10'	See description below and presentation attached.

Practicing the tool	15'	Practicing mentorship in couples: finding the bottleneck in my context.
Reflection	5'	Zoom-out questions: • What do you think: Is the "group" one of the fundamental elements of quality youth work or do you know some forms where this element is not so important? • Which trends that change the role of groups in youth work do you recognise in your environment? • How do "new circumstances" impact the process of group dynamics?

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES RAISED

The issues of the quality, identity and impact of youth work are increasingly present on the agendas of various international conferences and political documents.

Countries in which systems of youth workers' training and education are existing have developed their own conceptualisations of youth work. Youth workers in such countries are trained according to standards, the desired impact is defined and organisations are developing participative organisational cultures. In those countries, youth work has its own "body of knowledge".

In Slovenia, the body of knowledge of youth work is not recognised. Due to a lack of finances and identity of youth work, **human resources** is a key challenge. Systematic training of youth workers is not developed. Only few major organisations have their own training schemes. Youth work financing is weak and there is a high frequency of staff changes in organisations. For many youth leaders and youth workers, youth work is only a temporary activity before they move on to other, more profitable sectors.

In connection with funding, youth work is increasingly subject to different **indicators.** As a rule, these indicators are set by other sectors (employment, youth health …) while, on the other hand, the youth sector has not yet developed its own quality indicators.

Youth organisations are rarely developing **participatory organisational cultures**. A large part of the organisations in the country express problems with motivating young people to participate actively. It turns out that only a small number of organisations truly work according to the principles of youth work. Their organisational cultures are more "cultures of organising events for young people" than cultures of offering space for young people and their active participation.

YOUTH WORK GROWTH CYCLE: AN INNOVATIVE RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

The Youth Work Growth Cycle is a quality system developed at the Social Academy together with our partners from Poland, Germany and Italy.

We interviewed 32 experienced youth workers from four countries that are working across various fields. In addition, we carried out eight focus groups with young people with fewer opportunities.

In this way, we identified 20 processes that are taking place in successful youth organisations and that serve two key tasks of a youth worker:

• Encouraging young people to participate
• Keeping groups strong and growing

Based on this quality system, we prepared a mentorship programme that can be implemented with individual youth workers or in groups of organisational representatives. With its help, the individual or organisation can identify their bottleneck and systematically improve their organisational culture to become more "youthful".

The Youth Work Growth Cycle offers youth workers and group leaders the opportunity to rediscover groups and interpersonal relationships as the basis of youth work, without which other results of youth work are unattainable.

This quality system offers a wide range of processes, indicators and possible actions that can act as an inspiration for changing an organisational culture towards a higher level of active participation of young people.
In addition, the project translates the recommendations of expert groups- which youth workers often do not read- into a form that increases their potential to actually contribute to raising the quality of youth work.

KEY TRENDS IDENTIFIED AND FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

- Permanent youth groups often have a huge impact on young people. They are one of the core elements of many forms of youth work.
- Indicators set by policy makers often differ from those set by youth workers. There should be more dialogue between these two stakeholders.
- The demand for innovation in youth work tends to be exaggerated. Often, there is funding for innovation but no funding for replicability of good proven practices afterwards.
- Youth workers and young people need to take time for relationships and conversation. If you take time, you get a lot from young people! However, how to put "taking time for each other" into indicators and how to show its long-term impact?
- As a model, the Youth Work Growth Cycle is applicable to grassroots organisations that deal directly with young people. Umbrella organisations can use it for the education of youth leaders and youth workers.

LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES OR INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT AVAILABLE ONLINE

- Project web page: https://abc-of-youthwork.eu/
- Youth Work Growth Cycle (the tool): https://abc-of-youthwork.eu/portfolio/youth-work-growth-cycle/
- Manual in ISSUU format: https://issuu.com/socialnaakademija/docs/abc_of_yw_manual