

... and what governs it

Qualitative youth work asks, more than anything else, for youth workers who have the right motivation and approach.

The Logbook gives us the opportunity to see our strengths and weaknesses and to develop relevant, knowledge-based interventions. At least as important, however, is that it motivates staff to reflect on their work and what they need to develop.

Through research, we know that youth workers, often subconscious, way of looking at young people, their (adult) role and their mission is what, more than anything else, shapes the culture of the organization and thus its ability to reach its aims. It is these thought patterns that govern both how the aims are interpreted and how and from which starting points the concrete work will be carried out.

We also know that young people's participation, their motivation to explore new opportunities and develop new skills requires reciprocity. It requires adults who have a genuine belief in young people as the main resources in their own lives, who have confidence in their abilities and who are curious and feel that they themselves can learn and develop from shaping youth work together with young people based on their ideas, experiences and needs.

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This requires adults who strive for an equal relationship and who see young people as colleagues with different roles and competencies. It is only when this is the norm that youth work can make a real and lasting difference in young people's lives, and especially for those who, for various reasons, find themselves in a marginalized, vulnerable position.

Many youth workers have these qualities, but unfortunately far from all. Which is not strange.

- Youth work's history of organizing activities *for* young people
  - The desire to 'take care' of and 'protect' young people
  - The traditional adult role of nurturing and explaining
  - The wish to take center stage, to get attention, feel needed and act as an 'adult role model'
  - Own (leisure time) interests as motives and merits for employment
  - The desire to have a 'soft job'
  - External expectations to teach or act as a security guard
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All of this leads to that there are still youth workers with questionable motivations and attitudes. At the bottom lies, of course, the fact that an unclear identity leads to an unclear role and that youth work will thus attract and recruit staff accordingly. As said, many are still good, but it only takes a few activity-fixing, nurturing, adult role models for youth work to lose its credibility as an arena where young people get support for setting their agenda.

As long as participation is still seen as a fairly diffuse feeling that we hope young people experience, this situation will persist. Traditional 'adult perspectives' are simply too strong and do not change through the adoption of new policies or discussions around our so-called value base.

A sustainable change requires that the demand for young people's active co-creation of activities is visibly present in everyday work. Only in this way can the thought patterns and attitudes of youth workers be brought into harmony with the vision of truly participatory youth work.

This is why The Logbook, where youth workers after each shift document the extent to which young people are involved in the implementation of activities, serves as a necessary reminder of what needs to be prioritized. Are young people involved in planning, implementing and evaluating activities? Or are these managed predominantly by youth workers?



The vast majority of youth workers want to do a good job. It is in the ongoing discussions about what you see in The Logbook that you start looking for solutions. It is then that you start to ask yourselves how to stimulate and support young people's participation and what this requires in terms of methods and approaches. Many will find answers that works for them, a few will come to realize that they should engage in something else than youth work.

No one said it is easy, but in KEKS' overall statistics we can clearly see that we are moving in the right direction. The Logbook not only gives us knowledge, it also functions as an efficient governing mechanism and has contributed more than any other single efforts to the overall development of youth work.

Nobody wants to play in a hut built by others – attractive and well-functioning youth work requires participation.