

Youth participation in youth work recognition and development projects - The resource group model

Name of the organisation

Ungdom og Fritid (Youth Work Norway)

Website of the organisation

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Good practice aspect(s)/themes of youth work

- Participation of young people in decision making

Good practice category

A practice of processes and methods

Good practice aim & purpose

Youth Work Norway has over many years developed a method for youth participation, which can be referred to as the resource group model for youth participation. This model of youth participation has been used in a range of projects that aims to develop and increase the recognition of youth work both on a national and a local level. The purpose of this model has been to:

- Ensure that youth work development is fundamentally based on the needs of the youth
- Ensure that youths strengthen their sense of agency in the local community and development
- Ensure that the youths feel competent and safe to participate in local and national decision making processes
- Ensure that youths with different backgrounds and from different local realities are able to participate in youth work development
- Ensure that other actors involved in youth work development on the local level are made aware of the importance and the methods of youth participation

Good practice description

We have developed and used this method for youth participation in a range of different projects with the overall aim to develop and strengthen the youth work field. These projects are often coordinated on a national level, but implemented and developed on a local level. At the core, the method is about recruiting a diverse group of young people from different local realities who are engaged in the relevant topic for the project, such as digital participation or cultural activities. This group of young people works closely together with one or several youth workers from Youth Work Norway for the entire project period, and participates in designing and implementing all stages of the process both through digital meetings and in-person gatherings.

This resource group model builds on an overall working method in Youth Work Norway of youth workers and youths working closely together to develop youth work and influence local and national youth work policies. This is embedded in the organisational structure, where the boards both on a national and the regional level consists of an equal amount of youths and youth workers. By fostering a continuous and close cooperation between the youths and the youth worker, this model strengthens the youths' democratic competency, but also their sense of psychological safety in participating in decision-making processes. These youths then also work as a bridge for involving a larger number of young people in different stages of the projects.

One example is from a recent project called "Levelling up the Youth Club Structure" which aims to develop an overall framework for local youth work in Norway and to gather all relevant actors in Norway for a collaborative effort in the years to come, starting with two large-scale round table conferences.

In this project, 9 young people spanning from the age of 14-19 years old have been recruited from different parts of Norway. They meet for 4 planning gatherings in different stages of the project, and are also actively participating in all implementation stages and activities of the project. They also work closely together with the youth workers throughout the project period to develop their project and communication skills through different participatory learning methods.

A key activity in this project are the round table conferences, which gather relevant actors from the local and national level to identify needs and measures to strengthen the Norwegian youth club field in the years to come. Here, the youth resource group are actively participating in the planning of the round table conference, for instance by identifying relevant topics and questions for the conference. They are also seated at each of the tables during the conference, and participate actively in discussions with actors spanning from the Minister of Culture to youth work researchers and a local youth club leader.

Good practice result & concrete effects

The results of using this best practice have spanned from project to project, but overall we have seen that:

- The youth work development has been more attuned to the local realities of different youths
- Youth Work Norway has gained important knowledge from the youths on key topics for youth work development, for instance gaming and digital culture
- The youths that have been participating in the resource group have reported increased motivation, sense of agency, democratic competence and project and communication skills
- Other actors involved in the different projects has gained skills on different youth participation methods
- The local implementation of youth work development projects has also involved youth participation

Good practice chapter of the European Charter on Local Youth Work

Core principles of youth work