

The introduction of Rock and Water in youth-welfare-work - Experiences and learning opportunities

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Overview

- ❖ **Introduction** – the context of youth-welfare-work
- ❖ **The project** – implementation of Rock and Water
- ❖ **Research** – phenomenological analysis of the experiences of different participants
- ❖ **Discussion** – connection, flexibility and policy
- ❖ **Conclusions** – recommendations for practice

Youth-welfare-work

- ❖ Vulnerable city areas with different problems are situated e.g. small housing, poorness, low employment, etc.
- ❖ Youngsters in vulnerable situations have more chance to be confronted with negative answers from society (Vettenburg, 1989)
- ❖ More problems on different life domains: school, work, drug (ab)use, ...

Youth-welfare-work

- ❖ Youth-welfare-work acting on different levels:
 1. Low threshold leisure activities in the life space of youngsters
 2. Building relations and translating issues to a group level
 3. Working 'on the bridge', advocating and negotiating with institutional agents
 4. Giving signals and influencing policy on different life domains

changing youngsters to make them stronger,
changing society to attack structural inequalities



... and the need for Rock and Water

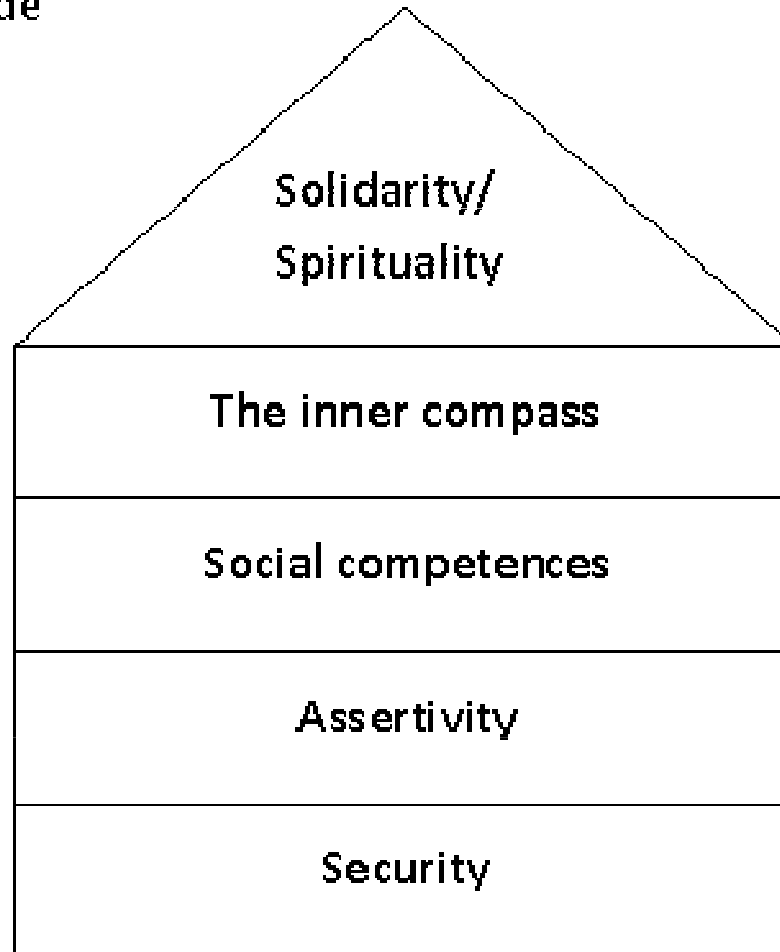
❖ What is Rock and Water?

- A psycho-physical training for youngsters developed by Ykema (Ykema, 2015)
- Traditional ways of learning not suited for certain youngsters.
- Especially the verbal and emotional expression to cope with aggression within themselves and others (Ykema, 2002)
- The training aims at connecting physical and psychological elements, in relation to existential and philosophical elements.

The 'rock and water'-house

Internal
communication:
Me and the outside

Communication



Follow-up
program for
youngsters of
14 years and
older

Basic program
for 9 year olds
and older

External
communication:
Me and the
others

Self-
control

Self-
confidence

Self
reflection

... and the need for Rock and Water

- ❖ Other sessions by Eclips called 'Powerfull' (double meaning in Dutch, 'possessing power', but also 'very amusing')

- ❖ Subtle differences mainly in the balance between:
 - exercise – reflection moments
 - more light and 'floaty' – down to earth

- ❖ Match with youthwelfarework?
 - Vision on possibilities and strengths of youngsters
 - Appealing psycho-physical action component

... and the need for Rock and Water

- ❖ Idea and plan at the start of the project:
 - Training day for the youth workers first
 - Trial session in different youth houses
 - Recruiting youngsters for an intensive training on a central place (not connected to their life space)
 - Following up trajectories of these youngsters

- ❖ This didn't work because of different reasons

... and the need for Rock and Water

- ❖ Adaptation of plan
- ❖ Different session in the same youth house
- ❖ Starting with youth workers that are really engaged with the program
- ❖ Open sessions where youngsters are motivated to participate

General: more custom to the context and the group of youngsters that are reached

... research component

❖ Research questions:

- Reactions of youngsters towards this program?
- How do they experience these sessions?
- What do they learn?
- How can this kind of program be implemented in this youth-welfare-work context

... research methodology

- ❖ Triangulation of different research methods
 - Participative observation
 - Active participation in planning
 - Semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders
 - Follow up and coaching sessions

- ❖ Interpretative analysis of data

... results concerning implementation

- ❖ Motivating youngsters is difficult
 - Practical issues (trainers, youth workers, location etc.)
 - Other activities and opportunities
- ❖ Training for youth workers is very important
 - Understanding the content
 - Engagement, motivation and support

... training youth workers

“For me, and this is more broad than Rock and Water, we talk now about Rock and Water, what is typical, as a youth worker, if you introduce something different, something new, is that it only works if you yourself are convinced, engaged with what you bring. If it’s only a feeling as ‘ok, but ...’ You have to really believe in it! Only then, if you believe in it, you can also really motivate the youngsters.”

... motivating youngsters to participate

- ❖ Difficult to explain in easy language what R&W is
- ❖ Youngsters are motivated by the 'fighting' aspect of the training
- ❖ Youth workers want to find a balance between the fun of 'fighting' and the learning aspect

... Experiences of youngsters during the training

- ❖ Importance of trust: issue for a lot of youngsters
- ❖ Importance of youth workers to introduce trainer

“are you from the police?”

- ❖ Also very sensitive for possible judgement of others

“What do you think!!! I CAN control myself!!!”

(angry)

... Experiences of youngsters during the training

- ❖ The place is very important, their youth house!
 - Our place, where we are welcome!
 - Has the feeling of a safe haven

- ❖ Motivation of youngsters
 - Experience of mastery of succes!
 - Learning, but in other way than in school!

... Experiences of youngsters during the training

❖ Group pressure

- Differences of individual talks and group talks
- The group as judge
- But the group is also motivating

❖ Simple visual language

- Easy language as essential for youngsters!
- Balance between action and speaking!
- Finding words and time to 'stand still'

... Experiences of youngsters during the training

❖ The fun of the action itself

“for me it was fun, nice, funny sometimes, because we laughed a lot. It was good to relax. They can do that more often!” (youngster)

❖ Do they actually learn something?

- Self control
- Breathing exercises
- Retain more than sometimes expected
- Youth workers notice behavioral changes

... Experiences of youngsters during the training

- ❖ Specific model for hard to reach Roma youngsters
 - More intense period of support
 - Attention for basic needs e.g. food
 - Small group to create safe feeling
 - Short exercises to keep attention

... Experiences with the structure of the training

- ❖ Length of the sessions
- ❖ Number of sessions
- ❖ Priorities: example of Bob: even if youngsters didn't participate in all sessions, some of them could also join in the end session (smashing the wooden board)
- ❖ Process or output? Keeping connection by balancing these two

... trainers and youth workers together




- ❖ Good connection during trainings
- ❖ Support of youth workers and experienced trainers
- ❖ Different but compatible roles
- ❖ Match of R&W with Youth work context

Discussion

- ❖ Important for youngsters
 - Building trust during the sessions
 - Adaptation by both youth workers and trainers
 - Model – function
 - Useful to connect to other activities and context of youth-welfare-work
 - Fun of the exercises themselves most important

Discussion

❖ Tensions fields to work with

- Planning & clear rules  flexibility
- Action/game/fighting  learning
reflection
- Real involvement  partial
connection

Discussion

- ❖ Transfer to other situations?
 - Within youth work
 - Other contexts?
- ❖ More at ease with vulnerability

Discussion

- ❖ Importance of basic attitude of trainers and youth workers!
 - Knowledge of inner world and development
 - Reflection about activities and content
 - Respect and acceptance of youngsters
 - Engagement with issues of youngsters
 - flexibility

Discussion

- ❖ Some organizational factors
 - Need for support and coaching at crucial fases
 - Connection of this kind of intervention in relation to other activities and assignments of youth work
 - The need for organization policy on this kind of training and the elements above

Conclusion

- ❖ Suited program to implement in youth-welfare-work
- ❖ Connection with the youngsters!
- ❖ Need for flexibility of all participants

thank you!



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Questions or suggestions?

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