OUYE

OPENING UNIVERSITIES FOR YOUTH IN EUROPE

November 8, 2022
Manchester

02
Co-Evaluation

Outline

VARIOUS PARTNERS' CONTEXT-SPECIFIC APPROACHES TO "OPENING UNIVERSITIES FOR YOUTH"

Finland =>

    Coaching Young People with respect to Their Opportunities for Higher Education and Encouraging them to Broaden their Horizons

France =>

    Encouraging the Self-Expression of Young People by Valuing their Various Skills and Making the Resources of the University and Associations Available to Them in Carrying out an Artistic Production and Outdoor Explorations

Turkey =>

    Physically Opening the Closed Gates of the University

UK =>

    Deconstructing the Concept of University

DEMOGRAPHICS	Finland	France	Turkey	UK
Number of Participants	33	25	13	4
Gender	♀ ♂ ☿	♀ 10 ; ♂ 15	♀ 9 ; ♂ 4	♀ 2 ; ♂ 2
Age Range	18-29	18-30	14-20	18-28

DEMOGRAPHICS	Finland	France	Turkey	UK
Place of Birth	Finland (25) Ukraine (5) Bangladesh (1) Pakistan (1) Turkey (1)	France (22) Other countries (3)	Turkey (11 born in Istanbul; 2 born in other provinces)	Initial group members were from different backgrounds; some were seeking asylum; some had been awarded refugee status; some were British-born and first-or second generation migrants.
Employment/Education Status	Employed Unemployed Student On Disability Pension On Long-Term Sick Leave	Students (15) Unemployed (6) Employed (4)	None of them worked; except for one high school graduate, all participants were high school students	All were at further education college
Activities	• Coaching (Group meetings and individual sessions) • PAR meetings • Art workshops • Keeping a diary • Cultural site visits • Evaluation of HEI marketing materials	• Hiking • Song Writing • Beat making • Recording • Public presentation	• Camera use and video editing workshops • Drama workshops • Gender workshop • Workshop on social rights of youth • Cultural site visits and visit of anart museum	• Online and face-to-face discussions with participants to explore meanings of the university and other learning and cultural spaces for the young, margianalized people • City walks • Reflections on the sense of not/belonging to the city

Co-Evaluation Outcomes: Expectations of Participants With Respect to the Local Process			
France	• to establish **new interactions** between several associations that would promote informal knowledge that's not taught at the university; • to **get involved in a European project**; • to **meet and bond with new young people**, establish a sense of solidarity, and learn as a group, engaging in common activities; • to **practice English**		
Finland	• **some enthusiasm**	**BUT**	"often disguised as cynicism" due to the lack of trust in higher education institutions
Turkey	• **excitement** because they were going to enter a gated world to which they had only vicarious access before through its various representations	**BUT**	this was a reserved excitement because the university campus was an unfamiliar, unknown world where participants didn't have a clear idea of what they can or cannot expect
UK	• Some of the initial group members had experience with similar types of youth-focused projects while others had not or had only limited experience. This **varied level of experience affected how participants approached the local process**: Those who were more experienced were able to voice their expectations clearly	**BUT**	the young people who were less familiar with youth-focused participation projects were notably less likely to speak up

Co-Evaluation Outcomes: Evaluation of the Local Process by the Young Participants and the Project Team

France

Difficulties:

- Inability to recruit a more varied group of young people (e.g. young people who were not enrolled at university or young people in exile)
- Difficulty of maintaining "the participation of young people throughout the project by adapting to their respective constraints."
- Language barrier

Positive Feedback:

- Delegation of responsibilities between the support team and the young participants
- Collaboration with the support team
- Inclusion in the collective construction of the project
- Horizontality between participants and the support staff
- Accessibility of the researchers
- Strengthened link of the associations with the university
- A rich experience of transmission of knowledge (such as emotions and life stories) in an informal and sensitive way
- Finding space to pass on their arts, which allowed young people to feel useful and valued.
- Encouragement, as expressed by a young participant: "I feel that the project gives me a boost."
- According to THI, "the involvement of the young participants in the project will change their life course and allow them to feel more comfortable at university…The project allowed them to legitimize their actions and to have more visibility."
- According to DMZ, the young participants of the project were "able to discover new skills, new entities and new actions to try out."

Finland

No centralized feedback collected from the participants. All feedback was received informally.

Difficulties:

- Lack of self-confidence and trust in HEI; young people with neurodiversity symptoms were in doubt about the willingness of HEI to admit them as students and meet their needs.
- Cultural differences between young people who live in families of a more collectivist culture in which decisions about studying may be made considering the community's needs, and those young people who come from an individualistic culture where decisions are made on independent basis:
  - *"For young people with an immigrant background, parents seemed to have indicated the fields of study they could accept, e.g., law, medicine or business studies. These studies are very difficult to access. With these young people, we tried to broaden their ideas about the possibilities .... However, the pressure from parents was strong."*

Positive Feedback:

- Expression of gratitude on the actual coaching in which young people were given new information on alternative study paths and degrees.
- Visiting different cultural places around Helsinki in the company of the project team was really enjoyed by the participants.

Co-Evaluation Outcomes: Evaluation of the Local Process by the Young Participants and the Project Team

UK

Like the Finnish partners, the UK team also did not formally collect data about the young people as part of the evaluation. They have rather based their evaluation report on their reflections and some reflections from the young people that they picked up during the process.

Difficulties:

- Participants' initial lack of confidence to actively participate in the co-construction process of the project.
- The difficulty of promoting equal relations in sessions held at the university because of the unwelcoming nature of the university surroundings.
- Participants' perception of and concern with lack of guidance on what the project would involve, how it would progress, and how long it would last.
- Difficulties involved with the implementation of the PAR methodology:
    - *"Utilising a PAR methodology enabled us to provide an open space for exploration with the young people where we could arrive at a project focus over time, together. This process of co-creation was crucial to our project because it is RAPAR's (only) way of working and the method of exploration and learning most frequently utilised by the UK project leads ..... Commitment to this method, however, was challenging because of the need to ensure that the time and space were available for trust to be established between group members, that members had the space to develop their ideas and to learn about issues together, and that a meaningful project could be generated from open discussion. Facilitating this approach was difficult at times because of the ebbs and flows of the group, and the need to move meetings online at points. We became concerned several times that we would struggle to create a project within the timeframe of the work as we wanted to be as genuinely co-creative as we could be.....We embraced the rhythms of the project throughout but we were aware that our commitment to applying PAR methods as authentically as possible had to be set aside at times to move the project forward."*

- Difficulty of establishing connections with a second community partner whose work centered around creative productions:
    - *"PAR was a less familiar way of working for the second community partner. There was a frequent sense that the inherent 'messiness' of PAR approaches and the perennial uncertainty of how a project may develop using PAR brought about an unease for the partnership that had to be carefully and sympathetically considered."*

- The difficulty of reimbursing the young participants for their time and travel (a standard practice in RAPAR) because of the limited budget of the project. (Eventually, the MMU partners secured a pot of money from the university for this use).

UK

Positive Feedback:

- Building rapport, creating bonds, and developing camaraderie between the participants and the project team during city walks.
  - *"Walking through different areas of the city, taking pictures and making videos, 'forced' us to actively interact with these places, and it undoubtedly promoted the building of relationships across everyone involved. The young people were excited to visit new areas or look at familiar areas from a different perspective."*

- The efforts of the project team and the commitment of the young participants culminated in a project idea that enabled the visualization of a new way of belonging in spaces that are not always welcoming.
  - *"The young people's idea to design a Utopian Piccadilly Gardens tapped into feelings of familiarity and safety, alongside feelings of precarity and vulnerability, and a desire to create somewhere where everyone could belong."*

- Focusing on not/belonging opened up the space for many conversations and much learning about living in the UK's hostile environment and feeling excluded from much of life.

Co-Evaluation Outcomes: Evaluation of the Local Process by the Young Participants and the Project Team

Turkey

Difficulties:

- Due to the young people's unease with self-expression we had a difficult time of engaging them into discussions in various workshops.
- Because of the formentioned difficulty, our local process has been adultled incontrast to what we had planned at the beginning.

Positive Feedback:

- A renewed, positive perspective on higher education institutions.
  - *"Participants found the university environment not as complex and intimidating as they thought before. They stated that they liked and appreciated one-on-one contact with faculty members and university students. Due to the welcoming campus setting in contrast to the unwelcoming closed gates, participants expressed that now they have a greater desire to be a part of the university."*

- Drama-, gender-, and camera use- and video editing workshops, as well as the culture tour in the historical district of Istanbul and the visit of an art museum were among the most liked components of the summer school for the young participants.

France

- *"During this experimentation, the rigidity of the university framework was a brake on certain aspects of the project. However, the university can also be a facilitator when it comes to the administrative hosting of projects such as OUYE."*

- *"If we had to do it again, I think it would be interesting to work on a greater mix of roles between the associative support staff and the researchers."*

Co-Evaluation Outcomes: Self-Reflective Thoughts and Concluding Remarks

Finland

- ○ *"On one hand, it was a positive surprise to see how many of the young people in our target group have at least a slight interest towards higher education. On the other hand, the experiment was strongly influenced by young people's disbelief in their own abilities. This was challenging to work with. In higher education, challenges arise when neuro-diversity-related factors prevent participation. Similarly, mental health disorders limit opportunities. The question remains, how broadly and intensively are the HEIs able to support learners struggling with such challenges."*

- ○ *"For the future if running [a] similar project, we would probably be even more creative and think outside of the box much more. Our young people seemed to enjoy many activities and with inspiration that we gained through the project from our project partners, we would probably set-up activities a bit differently. Probably we would also cooperate with other organisations that are active in the field of arts in Helsinki area."*

- In spring 2023, the Finnish team is planning to organize a mixed-seminar and dissemination event, where they would discuss with teachers and students at the university of applied sciences the topics that came up in their experimentation.

UK

- Although the UK team's local process did not address traditional access to university, it was **"temporally and spatially appropriate – and much more importantly, relevant to the young people's lives in the UK currently."**

Co-Evaluation Outcomes: Self-Reflective Thoughts and Concluding Remarks

Turkey

- Going through an education system based on rote-learning and central examination systems based on multiple-choice tests, young people's idea-generating and problem-solving skills are left untended. We observed this in interactive workshops we organized where young people got stuck at times when they needed to develop creative ideas and solutions.

- The young people who participated in the summer school predominantly came from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. However, a few of them had relatively higher socioeconomic backgrounds because of their educated parents with degrees. As a result, there were marked differences among these two groups of participants with respect to problem-solving and idea generation skills, and perspective. This showed us the power of cultural capital as a significant source of inequality and a strong determinant in shaping the educational and professional prospects of young people.

- Our access to the group of young people who participated in the summer school was through our community partner Zero Discrimination that mostly works with Roma people as a disenfranchised community. If we were to redesign our local process, we would try to be more inclusive, and gather a more heterogenous group of young people by reaching out to other groups of young people that are marginalized on various grounds in addition to socio-economic class and ethnicity, such as the LGBTQ+, immigrants, people with disabilities, etc.

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS ON THE OUTCOMES OF CO-EVALUATION

APPEAL OF A DIRECTIVE APPROACH

"… some of the participants gave feedback that they would have liked more guidance on the length of the project, how it would progress, and what it would involve.... We often felt that the young people were more comfortable with a directive approach where they were 'told' what to do ....For example, we had numerous creative sessions in the project where we would suggest an activity for the young people, and they almost always agreed to do it.... We hoped to support a process whereby they felt more comfortable to direct and 'take the reins' of the project rather than having it decided for them."

- UK team

"At DMZ, there was a lot of pressure on the facilitators to propose completely new things to the young people…"

- French team

"In the interactive workshops we organized, we observed young people getting stuck at times when they needed to develop ideas and solutions."

- Turkish team

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS ON THE OUTCOMES OF CO-EVALUATION

UNEASE WITH SELF-EXPRESSION

"They have consistently shown satisfaction and enthusiasm, but they are less likely to reflect on ideas or make recommendations."

- ***UK team***

"Their lack of space to express themselves in schools and in society at large, as well as their intimidation by the university may have led to the young participants' unease with expressing themselves. In general, it can be claimed that young people in Turkey suffer from a culture of authority, based on hierarchical relations in every aspect of social life, which hampers and/or suppresses their voices."

- ***Turkish team***

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS ON THE OUTCOMES OF CO-EVALUATION

THE POWER OF ARTS, CRAFTS, AND COLLECTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR BONDING AND SELF-EXPRESSION

"The majority of our young people have interest in different crafts and art work. It feels sometimes easier for them expressing their feelings non-verbally. Together we experimented with various options how express their opinions, thought and feelings in artistic way. Many young people felt relieved and enjoyed the activities. Each artistic activity was usually accompanied by the discussion and participants felt more relaxed to talk while being busy with manual work."

- **Finnish team**

"It was perhaps in the sessions held at RAPAR, sitting around the table, drawing, eating, etc., that everyone seemed to feel more relaxed. It was during these sessions that deeper, more open reflections about our sense of belonging to the city and the impact of the project took place.... Establishing the rhythm of weekly meetings with the young people where we would walk together and take photographs, sit somewhere familiar or unfamiliar and talk about that place, and think of our spaces creatively, allowed us to think about belonging .... It was in the walking tours and the 'doing' that the group began to develop the camaraderie that was necessary for the project..."

- **UK team**

Similarly, collective activities, like the visits of cultural places as in the cases of Finland and Turkey or hiking as a group in the French local process were all appreciated and enjoyed by the young people.

SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING SEEN AND HEARD

A common sentiment expressed by the young project participants in each and every one of the partner countries was their sense of gratitude for being seen and listened to. In that sense, the Finnish partners might be speaking for all of us when they stated:

- ○ ***"Young people… strongly emphasized the importance of being seen and heard. It is therefore worrying to think about how young people are treated and perceived in our society."***

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS ON THE OUTCOMES OF CO-EVALUATION

ALIENATION FROM AND LACK OF TRUST IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

"In the coaching sessions they could look for any reason to show that they were not believed in or were not really welcome to HEI as students…. Young people with neurodiversity symptoms were very concerned about how willing HEI would be to take them on as students and meet their needs."

-   Finnish team

"…they find that the teaching remains too top-down, even dehumanizing. They feel that there is a real disconnection from reality…At THI, all of the young people mobilized attend university but do not feel comfortable there."

-   French team

"…young people from marginalised backgrounds, and particularly those living in the UK without status, feel unwelcome in cultural and learning spaces such as art galleries, museums, libraries, and, indeed, universities. This is what led to our decision to begin the project from the starting point that the 'university', in conceptual terms, is part of cultural spaces and sites of learning that are exclusionary and unwelcoming to marginalised groups who have, historically, been 'Othered'."

-   UK team

ANALYTICAL INSIGHTS ON THE OUTCOMES OF CO-EVALUATION

NO POINT IN DREAMING

Young people's sense of alienation from and lack of trust in the universities affect their perception of their own abilities, their dreams, and imaginations.

- ○ "…talking about 'access' to university was not something that participants felt able to talk about or comfortable talking about because of the unlikelihood of it happening."

    -   UK team

- ○ "being surrounded by people who have real values, ….allows them to feel good about themselves and therefore to allow themselves to dream, to take responsibility for themselves, to have more confidence in themselves and therefore to move forward with their life projects."

    -   French team

- ○ "'Thank you for broadening my daughter's dreams! This unsolicited remark made by the mother of one of our young participants of the summer school is perceived by us as a solid measure of success of our local process"

    -   Turkish team

Thank you!