Taija Nöjd

Lasse Siurala

YOUTH WORK QUALITY ASSESSMENT

THE SELF AND PEER ASSESSMENT MODEL

INDEX

Taija Nöjd & Lasse Siurala

Lasse Siurala

Taija Nöjd

FOREWORD

Three Youth Directors from the Helsinki Metropolitan Area visited the Kent County Council Youth Services in 2004 to become acquainted with their Quality Assessment scheme. At the time Ofsted, the Ministry department responsible for local government youth work, was actively inspecting the efficiency and quality of local youth work. The Finnish Youth Directors were impressed at the Kent quality tool and decided to implement it 'asap' in the Helsinki Region. However, the local youth workers said it needed to be tested and modified to the new contexts. Interestingly, it took almost five years to elaborate the model. It has been since widely applied in a large number of very different kinds of municipalities in Finland. A few years ago the *Kanuuna Network* – Finnish network of local government youth work – decided to update the model. This publication is an abbreviated version of the new (2015) Self and Peer Assessment Model (SPAM).

During the past decenniums the public administrative culture has been changing with increased cuts in public spending and introduction of efficiency and quality tools. A recent example of the latter is the EU Expert Group report *Quality Youth Work* (2015). This publication first outlines the European debates on the quantitative measurement tools in youth work and then goes on to frame a role for peer quality assessment. It argues that the model presented (SPAM) is able to meet much of the criticism launched during 'the measurement boom'. The second part describes the application of the tool and also includes the concrete quality criteria and their grades.

This publication is a part of a project called *Laatua nuorisotyöhön* (*Quality Youth Work*) and it is produced in co-operation between City of Lappeenranta Youth Services and the *Kanuuna Network*. It is funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Finland.

Authors

MAPPING A ROLE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN YOUTH WORK

Lasse Siurala

1. THE MOVE FROM VALUE BASED TO OUTCOME ORIENTED YOUTH WORK

In many countries youth work has a relatively long and established history. The argumentation has been that youth work is good for our children. It has become a value based policy. Youth work promotes individual and social growth through activities where young people learn important skills and competences. This has been coded in legislation, government programs and local practices. However, since 1990s there has been increasing pressure for youth work to *prove* its value. The public support for youth work has become dependent on its demonstrated outcomes. Extensive international surveys indicate that youth work has been slow to carry out evaluation studies on its efficiency in comparison to many other services (Durlak, J., Mahoney, J., Bohnert, A. & Parente, M., 2010; Matteo, M., Campbell-Patton, C., 2008; Dickson, Vigurs & Newman, 2013). Youth work has been placed into the category: "Promising, but unproven". A recent EU report on youth work in Europe (2014, 7) says: "*Currently, a general lack of data and robust evaluation hinders the sector from demonstrating effectiveness*". The statement reveals the change in mind set: Youth work needs to scientifically prove its outcomes to deserve its legitimation and support.

During the past 10–15 years there has been a striking increase of conservative governments in Europe, often pushed further to the right by massive emergence of right wing populist parties. This has had a direct effect on national and international youth policies. The emphasis has changed from empowering all young people to be active citizens and from promoting non-formal learning to improving young peoples' employability, designing measures to NEETs and measuring the effectiveness and quality of youth work. In a way, there has been a change from a Council of Europe Human Rights youth agenda to the EU economic agenda. The current economic thinking is closely related to Neoliberalism and New Public Management. Neoliberalism refers to economic liberalism, from the 1970s and 1980s onward, whose advocates support extensive economic liberalization, free trade, and reductions in government spending in order to enhance the role of the private sector in the economy.

New Public Management aims at
1. reduction of public expenditure,
2. decrease of the role of the state and privatisation,
3. improving performance and accountability through introduction of private sector management to public sector (strategic management, Balanced Score Cards, performance indicators, productivity indicators, results-based budgeting, results-based pay schemes, quality management, EFQM, CAF),
4. Increasing responsiveness to citizens (like *service design*) and
5. building networks and partnerships with the 3rd and private sector.

The new 'Evidence-based policy' demands better (scientific) data on the quality and effectiveness of current programs, services and policies for the decision makers to make their former decisions "accountable" and to design "facts-based policies" for the future. As a result also the youth field is today actively predisposed to all the above mentioned strategic management tools of NPM. In some countries, like in the UK, where these measures have been used as a government tool to control the use of funds in youth work, fierce opposition has arisen. In other countries, like in Finland, where municipalities have used NPM tools to drive strategic change and develop youth work, they have been quite well received by youth workers.

Interestingly, also following measures have made their way into youth work services and practices: National and local youth work and policy reviews, research on youth, a variety of quality instruments, client feedback questionnaires, indicators on European, national and local level and monitoring reports (Ecorys (2011), Dashboard of EU Youth indicators). Another strong move towards measurement of the effects of youth is the European Council Recommendation (2012) that all member countries must have a system of validation of informal and non-formal learning by 2015. The system consist of four elements; recognition of learning, documenting it, assessing it according to a set of criteria and finally certification of it. Thus it is assumed that informal and non-formal learning *can* be measured and formalized – and linked to formal education. The overall objective is to make better use of all competences and skills to boost the competitiveness and productivity of the EU through improving labor mobility, wider use of skills and competences and reducing unemployment. This is also assumed to promote individual development and young peoples' labor market integration.

To conclude, following the winds of Neoliberalism and New Public Management, and further strengthened by the conservative governments, there has been a rapid move from value based youth work to the 'proven outcomes' – thinking. Not, however, without opposition and criticism.

2. THE CRITICAL VOICES: FORMALIZING THE NON-FORMAL, MEASURING UNIQUE PROCESSES OF YOUTH WORK?

Educational philosophers like **Hager** and **Halliday** (2009) argue that non-formal and informal learning by their very nature defy recognition, measurement and teaching. Informal and non-formal learning are 'indeterminate', 'processual', 'opportunistic and contingent' – in short, extremely difficult to measure at a given point of time. The authors imply that as the essence of youth work is that it is about non-formal learning, any attempt to measure or formalize it is detrimental. Hager & Halliday (2009, 248) maintain that non-formal learning...

> *needs to be protected against enthusiasts who, in attempting to formalize it, end up changing it into something else, thereby destroying its worth.*

Youth work in UK has been hard hit by NPM and Neoliberalism. First it was very closely managed by the Ministry, seeing to it that the political aims of the Government were cascaded down to the local level. Youth work became scrutinized by quality assessments schemes, indicators, reports and monitoring the results. Recently youth work has been decentralized to become the responsibility of the local level, but with essentially reduced public funds.[1] The youth workers have reacted through nation-wide campaign and action against the government policies (Jon Ord 2012, *In Defence of Youth Work* 2011).

According to the critique it is difficult to measure the outcomes or the effects of youth work, because youth work processes are unpredictable and contingent. In addition, youth work is about 'soft skills', like responsibility, deliberation, creativity, social skills, critical mind set and development of self-trust, which are difficult to measure. The youth work process is seen as essentially a unique encounter between a youth worker and a young person. As the critical voices maintain, it is difficult to describe a unique, contingent and unpredictable process of youth work. Thus the best approximation is: "you know a good youth service when you see it". Furthermore it is difficult to identify the specific role that youth work engagement has played within the other life-spheres affecting young people's development. The alternative to measuring effects of youth work is telling convincing stories about the success of youth work (In Defence of Youth Work 2011) or focusing on a qualitative and rich description of the process of youth work (Cooper 2011).

1. Writing this I happened to Skype with the prominent youth researcher **Howard Williamson**, who was, after our session, in a hurry to a crises meeting of the Board of his local youth club in Wales, because of the drastically reduced Government funds. After the meeting, he was heading for the local Pub to attend a fund raising Punk concert with bands whose players were old members of the said youth club.

The use of indicators has also shown out to be problematic. The Finnish *Kanuuna Network*[2] gave detailed instructions to local government youth directors and held a few working seminars with them to properly gather key indicators on youth work in the 27 biggest cities in Finland. It very quickly was found that the same indicator meant different things to different cities. There were also very different reasons why in some cities some indicators plunged and in others skyrocketed. It was extremely difficult in any meaningful way to actually compare the indicators. They were highly contextualized. It was then (in 2013) decided that together with the most recent statistical data, each city provides a *contextualization document*: What are the City -specific objectives and priorities behind? What kind of changes in the City and the youth service have taken place to explain the changes in the indicators? What do the indicators tell them? In a similar manner, the EU Youth Indicators (the Dashboard) have been criticized for their validity and the above mentioned contextualization concerns.

Council of Europe has carried out 21 national youth policy reviews (by 2015). No studies on the actual impact of the reviews exist. A summary report on the first surveys concludes that: *What is written in national reports may bear little relation to practice on the ground* (Williamson 2008, p 55). There is a grounded expectation that national reviews do not necessarily reflect the reality of the political practice or of the situation at the point of service. In addition there is reason to doubt that the review proposals have efficiently trickled down. Recently there has been carried out numerous international reviews on national health and social policies commissioned by the European Commission. Interestingly, one of the problems that the highly recognised consultants have jumped at, is that national findings, including best practices, do not seem to be easily *transferable*. The low transferability of national practices from one country to another must be linked to the contextual nature of measures and policies.

A final observation on the limits of measuring efficiency is related to organizational cultures. In some countries like in Finland and Sweden youth workers find it welcomed and useful when their work is evaluated. In many others, like in the UK and Germany, youth workers do not like being measured, assessed or evaluated by others. In the UK quality assessment is seen as a format of top-down surveillance and it is experienced to signify lacking trust of the superiors' at their work. In Finland the same tool is perceived as a way to improve one's work and get recognition for it.

_____

2. The Kanuuna is a network of the directors responsible for youth work at the 27 biggest cities in Finland. It promotes peer learning, carries out research and development in youth work and advocates the youth field. The member cities cover 60 % of youth in Finland and about 80 % of the country's volume of municipal youth work.

Even if there is a growing pressure to and an interest in measurement, reviews, indicators, quality assessment tools and outcomes studies, a good part of the youth field, including practitioners and researchers, are critical of this trend. Some youth workers minimize their engagement with any measurement, others use them if they have to and some others make good use of them. There also exist solid worries that formalization of non-formal learning can have unexpected negative effects on youth work. The critical reaction can signify three things. In youth work measurement and formalization are (1) impossible, (2) difficult or (3) not sufficiently adapted to the evaluation context of youth work. I discussed above the arguments of those who maintain that measurement and formalization of youth work are in practice not possible, waste of time and even dangerous to the field. The Education Committee of the House of Commons in UK (2011) carried out an extensive interview and study of the views of the youth field to measuring outcomes in youth work. The Committee concluded that many of the experts they interviewed did not oppose measurement of outcomes in youth work for reasons of principle, but think it is possible and desirable – even if it is difficult, time consuming, demands resources and puts a heavy load on the staff.

There is also a third angle to the measurement issue in youth work: Perhaps we should take better notice of the criticism and weaknesses of current approaches and be more sensitive to a practice-based learning process. The next chapter explores proposals to improve the standard expert-based review format and lays down principles for an evaluation which is more sensitive to (1) the actual behavior of young people in activities to be evaluated, to (2) the point of service practice of youth work, to (3) a dialogical and collective learning process which takes note of the highly contextualized nature of activities and experiences.

3. TOWARDS PRACTICE-BASED PROCESSES OF LEARNING

Sometimes we expect more from reviews than they can in the end deliver. There seems to a discrepancy between the promise and the reality. Let us have a brief look at the key common denominators to the reviews, research, efficiency studies and the indicators: They are all typically carried out by an external expert or a group of them. Those reviewed represent the best possible knowledge and professional competence on the organization reviewed. The evaluators also get ample amount of research, statistical and indicator information. This setting is based on following key assumptions: The external experts bring in a new approach, also to initiate change and search for new innovative solutions. The local professionals reviewed are motivated – enthusiastic in the best case – to receive alternative and critical views on their work to improve their practices and approaches. Finally, the research reports, statistics and the indicators are expected to provide the reviewers an access to the lives of the young people, to the actual practices of youth work and their efficiency. Based on true knowledge on young people and the youth work prac-

tices, the reviewers and those reviewed engage into an open mutual dialogue – free from political, cultural, professional or personal interests – to outline new direction for local practices and policies. However, often the reality is different: The review process can have strong, often hidden agendas, and rather than a forum for open debate, it is a battlefield of the political, professional, organizational and personal interests. The reviewers' 'alternative views and critical questions' might be so deeply embedded in their own cultural and professional experiences that their relevance in a totally different context might be marginal. Those reviewed might rather be prepared to defend their own practices than change them. Finally, the volume of quantitative data produced by the hosts might be unreasonably excessive, irrelevant, of doubtful quality, too old, not covering the key issues, difficult to interpret and so on.

The rest of this article will look at evaluation, reviews and quality assessment from a new angle. The focus is on practice-based learning process inspired by a constructivist educational thinking (Dewey, Freire, Montessori, Kinchloe, Schon). It will be argued that some of the problems of 'a standard review or evaluation process' can be dealt with through being more sensitive to closeness to practice, to a learner oriented approach, to learning as a collective effort, to reciprocal dialogue, to the contextualized nature of knowledge and to the Deweyan notion that "*knowing is a process of intervention*" (The Quest for Certainty, 1929).

1. Going beyond mediated knowledge on young people.

David Silverman (1989), an experienced authority on qualitative methodology, argues that in quantitative methods, including surveys interviews, statistics, indicators and expert reviews, "the phenomena escapes the research". The reliability and validity of statistical data can be poor. The results remain merely selected images of reality, which are framed and interpreted by the researcher. The real nature, processes and interactions are inadequately 'mediated' and often remain hidden. In a way, indicators and evaluation data float between reality and the reader (like the decision maker). This distance between the life-worlds of young people and evaluation in its varied forms is a problem, particularly, as the identity and meanings of young people are created in the dynamic fields of every-day life. **Christian Spatscheck** (2014) says:

> *Here, young people, their youth cultures and their interests and potentials are discovered within the individual life-worlds and their spatial contexts. Social spaces are regarded as relational settings that emerge through social interaction of the participating individuals. Spaces have influences that are represented by social structures, but they also can be changed and developed through activities of acquirement.*

To capture the meaning of a socio-spatial context like a youth centre to the different youth groups, it would be reasonable for quality assessment or expert review to have direct access to that context.

The Self- and Peer Assessment Model (SPAM) described in this report is based on observation of the youth activity, typically an evening in a Youth Centre, with also mingling with the young people and discussing with them. The fact that the observers are peers to and colleagues of the local youth workers facilitates the dialogue with young people. Of course such a short visit has limits to how authentic and deep information one can gain, but there still is the direct access to the reality of the 'social space, the 'spatial context' of the young people and the interactions between the young people and the youth workers, as well as that between the young people themselves.

2. Integrating young people in the evaluation process.

Indicators, statistical data, youth studies, quality assessments and reviews on youth work and youth policy are normally designed and carried out by adults, youth workers, youth policy makers or youth researchers. Sometimes, like in the case of the Council of Europe National Youth Policy Reviews the expert review group is consisted of representatives of the governments, researchers and young people from youth organizations (somewhere between 20 and 35 years of age). A promising recent example is the International Organization for Migration (IOM) project *The Active Citizenship: Enhancing Political Participation of Migrant Youth* (ACCESS, 2015). Five European cities participated in developing together activities to promote integration of migrants and then carried out a peer review on these activities. All participating cities reviewed each other by a review team consisting of youth workers and migrant young people.

The quality assessment model (SPAM) presented here looked at the possibilities of engaging young people to evaluate the youth activities, that is youth workers, other young people and the social exchange between the two. A first observation was that there remains a need for a quality assessment tool that is made specifically for young people. As will be argued below the assessment format does not apply as such to be used by young people: "the language and content of existing criteria are not necessarily comprehensible to non–professionals" (Nöjd in this volume). In order to integrate young people as auditors the list of criteria and their wording should be modified to be understood by the young people in question. Also the young people need specific training to be able to work with the other auditors. However, "*The overall principle is that youth work should be planned, generated and evaluated together with young people*" (Taija Nöjd in this volume).

3. Linking evaluation and learning to the practice of youth work.

An ideal learning process starts with the practice. As an example Carl Bereiter and Marlene Scardamalia (2010) outline a practice which is based on learning process ('knowledge building'), which starts from 'real ideas and authentic problems' in a working life context and is followed by elaborating solutions and new responses. The process is antithetical to a standard academic process which starts with a theory, elaborates hypothesis through which the theory is empirically tested. Sometimes the distance between the theory and the practice become too long and the use of the theory to the practitioner remains small. Another approach, also for the science, would be to start with practice.

When an organization is reviewed or evaluated, those reviewed tend to sugar-coat their practices or/and ignore some of the not-so-good practices. This is most likely to happen in large bureaucratic organizations, where the different level line-managers easily protect those above them from any bad news or failures. Telling bad news is understandable as it is their competence and their reputation which are at stake. A classic example is the City of Helsinki Youth Department (in 1971) where the line of command was able to keep the information that one of the Youth Centres had severe problems with drug use, selling drugs and violent behavior from the directors of the Service – until the Police massively raided the house, it became a spectacular media event and as the City Council went after the Director of Youth who was almost completely unprepared to the questions. Estonia participated in the Council of Europe series of National Youth Policy Reviews (2000). During the course of the review the CoE nominated International Expert Group felt that they did not get enough information to evaluate the situation of the Russian speaking young people in the country (Council of Europe, 2001). Furthermore, as the Expert Group report was going to be printed with some critical conclusions on the issue, the Embassy of Estonia in Strasbourg intervened and felt that the facts and conclusion in the report were not correct. Perhaps a parallel process of Estonia seeking for EU membership had an effect on the public discussion of the situation of the Russian young people. Anyway, it is apparent that for versatile reasons there is no such thing as a free flow of information in organizations. This is why reviewers want to see people from different levels of the organization and perhaps even people at the point of service. However, somebody from the direction is most always present and the locations to visit and the people to meet are selected by the organization under review.

Another 'human factor' in reviews is that an expert finds it easier to discuss with equals, researchers with other researchers, directors with other directors and youth organization, people with people from youth organization. There is always a certain resistance to move outside your professional comfort zones to talk with people whose professional language or competence you did not share.

Because of these difficulties to obtain reliable information from the practice of youth work in a City, a big organization or a Country, it seems to be advisable to concentrate in the point of service. The Self and Peer Assessment Model described in the paper is based on 3 things: (1) the activity (Youth Centre, Youth Camp, Group activity and so on) is prepared well in beforehand. The youth workers and the young people to be reviewed are told about the purpose and nature of the visit and they are encouraged to co-operate with the assessment team. Among other things, it is explained that the objective of the review is to develop the activity. (2) Each team spends about 2 to 4 hours at the location observing the place and the social interaction, mingling with people, discussing with them. (3) Next morning there is 3 to 4 hour feed-back session, which provides another opportunity for the reviewers to check their findings. There is always a trade-off between having a deeper view and seeing more activities. However, dividing the review team to pay several review visits, one gets better coverage. The Finnish practice of SPAM is a an ongoing process, so that, within a period of, say 3 years, most of the activities and facilities have been at least twice assessed. In this sense the SPAM effectively stands out form the one-time-off quality reviews.

4. Dialogical production of knowledge and competence.

A review or evaluation is typically *an interview*. The experts shoot their previously prepared questions, those reviewed give their (also often previously prepared) answers and the experts take note and try to get grips with the answers. Sometimes additional clarifying questions are posed, but in most cases there are strict time schedules which limit the possibility to follow-up questions and in-depth discussions. It happens to all reviewers when writing their reports that they realize that "I should have followed that up". As a result the overall format is essentially *an interview* with top-down questions and bottom-up answers.

When using the SPAM, one has to work with the list of 24 quality indicators, but the point is that you are not supposed to use that list as a questionnaire format, starting to fill them in from 1 to 24. That is rather a general frame for observations and questions. The idea is to have the list all the time in your mind, but to start gradually get grip of the essential elements of the activity as they unfold to you, like when entering the Youth Centre. Thus it is the art of the assessment to detect the essentials and be flexible enough to dig into them. When you start talking about something specific of the Youth Centre, the youth workers and the young people are likely to tell you more. They are on their own turf. Often the assessment develops into a dialogue and not a top-down interview. The feed-back event next morning is another opportunity to continue the discussion the day before. At this moment the evaluators have gone over the evening's material and can do two things; fill in the white spots ('things which need follow up') and/or shoot tentative conclusions and recommendations for further action – and continue a dialogue on those.

5. Collaborative learning.

Collaborative (or cooperative, collective, peer) learning refers to methodologies and environments in which learners engage in a common task where each individual depends on and is accountable for each other. Collaborative learning activities can include collaborative writing, group projects, joint problem solving, debates, and so on. Within collaborative situations, individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and beneficial to all other group members. In competitive learning (of formal education) students work against each other to achieve an academic goal such as a grade of "A" that only one or a few students can attain.

Pedagogically peer learning relates to John Dewey's pragmatist educational thinking and constructivism, according to which learning is practice-based, learner oriented, it typically presupposes a group or a network of learners and it leads to accumulated knowledge, competence and action. The potential of collaborative learning is recognized at youth worker training. For example, the University of Minnesota Youth Development Program students are regarded as a *cohort* of 12-20 students. This offers "the opportunity for students to spend two or three years learning with and from one another, supported by faculty as advisors, teachers and mentors". Students report that this "is the aspect of the program they value most, because it creates an inviting, accessible and responsive graduate school experience". To promote practice and working life -based learning as a collective pursuit, the Finnish Humak University of Applied Sciences is convinced that collective learning leads to better learning outcomes and has been positively received by students due to increased trust in their capacities (Siurala 2014).

Recently peer learning has received additional interest due to the development of the Social Media. *Crowdsourcing* refers to outsourcing problem-solving or learning to a larger (online) public. According to its proponents crowdsourcing becomes "learning for everyone, by everyone, about almost anything."

In the national and municipal reviews of youth work and youth policy it is customary that during the phase of data-gathering, interviews and site-visits, each expert specializes in observing and raising questions on the topics of their individual expertise. Their contribution to the final documents is either a theme specific chapter to the report or their 'notes'. The entire process and report can be about division of labour (according to the respective expertise of the expert group) and not that much a collaborative pursuit. The SPAM is dependent on collaborative learning. The first observation and discussion part at the Youth Centre (or other youth activity) is focused on groups; groups of young people, groups with youth worker(s) or groups of youth workers. One can carry out individual interviews or discussions, but it is recommended to concentrate on data-gathering on social collectives, as youth work is essentially about working with youth groups, not with individual young people. Thus when you raise a question in a youth group or a youth worker group, people quickly join in and develop a collective account or story. After the observation and discussion session the evaluators gather in groups (of normally two)

to conclude the findings, fill in the evaluation sheet and prepare for the next day's feed-back meeting. The pair develop a joint understanding of the assessment; they discuss until they reach agreement on rating (from 1 to 4) each of the 24 evaluation criteria, the key positive findings and the most important things to be improved – and a general plan on how all this could be constructively and honestly managed through to the youth workers reviewed. The feed-back meeting next morning, in the best case, should not only be reporting back. It is an opportunity for both parties to check on their findings. Even the grades in the assessment sheet can be changed based on the discussion. Interestingly, this very seldom happens as people tend to accept the key arguments and conclusions of the evaluators and rather focus on the constructive discussion on how to do things better in the future. The collaborative learning element has been materialized if the evaluators and the youth workers engage in joint dialogue to improve the identified problems. True, it happens that the discussion ends in youth workers basically defending their practices against the critique of the assessors.

6. Reciprocity of learning.

Peer learning has emerged in the recent European educational policy texts. According to the new formulations of EU's Lifelong learning policies "Exchange of good practice and peer learning [becomes] a key part of reforming the European education and training systems" (Lifelong learning policy: *Strategic Framework for Education and Training*, Education and Training, European Commission). There seems to be a belief that learning can be efficient between properly organized groups of equals. That belief may be the reason for the recent emergence of European Peer Networks in youth work. There are European networks of Youth Workers (POYWE), Youth Directors (ICY), Youth Organizations (YOUTH FORUM), Detached Youth Workers (DYNAMO), Outdoor Education Workers (EOE), Youth Researchers (PEYR), Youth Centres (European Youth Centre Network), Youth Parliaments (European Youth Parliament) and Cities nominated as Youth Capitals (European Youth Capitals). With this same wave also Peer Evaluation or Peer Review has emerged as a more systematic method of learning from each other (EPRA, European Peer Review Association, as an example).[3]

───────────

3. Unfortunately, the term 'peer' has been applied perhaps too broadly. Often renowned international experts on Review Committees are not equal or peers to local level administrators or practitioners. To take another example, learning from best practices is not peer learning, because peer learning is defined as learning which takes place between equals and which presupposes *reciprocity*. Reciprocal learning refers to a situation where both or all learners have something to give to each other. Learning from best practices is one-way traffic.

The Finnish SPAM is based on the idea that youth workers (from other Youth Centres, for example, or Youth Centres from other Cities) assess other youth workers and their work with the young people. As was noted above, young people can join assessment teams and evaluate the way youth workers work with other young people. The presence of youth workers and young people as equals facilitate reciprocal communication in assessments contexts.

In cultures where SPAM has been adopted as a positive measure to improve youth work, it is advisable, that also the managers take part, at least occasionally, in these evaluations. In the UK where the auditors used to be Inspectors from the Ministry, they were not necessarily that well received. In countries like Germany where the SPAM is not well known it has been evaluated to create opposition.

7. "Knowing and doing cannot be separated." *(John Dewey, 1929)*

When **John Dewey** said (1916) that "*Education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process*", he implied that this process, anchored in the perception of the world of the learner, must lead to action and change. Better knowledge on restraints to fulfil the learner's expectations leads to action. **Freire** in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* took it further: Learning from practice is essentially a way to emancipate from the oppression of the bad government. Sometimes companies and organizations run quality assessment measures because it is good for your image as a modern and competitive actor. Sometimes funders or strategic alliances expect you to be able to show that you rank high in quality instruments and contests. Countries may volunteer to be reviewed by the Council of Europe Youth Directorate because that can help them qualify to join EU, and so on. Then there might be those who are interested to run quality assessment because they want to find out how they can improve their activities. It means, that they are not interested just to get the fine rates, but to change their organization. In the same way, when we are assessing youth activities we essentially want to promote changes in young people's lives. The SPAM is not hopefully only a management trick, but also an instrument to promote active citizenship. It is advisable that the next day feed-back event is a serious start for changes in youth work – always keeping in mind, not only the assessment ratings, but also the question: How can we use this exercise to enhance youth agency? One practical hint is that the audit should be followed by a new action plan.

8. From best practices to unique solutions – the contextualized nature of experiences.

František Bradáč from the Municipal District Prague 14 (Czech Republic) took part in peer reviews of six European cities on political participation of migrant youth (ACCESS, 2015). Bradáč both hosted one international peer review group in Prague and participated in peer review teams in the 5 other cities. As he was asked what he learned from this experience, he replied: "The international review about Prague did not come up with anything essentially new, but through my peer reviews in the other cities I got a lot of new ideas" (interview 13 June 2015, Brussels). Apparently it is very difficult for people coming from other cultural and administrative contexts – even if they are experts – to come up with new proposals or angles for a particular City policy in the 14th Municipal District of Prague. Maybe the group did not have time enough to dig in their subject, or maybe the perceptions of the reviewers were too tied up with their own contexts that they were unable to see well enough the specificity of Prague 14th? It is as if there is a 'double-contextualisation' problem. The reviewers' capacity to perceive and understand is anchored in their own personal experiences embedded in given cultural and political contexts. This guides and limits the review process. At the same time the phenomena reviewed is also a part of a unique cultural and political context, which would need considerable effort to capture. As a result the distance between a reviewer and the reviewed can be significant. The reason for František Bradáč to learn interesting things during his peer review visits in other cities was maybe that he was not intending primarily to understand the local phenomena in its own context, but rather wanted to find out if something would fit in the context of his own City. In this case it would be a 'single-contextualization' situation: Bradáč looked at other cities in the context of Prague. This links well with the observations of the recent and numerous international reviews on national health and social policies commissioned by the European Commission: National findings, including best practices, do not seem to be easily *transferable*. The low transferability of national practices from one country to another must be linked to the contextual nature of measures and policies.

To conclude, one has to take seriously (1) the considerable effect of contextualization to the reviewer's capacity to observe and reflect, and (2) his or her possibility to capture the reviewed phenomena in its specific context. Perhaps we must start with admitting the limitations of current practices; more caution in the belief of transferability of local and national practices and policies. The current role and emphasis of Best Practices in international and –cultural learning should be reassessed: Is it even worthwhile to invest in the policies of promoting practices which are so poorly transferable? Don't we need a whole new set of guidance to contextualize the Best Practices before they are launched?

We might also need rethinking in the methodology and the aims of peer reviewing. The methodological challenge is to become more explicit of the reviewers' own cultural, theoretical and political assumptions. We also need to develop

improved sensitivity and better strategies to enter the contextualized phenomena to be reviewed. Another rethinking concerns the overall aims of reviewing national and local practices and policies: Should we turn the current review paradigm up-side-down; instead of chasing generalizable best practices, we perhaps should develop practices in their unique contexts? Aiming at unique solutions rather than best practices?

Within the light of the discussions above SPAM (Self and Peer Assessment Model) has the advantage of being modest. It does not aim at creating best practices, but rather at developing the reviewed youth work activity itself - in its unique context. Furthermore, as a peer assessment model, the 'peers' are usually youth workers or managers from the same city or sometimes from the neighboring city. The reviewers come from cultural and administrative contexts close to each other, which diminishes the need for contextualization discussed above. Finally, even if there is the detailed SPAM list of quality criteria of youth work, it is not supposed to confine the evaluation. The idea is to first and foremost get grips with the overall working culture and orientation to youth of the activity, or the youth centre, and then gradually move to assessing the work through the individual criteria and their grades. This approach provides the reviewer the opportunity to capture the general cultural context of the activity.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Youth work has increasingly felt the pressure to prove its outcomes and its quality. Some have strongly opposed this tendency, others have tried pragmatically to follow with a minimum effort, yet some others have made even good use of the New Public Management tools and different kinds of evaluation instruments. This article gives an outline of the various standpoints, the critical ones, in particular, and tends to conclude that at least quality assessment tools can be very useful for youth work – when properly used. The Self and Peer Assessment Model (SPAM) is presented as a tool which seems to answer many of the critical questions and doubts raised about measurement, peer review and quality assessment in youth work.

Even if the above account on SPAM is positive, following short list of reservations and remarks will be added:

The SPAM requires cultural adaptation.
The Finnish tool works in Finnish youth work, but it may need modification to adapt to other contexts and priorities of youth work.

Proper engagement of staff in the development and use of the SPAM.
Experience shows that it is vital to include youth workers in the design and implementation of the tool. One must create a shared understanding of its usefulness. The key is to agree that SPAM is primarily for youth work development.

The quality criteria define youth work.
It is important that the direction of the youth services is actively involved in setting criteria and taking the final decisions on them.

Youth workers must be trained to use the SPAM.
A useful element of such training has been constructing review pairs combining an experienced reviewer with a beginner.

SPAM is continuous activity.
Ideally there is a 2-3 year plan with calendar dates for assessment events.

Learning to give constructive feedback.
Feed-back meeting is very important event for the youth workers who are reviewed. A skilled reviewer gives constructive, but honest feed-back.

Results of SPAM should be integrated in the management process of the Youth Service.
Each service has to find a way to inform the direction of the review results.

Pairing a manager and a youth worker.
When setting up peer review teams, it is advisable (if possible) to couple a manager and a youth worker to guarantee varied views.

It is useful to agree with neighboring Cities to exchange reviews.
The difference between cities and their youth work and policy can be positively reflected through peer review visits to each other's activities, an opportunity for inter-city learning.

Enjoy your SPAM!

REFERENCES

ACCESS (2015) *Active Citizenship: Enhancing Political Participation of Migrant Youth, International Organization for Mobility*. See also: www.accessyouth.eu.

Carl Bereiter, Carl & Scardamalia, Marlene (2010) A Brief History of Knowledge Building. *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology.* Special Issue, Winter 2010.

Cooper, Susan (2011) Reconnecting With Evaluation: The benefits of using a participatory approach to assess impact. *Youth & Policy* nr 107.

Council of Europe (2001) *Youth Policy in Estonia.* Report by an International Group of Experts. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

Council Recommendation On the validation of non-formal and informal learning. COM (2012) 485 (Final).

Dashboard of EU Youth indicators. Eurostat. Http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/employment-and-social-policy/youth.

Dewey, John (1916, reprinted 1944) *Democracy and Education. An introduction to the philosophy of education.* The Free Press.

Dewey, John (1929, reprinted 2005) *The Quest for Certainty. A Study of Relations of Knowledge and Action.* Kessinger Publishing.

Dickson, Kelly & Vigurs, Carol-Ann & Newman, Mark (2013) *Youth Work: A systematic map of the research literature.* Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Dublin, Ireland.

Durlak, J. & Mahoney, J. & Bohnert, A. & Parente, M. (2010) Developing and Improving After-School-Programs to enhance Youth's Personal Growth and Adjustment: *A Special Issue of AJCP, American Journal of Community Psychology* 2010, 45.

Ecorys (2011) *Assessing practices for using indicators in fields related to youth. Final Report for the European Commission DG Education and Culture.*

Hager, Paul & John Halliday (2009): *Recovering Informal Learning: Wisdom, Judgment and Community.* Springer.

In Defence of Youth Work (2011) This is Youth Work: Stories from Practice. Http://lokalnirazvoj.rs/assets/files/This_is_youth_work_book.pdf.

Matteo, M. & Campbell-Patton, C. (2008) *Measuring the Impact of Youth Voluntary Service Programs. Summary and Conclusions of the International Experts' Meeting.* The World Bank & Innovations in Civic Participation.

Ord, Jon (ed) (2012) *Critical Issues in Youth Work Management.* Routledge.

Quality Youth Work (2015) A Common framework for the further development of youth work. A Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States.

Spatscheck, Christian (2012) Socio-spatial Approaches to Social Work. *Social Work & Society,* (10), Issue 1.

Services for Young People (2011) House of Commons, Education Committee.

Silverman, David (1989) Telling Convincing Stories: A Plea for Cautious Positivism in Case-Studies. *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science.* Volume 112. Springer Netherlands.

Siurala, Lasse (2014) *Some ideas about a youth work curriculum – reflections based on youth worker education in University of Minnesota, Humak University of Applied Sciences and University of Tampere.* Tallinn University, unpublished.

Williamson, Howard (2008) *Supporting young people in Europe (Volume 2).* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Working with young people (2014) The value of youth work in European Union.

YOUTH WORK QUALITY ASSESSMENT: THE SELF AND PEER ASSESSMENT MODEL

Taija Nöjd

STRUCTURE AND PRINCIPLES OF QUALITY CRITERIA OF YOUTH WORK

Criteria make visible the content of youth work and its values. When building a quality criteria for youth work activities, a shared meaning of the content of high quality youth work is created. Thus, the principle of developing criteria is participation of youth workers, youth work management and young people. The assessment according to the criteria helps to identify the strengths and areas of development of the activities. Also the goals for development are set. In the small municipalities in which the youth workers might not have a working community the peer assessment is considered a good way to provide guidance and peer learning possibilities to youth workers. In regional level it is also an instrument for co-operation. (European Commission 2015, 54.)

The SPAM model still has some weaknesses. The set of criteria is quite customized and at the moment it is developed towards a more generic form as it should cover youth work as a whole. The participation of young people should have a more central role in both assessment and developing the tool. The regularity and follow-up of the assessment should be ensured in local youth services. Also better connection to the decision making processes is important both on the local and city network level. (European commission 2015, 54.)

The newest criteria is the criteria for regional youth work – published in June 2015 – which is also included here as an example. It is a step towards a more comprehensive assessment of youth work than its predecessor, the quality criteria for youth centre open activities. The object of assessment is content of the activities, work methods, youth participation and collaboration but also actualization of equality and inclusiveness in regional youth work. The criteria for regional youth work is also notably more demanding than the criteria for youth centre open activities. The criteria for youth centre open activities, last updated in 2011, is now perceived as too easy, probably partly due to regular assessment and development of work.

PEER ASSESSMENT OF YOUTH WORK

The self and peer assessment model is developed by Youth services of capital cities Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa. Nowadays *Kanuuna network* – network of youth services of the 27 biggest cities in Finland – coordinates the tool (European Commission 2015, 53). The model is acquired from Kent, Great Britain, where youth work is inspected by Ofsted, The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Hovi, Luukkonen, Mäkelä, Pakka, Taponen & Westman 2009, 8). In Finland, peer assessment in youth work means the youth centres are audited by other youth workers, usually from another municipality. The model is based on the idea of reciprocity: *If you do an audit, you'll have one*. The peer assessment provides not only evaluative information but also a possibility for mutual understanding and learning. (European Commission 2015, 53–54.) The aim is not to inspect or merely audit but to develop everyday youth work.

In audit peer auditors – usually two youth workers from another municipality – observe the activities for a particular period of time, guided by the criteria (European Commission 2015, 54). The process of auditing youth centre open activities is described (Hovi et al. 2009, 8):

1. Preparing for peer audit

Timing the audit is important as the seasonal activity at the centre should be already established but there should be enough time to develop work according to the goals set after the assessment. The audit requires two hours at the centre and another 1–2 hours for the feedback meeting between peer auditors, workers of the centre and their supervisor. The timetables should be set well before the time of the audit.

It is crucial to get acquainted with the criteria guiding the assessment. The two auditors should meet in advance to agree on the division of assignment. It is necessary to evaluate which individual criterions can be assessed by observation only and which require interviewing the workers and young people at the centre. The challenge is that regional collaboration or work done outside the centre cannot be observed during the audit. The auditors should also explore the web pages and social media profiles of the youth centre.

2. Peer audit at the youth centre

During the audit observation should be focused on concrete actions, not personal traits or abilities of the youth workers nor the expressed goals. When auditing, interviewing the workers should be arranged so they can work as normally as possible. The auditors should tell the young people at the centre the reason they are there: to conduct a peer assessment and to observe the workers and activity at the centre. Young people at the youth centre should be also interviewed, as their experiences are necessary to assess many of the individual criterions. The two auditors observe independently, but at some point it is useful to check up the lacking information to assess every criterion.

Two hours have proved to be sufficient to gather enough information for the assessment. At the centre during the audit, it is recommended to write down initial assessments of levels of individual criterions plus observations they are based on. The criteria is a handy tool to carry and to refer to during the audit.

3. Assessment and documentation

Based on observations and discussions with the workers and young people at the youth centre, the auditors formulate a shared conclusion on the levels of individual criterions and strengths and areas of improvement in general. Every criteria is accompanied by a report sheet, on which these are documented.

4. Feedback meeting

In the feedback meeting the auditors present their conclusions. The auditors should be ready to provide observations to back up assessments. The auditors, workers of the centre and their supervisor have a discussion over conclusions, observed strengths and areas of improvement.

The main purpose is to provide the youth centre with peer auditors' observations and hopefully new insights or viewpoints on working methods or activities at the youth centre. After the feedback meeting, the workers of the centre choose the areas to improve and prepare an action plan for the future development with their supervisor. (Hovi et al. 2009, 24–31.)

The peer audits complement self-assessment of the activities. Self-assessment is done once or twice every year, peer audits more rarely. There are different ways of conducting self-assessment. The principles are the same as those of peer audit:

1) the work community studies the principles of assessment and the criteria guiding the assessment
2) youth workers make assessments individually
3) the work community – for example the workers at a youth centre – formulates a shared conclusion of levels of the criterions, strengths and areas of improvement.

Common conclusions are created through conversation, where everyone gets to share their opinions. Also available statistics and feedback from young people and

cooperators should be utilized in assessment. Finally, mutual goals and an action plan for development are set. Regular self-assessment and peer audits help youth workers and work communities develop work actively and systematically.

The information acquired through assessment is mainly utilized to develop and improve the everyday work. The collection of assessment reports varies between municipalities. The summoned information is sometimes, although rarely, used to evaluate implementation of youth services' strategy or to make comparisons between youth centres or municipalities. It is crucial that the youth work management commits to regular self-assessment and encourages peer audits between youth centres and municipalities. For youth workers it is valuable to get some feedback from their supervisors on assessment results.

Preferably all the employees should be acquainted with the tool when it is first introduced in the local youth services. Otherwise it takes a little resources to run the tool: at minimum, two trained peer auditors. Trainings for the auditors are organized by *Kanuuna network*. Trained auditors can then introduce the tool to their local youth services. The process of self-assessment and making an action plan in one youth centre is done in one to two weeks. Regionally the audits should be coordinated: who audits where and when. Coordinating and conducting audits between municipalities require a few months.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The guideline is that youth work should be planned, generated and evaluated together with young people. Young people should participate in the evaluation process, be informed about the purpose of evaluation and feel their opinions lead to change. (European Commission 2015, 25, 28.) Young people have participated in application of youth work quality assessment - but unregularly and depending on both the municipality and individual youth workers. At some youth centres, youth workers and young people have assessed activities at the centre using the criteria of youth centre open activities. At some youth centres, youth workers and young people have together remodeled the criteria for young people's use. Supported by the youth workers, young people have also audited youth centres in their home municipality or the neighboring one.

At some youth centres and municipalities, quality assessment made by young people is a regular practice. In these centres or regions young people have been given training in the principles of assessment and the criteria. An introduction to the assessment tool is important – this enables young evaluators and auditors focus on observation and provide arguments to back up their assessment. Still, there remains a need for a quality assessment tool that is made specifically for young people. The language and content of existing criteria are not necessarily comprehendible for non–professionals or observable solely at the centre. In any case, young people's participation in quality assessment is considered crucial.

REFERENCES

European Commission (2015) *Quality Youth Work. A common framework for the further development of youth work*. Report from the Expert Group on Youth Work Quality Systems in the EU Member States. Brussels: European Commission.

Hovi, Merja; Luukkonen, Tero; Mäkelä, Pekka; Pakka, Viula; Taponen, Harri & Westman, Marika (2009) *Nuorisotyön arviointi. Käsikirja nuorisotyön prosessien auditointiin ja itsearviointiin*. Youth services of Espoo, Helsinki and Vantaa.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
1. **Regional knowledge**	The working community is aware of activities organized for young people by other operators (e.g. associations, the church).	There is statistical and empirical knowledge of the local population. Youth workers are aware of services in the area and facilities available to young people.	Information is collated on young people in the area and their leisure time, and on upcoming changes in the area; this information is used when planning activities.	Youth workers engage in regular discussions with young people in the area, and activities are planned accordingly.
2. **Cooperation with local operators** (e.g. associations, the church, the commercial sector)	Youth workers are aware of the activities offered by other operators, and contact with them is occasional.	Activities offered to young people are coordinated with other operators in order to avoid duplications. Activities offered by other operators are communicated to young people occasionally.	Activities are planned with local needs and other operators' activities in mind. Some of the activities are offered jointly.	Activities are regularly planned, organized and assessed with other operators and young people.
3. **Networking**	Youth workers are aware of regional networks.	The unit participates in appropriate networks.	Networks are appropriate and youth workers play an active role in the networks. The added value generated by the networks is utilized in the work.	Youth workers make sure that there are channels for young people's voices to be heard in the networks.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
4. **Cooperation with guardians**	Guardians have been informed of the young people's participation in the youth services' activities. Homes are contacted when necessary.	There is regular contact with the guardians of those young people who are actively involved in the work via bulletins, personal contact, etc.	A structure has been created for communication between youth services and homes. There is active, regular, two-way communication.	Guardians can participate in the activities, making it possible to use their skills and input.
5. **Cooperation with local schools**	Youth workers know the local schools. Youth work is promoted at schools occasionally.	Youth workers regularly visit the schools in order to promote youth work. Cooperation between schools and youth services is occasional.	Cooperation with local schools is systematic, with mutually agreed contents and schedules.	Content of the systematic cooperation with local schools is defined by the needs and wishes of young people, and the cooperation is regularly assessed together.
6. **Meeting young people in their own environments**	Young people are only encountered at the youth services' facilities.	Youth workers go out in the area and also meet young people outside the facilities. Youth workers are aware of the locations that are popular with young people.	Activities are occasionally organized outside the youth work premises, at locations that are popular with young people.	Activities are regularly organized outside the youth services' premises. Young people are involved in the planning and implementation of activities.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
7. **Influencing local issues**	Young people can only influence activities which take place on the youth services' premises.	Young people are encouraged to take a stand on issues related to them, and information is provided on other ways of making a difference (e.g. e-democracy).	Youth workers actively encourage young people to form groups to make a difference on local issues they are interested in.	There is a youth group or groups in the area engaged in influencing local issues.
8. **Digital aspects and the social media**	Youth workers are aware of young people's on-line communities, but they do not participate actively.	Youth workers participate actively in various young people's on-line communities, and interaction with young people is active.	Young people and their activities are actively promoted on-line.	The digital aspect is a natural part of youth work and the work community. Skills and contents are developed in collaboration with young people.
9. **Communication**	Traditional channels are mainly used for communication and this has not been developed; for example, websites are not updated and social media is not used.	The content of communication is appropriate, and agreed identifiers are used in the materials. The social media is used. Basic on-line information on the activities is up-to-date.	The contents and tools of communication are appropriate and speak to young people. Communication on-line and in the social media is versatile. Communication is generated together with young people.	Communication is an important part of the work, and versatile methods are used. Young people are actively involved in generating and implementing communication.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
10. **Systematization of activities and assessment of implementation**	Activities are planned in accordance with the youth workers' personal interests and skills.	Young people are allowed to participate in the planning and assessment of the activities.	The activities are planned and assessed comprehensively, regularly and with purpose, and the participating young people are involved in this.	Local young people's voice has been heard extensively when planning the activities. Regional knowledge and prior assessments have been taken into account.
11. **Operating models and instructions**	Workers have agreed, in advance, on operating models relating to bullying and incidents involving substance abuse, threatening behavior, and violence. Youth workers are aware of statutory plans such as rescue, safety and equality procedures.	The common operating models have been documented. Induction procedures are in place, and all members of the work community are aware of the operating models.	*Educational operating models* are discussed regularly in the work community. The operating models have been discussed with young people. Youth workers are aware of the different operating models adopted by various local operators.	The concept of cause and effect is discussed with young people. Young people understand and have a say in how certain situations are handled and why. Local operators share common operating models and all operators have internalized them.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
12. **Distribution of work and communication between youth workers**	Distribution of work between the workers has not been agreed. Interaction between the workers lacks situational sensitivity.	Tasks are agreed case-by-case during activities. The workers understand that they are role models also in terms of their own interaction.	Distribution of work is clear and has been mutually agreed. Communication between the workers is good.	Distribution of work is practical and flexible, and communication is natural. This also reflects on young people.
13. **Contact with young people**	Youth workers only pay attention to certain young people on the premises.	The workers make equal contact with all young people on the premises.	Youth workers are able to recognize and react to young people's friendships, strengths and needs for support.	Workers actively chat with young people about how they are, and they have a confidential relationship.
14. **Enabling and promoting friendships**	Youth workers' pay attention to any young people who are alone.	Group activities are organized, enabling young people to get to know each other and form friendships.	Projects are implemented with young people, aimed at promoting friendships and preventing bullying.	Opportunities are created for forming friendships across defined groups. Young people play an active role in planning and implementing activities aimed at promoting friendships.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
15. **Equality** • origin • nationality • language • religion • conviction • health • disability	Discrimination is prohibited in all activities, which is reflected in rules and instructions, and accessibility is made possible.	Equality is discussed with young people, and advice is available in incidents of discrimination. The workers are prepared to challenge their own prejudices.	A young person feels safe in the environment, regardless of their background and characteristics. Special expertise of organizations can be utilized.	Opportunities are created for different young people and groups to meet and work together, and interaction between different individuals and youth groups is actively encouraged.
16. **Sexual identity and sexual orientation**	Activities and tasks clearly reflect the mind-set and operating model of girls/boys. Gender neutrality is not considered in activities.	Activities promote gender equality. Sexual diversity is acknowledged, and the workers are prepared to discuss it. The workers can provide advice on the activities of local rainbow groups.	Gender neutrality has been considered when planning the premises and activities. Some of the activities have deliberately been planned in a manner that does not categorize participants according to their assumed sexual identity.	In the activities, presumptions regarding heterosexuality as the norm are approached critically, with reference to talk about girlfriends and boyfriends, for example. Youth services enable the establishment of peer groups or cooperation with other operators.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
17. **Opposing racism**	Racist behavior and name-calling are formally reprimanded.	There are common procedures for opposing racism and addressing racist behavior, and young people are aware of them.	Racism and experiences of racism are discussed with young people.	Opposing racism is a systematic part of planning and implementing the activities. The workers are active in addressing racism and hate speech in collaboration with organizations, for example.
18. **Enabling activities initiated by young people**	Voluntary groups initiated, or events organized by young people, or peer-supervised activities do not exist.	There are occasional groups initiated, or events organized by young people. The workers encourage young people to organize their own activities.	The workers actively seek new youth groups and help young people to find premises and funding for groups and events.	Young people regularly plan and implement events and/or activities for other young people. Funding is available for young people to initiate their own activities.
19. **Peer-supervised activities**	No peer-supervised activities are organized on the premises.	Young people occasionally act as peer-supervisors on the premises. They have not had peer-supervisor or equivalent training.	Regular and systematic peer-supervised activities take place on the premises. Peer-supervisors participate in peer-supervisor or equivalent training.	Peer-supervised activities are well established. Young people carry out the activities independently with background support from the workers.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
20. **Hobby and activity groups**	Groups are formed based on the workers' ideas regardless of the needs and wishes of young people.	Objectives have been set for the groups' activities.	Young people are allowed to define the objectives for the groups, and groups are arranged according to local needs.	Participation of as many young people as possible is enabled in hobby activities in collaboration with other operators.
21. Gaming • board games • card games • role play • console games • computer games • miniatures games • mobile games	The workers understand gaming as a hobby, but are not acquainted with the equipment. At the minimum, youth services provide the premises for gaming.	The workers understand and can use basic gaming equipment, and they know the rules and age limits. Youth services have ways of supporting young people in versatile, independent gaming.	Young people are involved in planning the gaming activities. Young people have their own activity groups. The workers also participate in games by working in the networks created by young people. Youth services organize community gaming events together with young people.	Objectives have been set and resources allocated for the gaming activities, and they are planned and implemented with young people. The workers are familiar with the gaming phenomena and able to talk about them to parents and other networks.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	1 INSUFFICIENT/ POOR	2 SATISFACTORY	3 GOOD	4 EXCELLENT
22. **Promotion of a healthy lifestyle** • exercise • nutrition • relationships • sexual health • intoxicants • daily routine	Education about and motivation for health living is occasional.	Health-related themes are raised and discussed with young people. If necessary, information and support is sought together.	Promotion of a healthy lifestyle is considered when planning and implementing the activities.	Young people are involved in the planning and implementation of themes related to a healthy lifestyle.
23. **Environmental responsibility**	The environmental aspect is occasionally considered in the activities and purchases.	The workers act in an environmentally responsible way and encourage by example. Waste is sorted and recycled.	Environmental responsibility is apparent across the activities. Responsible consumption and environmental impact are discussed with young people.	Together with young people, environmental responsibility is addressed and the ecological footprint managed in the local area.
24. **Promotion of youth employment**	The workers are interested in the young people's issues with studying and finding work, and provide information on study and employment opportunities.	Young people's abilities to find employment are enhanced by offering periods of work experience or placements on the youth services' premises.	The workers practice work-life skills with young people (driving license to work life, work experience from running a club, etc.).	Opportunities are created for young people to practice work-life skills in the local area.

AUTHORS

Taija Nöjd
Project Secretary
Project *Laatua nuorisotyöhön* (*Quality Youth Work*)
The City of Lappeenranta Youth Services
taija.nojd@lappeenranta.fi

Lasse Siurala
PhD, Adjunct Professor, Aalto University
lasse.siurala@welho.com