YOUTH
FOR SOCIETY

MANUAL FOR BEGINNER YOUTH WORKERS

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Authors
Anahit Minassian, Areg Tadevosyan, Karine Stepanyan, Anush Hayrapetyan, Hermine Papikyan, Simon Thornton, Oliver Wiechmann

Editorial team
Alis Hovhannisyan, Taguhi Minasyan

Translators
Levon Baghdasaryan, Varduhi Lavchyan

Photographer
Sebastian Stadler

Designer
Lilit Stepanyan

FOREWORD

Dear colleagues

This manual is published in quite an interesting period of development the youth field of our country is currently going through.

This year the development of youth worker institution has been approved by the Government of Republic of Armenia as an important direction of youth policy of our country.

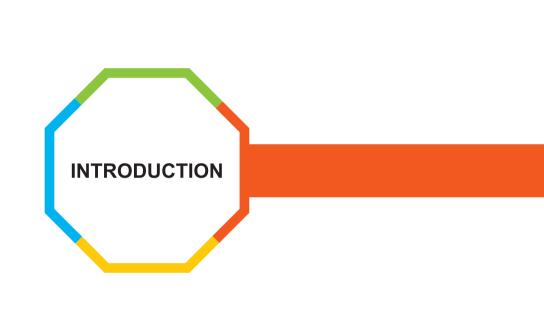During the recent three decades youth work has been playing a key role in the improvement of society life in different countries. This involves work with youth groups and young people aimed at the individual, social and educational growth of young people, as well as the full development and social realization of their potential.

In order to have realized youth work institutions we have to raise the awareness of the society about youth work, create methodological and training materials in Armenian about youth work, train youth workers, as well as provide access to youth work for different groups of young people.

This manual is of a particular interest as it is based on the perennial experience in youth work done in different communities of Armenia in the framework of "Young Citizens of Armenia" project.

The manual can be used both by beginner youth workers, and the ones interested in youth work.

Arsen Karamyan
Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth
Affairs of the Republic of Armenia

INTRODUCTION

… so why this book?

It has been five years since the moment we launched the idea of creating a space for young people to gather around their common interests and develop their youth clubs.

Today the activities of youth clubs in our centers and the support from youth workers *(people who work with youth groups)* allow hundreds of young people learn new skills, build confidence, meet new friends, dream about the society they want to live in and find ways to come one step closer to it.

Many young people across Armenia have been approaching us with the request to assist them in establishing their clubs in their town/village and help methodologically to run them. Our resources have been limited though. This publication, therefore, is our small contribution which goes to all these young people and the ones ready to support the great ideas of youth practically, it is dedicated to everyone, who works or intends to work with youth in various contexts and - is willing to improve!
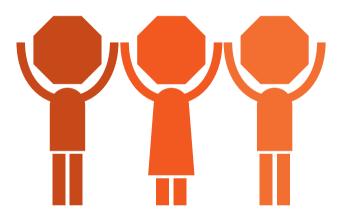
It is our belief that the quality youth activities take a lot of thought, heart and skill to design. We are therefore sharing with you not only a set of methods but also our thoughts on core learning and communication principles with young people today.

Hopefully youth work will become a separate profession once in our country, until then we are happy to make this book available in Armenian as there are very few publications existing in this field in our language.

We wish you a pleasant reading and truly hope that the story of "Young Citizens" inspires you the way it inspires us to make things better for the young people in our country.

Anahit Minassian
Director of KASA Foundation

"YOUNG CITIZENS OF ARMENIA". A STORY OF ONE PROJECT

photo

note

attention

important

solution

Welcome on Board!

If you are reading this manual right now you are embarking on a journey - a journey to discover what it is to be a citizen, about what civic education is and why and how it can be realized. While reading the manual you may find yourself asking questions like: "What are the opportunities and responsibilities that I, as a young person, have in my community? How would I like to see my neighborhood, village, town, school or university? How does change occur? Can I myself change or do anything for my community? How? Where to start?" And hopefully you will find inspiration for answering these questions as we share our answer, the "Young Citizens of (YCA), Young Citizens of Armenia" project, with you. After all, it was realized by young people just like you and it has been bringing together young people interested in the kinds of questions listed above for over four years now. The journey will take you down the sometimes rocky path of project development from the first seeds of ideas to their implementation. It will tell you about the various methods young people have used and the way they changed these methods over time. The journey will help you find tools to get to know yourself and your peers better and make the most out of your free time together!

How, When and Why was the Idea for the Project Born?

It all started when our foundation, KASA, which initially focused on humanitarian and construction work in deprived villages and towns, felt a great need to do more in its efforts to provide opportunities and possibilities for the disaffected youth of Armenia. We noticed that many young people in Armenia needed support during their transition phase from childhood to adulthood; support that was simply non-existent. Adolesence is a period in which we are faced with numerous important decisions that will have long-lasting impacts on our future lives, not least in areas such as education, employment, independence from parents and personal development. Apart from the need to develop skills for employment, young people also have to have a chance to discover themselves, express themselves and find different ways to fulfill their own potential. Often we observed that young people were of the opinion that they could only find all these opportunities abroad, even if they had never left their hometowns. From that time on, the work with young people became one of the key areas of activity for the "KASA" foundation. The purpose of this work has been to facilitate and support young people's development from dependence to interdependence by encouraging personal and social development and enabling young people to have a voice, influence and a place within their communities and societies. Ever since then, we have continued to accompany young people and support them by raising their awareness of the range of decisions and choices open to them and offering opportunities for discussion and debate on the implications of particular choices.

Since 2002 when the Yerevan and Gyumri centers of the foundation were established, they have become a meeting point for young people to get together to share their ideas, skills and time. Gradually some of the meetings grew into regular activities such as conversations in English and French to improve language skills or film screenings as it was more fun to watch films in a group. When referring to these meetings the young people at a certain point gave these activities a general name: "club". Such meetings became very popular among young people; attendance grew and word spread. By visiting the clubs the participants improved their language skills, learned about different cultures, organized their free time around a hobby and made new friends. The number of clubs gradually increased as more and more young people attended the centers. Back then they only needed a space to meet and the discussions about all aspects of life occurred organically. The clubs operated independently and without any special guidance. However, the growing number of clubs as well as the growing requests and suggestions coming from the young people (e.g., materials, support to come up with ideas for

discussion topics, methods in order to engage everybody in the process), started to require some coordination and the provision of methodological support to the young club leaders. We noticed that the same kinds of issues and questions were coming up again and again from the leaders of different clubs. Thus, bringing the clubs together under one project seemed like a solution, in order to provide common support and coaching schemes, create a space for peer learning and sharing of good practice - as well as using our scarce resources effectively. Initially this project was leisurely, simply providing a space for young people to meet like-minded peers, and the topics discussed in the clubs arrived spontaneously. However, over time it became obvious that young people wished to talk about more abstract and ambitious topics related to our society in a more systematic way, but did not know how to start and make sure that the discussions did not simply turn into a forum of complaint and protest. This is when the concept of the "Young Citizens of Armenia" project was conceived. Its aim: to provide a platform for young people to further investigate and scrutinize the environment in which they live and find the thing that would make them feel at home in Armenia.

Who is the Youth Club Leader?

Today there are young people who study, have jobs or do not have any occupation since they haven't found what would they be interested in. Some of these young people often share the desire to find new interests outside their employment and everyday pursuits: something that is interesting to do, is useful to learn and somehow benefits the people surrounding them. We often came across young people, who really wished to make the most of their free time in the way described above but simply didn't know how.

This is what led us to creating a platform together with the young people where a group of them would initiate the process of setting up clubs that would answer their and their peers' various interests. The figure of the youth club leader in this particular context is a young person who decides to initiate and run a youth club for his/her peers. The process of club animation is not only a way to come together around common interests, but also a way to combine what's enjoyable and what's useful. For example: many young people are interested in the arts but don't know how they can put this interest to use for self-development and positive changes in the community. Running a youth club on a weekly basis is a great way for self-development, since the club leader, in the process of preparing for and facilitating a discussion on an art-related topic,researches a good deal of material on the topic, works out methods to share and discuss them in an easy-to-understand manner for his/her peers. At this point, you might well be thinking: "How can an interest such as art bring positive change to the community?" The answer lies in the creativity of the club leaders themselves, take for example an activity in which the club transformed a lot of things considered trash into works of art thus promoting recycling culture in their community.

By getting involved in the project on a voluntary basis the youth club leader passes his/her motivation and enthusiasm on to the peers, by provoking the thought of the participants, raising issues and problems for consideration and challenging prejudice and complacent thinking. During the discussions the youth club leader creates an environment that encourages pluralism and dialogue, whereby every opinion matters and can contribute to the discussion, but equally every opinion is open for criticism.

Naturally, navigating such discussions is no mean feat. From our experience, certain kinds of problem are common. For example, a conflict can happen within the youth club leaders' team (for many, these clubs are their first experience of cooperative work) or low attendance to the clubs affects the mood and motivation

of the club leaders and the other participants, etc. It is through confronting and attempting to overcome these kind of issues that the youth club leader gets an understanding of his/her strengths and weaknesses and how s/he can best serve his/her own needs and those of the surrounding world.

A youth club leader…

- has a clear motivation for working with young people

- has a positive attitude towards his/her country and is willing to contribute to its development

- is eager to learn and understand the essentials of working with young people in a non-formal educational environment

- enables the growth and development of young people so that they are more able to take responsibility for themselves, and to recognize the needs of others

- has a positive and understanding attitude towards young people and their lifestyles

- has an open minded willingness to learn and challenge own attitudes

- is able to appropriately challenge oppressive and bullying behavior

- has the ability to communicate effectively and is willing to polish this ability on a daily basis

- is able to work both as a team member as well as independently using initiative

- has a commitment to long term working and relationship building within the club with young people as well as organizers/supporters of the programme (if any)

- has a basic knowledge of the purpose of youth work and is willing to develop it

- has a knowledge of the local youth, community and voluntary sector

Various Elements in Building our Project

Now we would like to start unfolding various components of the project and the methods that were needed to overcome the new issues arising from the increasing complexity of the youth clubs. Before we proceed to the description of components let us note that it was clear to us that young people visiting our centers over the years really felt the need to express themselves, be informed, and make their own opinions heard. We needed a neutral platform that offers diversity and different opinions where the human mind soars freely in trying to create, where one can develop self-confidence and determination. In response to all of this, a number of project components were designed which we present to you here. In fact, with each year the project components continued developing, getting richer with new ideas and ways to implement them, based on the needs of participating young people. Let us look at the genealogy of this in order to understand the aim and development of each of the project components.

A. Youth clubs

The clubs are one of the key components of the project that marked the start of the project. The clubs organize the free time of young people outside their main occupation: school, university, work, etc. The clubs are different from other ways of spending time in that they combine leisure and learning. Young people meet to interact, talk, visit, express themselves, hold discussions on the events happening around them, learn through each other about themselves and the world and to simply have fun.

The clubs are based on the interests of young people: for instance, young people interested in art are brought together in the art club, those interested in films, in the film club, or for those interested in foreign languages there are language clubs and so on. Despite the fact that interests differ, each month the clubs have a common topic or theme. For instance: "How to dialogue with other cultures?", "Where does freedom of speech end and hate speech start?", "Is it the advanced technology that shapes the human of our days or the human shapes technology?". "Such questions are studied and discussed in line with the specific orientation of the club. But, why have one common topic over a month if you can have various ones? We realized that holding discussions around a common topic in different clubs allows us to break it down and look at it from different angles thus broadening the opportunities to learn.

Below, see the overview of the clubs.We are going to take the example of the topic "Environment" to demonstrate how the same topic can be discussed in clubs which appear to be very different at first glance.

Language clubs

Many young people are interested in learning foreign languages. Language clubs were initiated by young people who were interested in English, French, Italian and Spanish. Their idea was to have meetings during which they would discuss various topics in a foreign language to develop language skills, overcome the barriers to speaking a foreign language and explore issues in Armenian culture and the respective culture(s) of the club. The language clubs encounter little difficulty with regard to the discussion of topics, since the main condition is having the meetings in a given language. In order to reinforce and enrich the intercultural aspect we engage young people arriving to Armenia through the European Voluntary Service (EVS). They often serve as co-leaders along with their Armenian peers in the clubs and enrich the clubs by sharing their culture and experience.

Example: "Daily foods and their hidden identity"

Art club

Was set up by young people interested in the arts and seeking to find elements in different works that are closely linked to various aspects of our daily life. Going against often heard expressions such as "I don't "get" art" and "I am not creative", the youth club leaders refer to works by different artists during the meetings, and also stress the importance of "speaking" creatively on the chosen topics, promoting creativity in all possible directions.

Example: "Land Art" - an art form that is created in nature, using natural materials such as soil, rock, and water. Sculptures are not placed in the landscape; rather, the landscape is the means of their creation. Using this creative method helps to unfold various aspects of any topic and shows the ways in which art can bring the human closer to nature.

Psychology club

Initially this club was set up as a platform where young psychologists met to discuss various professional topics. With the development of the club, however, an idea came up to share the knowledge about psychology applicable in every-day life with those, who are not professionals but who are interested in human psychology and discuss various topics of daily life, revealing their psychological aspects, in order to better understand how they affect the inner world of each of us.

Example: "What is the emotional connection between the human and nature?"

Film club

The love of movies and the desire to share it with peers were at the heart of the idea to set up a film club. Following the screening, different aspects of the films are discussed, ranging from the technical (soundtrack, cinematography etc.) to the themes present in the film. The participants try to identify the issues and problems posed by the film and discuss them. The film club provides an opportunity for people to share or discuss the film with others, an activity which is becoming increasingly rare in the age of the internet.

Example: Films raising awareness of environmental issues and presenting various solutions, such as "Home", "Waste land", always prompt interesting discussions.

Human Rights club

Young people who started the club are all concerned with raising their peers' awareness about their own rights. During meetings conceived around interactive exercises, together the participants discover and try to understand what rights they have and how they can protect them. To solidify knowledge of human rights, we often invite experts to our club (e.g. from the Office of the Defender of Human Rights), who present the situation in Armenia in the area of violation of different rights and the measures taken to improve the protection of these areas.

Example: "How consistent am I in ensuring my right to live in a healthy environment?"

Intercultural club

All the topics discussed in this club are viewed in the context of different cultures. This helps to learn about different cultures and at the same time understand how diverse the options for solution to issues around us are. The club features participants representing different cultures allowing us to dig deeper beyond the stereotypes and learn about it through the person of that culture. Here, as in the language clubs, the intercultural aspect is enriched by the presence of international volunteers or with foreign guest participants visiting Armenia.

Example: "The importance of nature conservation and attitudes to it in different cultures."

Cartoon club

Young people who like animation pictures and do not agree with the generally held belief that the animated movies and cartoons are created only for kids, have set up this club in order to communicate the deeper idea behind the movies and their message also to adults. They for example demonstrated how powerful a 3-minute animated movie about the human impact on the earth can be in driving us to rethink our own lifestyle and think bigger than our immediate environments, that is, to think about the future of the entire earth. This club is very similar to the film lovers club with the main difference being that instead of live action movies people watch animated ones.

Example: The movies "WALL-E" & "Finding Nemo", for example, lead you to reflect on the environment.

"In the middle of events" club

When events occur, our own opinion on them is formed very fast simply based on rumors or the mass media response. So we do not take the time to stop and try to understand how we so instantly formed our opinion. This fact, noted by a number of young people, lead them to set up this club which discusses latest developments in Armenia and around the world and the way mass media covered them.

Example: What are the potential consequences of the decision allowing prospecting for oil and gas in the Lake Sevan basin?

This is not an exhaustive list of clubs, since any interest can lead to setting up a club of a new format.

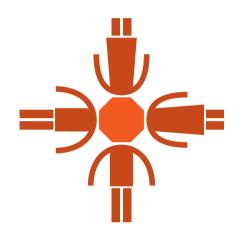*Having different focuses, the clubs, however, share common features:*

- the clubs are set up and run by young volunteers and for young people

- the meetings take place with an already set frequency, for example once or twice a week

- the duration of each meeting is usually 1.5 - 2 hours

- participation is on a voluntary basis

- the participants are young people aged between 16 and 30. The up-

per limit is very flexible and does not imply restrictions for those above the limit who wish to attend the club meetings. However, this restriction applies to the young people under this age due to the complexity of many of the issues discussed. If the participants under 16 are interested in the clubs, such can be set up specifically for that age group in order to address their specific needs and interests.

- the meetings are arranged and co-ordinated by youth club leaders, however, the entire process is built through the active participation of all the participants.

- for all the clubs a common topic is picked each month and each club leader makes his/her own decision on what specific weekly sub-topics are to be discussed in the club within the general topic.

B. Activities outside the clubs

For young people the club meetings provide a platform to discuss issues of relevance, concern and interest. However, over time both the club leaders and the participants began thinking bigger. A desire to take concrete action grew, which would take the discussed issues outside of the meeting rooms drawing public attention to them and engaging broader public in their solution. Activities outside the clubs came to fill this gap and garner yet more discussion on the issues covered in the clubs.

The activities realized have been various, but they share the common goal of drawing public attention to important issues and to turn the experiences and knowledge gained during the discussions into something useful for the community.

Youth initiatives

Have a concrete idea? Put it into action, develop it from A-Z and make it happen!

Often when we say *"initiative"* many people perceive it as a mystical thing which requires supernatural abilities to think it through and implement it. Sometimes we don't understand how one can undertake and implement a thing, where to start, where to end and what outcome to get.

But in fact, the essence of the initiative is to identify the existing needs and issues and find constructive solutions to them which would be beneficial to the public and the society. No miracles are actually needed for the initiative. The only miracle as such is the sense of responsibility for improvement, as well as the important guiding principle, the desire to act and change, not to remain indifferent towards things happening around us and initiate relevant actions. One of the key objectives of the project is to develop initiative-taking skills among young people. The question here is for the young people to be able to develop and implement their own ideas based on community needs and to learn to bear responsibility through practical measures.

Example: During one of the club meetings as a result of discussions around the fact that special needs children are being raised in isolation in Armenia, the participants came up with an initiative of regular visits to special needs children. They took turns to organize film screening and discussions, do arts and crafts with the children on weekly basis. These activities sought to extend the limited opportunities for interaction that children had. They also aimed to promote their communication skills through fun activities.

Other youth initiatives included community waste removal, cleaning busstops, setting up designated areas for announcements, designing Latin letter versions of street signs and travel destinations in different regions of Armenia for foreign visitors, etc.
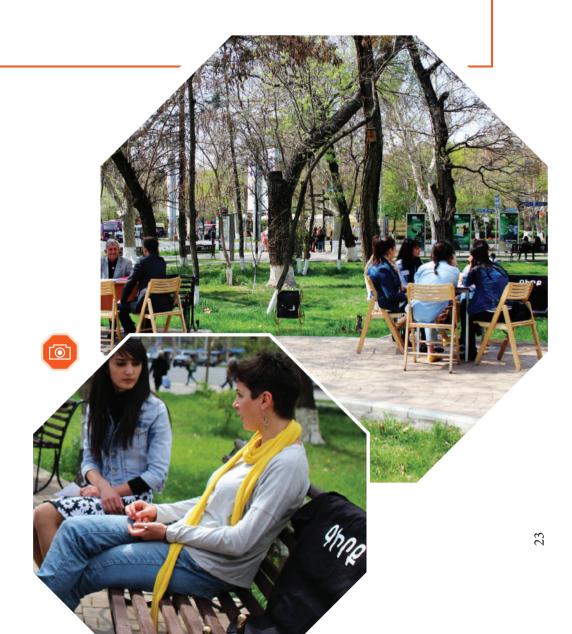
Here are a few examples of this kind of activities:

"Human rights" laundry: We thought hard about how to draw the attention of the public to the fact that we have rights which we often overlook, where the primary prerequisite for their protection is awareness of them. In order to focus attention on these rights in an every-day setting, young people decided to associate it with an activity that is part of our daily life. They tied a clothes line along the entire

pedestrian street in the centre of Gyumri and hung out some laundry with different rights written on them. The passers-by who first responded with surprise, would start reading the rights, sometimes asking questions and starting discussions on these topics. This way the participants took home an interesting episode of their day and also gained knowledge.

"Living library": In this *"library"*, set up in Komitas park in Yerevan, the "books" were people ready to share their life experiences, culture and "message" with others. Around 20 "living" books came together: a person who had experienced clinical death, a Syrian refugee, a yoga trainer, a pilot, an Indian student and others. These were people with interesting and incredible life stories which one can learn a lot from. For about 20 minutes each of the "book people" shared their story to the library visitors. In our era of technology, people sometimes get tired of virtual interaction and need real interaction! And this is what also motivates the "living" books and the "readers" to meet.

Experience sharing activities
Happy about the way your youth club is running? Help the others to get started!

Following a meeting of the film club, we were approached by a girl from Spitak, a city in the north of Armenia, who expressed her eagerness to have a film club in her city and asked us for help. We visited Spitak and jointly started a film club, passing on the skills built in establishing and running a club. Similarly, we visited Ashtarak, Vanadzor, Ijevan and Chambarak, where we had networking meetings with young people who wanted to have a club where they could meet, interact and talk about various topics. Young people had hard time imagining what it would be about, where to start, what is needed and how it should be done. The idea of these activities is to show the experience accumulated by the club leaders in different places so it could sprout and fruit. It is important that the accumulated knowledge is not restricted to one place, but is spread and made available wherever there is a need.

Exhibitions
Share your art… Art is not what you see, but what you make others see!

Artists have in all times used their works to communicate to the broader public various societal issues that were of concern to them and over time these works, passed from generation to generation, carried a great deal of information allowing us to learn the characteristics of those times. Paintings for instance, as a kind of visual dialogue, allow the artist to present the world from own perspective letting the viewers have another perception of the same world, leading to a many-sided perception of things. Because of this, learning about the world around us through the "language" of art became one of the integral parts of the project.

The visual presentation of topics discussed in the clubs was performed through thematic exhibitions presenting the works of those young artists who had already created something around those topics before or created new pieces around jointly selected topics.

Example: Joint exhibition on "Intergenerational dialogue" where artists presented the difference in the outlooks of generations, the transience of time and in this context the opportunities for dialogue and learning between those representing different generations.

The first step in somehow responding to issues is to get an insight into it. There is no better way to do it than to "grill" experts who have researched the topic and are well-versed in it. The seminars are meetings with knowledgeable experts who offer interesting materials on the topic and answer the questions of the participants. We invited number of experts and have covered various topics related to our society. The seminars are rather small scale activities (25 - 40 participants), their entrance is free, not limited to the club leaders/participants and they essentially include newcomers who are interested in the topic but are not necessarily familiar with the project yet. Organizing this type of event is great for extending your network of knowledgeable people in Armenia as well as attracting new club participants for your usual club discussions.

How do we pick the topics? The topics brought forth over the clubs' meetings that were of greater interest or sometimes even concern to the participants, become topics for seminars. In order to research the topics from all sides we have also brought together several experts around one topic, who present different aspects of the given field.

How do we find the experts? Asking everyone; parents, friends, colleagues. Look for them on TV and radio programs, search for topic related publications on internet and try to find out more about their authors. At first you might think these kind of people are far from your reach, but try it and you will see yourself that often they are really easy to approach and happy to share their knowledge and experience with young generation. Depending on your resources you might consider a symbolic compensation; we had different experiences in this regard. Whatever option you go for, you will need to make sure it is clear and acceptable for your expert.

Example: "Faith and reason: religion in the secular age" - a historian, a priest from the Armenian Apostolic Church and a Tibetan Buddhist were invited to speak together and answer questions on different aspects of the topic.

"Keys to success" activities

Get inspired by the positive examples around us!

Often someone's positive experience inspires and drives us to do and change something. While many young people are quite disaffected, believing that they cannot fulfill their potential in Armenia, there are also those who managed to find the *golden key* to success, who were not discouraged by the initial difficulties, and who believed in what they wanted to achieve and stayed the course.

Here, another idea was born. Why not share this *"key"* with young people wishing to act, create, change but still having fears to act in own country? We organized meetings with those young people (representatives of the business world, artists, those from the youth field, etc.), who owing to their perseverance, determination and will are living examples of becoming successful in Armenia. Such meetings aim to point out to young people in particular the positive examples, which can be inspiring, if there is a good idea and a desire to follow-up and implement it. The goal of these meetings is to encourage as many people as possible to discover their own potential, draw on it and implement the most incredible ideas.

How Did We Work to Make it Work?

You are probably thinking now: "So how can all of this be implemented? Where to start from?" In order to make the project components presented up to this point as effective as possible, to support the club leaders and equip them with skills (such as abilities to demonstrate sound critical attitude towards the information received, actively participate in the social life, care, organize and initiate), we started working on various implementation methods which we present to you here.

Main Methodological Approaches Used

However, before we start sharing our thoughts on methodology we used to make this project work, it is important for you to understand that we work with young people of different social and cultural backgrounds with a range of needs, interests and aspirations. Some of them are at ease to get quickly on board and fully involved in the activities of the centres, whereas others need more time and effort in finding their own place and activity that fits their needs and interest the best. We cherish this diversity and have been looking for an educational methodology that would be open to make the best out of this diversity and contribute to harmonious personal, social development, well-being and self-realisation of the young person. On the other hand most of our activities focus on acquiring life skills in support of both active citizenship and employment for young people in a quite complex Armenian reality. Therefore, what we were looking for was not only a set of effective interactive methods that would bring different groups of young people together, but rather a holistic value-based educational system which would enable young people to develop autonomy, proactiveness, critical awareness and motivation to contribute to the sustainable development of Armenia.

Non-formal education has been the core methodology and philosophy of the foundation in our youth programmes. Non-formal education has a long and lively tradition in Europe, although the term "non-formal education" as such was only introduced into official usage in the 1990s. It is generally considered to be one of the main forms of youth work and is aimed at enabling young people to learn from experience and experiment. It is usually carried out during young people's free time - often outside of the family, school or work. Non-formal education is a peculiar form of education in that it allows representatives of different social groups to obtain and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes corresponding to the demands/conditions of the rapidly changing environment.[1]

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[1] Non-formal education concept in the Republic of Armenia. Annex of the N50 Decision of the RA Government (14th December, 2006). *Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունում ոչ ֆորմալ կրթության հայեցակարգ, ՀՀ Կառավարության 2006 թ.-ի դեկտեմբերի 14-ի N 50 որոշման հավելված:*

As the term of "non-formal education" has been recently put into wider use in Armenia, we feel it is important for you to know that just like in case of many other terms, here too different people put different ideas behind this particular term. Our understanding and definition of the term is based on the State Concept of Non-formal Education in the Republic of Armenia (adopted by the RA government in 2006), which just like our own practice, is inspired by a non-formal education tradition that is widely acknowledged to have been shaped mostly by the Council of Europe, in particular its youth sector.

Non-formal education stands for a range of core learning principles, methodologies and approaches commonly emphasizing the learner's intrinsic motivation, voluntary participation, critical thinking and active role in society.

Some of the key features of non-formal education to keep in mind when designing your activity…

- balance and fine interaction in cognitive (knowledge), practical (skills) and affective (attitudes) dimensions of learning

- linking individual and social learning

- symmetrical teaching/learning relations

- participatory and learner-centered

- maximally close to real-life situations and challenges

- learning through experience

- voluntary participation

- open and accessible to various groups of learners

balance → knowledge skills attitudes ← interaction

We see young people as partners in learning and decision-making, therefore the educational environment, which we provide should support:

- young people to better participate in our society's social, cultural, economic and political life;

- encouraging young people to be critical in their responses to their own experience and to the world around them;

- making informed choices about their personal responsibilities within their communities;

- working alongside school/university education to encourage young people to achieve and fulfill their potential;

- working with other organisations (both non-governmental and governmental) to encourage society to be more responsive to young people's needs.

Another important notion we would like you to discover is peer learning. Peer learning is mutually beneficial and involves the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience among the participants. It can be described as a way of moving from independent to interdependent or mutual learning. Young participants of our clubs learn a great deal by explaining their ideas to others and by participating in activities in which they can learn from their peers. They develop skills in organizing and planning youth activities, working collaboratively with others, giving and receiving feedback and evaluating their own progress over the time.

As we moved throughout the project, we saw that most of the young people in Armenia are very keen on gaining new knowledge on various topics and widening their horizon - what's more challenging though is making this knowledge serve a common good. As you read you might yourself recall at least few situations in your life when making a common decision together with your peers was very difficult, sometimes even impossible. This particular project is aimed at the development of autonomy and decision-making skills of young people, it therefore grants them with a possibility to participate in project monitoring and recommend on implementing any changes for improvement. Participation of young people in decision-making processes is probably one of the most difficult but also most important aspects of the project. Creation of the youth club leaders' council within the project was our way to practice real-life participatory approach.

Project Support Components

A. Youth Club Leaders' training

Have you ever been in a situation when you felt like you lacked a skill, that you are in conflict with yourself and not clear on what you want or simply said to yourself that you couldn't do it? Each of us has probably experienced one of these moments, and certainly, when taking on the responsibility to lead a club, experiences such as these are almost inevitable.

This is the very reason we initiated the process of training the youth club leaders on the methods of non-formal education. Trained youth club leaders would then multiply the experience and knowledge they gained during the training with their peers during club meetings.

Three times per year all the club leaders would receive a training specially prepared for them by "National Pool of Trainers" and our foundation.

During these trainings the club leaders:

- develop their communication-based competences: interact, dialogue and mediate

- learn about various youth club facilitation methods: design youth activities based on experience, practice and experimentation

- develop their co-existing and co-working competences: effective teamwork, partnership, networking

- raise awareness of self-directed competences: creativity, discovery, responsibility

- receive theme-related knowledge: theoretical inputs on citizenship and selected monthly topics

Now you might ask, "Why do we need to learn about all these things?" Well, in fact, we should admit your task is not going to be an easy one… You, being a young person yourself, need to motivate many others out there. Training yourself as a youth club leader is a way for you to grow and thus help others grow too. Growing is a constant process of self-awareness, self-discovery and self-development. It is important to know how to create a unique learning environment which is rather casual and encourages young people to think outside the box. While designing your club activities try to put the theoretical knowledge into practice and experience the reality around. This type of environment highly values diversity and helps you create a neutral platform for your club participants to learn from each other.

B. E-learning

Some years ago we could not imagine that even while being in different parts of the world you could learn, get knowledge, share experience and skills with others would be so easy? With the development of new technology distance becomes less of a problem for the accessibility of information and educational resources. In order to get prepared for club meetings the youth club leaders often asked us for support (they mostly requested quality materials on the topic but often also needed guidance on facilitation methods). Taking into consideration time, space and financial constraints as well as witnessing current accessibility of Internet to rather a large number of young people in Armenia, we have come up with the solution of using E-learning as a support measure.

E-learning component enables you:

- to accompany club leaders in their weekly tasks (providing a safe and private place to interact and brainstorm on club leader experience with all club animators, having possibility to directly address questions to project assistants anytime and anywhere)

- to provide a common theoretical base and methodological support on different aspects of our society (the platform has a section for each month where thematic materials in forms of text, audio and video as well as examples of methods of non-formal education are shared)

- to assure self-directed as well as group learning process of club leaders (methods such as short quizzes, thematic discussion boards, youth-friendly individual and group assignments on monthly topics are available for better exploration of the topic)

- to develop digital and e-culture competences very needed today

Through the platform the club leaders are able to use the information package according to the topic of the month posted on the platform (e.g. How to dialogue with other cultures?) in order to prepare for the meeting of the club. The introduction, references to literature and internet sources, the thematic quiz as well as the videos included in the information package help the youth club leaders form an understanding on the topic of the month, as well as discuss the emerged questions in online discussion forums. E-learning can be costly but there are many ways of simplifying it through various web tools existing today.

C. On-going consultations and support

Imagine that we have a group of young people with some understanding of why they got involved in the "Young Citizens of Armenia" project, what their role is going to be, what they will do, how and why. And yet they still have big question marks: How am I going to interact? How am I going to communicate? How am I going to organize? Where do I start and end? In order to provide relatively adequate answers to these questions we organize 3-4 day trainings, as mentioned above, which seek to lay the foundation for the future work of the youth club leaders. Nonetheless, as the saying goes, practice makes perfect.

So let's get started, the club leaders prepare for their club meetings. Here is where

they encounter different challenges, such as the difficulties of organizing team work, conflict resolution (internal and external), organizational skills, communication barriers, etc. How do we overcome all of this? This is where on-going consultations come in. Meetings are regularly held between the project coordinators (who are usually more experienced in youth work) and the club leaders, before and after the clubs, discussing and giving advice on both personal and project-related issues (e.g. the efficient organization of the clubs, improvement of the skills of the leaders, sharing, presentation of new tools and methods in non-formal education, research, development, team work and cooperation among animators, etc.) We also want to note that the project team has managed to establish close contact within the team of club animators, who often confirm that they feel more confident when they exchange their concerns and ideas, especially in case they have issues with interpersonal communication.

D. Meetings with experts

As already mentioned, the thematic coverage of the clubs is very extensive, from mass media to ethics and morality. The thematic diversity and little time to prepare for weekly meetings requires the prompt shifting from one topic to another and quick research on these topics. The project team has provided its assistance, preparing a starter kit accompanied with video materials and references for further research. Nonetheless, the leaders often expressed the lack of a well-rounded understanding of the main aspects of a chosen topic. This is when the idea to have meetings with thematic experts came up. The expert provides comprehensive information on the general topic based on in-depth research, presents the current issues associated with the topic and the tendencies for development first in Armenia's setting, and then in the global context. The meetings take place in the format of an interactive get-together allowing us to turn to the questions that arise right then.

As a result of collaboration with the experts a network of professionals in different sectors is set up who can provide guidance and support to the animators also outside of their meetings.

E. Youth club leaders' council

Generally speaking, decision-making is a difficult and burdensome process, especially when decisions are made not only for you but also for others. How does decision-making work? When there are unclear issues or issues arising from certain circumstances decisions are made to clarify them, or when there

is an alternative and you have to make a decision by choosing the option that is the most beneficial. Due to our cultural characteristics the decisions are mostly made by others on our behalf, and we abide by them although we often complain about the decisions made by other people. In such cases, the first complaint that comes to mind is the following: "But why did they decide this way? Wasn't it possible to do it differently?" And in this case the *"top-down"* approach works almost always: I tell and you do. In its turn this leads to a misunderstanding of the concept of *democracy* and undermines the abilities of the human to act and make decisions independently. At the same time when we are given the opportunity to make decisions on a participatory basis, we often experience fear and avoid responsibility. However, a sound civil society rests on informed individuals with autonomous and participatory decision-making skills who are thus able to assume responsibility for the decisions made.

For many years it was the project team that made decisions on various components of the project on behalf of the club leaders. This way, the club leaders didn't have a chance to voice their wants and needs on a decision making level. Therefore, to promote as much as possible the club leaders' independence and participation in decision-making that concerned them, the "animators' council" was set up. This way the club leaders set forth the issues related to their own work, jointly discuss them over the council's meetings and make own decisions on the issues throughout the project implementation.

As a matter of fact, the Youth club leaders' council set the aim to develop autonomy of the club leaders, their decision-making and self-organization skills.This component guides the club leaders in creating their own management/governance model by making democratic decisions on the matters directly associated with them and their participation in the project (e.g. selection of topics for monthly discussions in the clubs, improvement in the processes of the project, making the project more accessible for young people with fewer possibilities, etc.). Through this unique model of club leaders' council, the club leaders understand the significance and at the same time also the difficulty of being responsible from their own experience. They realize what it means to be responsible not only when it comes to decision making but also when it concerns all of those who the decision was intended for.

Who joins the Youth club leaders' council? The council is made up of one leader from each club. To reinforce the idea of cooperation and participatory approach among the club leaders it is preferable for each club leader to discuss and pick a person from their team that is going to have their voice heard in the Council.

How is this process set up? All the club leaders have the opportunity to be in

the council and be equally involved in the process of improvement of their own project. The council has a set session with regular meetings to discuss project implementation, moderation and similar issues of concern. Specifically within this project each cycle of the council lasts 2 months. Then those club leaders who have not served in the council come to replace the members of the council (the number of the clubs and club leaders should be taken into account here when setting the duration of the council cycles in order to ensure equal participation of all the club leaders).

It should be noted that the initial work of the council can be full of challenges and it can take a long time for this mechanism to get up and running. It can take a long time for the club leaders to be able to overcome the obstacles related to the clear and understandable formulation of their thoughts, to start working together, to listen diplomatically to one another and to participate in decision making. Since the process of such autonomous decision making is not common in Armenia, the project team set a goal to work on the *council* component with incrementally increasing levels of responsibility over the year. Initially the club leaders decided to draft a number of documents needed in order to launch the *council* and be guided by them in the future, they might be interesting for you to consider (e.g. "Composition, Rules and Procedures of the Council", "Responsibilities of the council coordinator and the rapporteur", "Council functions", "Values and principles", "Improving our clubs, quality standards and criteria"). One of the key functions of the council is the selection of topics of the month to be discussed in the clubs. In order for the topics to be consistent with the specific focus of the clubs (for example, in Human Rights, Psychological, Art clubs), the demand for the topic among young people and the possibilities to set up meetings around these topics by the club leaders should be carefully considered. So each delegate of the selected session initially discusses within their own club the topics of interest and then all the possible options are discussed and approved at the *council* meeting.

Here are some examples of the selected topics: "How am I interconnected with my environment?", "How to dialogue with other cultures? "What is my secret to reach peace (internal and external)", "How is my understanding of right or wrong determined?" "What is the connection between me and society?"

What happens next? The decisions of the *council* are made in two stages: The animators present at the given session of the council are involved at the first stage. At the second stage the delegates elected by the *council* present the decisions made by them to the project team in the course of the co-management body meeting and this is where final joint decisions are made. This meeting is held jointly by the Animators' council and project team members. The latters offer certain

recommendations in order to ensure consistency of the animators' decisions with the aims of the foundation and the project.

F. Newsletter

The question "What do you do in the clubs?" is often asked of animators by their friends and family. In order to make the work of the clubs and that of the club leaders visible beyond our centers' space, an e-newsletter was jointly created and published bimonthly.

The newsletter contained certain information on the project, such as the latest changes in the project, interesting past events, guests invited, etc. The club leaders as well as many club participants expressed a wish to publish their thoughts and experiences in a separate section of the newsletter as advocates. The newsletter gradually came to include certain important events and civic initiatives happening around us.

Times change, the media change. Now, years later in order to have a diversity in expression and coverage the newsletter turns into a blog.[2] Its purpose and the operation mechanism is essentially the same: inform, exchange, share and disseminate best practices. Year after year we strive to come up with the best working option to cover the work of young people and share our experience.

[2] https://youngcitizensofarmenia.wordpress.com/

Sharing Some Thoughts on the Outcomes

In this part of our journey let's discuss the project outcomes which tell us why it is important to support a young person's personal development and how it contributes to building a society that we all aspire to live in.

We, young people, are diverse and this is invaluable. One is a good listener and is amazing at analyzing the thoughts expressed by others. The other one can turn the material analyzed into brilliant ideas, and the third initiates a specific action based on the ideas. But often we are not even aware that we understand people very well and can easily solve conflict or that we are great organizers. Instead, we go down a path that we didn't choose, that we don't like and one that doesn't bring out our hidden potential, capacities and desires. For example, one often enrolls in a course at a university and studies a profession only because it's prestigious, whereas in reality one excels in a different field. We are often concerned that we will not be able to find a job if we don't have some prestigious profession. As a result, the labour market is flooded with people trained in certain professions, whose supply exceeds the demand while finding high-quality candidates for other jobs becomes a problem. Besides, why don't we start our own business, if we are not finding what we want? Many successful business people of today had failures along the path to success but with each failure they were closer to success since they carried on.

In this context and as a result, the project created the environment in which each of us is able to discover their hidden potential and make the best use of it. Owing to a great deal of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills acquired or developed in the course of the project the young people participating in our project are able to better orientate themselves and act in many situations. In addition, this process gave birth to the network in which the members are ready to support each other and collaborate on various issues: from individual consultations to large-scale collaboration for the sake of own community development or promotion of a business idea.

Now you might be thinking; "How has all of this led to building a better society?" The answer is actually very simple. It is due to self-awareness and self-development that the young people have started valuing diversity, each person's uniqueness, listening and respecting everybody's opinion, not being indifferent and caring about the surroundings, criticizing what used to be taboo and initiating change. Change is not achieved in a day, is it? It is an art of small steps as put by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in his book "The Little Prince".This is the very foundation of a healthy society in which many of us aspire to live.

Over the last five years the project has been providing us with a lot of food for thought and to conclude this extraordinarily enriching process we would like to highlight some of them…

- Creating a great youth project is not only a matter of finding resources but an ability to establish a special relationship with young people; it is an ability to decode the needs and concerns of young people that are often voiced out in a language others don't quite understand.

- Such civic education youth projects are essential in advancing the understanding and practice of democracy, human rights, citizenship, cultures of participation and equal opportunities in our country.

- Youth is a fascinating period in a human's life, however it is also a period full of personal and social ambiguities; young people need support and not just constant judgment in dealing with change. Being a part of a youth club could be very beneficial at this stage.

- The world is not the way it used to be 10, 20, 30, 50 years ago...We live in a world of rapidly changing identities. Among all the other challenges, most young people are faced with identity questions (e.g. "what does it mean to be Armenian today?"), open-minds are needed in strengthening positive identities and a sense of belonging. Providing a neutral platform for discussions and accompanying young people in self-discovery and self-expression is important.

- All young people have a great potential, but are mostly unaware how to make use of it… It takes time, effort, strong motivation and an open spirit, but the results are very rewarding.

- Ongoing mentoring provided by a more experienced youth worker serves as a great support to the young people. Areas where a talk is appreciated may vary from personal life concerns to thoughts on social transformation and future of Armenia.

- Once young people start to gain self-confidence and feel motivated and comfortable in a youth club, many of them come up with compelling ideas, and are capable of initiating and implementing youth activities which would raise and put forward for discussion issues that are otherwise usually ignored.

- Volunteering and youth work broadens personal horizons of young people, develops a number of important competences and clearly enables transitions to successful adulthood - particularly working life.

- Participating in such local youth activities on a regular basis shapes a strong and healthy feeling of ownership towards one's community and country; it gives a hope and motivation to contribute to the chal-

lenging process of its development and to feel more at home.

- Serious difficulties were experienced once we passed from discussion phase to action phase; establishment of Youth club leaders' Council is probably the best illustration of it. Once on a decision making platform we tend to fall into our old reflexes of desiring to be "always the first and the best"; ignoring others in order to feel "important" and "special" in our role completely forgetting about the responsibility that we have. Simple listening skills and more importantly the understanding and internalization of the notions of accountability, responsibility, respect and self-awareness are crucial to be developed.

It is certainly not an easy path to walk but we absolutely encourage you to go for it!

Our Youth Club Leaders about the Project…

Artsrun Pivazyan

During the University exams, the examination committee was surprised at my competent public speaking skills. They were surprised by my critical and analytical approach to interpreting the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. After a short discussion they started asking questions about YCA (Young Citizens of Armenia) project. They mentioned that the skills and values I obtained in the framework of the project were as important as my professional knowledge. As a result I got my first excellent mark in the state exams - 100 points out of possible 100.

Tatev Sargsyan

I started participating in this project when I was just 15 years old. I was very shy then and had difficulties communicating; I was afraid to express my ideas and opinions especially in the presence of those who were older than me and expressed themselves better. Over time I felt that the project was helping me to understand myself better. I started being more at ease and self-confident which gave me the resolve to apply for an exchange programme and study for 1 year in the USA, thereby developing my knowledge and abilities. This project has visibly stimulated my progress; I feel more valued and active in society.

Lusine Grigoryan

My participation in the project has helped me to become more self-confident, to overcome my fears and realize my imagination. During the project I made one of my most difficult decisions - for the first time I went abroad to implement a 1 year volunteering project, to get to know a new culture, learn and teach…

Piruze Sahakyan

While running the Intercultural club, I have developed my listening skills and I have become more patient. It helped me communicate more easily with my friends (especially with the ones I always argued with), accepting and trying to understand their views. It seems that previously I was expressing myself in the manner of offering an opposite viewpoint or forcing my opinion on the opponent. Today I think that our wealth is also in our diversity.

Anahit Simonyan

The organizational skills, the ability to organize effective discussions about difficult questions and the knowledge about non-formal education obtained and developed in the project has inspired me greatly and recently, together with my friend, one of who was also a club leader, we established an NGO dealing with human rights education (Human Rights Educational Center NGO)…

Nane Norekyan

Frankly speaking, during the project I decided to live and work abroad. I moved, lived there for 3 months. I had a good job with a high salary but I returned to Armenia. Now together with our partners we work on projects for the development of several provinces of Armenia. The YCA project had its big influence in this question.

Syuzi Muradyan

I know one thing for sure: I am not the person I was before coming to this center - in the most positive meaning of my words. In my opinion, there can't be anything more important than this since all my subsequent success depended on it.

Arevik Karapetyan

The biggest result of the project for me is the fact that a great number of young Armenians have become more open-minded, have come out of their "comfort zones" and are ready to do, along with their studies, things that are useful not only for them but also for their environment. I have run the Gyumri Film club for one year. That period has become a turning point for me. It gave me both knowledge and working experience; it allowed me to develop certain qualities that helped me in my professional life. It developed in me responsibility, discipline, organizational skills, interpersonal communication skills and the ability to work in a team. The latter helped me a lot in finding a job.

Nare Hovhannisyan

My education is in literary theory but after graduating I felt like half a person simply because I couldn't speak English. Good knowledge of English is not only one of the requirements of the majority of employers but also a precondition for intercultural dialogue. I couldn't find a job immediately after graduating from Yerevan State University which also meant that I couldn't afford private lessons of English. And then suddenly I learnt from a friend of mine about the English club. I invested all my intellectual efforts into teaching myself English, having as a stimulus the English speaking environment where I could express myself in English as well as debate. The result was astonishing. Recently I was offered a job at the American University of Armenia where I currently work in the Lifelong learning department and now I myself encourage people to participate in such projects.

HOW TO FEEL AT HOME IN THE WORLD

note

attention

important

solution

The Social Animals that We Are: Understanding Civil Society and Active Citizenship

Let us call this entire project of active citizenship the project of feeling at home in the world. This definition is the kind of definition which, at once, sounds the most obvious and, yet, the most meaningless. It will be the aim of this chapter to draw out the meaning of this definition; a meaning which, sometimes, might be less than obvious. More specifically, this chapter will be

"If the human essence is social, then men and women have to choose not between independence or dependence but between citizenship and slavery."[3]

"How Ought we to live?...Who are we, as Armenians?"[4]

The first quote here tells us that we humans are social beings; we live in families, neighborhoods, towns, cities, nations etc. We live *with others*. And the way in which we live with others gives rise to and is shaped by culture, tradition, social structures (family, friends, professions, social roles etc.) and political institutions (governments, judiciaries, police forces, etc). From the smallest tribe, to the bustling metropolis our lives are complexly mediated by a vast array of different social structures which are often hidden and deeply embedded in our way of life. These structures, however, are not eternal and unchangeable; they are made by us and they are always in flux.

Now, oftentimes we might not notice - and we might not need to notice - the social

[3] Barber, B. R., *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Pg. 216

[4] Bellah, R., Et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), Pg. vii NB. This quote has been paraphrased in order to refer to Armenians rather than Americans. The authors take it that the meaning of the sentence itself is left unchanged.

structures which shape our lives. We simply "live" these structures; and that is fine for us. However, just as often, we might be made to feel "uncomfortable" by these structures which constitute our way of life.[5] This is to be expected, however, because the truth is that one of the reasons that our social lives are mediated by these various structures is because what I want and what my "neighbour" wants sometimes conflict, and we need ways of "managing" these conflicts; whether it is by social custom, or police action. This is not the only reason for the existence of social structures, of course; culture and traditions reflect a collective self-identity of a people or a nation which ties us together. Yet, this also poses problems since sometimes who we take ourselves to be and the societies in which we live do not "fit" somehow.[6] Something does not feel "right".

So, the point of the first quote is to say that given the situation just described, we are presented with a choice: citizenship or slavery. This choice is crucially different to a choice between dependence and independence, since independence is not an *option* for us - we cannot simply leave the social world all together. But what does it mean, then, to say that we have to choose between slavery and citizenship? Slavery here means passively "putting up" with life, even if we are alienated from it; perhaps pretending to be other than we are and trying to "fit in", or perhaps retreating into an isolated life. *Citizenship*, however, means realizing that the social structures and institutions that shape our lives are things that we have created and that we have the power to question and alter. If we feel that there is something wrong about the world in which we live, it is ultimately "up to us" to change it; it is our responsibility as citizens.

We might think, though, that in a sense being a citizen is easy; we are just citizens of particular nation-states in the same way that we just are a certain height and are born to certain parents. This kind of thinking is a mistake. Being a citizen is not simply a "bare fact" about us like our shoe size or the colour of our eyes, it is a role that we "take up" and perform. If we take up the role passively, we play it

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[5] There are many faces to this feeling. It might be a case of *alienation* a term made famous by the work of Karl Marx, who suggested that the way in which industrial capitalist societies were structured created a rift between how we work and what we produce, so that when I work in a supermarket, I care only about the money I receive for this work, not for the work process or the outcome of the work itself – this is alienation. It might also be a case of anomie, a term developed by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, in which the individual becomes disconnected from society at large, gaining little moral guidance or existential security from the society in which she lives.
[6] Again, this "lack of fit" might be explained in terms of Durkheimian *anomie*, but it might also, following the Marxist route, be linked to the fact that we find ourselves being "oppressed" by social structures in one way or another - maybe we live in a sexist, patriarchal society, or maybe one with strong class divisions. This idea is expressed explicitly in relation to civil society by the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci, who argued that civil society is a sphere in which, for the most part, the "ruling class" can disseminate its own culture and values, but it is also the sphere in which oppressed groups can challenge this culture and these values.

badly. To be an active citizen involves asking the tough question presented in the second quote presented above: How ought we to live? And, to add to the difficulty of such questioning, being an active citizen means asking this tough question in *public*; it means engaging with others - perhaps others with more power than us and different opinions to us -, it means taking up an active role in the social world in which we live.

This does not mean, however, simply *forcing* the world to "fit" to our own wishes and desires. To do this would not be to "feel at home in the world", to do this would be - to quote American writer David Foster Wallace - "…to be lords of our own tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the center of all creation."[7] "The lord", or the autocrat - as history has shown us - gets everything they could possibly want, caring little for the lives of others. Yet, they are not satisfied. Rather, feeling at home in the world requires being open to the world and the others who dwell alongside us; it means engaging in the public sphere and working *with* others to create the best of all possible worlds.

In sum, then, we have suggested that *fundamentally* we are social animals who live in communities constituted by various formal and informal structures. These structures are flexible and constantly changing, even though we may not be aware of it. Our positive claim is that what it means to be an *active* citizen is to participate in public activities which engage with these structures. In short, being an active citizen means to engage in the project of *feeling at home in a world with others*.

[7] Wallace, D. F., *This is Water*

Focusing on Civil Society

To get an understanding of civil society in view, it is perhaps easiest to start by saying what civil society is *not*: it is not Government proper, i.e. the world of professional politicians; and it is not the family home either; nor it is the sphere of business and trade. To be sure, it influences and is influenced by all of these, but it is not reducible to them. Civil society is a realm of public discussion and action in which ordinary citizens meet one another and engage in the collective life of a society. Admittedly, this definition is far from clear, but in recent years political theorists have suggested that civil society - whatever it is - is *crucial* for democracy and the health of societies in general. Understanding *why* they think this will give us a better understanding of what they take civil society actually to be. In his book, Civil Society, Michael Edwards has deciphered three dominant theories regarding civil society:

1. Civil Society as Associational Life

On this view, civil society refers to all of those associations, clubs, informal groups etc., which we take part in. Volunteering in the NGO sector is one example of this, but so too is joining a football club or a choir. "Associational life" is how humans flourish and find fulfillment in their lives, developing new interests, skills and friendships. Crucially, people who adopt this view of civil society[8] argue that associational life contributes to the development of public trust and cooperation which provides a normative framework for strong democracy.

2. Civil Society as the Good Society

Simply put, this understanding of civil society sees civil society as a society which is civil, where "civility" is understood to mean a kind of society in which its members collectively strive to improve their own society. So, in Edwards' words "The key hypothesis[9] is that communities, networks and associations are "microclimates" in which skills are learned, values and loyalties developed, and caring and cooperation - instead of competition and violence - become the rational ways to behave…"[10] On this view, civil society is the place in which positive norms are developed and pursued. However, one might wonder how a society "decides" which norms are the best one's for it?

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[8] See: Alexis De Toqueville, J.P. Mayer, ed., *Democracy in America* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969) for De Toqueville's classic and influential study and Robert D. Putnam, with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993) for a more contemporary version.

3. Civil Society as the Public Sphere

This conception of civil society sees civil society as the sphere of public discussion and deliberation, in which norms are discussed, issues raised and arguments conducted.[11] This conception builds upon the others, but places a renewed and definitive emphasis on the term *"civil"*. As Edwards puts it: "Civility, from Aristotle to Stephen Carter, assumes that we will disagree, often profoundly, but calls on us to resolve our disagreements peacefully. Everything else - from street protest to satire - is welcome in the public sphere. Active citizens need suspicious minds to probe and challenge, minds that are unafraid of speaking truth to power whenever that is needed".[12] Civil society as public sphere, then, means the defiantly democratic practice of engaging in peaceful debates and discussions with fellow citizens about the central issues of the day.

So, what have we learned?

In the first place we started with the basic claim that we are social animals, we live in societies, and part of what it means to live in societies is to engage and participate in the public life of these societies. It is by such engagement that we can address issues and concerns we have personally about the world in which we live, but also it is by such engagement that we gain fulfillment; we become open to the world in its richness and difference, we meet new people and learn new skills, for example. But actively engaging in civil society is not just good for us individually; it is also good for our societies. It is said that by our participation in different kinds of associations such as NGOs and clubs, we build general social trust and cooperative skills which strengthen democracy. Furthermore, by engaging in discussion and debate in the public sphere we contribute to the development and existence of norms we consider to be constitutive of "the good society". By being active citizens, in short, our lives go better for us (we feel more "at home" in the world) and our societies benefit in terms of becoming more representative, considered and strong democracies.

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[9] See, e.g.: Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)

[10] Edwards, Pg. 41

[11] See, e.g.: Habermas, J., *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol. I: *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, T. McCarthy (trans.). (Boston: Beacon, 1987)

[12] Edwards, pp. 67-8

What is Citizenship Education and Why do We Need it?

One could start by asking why we need citizenship *education* if it is a legal status given to people by birth. So why would there even be a need to educate somebody for it? Although it is true in the sense that we usually become citizens of a country when entering this world, we already have seen in the previous chapter that citizenship goes far beyond the legal aspect. In a wider sense, we should rather understand it as a role that people have within a society and which needs to be filled with life by them. Especially the ideal of an active citizen, who engages in public deliberation and common actions with others is based on a set of knowledge, skills and last but not least values, which are needed to play this role in a good way. We just can't assume that people are already born as good democrats with the capacities and willingness to get actively involved in the public life or that they will naturally develop the necessary competences to do so while growing up. If this holds true the topic of citizenship goes beyond a question of political debate - it becomes an educational task. In a broad sense *citizenship* education therefore can be described as educational measures, which enable people to make use of their rights in a society and empower them to get actively involved in the public sphere.

As the way, in which we address this task will affect the development of our society and its political system, we can't be neutral to it. The specific concept of citizenship education which we will choose then mirrors our ideals of how a citizen should be: Do we want to have citizens who passively do what they are told to do? Or do we want to have individuals who are able to make up their own mind and come up with creative solutions for existing problems? In case of the latter it will be necessary to give especially young people the possibility to develop the necessary competences for it.

After having gained an initial idea of what citizenship education is and why it matters, the questions appears what are important aspects that citizenship education should deal with more specifically. In a traditional understanding of it, the answer is clear: knowledge about the functioning of the political system. This includes, for example, the structure and functioning of its institutions, constitutional rights or the voting system of a given society. The knowledge approach surely has its value: to be able to claim rights we should be aware of them and to be able to influence decisions we will need to understand the rules and procedures that govern our lives. Is learning about all those aspects however enough to encourage active citizenship? We can easily imagine a person knowing everything about the political

system but not having the rhetoric skills to engage in discussions with others. We can furthermore imagine that one possess necessary knowledge and skills but is lacking willingness to do something for the common good. In the same way that a democracy is not only about establishing democratic institutions but requires the development of a democratic culture, citizenship education therefore can't be limited to provide abstract knowledge about the political system. For a successful citizenship education activity we will need to work on skills and attitudes, too.

The list of specific skills and attitudes needed for active citizenship is long and covers a variety of fields. One of the core principles however is, that it should enable participants to develop a sense of critical thinking, which will help them to come to their own conclusions in matters that affect their lives. The German philosopher Kant brought the underlying attitude to its probably shortest formulation: Sapere aude - or "Have the courage to use your own understanding!".[13] To be mature in this sense means to be able to use one's own mind without another's guidance and to keep a skeptical distance towards the positions of authorities. At the same time it needs to include the ability to remain self-critical about our own positions and to keep an openness to revise them in the light of new arguments and experiences. Being critical therefore also doesn't mean that we should never agree to ideas, which are hold by the majority of the society or which are transmitted by tradition. The difference lies in the process: Do we accept what is told to us for the sake of conformity and obedience to existing norms? Or do we understand different positions and after assessing them, decide for us if they are right or wrong?

Looking again at the quote of Kant, it also highlights the aspect, that it takes courage and therefore also encouragement to make use of critical reasoning. To make use of our own minds and to question things that we have taken for granted while growing up is not always a pleasant experience. It is a journey without a clear destination and in a first step can easily lead to uncertainty or crisis - not even mentioning the conflict potential with people in our surroundings, who hold different opinions. Citizenship education activities therefore can be seen as a safe space to experiment with positions and arguments, which will allow the participants to come to their own understanding without being immediately exposed to the general public. Those activities give the chance to commonly understand, analyze and debate current problems and by doing so develop the skills needed to engage actively in the public life of the society.

In this sense, citizenship education should also focus on providing "right questions" instead of "right answers". A change in the way we *think* about a problem is often the most powerful tool to see things in a different light and to come to own conclusions. For instance, instead of giving a lecture on what a just society looks

[13] A full version of his text "'What is enlightenment?'" can be found here: http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html

like, we should rather explore what we mean by justice and what consequences it would have if we apply it to the society we live in.[14] As the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire noted such a problem-posing education also helps to perceive the "world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process of transformation".[15] By understanding that the social order is man-made, a space for possible changes and for our own involvement in shaping those transformations is opening up.

Critical assessment of opinions and developing own positions therefore should not be an end in itself. As Freire points out, a successful engagement and transformative practice needs to keep a balance between action and reflection. A pure reflection without action results in what Freire calls *verbalism*: Words and phrases will remain empty, unless they are connected with a commitment to actions for change. We can have the most wonderful ideas on how to create a more just society - a critical mindset will never transform the world by itself. Action nevertheless doesn't have to mean something spectacular. It is not always necessary to organise a massive manifestation to put a topic in the spotlight; publishing an article or organising exhibitions can serve the purpose of raising awareness or making people reflect on a topic as well.[16]

On the other end of Freire's dual conception we find action without reflection, named *activism*. Action for the sake of being active and for a change without direction is running the risk to do more harm than good. This also underlines once more the necessity to remain self-critical about our own critical reasoning.

Summing up the mentioned aspects up citizenship education therefore should...

- provide a balance between developing knowledge, skills and attitudes

- give a safe space for young people to come to their own conclusions on matters that affect their lives

- prepare participants to go beyond criticism and to get active for a positive vision of society.

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[14] If you want to know more on how to address topics in educational activities: Chapter IV will give you an in-depth insight
[15] Freire, Paulo (2000): 'Pedagogy of the oppressed' , New York: Continuum.; page 83
[16] Interested in forms of action? Chapter IV will serve your needs

Youth Work Situation in Armenia in a Nutshell

The notion of youth work

The term *"youth work"* with rather unclear translation into Armenian has been extensively used recently by YNGO sector actors.

But what is actually youth work?

Do not get disappointed in your attempts to get a single and unique definition for it, there is not any.

Youth work is considered to be one of the main tools to work with young people and address their needs. Youth work is aimed at harmonious personal, social development, well-being and self-realization of the young person through educational activities often outside of the school setting. This is the definition that we - the people behind this book agree about; we encourage you to look for more.

The Declaration of the Second European Youth Work Convention (Brussels, 2015), states that youth work is about creating spaces for young people and it provides bridges in their lives.

Understanding different forms of youth work practiced is also very interesting…

As the professor of European Youth Policy - Howard Williamson mentions in a recent publication[17] - "The term "youth work" encompasses a broad range of activities and measures, from those that offer leisure activities, support for inclusion and work to youth civic engagement, and many diverse actions in-between. A range of different actors are involved in the delivery of youth work, sometimes provided by the state and other times by the third sector and volunteers or a combination of the two, with backgrounds in diverse fields and a whole variety of life experiences and motivations. The aims of youth work are equally varied and can target all young people or be more targeted towards certain groups."

And how is the situation regarding youth work in Armenia? Now wanting to bore you with history and facts, we would nevertheless like to discuss some ideas here, and those of you who are most interested in this topic, can read the resources regarding the topic presented at the end of this book.

[17] "Finding a Common Ground: Mapping and scanning the horizons for European youth work in the 21st century"

- Armenia, as the other post-Soviet countries, lacks the historical experience of working with young people, as well as the state level work with young people that is established and equipped with a number of tools.

- The thoughts around youth work in Armenia are rather "fresh", however this is not linked to the independence of the country. We can say for sure that youth work, despite its commitment to communist ideology, existed even in the period of USSR. On the contrast with nowadays, it had a rather well-developed methodology, the right succession of activities, specialists serving the "youth work", etc.

- There are a large number of organizations and professionals experienced in youth field, working on national and international levels. However, Armenia still faces the challenge of uniting all these forces and setting up a harmonic link between the field and the vision of its development.

- Despite the official statistics about youth and the situation in the youth work field, the number of the young people who want to take the responsibility and defend their right to participation in decision making, increases (e.g. "Save Teghut forest", campaign, the movement of Mashtots park, We will not pay 150 dram, the demonstrations against the raise of electricity prices, etc).

Happily, we need to share the news that the concepts of "youth work" and "youth worker" have been recently defined and recognized by the Government of Armenia in the form of the concept on the Youth state policy.[18] However, youth worker training and youth services provision at large is for the moment done sporadically by non-governmental bodies. This is certainly creating difficulties regarding the maintenance of quality and standards of youth work in the country. Unfortunately, none of the higher educational institutions in Armenia provides a degree programme on youth work. There is a big lack of trained youth workers especially in the remote areas of Armenia, who would support young people during their transition phase from childhood to adulthood.

It is quite interesting to look to some of the aspects where youth work is believed to have added social value.[19]

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[18] http://www.msy.am/files/post/1415360883-Hayecakarg.pdf
[19] Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the member states, meeting within the Council, on youth work, 3046th EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE and SPORT Council meeting, Brussels, 18 and 19 November 2010

1. promote social participation and responsibility, voluntary engagement and active citizenship;

2. strengthen community building and civil society at all levels (e.g. intergenerational and intercultural dialogue);

3. contribute to the development of young people's creativity, cultural and social awareness, entrepreneurship and innovation;

4. provide opportunities for the social inclusion of all children and young people;

5. reach young people with fewer opportunities through a variety of methods which are flexible and quickly adaptable.

We should state that while there are many attempts to provide different platforms for the first three points, we have been almost ignoring the needs of young people with fewer opportunities; designing and implementing quality youth work activities for these groups are often beyond the competences and sadly sometimes also the interests of mainstream youth work practices in Armenia. In this regard youth work in Armenia still has a very long way to go…

Youth work in programmes and strategies

The most important recent development is that the development of youth worker institute became the main priority of the state youth policy for 2015. By October 2015 The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs should submit to the Government a draft decree on "Regulations for the institute of youth work".

It should be noted that recently the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has started to work towards the definition, clarification, development and awareness raising activities of the "youth work" concept.

Based on the Decree, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs sets the following activities of Youth work institute development in Armenia, which is viewed in the framework of the Youth Participation Development being strategically priority of the Ministry:
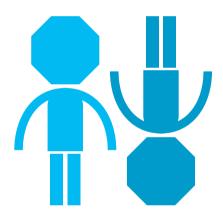
1) Development and adoption of regulations for the institute of youth work

2) Development and adoption of a program for preparation of youth workers

3) Development of a manual for youth worker preparation

4) Development and organization of youth worker training courses for the workers of state agencies, local self-government and representatives of NGOs working with youth.

Two major research projects have been realized aiming to better understand the needs and field of the local youth work in Armenia (one of them implemented by the Institute of Youth Researches of Youth Studies Institute of Youth Events Holding Center). The other one has been implemented by the "National Pool of Trainers" NGO with a support from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and aiming to map and analyze the international approaches and experiences in the field of youth work.

THE YOUNG PERSON'S PERSON'S WORLD: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

infographics

note

attention

important

solution

Dreams and Challenges

Very often one can hear every day phrases like "You've got your head in the clouds", "You're daydreaming, get a grip", etc. By these phrases our friends, parents or relatives express their anxiety about our future, try to protect us from pursuing unrealistic goals and direct us to something more realistic. Such anxious attention is sometimes really necessary since young vigor and zeal can really lead to useless pipe dreams.

However, life experience shows that such an unflinching commitment to pragmatic and prudential concerns is not always the way. The human history bears witness to the fact that some of the most important inventions and progressive steps have been made by "dreamers". So, whilst we should not reject pragmatism and prudence, we should not be a slave to its instrumental rationality - and we should embrace creative thinking as well.

Dreams allow us to create an intellectual distance between the world as it is and the potential future worlds, of which we are co-creators. Imagination is the means that allows us to see as yet "non-existent" ways of doing, acting and thinking. Why is the word "non-existent" in scare-quotes here? Because if something has arisen in the mind and heart of at least one person, it is not right to say that it is "NON-EXISTENT"; in the same way one can look at an acorn and deny that it has the potential to grow into a huge oak tree. If instead of simply discarding that acorn we with some friends find a place where it can grow into a tree, plant the seed and at least for some time take care of it, water it, it is very likely that the semi-destroyed forests of Armenia will get one more young and green oak tree.

In the same way if we allow our dreams to open their wings; if we can find several friends who share our vision and are prepared to invest their time and energy in the implementation of that idea, maybe after some time many people will be surprised wondering how such a great job was done in a small country like Armenia. After all, no one expected that the young owner of the bicycle repair shop would become the founder of the car manufacturers and one of the richest people on the planet, or that the authors of software for communication within their student community would in a short time become the founders and owners of the world, leading social network Facebook.

It seems that the challenges facing the subjects of these famous success stories from the business world were greater than the one's facing us today. In business, people do anything for the plans of their competitors to fail. Whereas in the case
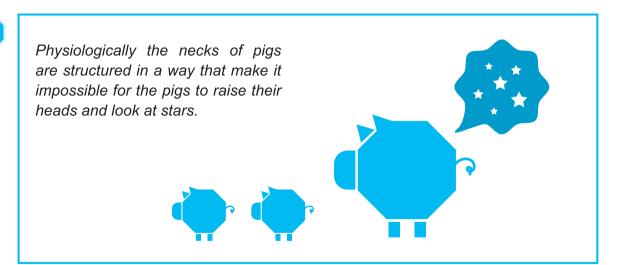
of our project as well as with young people's initiatives in general, there is often surprisingly large amounts of support provided by the residents of the community or even by absolute strangers.

All thinking, down to the most insignificant and fleeting thoughts, requires some imagination. In our project, every step from preparatory work, to risk assessments require imagination. It is in the nature of planning and organizing itself that it requires abstract and creative thinking. We need to understand what we lack for organizing the things we do not have yet, how and when we are going to do that, how to plan everything for its further smooth implementation. All of the abovementioned is impossible to realize without a close cooperation between the mind, heart and imagination.

We need to understand that when the child, adolescent and young person is dreaming, the only obstacle for the realization of the dream is unawareness about problems related to the realization of the dream. But if we focus on the obstacle and reject the importance of dreaming, then after several times our ability to dream will leave us. Maybe after that our life will become more simple, understandable and predictable, but in general, this is a great loss. The soul of the human being without imagination switches to the "crawling regime" when there is no more place for the interesting, new, surprising and wonderful things in our lives any more.

Physiologically the necks of pigs are structured in a way that make it impossible for the pigs to raise their heads and look at stars.

When we have trainings with adults, we often ask them what their current occupation is. We then try to find out if their jobs match their childhood dream professions - and nine times out of ten it is not. More often than not, there is good reason why this is the case - concrete circumstances make a big difference. But

it is a fact that someone was dreaming to become an astronaut but became an accountant; s/he wanted to become an accountant but became a locksmith; s/he wanted to become a locksmith but became a trader; s/he wanted to become a trader but became a taxi driver; s/he wanted to become a taxi driver but became a plasterer… Is it really true that very few people surrounding us manage to pursue their dreams and arrive in a world where their dreams come true? Is the Universe against us and always creating obstacles to block our dreams?

The people who were able not to yield to temporary obstacles and saw their dreams come true state just the opposite. They INSIST that if someone really fights for his/her dreams, the whole Universe starts supporting them. Even if we face big obstacles, later on it becomes evident that those obstacles were needed to solve some internal issues, to develop certain competences which we would need later on. So even the obstacles and dangers appear at the right time and at the right place and become supporting factors.

On the opposite end of this situation is the result of rejecting dreams, for not making them come true. If you had dreamed of something absolutely different and for some reason decided to step back from it, even the biggest success in a new field will not eliminate the feeling of dissatisfaction. The thing is that our real needs underlie in the depths of our dreams, and working for them is absolutely essential for our growth and satisfaction.

It is not mandatory that your childhood dream is exactly what you should pursue. Suppose someone dreamed to become a doctor. In this case we have to understand what real need and interest was hidden behind that dream. For someone it could be the wish to help suffering people or animals. In case of the given inner need the person can do many other works that give him inner satisfaction. It can be being a doctor or a veterinarian or a social worker involved in humanitarian projects, or a psychologist. However, for someone else the dream to become a doctor can be conditioned by the interest in the workings of human or animal bodies. In this case the person can feel completely satisfied in the role of the doctor or biologist, for example…

Based on these examples, one can perform a simple task of self-recognition and self-analysis. One can try to remember what s/he wanted to become in childhood and try to reveal the real needs behind it. After revealing those needs one can try to understand what alternative choices for projects, education, social work and specialization exist that will allow to maximally satisfy the revealed needs and interests. It is very important to do this work before starting some activity (especially if it concerns long-term activity) and make sure that this new activity

(be it education or work or social activity) is somehow related to our main interests and needs and supports realization of our dreams.

Summing up this chapter we have to take into account a possible danger connected with imagination and dreams. The thing is that when we do not try to direct our imagination and make OUR dreams come true, there will always be people, forces or structures in our environment who will try to take under their control the powerful potential of our imagination and dreaming. If we pay attention to how TV programmes, commercials, and even political parties do everything to capture our attention and imagination, it will become clear how important self-analysis and independent creative thinking really is. In the current information society, wars are waged not so much for land and money but for capturing the attention, motivation and imagination of the populace.

Another manifestation of the information war is the fact that when someone yields to information attacks (believes that Coca-Cola is the best drink, that Audi is the best car and s/he should try to have it, starts feeling unhappy that s/he doesn't have an iPhone4 and can't buy an iPhone6 right now etc.) s/he already starts promoting the ideas of the forces that took control of him/her. S/he arranges all his/her actions according to this new idea and starts actively promoting it among his/her relatives, friends etc. It is like a contagious disease; one person infects others.
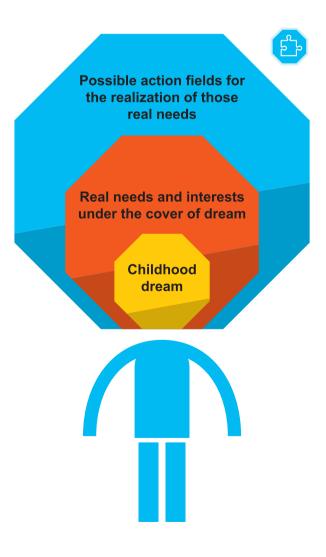
The same can be said about spreading positive ideas. Fortunately, the power of dissemination is quite strong here as the whole universe supports the dissemination of the positive and right ideas. It is important to mention about the feeling of responsibility and remind that we are the ones to decide whose mill will receive more water, and here we often underestimate the importance of our own choices and our job.

And this latter is especially important in our times and for our country. We have to realize that if we compare our newly independent country with western countries which have a longer history of independence and peace, there can be an impression that there everything is good and here everything is bad. And the logical continuation of this idea is to move over there in order to realise our dreams. But it is so only at first glance. We live in an epoch extremely favorable for the realization of dreams. What seemed science fiction to our parents has become routine for us. Today visiting other countries, participating in international projects, getting to know other cultures is much easier. The development of technologies has given us access to the huge cultural heritage of the whole humanity.

Our mind is the most powerful means for the realization of our dreams and for preventing their realization. We decide that "nothing is possible here and only there I can realize my dreams". By thinking this way we voluntarily deprive ourselves of the opportunity to build our future in our motherland. But when we care for the progress of our country, we not only create our place and strengthen it but also with our every success support the building of future for our environment and generally for our country. Every good doctor supports the recovery of hundreds of our compatriots; every successful businessman creates jobs for his numerous compatriots; every talented scientist enriches his country by his inventions and raises its prestige. Only here we can state that by solving our personal issues we also support the prosperity of our motherland. Even if there are places where we could have got the same thing much easier, it absolutely doesn't mean that it is our fortune. A hard won victory is much sweeter and soul enriching than the one won by lottery...

Possible action fields for the realization of those real needs

Real needs and interests under the cover of dream

Childhood dream

Motivation to Do or Not to Do Something

The shelves in our bookstores are full of books, which explain HOW to do this or that thing, YouTube is full of various video tutorials answering the HOWs (How to keep bees, how to make homemade cheese or a homemade atomic bomb, how to become a superstar or a millionaire, etc), numerous training centers offer thousands of course on HOW to do this or HOW to become that… This is really good and useful. If in the past this information was either not accessible or cost a lot, or was for the chosen few, today it is accessible to practically everyone.

However, against this great number of HOWs, the sources that would answer the question "WHY?" are almost not seen. Why would I want to become a beekeeper or why would I need to make an atomic bomb at home? What does it mean to be a millionaire? Or why do I want to become a superstar? When we try to ask ourselves these questions the answers seem quite obvious and not worth thinking about. Clearly being a millionaire and having suitcases full of money is very good, since you can buy "whatever and whoever you want"… Obviously, being a super star is a powerful thing, since everybody knows and loves you, you are very popular and can do anything you want… However, if we try a bit harder to really understand how to become a millionaire or a super star, and what the different good or bad "bonuses" of these package deals are, maybe these prospects will not seem so obvious anymore.

But advertisement and "glamour" prevail in our societies. It is not trendy to analyze and think hard - even about seemingly obvious things because while you think, the others will snatch the tasty morsels and you will be left empty-handed. So, run…run to your success and thinking will somehow come along the way.

However, this attitude shows lack of knowledge about *motivation*, and as such it risks leading to many broken lives; an army of unhappy lucky ones or losers. Our performance and level of satisfaction directly depend on how much we follow the path that's close to our hearts. It is impossible to be content even with the nicest "substitute", if that's not what we wanted. Let's imagine that a person is hungry and tries to satisfy his/her hunger by drinking or has a great desire to travel and tries to satisfy that need by watching movies …

The motivation is something to be remembered at any moment. It is not possible to determine the motivation once and never revisit it, since the flux of life requires constant reassessment and adjustments to motivation. Why am I doing this at this very moment? Is this what I want to do? Is this the most important and efficient thing to do this very moment?

In reality, the majority of people act automatically in different situations, without burdening the mind to assess the situation. Life is an "accident" for many. When sharing their experience of the previous day, this is how it's often worded: "Do you know what happened to me yesterday?", "Do you know how it happened?" It turns out we are sitting in the driver's seat of the car of our life, but we act as passengers, living as if we don't have any opportunity to manage our course and pick the direction. No wonder so many accidents "happen" in these conditions.

If we try to analyze our present life and situation, it will become clear that all the good or bad we have or don't have today is a consequence of the choices made and steps taken in the past. For many, this discovery does not lead to constructive conclusions. On the contrary, we can often see how some people in a time of depression sit down and brood on thoughts such as, "If only the day before yesterday I didn't do it as I did, but the other way. If only I had better luck, wealthier parents, or was born somewhere else" and so on and so forth… However these regrets and sufferings today shape our TOMORROW. If today you busy yourself with endless regrets it is easy to see their consequences in your future. You would hardly find an example when regret and self-pity have improved the situation.
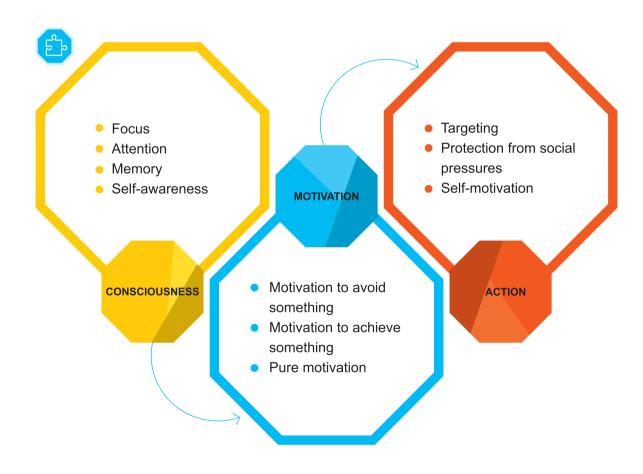
So, it is essential to understand whether what we are doing now is what we want to do. The fruit we will reap in the future directly hinges on the answer to this question. If we are the result of the choices and decisions we made in the past, then it is clear that we need to understand now what motivation we have in reality, where we dream of tomorrow or a year later and only then take crucial steps in that direction.

In fact, motivation is the link connecting our conscience with future actions. If we are not conscious and do not make efforts to understand ourselves, our desires and dreams, we won't be able to come up with a clear and consistent motivation: And without clear and reasonable motivation it is absolutely impossible to correctly formulate our goals and the steps needed to achieve them.

It is also important to distinguish between the motivation to avoid something and that to achieve something. We often believe we want to get or achieve something, but this motivation hides a fear or a need for something formed in the past. If this is not clear and visible to us, getting satisfaction is very hard. If the dark and cold years of the 90s in Armenia caused somebody to have a fear of hunger, then even in case of their becoming a rich oligarch, this fear may continue to persist in them. They will try to constantly amass wealth, so that if "something happens" the next several generations would not be in need of anything. In these circumstances, if and motivation is based on unconscious fears and complexes, then one should

work not on satisfying needs, but rather on oneself and first of all get rid of the fears and hopes which are often not even relevant today.

Another and a healthier type of motivation is when you want to get a positive outcome for yourself and others. In this case it is not based on subconscious fear and resembles more a challenge for future development, when you see the peak of the mountain and you decide that you will definitely reach the summit. Having a broad outlook is a required for it to develop. Many people aren't even aware of the numerous wonders of the world and even having the opportunity can't set interesting goals for themselves and try to achieve them. From this perspective seeing people who due to the lack of knowledge and limited outlook do not find interests and goals to pursue is very sad.

CONSCIOUSNESS
- Focus
- Attention
- Memory
- Self-awareness

MOTIVATION
- Motivation to avoid something
- Motivation to achieve something
- Pure motivation

ACTION
- Targeting
- Protection from social pressures
- Self-motivation

In very rare cases we encounter also a third type of motivation, which is a bit hard to grasp and can notionally be called "pure motivation". This is the case when the motivation is not based on either fear, or worry or hopes of getting a positive outcome. Here the person clearly understands that "this should be done, because it is the right thing to do". There are no fears and worries that it might not work and there is no anticipation such as "it would be great if it works…" It is simply the right thing and one should do everything possible and beyond to make sure this happens. In this case the motivation does not depend on the outcome and therefore cannot be exhausted.

The topic of motivation has become central in a number of studies over the last decades, since a number of areas saw a drop in motivation, lack of participation and interest. Most of the research was carried out in order to identify the patterns of motivation in the workplace, but the findings were often applicable in other fields.

Up to the end of the 20th century the main mechanism to boost motivation was considered the "carrot and stick" method. In order to raise the motivation of the employees they needed to be rewarded if they worked well and punished if they didn't. Up until the end of the 20th century when the labour market offered mostly mechanical work which did not require much creativity this method worked great. All the management systems were based on this and various applications of this method were suggested.

However, upon entering the 21st century the global labour market structure started changing radically. Automation and mechanization obviated the need for people to perform mechanical, monotonous work. Due to the huge progress in information and communications technology the types of intellectual work got rid of its mechanical nature. These changes in the labour market could not but affect the work carried out in the motivation area. The changes and solidified negative phenomena (a drop in work motivation, inadequate employee satisfaction, high personnel turnover, etc) were analyzed revealing interesting new patterns.

The American scientist Daniel Pink, in his book "DRIVE"[20], mentions that the secret to high performance and work capability are not our biological needs or the rewards and punishments. It is the deeply human need to direct our own lives, and develop and build on our own competencies, as well as leading a life that has a goal and a purpose.

[20] Daniel H. Pinks Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us.

The study carried out by top MIT scientists and sponsored by the US Federal Reserve showed that when it comes to simple, mechanical tasks not requiring creativity, the "carrot and stick" method works in a clear way: the higher the reward sum, the higher is work performance. However when it comes to the tasks that require at least basic intellectual work, higher pay leads to LOWER performance. The scientists explain this by suggesting that material incentives help to concentrate, not get distracted and showing high performance for a long time. However, for tasks requiring intellectual efforts a broad outlook, open mind and calm are more important.

SMALL REWARD

GRAND REWARD

Productivity growth of intellectual labour

Productivity growth of the mechanical labour

Low productivity of mechanical labour

Productivity decline of the intellectual labour

21st c. labours are more productive

It is important here to talk about so-called intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In the 21st century the physical, mechanistic and simple tasks give way to more creative and intellectual ones. By "extrinsic" we mean the cases when the person gets rewarded or punished by other people (manager, teacher, head, etc). Intrinsic motivation in the person develops on its own. The person himself/herself finds a purpose and opportunities for development in this or that work and is able to motivate oneself (so-called "self-motivation"). If up until the end of the 20th century "carrots and sticks" worked well, in the 21st century the types of intrinsic motivation come to the forefront. According to Daniel Pink the three key factors we have to focus on in this area of new motivators are AUTONOMY, MASTERY, and PURPOSE.

AUTONOMY
The work allows us to plan the goals and work methods independently choose teammates and the most efficient time frames.

MASTERY
The work allows us to discover and develop the person's potential, enabling one to grow and master the areas that are interesting and valuable to that person.

PURPOSE
The work does not only seek to ensure narrow personal or organizational gain, but rather pursues an overarching aim that will benefit broader circles of people.

To summarize the topic of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation we should note that types of work that are purely mechanical or purely creative don't exist now, so both for leaders and teammates it is critical to balance these two kinds of motivation. The examples above simply illustrate the processes unfolding in today's world that reveal once highly effective strategies are outdated and draw more attention to the issue of intrinsic motivation.

But what can we do in our country where the "carrot and stick" method is used

across the board. How can we work on our intrinsic motivation? Understandably, for self-development we need the environment and methods so one of the best options for this is volunteering. It is in volunteering projects that the positive goal is a priority and making profit is ruled out by definition. We are the ones to choose a programme and work that is close to our hearts, and are ready to invest our time and energy.
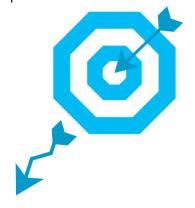
Volunteering is largely based on autonomy, it develops our abilities to master many fields that we are interested in aiming to resolve social issues. Through this work we are able to contribute to the overall development of our homeland.

Understanding our Strengths and Weaknesses

Low self-esteem is considered a big issue. "The child has such a low self-esteem, s/he is not self-confident at all, let's take him/her to a psychologist". On the other hand, if you are self-confident, have high self-esteem, are willing to stand by your position and defend it, then you are a "naughty", "disobedient" and "stubborn" child and they should do everything to make you submissive and obedient. Often it is hard to figure out what the people around us want from us. You try to match "their" perceptions of what is the ideal, and you immediately become unacceptable "for the other ones". You try to conform a little bit and "the other ones" are up in arms about it… It is highly problematic to build our identity so that it matches up to the expectations and perceptions of parents, neighborhood friends, classmates, teachers, employers, the state and others who are in their turn very different from each other.

It becomes more problematic for those who haven't even heard that they can work on changing their identity. We often hear that Karen is this way, and Vartuhi is that way, and once the majority of those around us are in agreement that "we are like this, period" this is already a "life diagnosis" and we will need to work long and hard to change it, or we may end up relocating, even abroad.

In any case, for those readers who believe they are the way they are and nothing can be changed anymore, let us tell you that for thousands of years thousands of people, institutes, spiritual traditions and psychological directions, scientists have been working out new techniques and ways of assessment of personal qualities, their development and individual transformation. So it would be naive to think that your problem is so unique that hasn't happened and got resolved at least 500,000 times over human history. You simply have to admit there is a problem and put a little effort into finding that one method out of thousands that will be right for you. After that you should dedicate part of the time and energy you would spend on self-pity, complaints about your fate and crying sessions to working towards the resolution of this problem.

Consequently, people come up with a multi-faceted and many-sided format, that allows them to behave one way here, and another way there and eventually they themselves are confused about who they are and where they want to go. Another option is to pick one of the main actors in your environment and tell him/her that from now on you are going to follow specifically his/her perceptions and expectations, and inform the rest, "Sorry, but I'm not playing with you anymore." In this case we often end up with a one-sided and conformist image which doesn't exactly represent our true nature and motivation fields (and generally speaking doesn't have anything to do with US.) Sometimes these decisions turn out to be "good" ones, at other times not so much, but in any case it's good to at least understand how this happens and how we can find an option that is more interesting to us and efficient...

When going down this road we need to understand that the systems of self-evaluation and value perception offered by our society are initially imperfect. Since we are little we are taught to evaluate ourselves based on what others think of us. If the opinion is favourable then we are GOOD, if unfavourable, than welcome to BAD ones' corner. Anyway, the description of the above situation demonstrates that such a system is initially contentious since we are never (or almost never) surrounded by similar people. Because of the way things are, we communicate and act in different systems (home, neighborhood, school, class venues, university, workplace, army, etc). Even within the same system, the situation is sometimes contentious: one thing can be good for the dad and bad for the mom or the grandma…This further complicates the problem of self-evaluation based on the opinion of others.

Nonetheless, there is a case for which the system of "self-evaluation through the opinion of others" can lead to quite interesting and useful results. It is the case when we carefully study the opinions on good and bad of all sides surrounding us and are able to find certain Good things and certain Bad things on which so many different systems are in agreement. Here we identify the things which are really by and large good or bad. Or in a very small number of cases it helps the issues faced by our society and civilization to surface, those that are so deeply-rooted that they have become the norm.

The thing is, if we want to understand our situation and determine our potential course and development paths we can't avoid the problem of self-evaluation. We need to know where we are now to figure out where to head next and how.

The other option which is quite widely promoted now is subjectivism. Here the judgment on good and bad is based on our subjective perception. What is enjoyable is regarded as Good and what is unpleasant or hard is regarded as Bad. This is an easier and a more manageable method which can be observed for a long time and we can feel certain that we understand what's what. The number of people who consciously go down this path keeps growing. The downside of this is the fact that what is enjoyable is not always beneficial and doesn't necessarily contribute to progress and what is unpleasant and is hard is not always harmful and useless.

If we honestly look at our life experience we will see that all the things that we now find to be our success and achievements came to us the hard way, sometimes not so enjoyable. In fact, the harder the road the sweeter the victory is. And when we look at the pleasures and the area of satisfaction we will clearly see that the satisfaction from the so-called "fun" cannot be long-lasting or never-ending. On the contrary, the long or short-term satisfaction is generally followed by emptiness and doubt. In order to overcome this one should either contrive something different or go back to the same pleasure over and over. Normally, you need increasing amounts when you experience it over and over since the repetition of the same thing becomes ordinary quite soon and loses its effect. At a certain point "more" becomes dangerous, sometimes even disastrous.

These are very natural things to happen since this is how our brain's pleasure center works. When stimulated, it feels good, once the stimulation process is over- thanks, but it will need it again in a couple of hours. So, before we get enough conscience and awareness we can't really rely on what is pleasurable and unpleasant to us either.

Another option that exists in our society today as an assessment mechanism is the statistics. It states that if the majority says it this way, there is a high probability that it is true. And if the majority says "Don't do it that way!", then there is a high probability that it is actually harmful or dangerous. Here we will refer to the work of renowned philosopher and social scientist José Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses. Gasset stated that one of the biggest issues our civilization faces is that the "masses" overtake all the aspects of our social life. One or more very smart people can present very realistic and correct options but the masses will claim something different and that will prevail. How did Gasset explain this "phenomenon of masses"? He believed that the mass is an averaging. When a

large number of people get together and unite, they lose their personality to a certain extent. An average system is set up where the personal opinion, level of development and attitude of the participant are pushed back and we see the reign of the average masses.

As per Gasset's scheme there are two options: when your personal level is higher than that of the averaged out masses and when your personal development level is still lower than the average of the mass.

So, if in order to evaluate our state, we take into account the majority's (the mass) opinion it will not help us since we will have to reckon with the system at a development level that is lower than ours and therefore cannot evaluate or judge us. In the other case when our development level is lower than that of the average masses, the opinion of the majority regarding our state may turn out to be useful to us.

Here we find ourselves in a two-fold situation. For some cases this assessment mechanism will work (when we are at a low level of development), in other cases it will not and can even harm, when we are trying to feed the masses something that is higher than their level. At any rate, it is interesting to look at ourselves from that perspective as well and understand where we are.
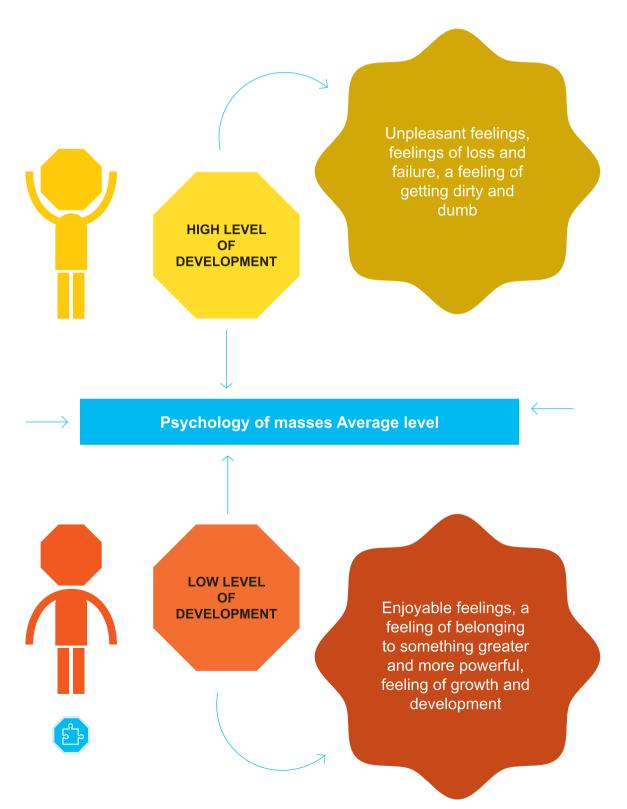
The final and the most complex system of self-assessment is actual SELF-assessment. In this case we assume personal responsibility for assessing our competences and qualities and make a judgment on performing a thorough self-analysis. Here our degree of candor, will power and breadth of our outlook come to the forefront. Candor is perhaps the most important in this threesome since we are the best able to lie to ourselves. Our talents are in this area are simply inexhaustible. Only by putting our Heart to work we can convince the brain to play fair and allow us to really understand where we stand. The open Heart knows the right and wrong and can become our good ally in this battle.

We are definitely not the first ones to perform self-analysis and self-assessment. For already many years and decades different youth structures and experts work have come up with different ways so that this work can be performed more efficiently.

The most common methods and approaches in Armenia are those found in European youth work projects. Below we present the key competences scheme which enables us to analyze and assess ourselves.

The first thing to understand in relation to this scheme is the concept of competence.

What does it mean when we say that we are competent to do this or that? What is this competence made of? And how should we go about developing it for the process to be more efficient? The research carried out in this area shows that in order to develop competences in any field we need a few things.

HIGH LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Unpleasant feelings, feelings of loss and failure, a feeling of getting dirty and dumb

Psychology of masses Average level

LOW LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Enjoyable feelings, a feeling of belonging to something greater and more powerful, feeling of growth and development

First of all we have to determine what competences we need at this stage of our life or for the given task or to achieve the given objectives

It turns out the number of these competences is much more than one. While working on this list it is a good idea to collaborate with people who are already engaged in addressing such issues, because they can very often point out certain competences which may even be unknown to us due to lack of experience.

We need to assess our current level of development by the list of competences formed

Here it is critical to be honest. There is no need to subject ourselves to pointless self-criticism and assess ourselves lower than we really are, but it is a lot more dangerous to pretend to be the boy of our dreams or the girl of our dreams and assess ourselves much higher than we are.

The best way to avoid these issues is to record the facts backing up our assessment of all the competences under review

Imagine that you have assessed a certain competence at 8 points out of 10. If you need to prove you deserve this rating, what arguments can be presented? The table shows possible justifications.
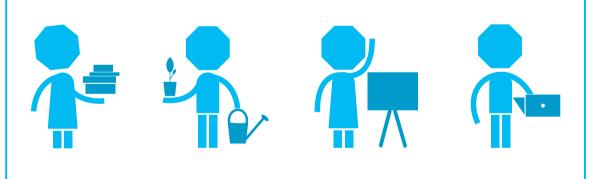
Possible Justifications behind competences
(that can be checked as needed)

- I have took a special course (courses) on that topic, or the following courses contained a training module on that topic (indicate the details of the course(s))

- I did reading on the topic, researched articles, internet resources, (indicate sources)

- I have organized a training course on this topic (details of the course(s))

- I have been involved in the organization steps of the project on the topic (indicate project details)

- I have authored a scientific/ popular science or other article/internet material on the topic (indicate the details of the published work)

- I did voluntary work in a structure (project), where I was able to develop these competences (indicate voluntary work details)

- I have a formal educational base on the topic (indicate the details of the educational institution and the training course (subject))

- I attended an e-learning course(s) on the topic (indicate the details of the course(s))

- I have watched video materials, popular science or educational films on the topic (indicate the titles)

- And others

Many *other unique evidences regarding the topic are possible.* However, keep in mind that the evidences have to be *unique, concrete and verifiable* and least based on your personal opinion. You can also give concrete examples of you have demonstrated that competence with or without success.

It is also essential to remember that when you indicate that you are *not adequately competent in the given area*, you should write why exactly you think you don't have the competence and what examples you can give as evidence for this gap.

The next thing one should do is understand what key components the *competence* consists of. According to the "key competences" model for life-long learning competence is made up of thee main elements: Knowledge, Skill and Attitude.[21] If it is about the competence to grow strawberries, the three possible components, put more simply can be such:

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[21] *Within The Lisbon Special European Council (March 2000): Towards a Europe of Innovation and Knowledge*

KNOWLEDGE

I know what types of strawberries there are and which will grow better on our soil. I am aware of the principles of planting and caring for them. I know what to do in each season. I know what pests are a threat to strawberries and how to protect the plant from them. I know how to harvest it and sell it (and so on).

SKILL

I can work with soil. I can perform all the work associated with planting, caring and harvesting the plant. I can work with gardening tools. I am good at selling them, etc.

ATTITUDE
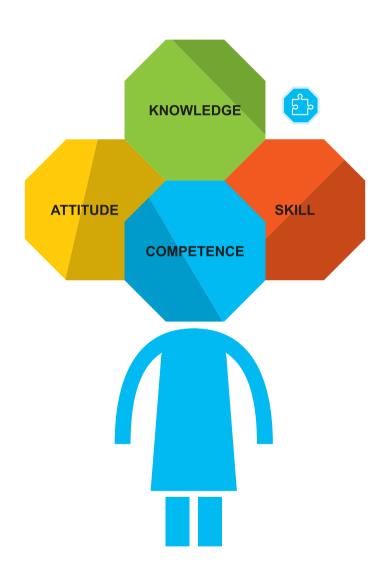
I love gardening and always research new things about it. I try to forge links with other professionals in the field and share information and experience with them. I am willing to do any task related to this and try to get skilled in all types of work. If I don't know something, or something is not working, I am not embarrassed to ask those who are more proficient in it. I take the time to help the beginners in this field and understand that it is useful to me too (…etc).

Once all of this is done, once we have understood what a competence is and have made a list of competences we need, as well as a pre-assessment of our situation in terms of our current competences in the area, once we have identified the ones that are more urgent and critical, we need to take perhaps the most important step.

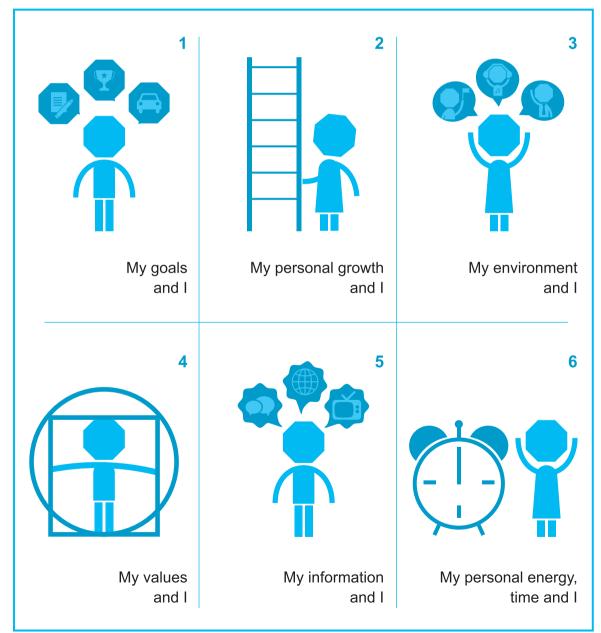We plan what competences we are going to develop and when and WE DEVELOP THEM.

Life shows that people quite successfully perform all the previous stages but when it comes to this final stage the majority successfully forgets to perform it.

KNOWLEDGE

ATTITUDE

SKILL

COMPETENCE

Competences Needed for Personal and Community Development

In this section of the book we would like to talk about the competences needed for personal and community development and main problems. Naturally, these problems and competences are so numerous and diverse that a whole book or a series of books could be dedicated to this. But here we have picked a few of them that we find especially important.

1 My goals and I	**2** My personal growth and I	**3** My environment and I
4 My values and I	**5** My information and I	**6** My personal energy, time and I

One of the most important things to know is that our competences can develop only when we take action. You can attend hundreds of courses on the topic and still be unaware. Sometimes, even the opposite happens, when the person who has done all of that starts THINKING that s/he is now super-informed. We should keep in mind that these materials and trainings simply prepare us for our contact with reality, whereas the true competences form exclusively through practice.

In the 90s an experiment was performed among IBM corporation employees, and was later repeated numerous times and confirmed by the scientists from other countries. The purpose of the experiment was to understand how much the person remembers from the course attended, if:

a. s/he only hears about the topic
b. listens and is shown how to do it
c. s/he listens, is shown how and given an opportunity to try it at least once

Then they tried to understand how much from the material is recalled 3 weeks and 6 months after the course. The picture was quite interesting.

When it was about a shorter period (3 weeks) the percentage of memorized material was respectively 70%, 72% and 85%. Of course, the difference between hearing and trying was obvious, but not so pronounced. When they looked at this 6 months later, the figures were simply staggering. In case of just hearing only

	Heard	Heard Were shown	Heard Were shown Tried
Remember 3 weeks later	70%	72%	85%
Remember 6 months later	10%	32%	65%

10% remembered what it was about whereas in case of hearing, seeing and trying this figure was 65%, so even half a year later the participants of the experiment were able to memorize the material.

These are important figures to remember when we decide to develop our competences and start planning our self-development process. If there is an opportunity to be part of some work, even on a voluntary basis, then this is the best way to ensure steady and consistent growth. Programmes where the volunteers pay to be part of them are very popular abroad since they are able to appreciate its future value for their development and improvement.

Naturally, mistakes and challenges in the course of work in a new area are inevitable. But as one of the popular movie characters put it "Among my friends I make mistakes the most, since I am the one trying to do different things the most."

One of the critical approaches to work on in the process of development of competences is the attitude towards mistakes and failures. Obviously, we should try to make as few mistakes as possible, but the most important question here is our attitude towards mistakes. There are people who are so afraid to make mistakes that it paralyzes them not allowing them to act and people who get discouraged and depressed because of even minor mistakes. This is the most pointless way to spend our energy. We should understand that the only one who doesn't make mistakes is the one that doesn't do anything. There is a vast potential deeply hidden under the mistakes and failures. If we are able to analyze all our mistakes and failures with a sense of humor, learn our lesson and try to not make such mistakes in the future then the mistakes and failure turn out to be the most important and effective elements of our learning process.

It is critical to understand that the mistake becomes success or failure ONLY due to our attitude. IF we treat it as a tragedy it makes us unhappy and weak while if we look at it as a life experience, that should teach us, makes us stronger and help us move on to the next positive and negative experiences, then we can also be thankful for the mistakes. Life shows that given the right attitude the learning potential behind mistakes and failures is even greater than that from successful experiences.

1. My goals and I

People are often asked what their goals are in this life, or for the next year (month). Very often people are quick to answer that question and it seems like they have been thinking about this for quite a while, have discussed them with reliable people, have tried to work out the objectives and resources needed to attain them. Life shows that most of the people consider it easy to come up and formulate a goal: you can spend 15 minutes on talking about it and plan what you need to for the next 15 years. If they gave it more careful thought it would become clear to them that even achieving short-term goals is quite demanding and requires serious consideration.

The importance of goal-setting cannot be underestimated. It is the existence of goals that enables us to look at our every step and opportunity from the perspective of the overarching target and understand whether it is efficient or not. Otherwise we have a confusing situation which is best described by the saying "All roads lead to the goal if you don't know where you are headed". The only problematic thing remains the fact that our lives are not endless and we cannot pursue all the paths in this world.

Here are a few important steps for goal-setting:

A. Appreciate the importance of goal-setting and acknowledge that it is not a spontaneous and easy process.

B. Plan the goal-setting process and dedicate time and resources to it (especially, when it concerns long-term plans, such as education, employment or defining the goal of life).

C. In the course of setting both long-term and short-term goals always come up with several alternatives. It is critical to know that there are ALWAYS several options to attain the same goal.

D. Form a clear understanding of the resources (time, material resources, knowledge, human resources, etc) needed for the goal set, determine the ones that exist and plan how to get the ones that don't exist.

E. Have a clear step-by-step plan for reaching the given goal and calculate the time needed for each step, come up with a schedule.

F. START the process of achieving the goal and every once in a while make the necessary changes to the worked-out plans since it never happens that plans are implemented exactly as worked out.

2. My personal growth and I

Most of the people around us think that we came to this world to either suffer (proponents of this tenet are mostly those who are not doing so well for the moment) or enjoy life to the fullest (those who are successful for the time being tend to think this way).

All the wise men tell us, that the enjoyable and unpleasant aspects of life are of interest only partially, whereas the main goal in life is our growth (preferably your mind, heart and soul and not the growth of your stomach, or the number of zeroes in the bank account). They stated that this is the priority question we should focus on and it is naïve to leave the solution of this problem for later, once we have already dealt with the "important stuff" and are free from our "hassles and troubles".

To ensure personal growth it is desirable to take some specific steps:

A. Understand the highest priority of personal growth in our lives.

B. Develop our mental and visual outlooks so that the many paths offering opportunities for growth are visible. It is essential to understand that there are many trails leading to the peak of the mountain, but we have to choose the one that will work best for us and will be closer to our heart.

C. Analyze our current state, with good and bad, understand the priority areas of development which should be done with utmost candor and openness and figure out what you want to do now and later.

D. Seek out resources, schools, people and learning methods needed to take the determined path of the development and try to get support.

E. Plan the achievement of the development goals we have determined not forgetting to make adjustment along the way, since personal growth is work in progress and sometimes goes beyond the boundaries of what we imagine.

3. My environment and I

One of the Sufi masters said that the difference between heaven and hell was in the people surrounding those who were there. Indeed, it is hard to underestimate the significance of our environment and people around us being an integral part of that environment. Nonetheless, most of us "manage" to underestimate it.

It is important to understand that our state and level of development directly impact the quality of people appearing around us (as the main law of hermetism states, "like attracts like"). In its turn, the quality of our immediate environment can hugely affect us driving us to development or regress. The other essential thing is the understanding that we can and must work towards a better quality of our environment. Environment is not a diagnosis, but an equation with many unknowns where we can change a lot if we recognize it and want to do it.

For work in this field we can offer a few pointers:

A. We can't go without analyzing who and what kind of people surround us overall. We need to know the main groups and types of people, their average qualities and properties.

B. It is a good idea to decisively and with no regret get rid of those people who push us to a lower level of conscience and morality and thoughts of pity here are completely irrelevant.

C. We should strive to find and then appreciate and hang on to the people who are at a higher level of development (conscious and moral) than us. You shouldn't be afraid of looking worse next to them. In fact, the prospect of losing the chance to communicate with them is scarier.

D. We should not view our environment from the perspective of benefit or loss: We should help everybody to develop as much as possible. It is the universal law that giver is a receiver.

4. My values and I

One of the well-known fables sums up one of the main theses of the society today: "The stronger always blames the weaker". Most people don't like this, however many try to reckon with this as the necessary evil. If we ask the people we know if this is how they treat others, they will answer "No". However, if you ask the same person if s/he is treated that way by others, the answer will most probably be "yes, with the exception of a few good people."

Nearly all think it is not a good thing but it is widespread and becomes more and more pervasive. How can this be? What causes a situation when being kind is viewed as the synonym of silliness and timidity and being modest as that of stupidity or weakness? The word Honor is almost taken out of our daily vocabulary, and Conscience sometimes surprises because what conscience are we talking about in business relations? The list of these words that are good candidates for inclusion in the Threatened Species List can be continued: Honesty, Compassion, Love, Care, Responsibility, Courage, Spiritual growth, Harmony and so on…

Can we for a moment strain our imagination and think of a world where these concepts don't exist anymore, where there are no principles and values that will help us tell right from wrong, a world where people laugh at those few who try to tell them that "it is not a good thing and we shouldn't do it…"

We should realize that the choices we make every moment of every day and our value orientations will determine whether the humanity will be able to get back on track of spiritual and moral evolution, or this decline will continue, and soon our planet will no longer tolerate the existence of billions of immoral parasites on it.

A few topics to think about:

A. Did you ever have a reason to think about values that are the most important to you, where is that line you CANNOT go any further back, what is it you would never leave behind, what is it that is more valuable to you than the most desirable pleasures…

B. If you find such values then you can think about what you do to ensure they are not lost and are developed. What part of your life do you spend on entertainment and looking for fun, and which part is dedicated to the things that truly matter to you…

C. Think whether everything is ok about these values… Does anything bad happen to them and if yes, can't you do something to mend the situation…?

D. Have you thought of the positive aspects of being moral and are there negative ones? Or have you thought about how the person pays for his/her immoral actions, when s/he lies, oppresses those weaker than them, insults or shows cowardice…

We urge you to think about these questions and try to understand, that we won't automatically turn into a good person… You can turn into a scoundrel automatically, since climbing a mountain is harder than falling into a manhole. The evolution of our soul takes hard and painstaking work and few understand the advantages of it, but we assure you that it is WORTH trying.

At the dawn of the 20th century Russian mathematician Moiseev in his book "Modern Rationalism" said: "Morality is a finer concept than teachings on morality and has to do not only with the morals but also with the spirituality of the person, his/her orientation to inner values. We absolutely have to move on from discussions on environmental, technology and political science questions to the problems of the evolution of the person's inner world. We have to find such ways of influencing them so that the person's inner world becomes the main value for him/her. This is the most important key: key to the existence of the homo sapiens."

5. My information and I

We live in the information age. Today those managing the system are less interested in who has land or money and how much or what economic power they have or where the geographic borders pass through. The main focus is to understand what we think or feel about this or that issue. So the bonus that always goes with the information society package deal is the information war, a war for minds and hearts…
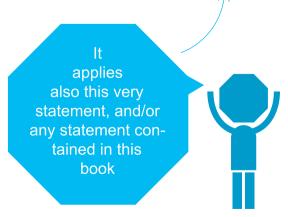
They constantly try to persuade us through television, internet and various social networks that we badly need this or that or we should seriously consider this or that issue. Through sounds, lights and special arrangement of goods in the supermarket, as well as discount cards and super discounts we are constantly manipulated. You have probably experienced this when you go in there specifically to buy something but come out with a couple of other things in your hands which, turned out, you were never going to need.

But unfortunately the information war is not waged only in supermarkets, it doesn't leave us alone even when we are asleep when we have a dream about how we are driving the luxury car that we saw 40 times in a TV commercial that day. We have to understand that if we really live in the information age, then above all else, THE MOST IMPORTANT competences to us should be those that will ensure the security and purity of our information field.

A couple of pointers in this area:

A. As much as a piece of information or a statement seems reliable to you, try to make sure it is true, is from a pure source and it does not seek to manipulate you.

It applies also this very statement, and/or any statement contained in this book

B. Develop your competences to fend off information attacks. The first step in doing so is to recognize the attack (keep in mind that these attacks can be diverse, starting from a street beggar trying to get money from you to the irresistible temptation to watch a stupid soap opera.)

C. Don't try to solve the issue by withdrawing. Of course, at initial stages it is extremely important to limit the information flows affecting us, but the right solution is to be open and consciously sort through the information and analyze it.

D. Try to find alternative sources offering reliable and pure information and gradually find your information sources. Listen to your Heart and Intuition, which can almost always unmistakenly judge the quality of the information.

E. Learn, develop, be awake and strive to become conscious and able citizens of the information age.

6. My personal energy, time and I

One of the key aims of the information war is to convince us to "willingly" dedicate our energy, attention and time to solutions of some problems which we have not determined for ourselves and which are not necessarily needed and even harm us. They can even be enjoyable, but if we think a little we will clearly see the irreparable harm it can cause to our health, wallet, quality of brainwork and feelings. And most importantly, we carelessly spend on this our most valuable and non-renewable resource-THE TIME OF OUR LIVES.

Who can explain what's the good thing about the pretty and colorful packs that read "Smoking kills", "Smoking causes cancer"? Or if it is indeed so why do smart people spend tremendous amounts of money, energy and time on this DANGEROUS activity, if the tobacco odor itself doesn't have anything to do with the person's self-confidence, freedom, maturity, composure and beauty.

A lot of people work so they can live. So, can we assume that that work which we dedicate 50-80 % of our awake time has nothing to do with our life and is not part of it? So we agree to sell 50-80 % of our lives for around 100-200 thousand drams a month. Ok, assuming we do, how about we think of a job that is worth doing it for and we would not be embarrassed to call part of our lives.

We can't get more energy than we have for the day, and can't have more than 24 hours a day, even if we have great connections and a couple of suitcases with money. Therefore, the work with our energy and time resources should be directed towards their good management… That is, not spending them on pointless and sometimes even harmful "activities" that do not improve us or make us happy and gradually directing the time saved to building a better future for us and, our loved ones.

The stages of competence development

Once we start the process of consistent development of our conscience and competencies, knowing the stages this development goes through will be important to us.

I

The first stage can be called " I don't know I can't" or
UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE
It is characterized by low levels of performance, consciousness and awareness.

II

The second stage can be called "I know I can't" or
CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE
This is also characterized by low performance but the person starts understanding the main patterns of the processes and

III

The third stage is called "I know I can" or
CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE
It is characterized by good performance since the competencies have developed to some extent. The attitude is more conscious, but the efforts applied are still at times artificial.
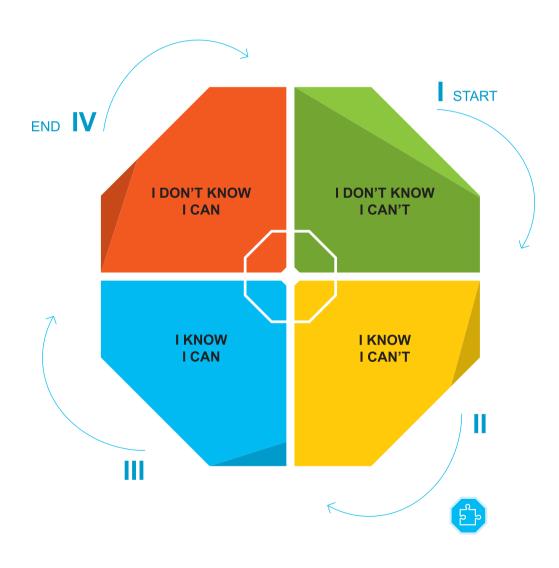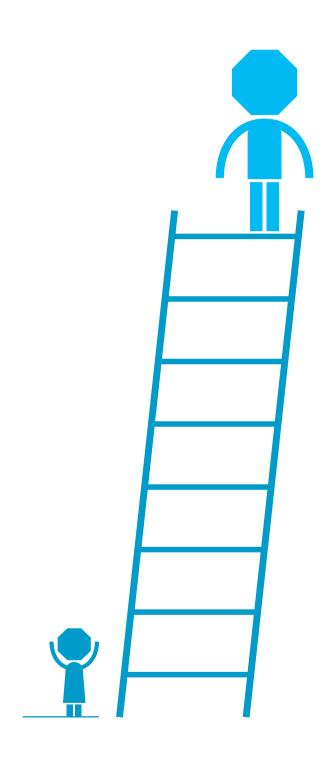
IV

The final, fourth stage is called "I don't know that I can" or
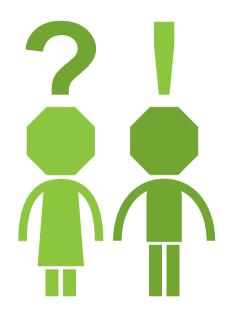**UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE**
Here the person doesn't recall anymore the struggles for acquiring the competencies. Everything happens naturally, holistically and harmoniously and high performance is achieved without artificial efforts.

At the fourth stage the peak of the next mountain, the next challenge starts showing, and the process starts over but on a different level already.

We
wish you
good luck in
developing your
competencies...

I START

END IV

I DON'T KNOW
I CAN

I DON'T KNOW
I CAN'T

I KNOW
I CAN

I KNOW
I CAN'T

II

III

HOW TO GET STARTED? TIPS AND TOOLS

infographics   note   attention   important   solution

Useful Tips to Get It Started

So, it looks like the time is ripe for you to take action and to set up a club! But, you may think, where to start? Here you will find some start-up suggestions!

Team set-up

You might be thinking, "What team are we talking about? Why is it important? And how is it formed?"

A good organizational and administrative team is essential for ensuring the sustainability of clubs, and good and efficient teamwork and communication within this organizational structure is one of the ways to guarantee the "health" of the clubs.

Before we look at the recipe for good teamwork, let's see how the team is set up. First of all, you need to have a clear understanding of who you are looking for (for example, setting an age range) and the qualities they should have, for example, organizational skills, social skills, punctuality, a sense of responsibility and so on. Based on this understanding[22], you can write a call for applications. Have an application form that those interested will fill out and send to you.

Following this stage the search itself starts which can be performed in the following ways:

- Disseminate the announcement through the internet

- Meet with school and university students at educational institutions (here you can collaborate with school and university student councils)

- Meet with youth groups involved in other organizations

- Look among acquaintances and friends

- Let your imagination run free and invent new ways of sharing the information.

Once the applications are collected, the selection stage starts. The initial selection is made based on the applications. Sometimes, the number of applications is large and it is hard to make a clear selection. In this case interviews are conducted.

They make it possible to meet the applicant in person and get to know them and discover new qualities. Based on our experience, the animators' team for each club should be made up of 2-3 people.

So, with the animators are selected, now let's see how to ensure the efficiency of their team work. Successful team work depends on each team member, their commitment and sense of responsibility. First, it is essential for the animators to have a clear and similar understanding what the club is and why it is organized, otherwise each leader will take their own path, leading to disharmony in the club Division of labor and assignment of roles makes the work clear and increases efficiency. (For example, one is in charge of finding video materials on the topic of the day and presenting them, the other works on disseminating the club announcement and so on). The division of labor can be based on the interests of the members but must be equal. Every once in a while it's recommended to alternate the roles, which besides being refreshing and increasing flexibility, allows club leaders' to develop new skills. Openness and willingness to talk about the issues of concern greatly contribute to a higher quality of team work, creating an environment of trust and mutual help which in its turn makes it easier to resolve contentious situations.

When talking about teamwork the 3P model is often mentioned: People, Process and Product.

Now let's see what it is. People included in the team, are in charge of implementation, and in this case, these are the animators. Process is the entire course of work (in case of clubs- starting from preparatory work till the end of the club meeting). Product is the outcome of the work, in this case the club meeting. Successful teamwork is the balance of these three components. Often it is hard to secure this balance since each team member, often inadvertently, prefers one of them:

for example, one prefers People and does everything to make sure that his/her teammates are comfortable, or Process, so that working together is enjoyable or Product, so that regardless of how the preparatory work went or how the team members felt in the course of it, it is the success of the club meeting that is considered all important.

PEOPLE **PROCESS**

PRODUCT

From time to time one of the three happens to become key as we address a certain issue emerged in the given period, however the other components should by no means be overlooked.

How to set up clubs?

When talking about clubs we have mentioned in the first chapter that they are set up around certain interests. Interests can be diverse: films, a foreign language, protection of nature, psychology, art and so on. These very interests form the central pivot of the club and are reflected in the title of the club, e.g. English club, Environmental club, Film club, etc.

The first step is to identify the interests and come up with a name of the club. While doing this you can start looking for like-minded people with whom you can potentially realize the club.

Afterward, decide on the venue and frequency of the meetings. You should be clear in this, for example meeting every Wednesday at 6 pm. This way it will be easier for the participants to remember. Set the frequency at your convenience. It can be weekly or twice a month etc.

Select the topics for club meetings for 1 month: this way you will save time in the long run.

Now, it looks like everything is decided, so start preparing for the first meeting. Disseminate the announcement on the meeting, invite your friends. At the first meeting present the orientation of the club, as well as how often the meetings are going to take place and introduce yourselves. Experience shows that this should be done not only at the first meeting but also later on because every now and then new members will join. Keep in mind that this meeting will determine the makeup of the participants of the next meeting. So spare no effort! Don't let the weaknesses of the meetings discourage you but rather work on them and improve the performance of the clubs.

Remember that for the club participants the motivation to attend can be very different. One comes to learn something new, the other to simply to pass time, the third to meet new people and so on. Due to this their participation and attitude toward the club might not match your expectations. This is not a reason to get discouraged either. Simply try to find a unique way of interaction with each of them.

Focus on the interests of the participants and their needs. Try to make sure these are reflected in the club meetings as much as possible. In the discussions it is also very important to cover the issues of the place where you live, and strive to make the discussion practical and relevant to the participant's everyday lives.

Well, it looks like all the steps are completed, all that's left is for us to wish the club success!

Resource management

When thinking about setting up a club we face the question of the resources we will need to make this happen. But, fear not! Everything is not as complicated as it seems. We simply need to take note of the resources around us and use them effectively when organizing club meetings.

Here is the checklist of required resources:

Human resources - People gathered around the club are an invaluable resource. Given a good team of club leaders any problem that arises can be regarded as soluble. Each participant attending the club brings in their experience, skills and knowledge as well as the interests and hobbies that they can contribute to the club: for instance, a participant interested in graphic design can contribute by making the poster for the club, those interested in journalism can do so by writing articles about the meetings. By contributing in their own way the participants develop a sense of ownership and a more caring attitude towards the club.

Time - Time is one of the key factors, since the success of club meetings is mostly directly proportional to the time invested. You need to invest time to prepare, research materials and disseminate information regarding the meeting.

Venue - When picking a venue for a club meeting you should consider the fact that the meetings will be taking place regularly and it is advisable to choose a reliable venue since constantly changing venues might confuse the participants. When weather permits the meetings can be moved to an outdoor setting. This way you will kill two birds with one stone: you'll enjoy fresh air in the nature and will have unexpected participants who can

potentially become permanent members. Meetings can be held also in the spaces of other organizations: new collaboration can be a source of new and unexpected resources.

Technical support - you should consider the availability of a computer, projector and speakers in order to present video materials, films and presentations during the meetings.

Educational materials - the basic list of educational materials needed to perform various exercises should include: Flipchart paper, A4-size white and colored paper sheets, pens and colored pencils, markers, glue, gouache, watercolors, colored sticky notes and scotch tape. This list can be adjusted based on the unique exercise needs (e.g. a rope, cardboard boxes, etc). Be inventive in obtaining the material needed for the events and try to use them wisely since, as you know, the resources of the planet are limited...

Other community resources - Depending on the topics of the club meetings you might consider using such community resources as museums, cultural and historical spots. If the topic of the meeting deals with art or environmental protection, it can be an area in the community facing environmental issues, thus making it possible to look at the issue right there or conversely see the solutions offered to the existing issues.

While keeping the above list in mind, you should simply remember that given a caring and committed team of club leaders, the club can be started even without having all the necessary resources, since the participants will be able to get all of that over time.

How to ensure visibility of your events and find /motivate/ participants

The visibility of the clubs can solve several issues at the same time from the perspective of making your work and its outcome known and attracting new participants to your meetings.

As a first step in disseminating information on the meetings you are organizing, try to determine the most effective channel of getting information to the residents of the community where the club is going to be organized.

Today the fastest way of disseminating information is the internet. A tremendous amount of information is shared and exchanged over the social networks around the clock but admittedly it is not available or accessible everywhere.

Regardless of whether the information is disseminated through the internet or not, it is good to have a poster and a leaflet with an interesting design indicating the venue and the time of the meetings. Leaflets and posters can tell people about the event 24/7 in places where you cannot be constantly present. When choosing the venue you should think of a place in your community where the people you would like to see in your club pass the most. It can be the cultural center or the nearby shop, or other organizations in your community, schools and universities. Apart from sticking up posters and distributing leaflets it is a preferable to personally have meetings with the youth in different places in order to present and explain how meetings are held, how they can participate and surely answer all the questions right there.

While disseminating the information you can also think of placing announcements on local TV channels and radio. Going back to the internet let's not forget about the club representation in social networks through a page or a group, with regular updates of the information, photos and also videos which will illustrate how the meetings go or offer interesting materials on the topic of the discussion. All of this can, of course, "attract" new participants to the club, but how do you ensure the continuing interest of the participants? The first conditions are ensuring a warm and welcoming environment and interesting topics. However, in order to solidify the connection of the participants to the club and raise the level of care it is very important for them to bring in "a small part" of themselves to the club.

This can
be in the form
of a discussion on
the topics proposed by
them, an opportunity to
moderate a club meeting
or discovering their hidden
potential with the help of
the club leaders.

Designing and implementing a club discussion

Having reached this point in the manual, you have been given a lot of tips on how to get started with your own educational activities. What is still missing though is how to actually choose a topic and prepare it for a club session. Over the course of the next few pages, we will therefore have a look at the content side of the process. We will explore strategies to find and approach a topic and we will have a look at how to work with information resources. We will furthermore have a look at tools and methods which can be used to make our participants reflect more deeply on any kind of topic and to engage in lively discussions with each other. Last but not least we will give you some links to additional resources for finding tools, which you can use to extend your own toolbox.

How to choose a topic?

The first question for choosing a topic is what kind of topics are really suitable for a club discussion. There are of course some "classic" topics linked to citizenship education, such as the nature of political systems or our legal rights and duties. But our understanding of citizenship education should not stop with these. As discussed in chapter 2, our social order is man-made and changeable and therefore everything which constitutes it has the potential to become a topic for discussion and problematization. Even the natural world, which is usually thought to stand in opposition to everything human made, can become a great topic if you look at it from the perspective of the relation between humans and the environment.

So from all the possibilities on offer which of them are good topics for a club discussion? The following questions should help you to get closer to an answer:

1. Is the topic relevant for the needs of your participants?
This forms a crucial consideration since a topic deemed irrelevant for participants, will lead to low motivation and participation. Relevance in this case means that the participants should be able to relate to the topic within their personal life. Luckily, his is certainly the case with most of the big topics of our human existence. When talking about the environment for example, we all have our attitudes on how we should treat nature and in our daily life we are constantly making choices, which affect it.

Of course, choosing a topic which can be relevant for the participants doesn't mean that they will all share this opinion from the beginning. It is a very personal matter how relevant they consider it to be to their own lives. The most important aspect when choosing a topic therefore is that it has at least the potential to be relevant for them. By choosing interesting methods and ways to engage the participants in discussions about it they should then be able to make the connection to their lives themselves.

2. Do you yourself have interest and motivation to research on the topic and to go deeper in it?

Particularly when starting a club for the first time you might think how you can actually work with a topic in which you are not a specialist yourself. Regarding those concerns it is important to understand that you don't have to become an expert before you can start to work on a topic in a club. In fact, it might even happen that you are not the most knowledgeable person in the room while animating the process. This may sound a bit confusing but it becomes clear when we understand that our role as leaders in the club is not to give a final answer to the questions under discussion in the clubs or to give an academic lecture. As club leaders we are responsible to guide our participants through the discussion process but at the same time we still remain learners ourselves and we should be open to learn more and more through the discussion with our participants.

What remains crucially important and can't be replaced is your personal motivation to learn, grow, and to go deeper in the topic. Although you don't need to know everything about it right from the start, you will need to do some initial research and to develop a passion to find out about it more deeply. Your attitude and motivation to know more and understand the topic better is therefore a far more important factor than your preexisting knowledge.

If you are able to answer the questions about relevance and personal motivation with yes: congratulations, you have found a topic. There are however some additional aspects, which you might want to take into further consideration:

3. Is it a topic, which can also be discussed in other places?

Another aspect you can think about is; are there already places for young people to discuss about the chosen topic. This is important because the discussion clubs should be considered as an opportunity to specifically address those topics which usually don't have a place in other places such as schools or other youth organisations. This is of course and additional criteria and there is nothing wrong about discussing topics which already have their place somewhere else since in the end it will also depend a lot on how it is presented and approached.

4. **Has the topic the potential to lead to concrete actions?**

This is an important aspect to be taken into consideration as the educational efforts should not only provide a critical reflection but also lead to action which will affect people outside of the club. Most of the topics, which are related to our life in society possess the potential to lead to further actions, but it is worthwhile to formulate the topic to already think a bit further as to what kind of out-of-club activity could result from the discussions.

How to approach a topic?

Within the "Young Citizens of Armenia" project, as described in the first chapter, we eased the difficulty on how to get started with a topic by choosing a "topic of the month", which then was broken down into smaller sub-topics by the leaders of the respective clubs. What can be learned from this approach is that you can start by choosing a more abstract thematic field and try to explore different perspectives on it. Let's say you would be interested on working on the topic of human rights. You can ask yourself: should it be about the concept of human rights in general? Or do you want to pick a specific human right, e.g. the rights of asylum seekers and to go deeper into it? Would you like to discuss the human rights situation in Armenia? Or to compare it with the situation in other countries. Exploring the different facets of a bigger topic is not a mechanical process and you will need some time and experience to find your way in. However there are some ways and strategies that might help you for that.

Problematization

To adapt a topic for a club discussion a good strategy is to re-formulate it as a problem. A problem in this context doesn't mean something negative, it is rather the process of realizing that something that we have taken for granted and maybe never questioned before is not an eternal order and can be actually debated and changed.

Let's take for example the topic of art. In a wider sense we all seem to know what art is and what is it not. To re-formulate the topic as a problem we could start by asking ourselves the following questions: How can we actually define art? Is it already enough if one person claims that it is as an art piece to make it one? Can or should art be political or not? Is everything allowed if it is considered art? If no, what are the boundaries it should not cross? By raising those questions you already gather material to create sub-topics for several club sessions, e.g. in this case "What is Art?", "Arts & Politics", "The Boundaries of Art" etc.

The intercultural lens

Another strategy to put our common understanding into question is to look through the "cultural lens". This means to have a look at other cultures in order to understand what is their approach and understanding towards a topic, e.g. about conflict. How is a conflict perceived in a different cultural context? How does our understanding differ from theirs? Or coming back to the human rights debate: Is human rights a western invention or do we find similar ideas in other cultural environments?

By understanding that things are seen differently depending on the cultural context it helps us to explore the influence of our own cultural background and to look for alternative ways of dealing with different issues.

The historical lens

For discovering differences in norms and values we don't always need to look at other countries but simply can have a look at our own history. Norms and values are in a constant process of change and re-interpretation and what was considered to be normal some decades ago might have changed in the meantime. Taking the example of gender roles you could e.g. try to find out: How was the role of women and men perceived 50 years ago? What changes can be seen if we compare it to today? Was it e.g. possible 50 years ago for women to have a leading position in a company?

By understanding that our own culture is a dynamic structure gives us the chance to think and debate alternatives and understand that we ourselves can become agents of change.

Research and work with information sources

In the following section we will explore ways on how to work with different types of information resources to self-educate ourselves about the chosen topic. On the one hand we are nowadays in the fortunate situation that we have greater access to information than ever before. With the rise of the internet we gained access to an unimaginable source of a data, which also led to a democratization of information access. It is no longer necessary to live in a big city with specialised libraries to research a topic as the digital content can be made available nearly everywhere.

On the other hand, the fact that we do have access to a seemingly endless amount of information creates new challenges: How can we filter the relevant information? What are good strategies to start our research? And what sources are actually reliable? This last challenge highly increased due to the nature of the internet as basically everybody has the possibility to publish anything he or she wants without an institution of quality control. The role of checking the quality of information is therefore on us and we need to develop strategies to find out, which of the sources are reliable. We will come back to this topic a bit later, for the moment let's first have a look at the different types of resources you can use.

Types of resources

Internet resources are for sure valuable and will be a great help for finding information about any topic. However, there are some other ways to gather information and we would like to highly encourage you to not limit yourself to online research.

Books and magazines

Even in the digital age a large amount of information is only available in printed form and therefore the analogue mediums should not be forgotten. Apart from new literature there is also a vast amount of printed materials from previous decades, which are not necessarily digitalized. In short: if you have the possibility then take the chance to check some libraries for books that relate to your topic e.g. in your university or public institutions. They often give a more comprehensive overview on the topics and one book with good articles can spare you several hours of internet research. Apart from books you can also try to find some specialized journals, e.g. art journals to find reports about artist you want to present or political science journals.

Human resources

Another source for information, which should not be underestimated are human resources. You can be sure that no matter which topic you are preparing, you will never be the first one to deal with it. It is therefore always possible to find experts

in the field whom you can contact and ask for advice or materials. In the best case this also can turn out into a great connection for a guest speaker in your club.

Apart from looking for individual experts (e.g. researchers, artists or politicians) you can also look for organisations who are dealing with your chosen topic, e.g. human rights education. Those organisations then might be able to provide you with information materials or contact to experts, who can help you further. Last but not least try to use your personal network, e.g. if you want to get a first understanding about a public opinion on a topic. Just start to talk with your friends, parents, relatives etc., about it to get an idea on their approaches towards the topic and maybe they will also have some ideas about people who might be able to help you further.

Internet resources

Speaking about internet resources, one challenge for the Armenian context is certainly that quality online resources in the Armenian language are still a bit rare. Although there had for example been a promotional campaign to raise the number of Wikipedia articles in Armenian language, it still is comparatively low. Therefore, always try to extend your search to other languages you know. Russian already opens up a whole new amount of resources but of course English/French will help even further.

G Google
A starting point for your internet research is obviously Google (even though other search engines also exist.)

To make your search more effective, here are some small hints and advice:

- In general, try to play with your search terms. Try to find combinations and additions to your main topic, e.g. "human rights", "human rights in Armenia", "history of human rights", "importance of human rights", "human rights philosophy" etc. to get a bigger variety of results.

- Try to google complete questions you have identified, e.g. "should art be political?" or "are human rights universal?" This strategy will also give you a very different list of results to googling just "arts and politics" or "human rights".

- Try to use quotation marks if you have a term consisting of several words, e.g. "human rights education" and see how the results are changing compared to ones without quotations marks.

- If you deal with a specific educational field, try e.g. to search for freely available handbooks and guidebooks who deal with your topics, e.g. "human rights education manual". Also, thoroughly check the websites of organisations, who are active in the field for information materials and tools.

Wikipedia

Another good place to start your research is Wikipedia. As with Google searches, it will be important to use all the language skills that you have. Even if you find an article in one language it will be better to have a look at the same entry in other languages as they might focus on very different aspects. If you can find a well written Wikipedia article about your topic, it also has the potential to lead you to further resources. Either within the article itself you can find a special section with links or if this is not the case, you can check the footnotes of the article for additional material.

Video

It's always worth to check videos sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo) for visual materials of your topic. One way to use videos is for self-education, e.g. if you can find lectures or documentaries on your topic. Apart from that a lot of educational movies and animations can be found for a variety of topics, which you can also use as material for the club sessions.

Magazines

Most of the specialized print magazines have their virtual counterpart with at least some of the articles usually freely available. Their search engines are therefore also great resources for finding specialized information and articles.

Podcasts

Podcasts are series of audio recordings focused on a special topic, which can be subscribed to and automatically downloaded. They are again a great source for self-education as a huge variety of topics is covered by them and they can serve as a great addition to reading or watching videos about your topic.

MOOCs

If you want to further self-educate yourself about a topic you can try to find and sign up for a massive open online course' (MOOC) related to it. Those are series of lectures and accompanying material made accessible by universities all around the world. They are usually available for various levels of experience and you will especially find a lot of introductory courses to a variety of topics.

Credibility check for online resources

As mentioned above, the seemingly endless amount of information available through the internet demands from us to develop a critical sense for evaluating the resources we are using.

The following questions can serve as a guideline to better understand the general credibility of the information source:

- Is it possible to identify the author of the article? If yes, can you find more information about him/her? Can s/he be considered an expert in the field? Articles and information, which are published anonymously already give a clue towards a lack of credibility.

- Can you find a date when the information was published? Is it a recent source or maybe already outdated?

- Is the resource descriptive and neutral or does it aim to convince you that a certain position is correct?

- On what kind of website is the information published? Is it an official institution or news site, which have their own quality controls or is it just a personal blog in which everybody can write what s/he wants?

- Does the website on which it is published have a political agenda? Or is the website related to business interests and therefore maybe biased in a certain direction?

- Does the article provide evidence for its claims in the form of links to the information resources it draws upon? A good and credible resource will always try make their own sources transparent. In general you should never trust only one source. If you find a figure or an interesting fact you would like to include in a presentation, try to find several sources for it.

It is not possible to have a definite checklist to be 100% sure that the information you found is correct as also false information can be widespread and adopted even in quality media. The questions and strategies mentioned above however should be able to help you develop a critical approach towards your resources and in providing correct information to your participants.

How to structure a club session?

After you have chosen a topic and done your research, the question still remains; how can you actually structure the sessions of your club? For this we will have a look at important building blocks of a club session:

The opening
The main function of the opening is to welcome the participants and to give them a clear picture of what they can expect during the session. Preferably use a flip

chart paper to write down the planned structure so participants are aware on what will happen. If it is a new group it's also nice to give the participants the chance to briefly introduce themselves with a couple of words. In case you have a guest speaker, also use this opportunity to present him/her briefly.

The opening is also a good time to use an ice-breaker and those games can certainly contribute to create a nice atmosphere. However, you should also take into consideration that - especially for newcomers to the non-formal education sphere - those kind of games might also be a bit irritating at first. Also be aware that the opening should not take too much time, some 10-15 minutes is certainly enough for it.

Inputs and presentation

Working in a non-formal education setting does not mean that you should never use frontal inputs. On the contrary, inputs and presentations, if used in moderation, can become a very inspiring part of your club and an important base for further discussion. If you choose to do a presentation try however to always keep the interaction with the participants going. This can be done by e.g. including some reflection questions in the presentation or by giving them space for questions from their side.

A special version of this format is the expert input. If you would like to work with a guest speaker, make sure to have some clear arrangement with him/her, e.g. about the length of the presentation and the specific topic addressed. Make also sure that the input will not take the whole session, 45 minutes should be certainly the maximum. This is also important as it will give the chance to actually engage in discussions with the guest afterwards.

Discussions and interactive exercises

Discussions and interactive exercises usually form the core of a club session as it gives the participants the chance to explore the topics by themselves. In the tool section you can find some inspiration as well as tips and suggestions, which can be used for any topic. There is also a huge array of specialized methods and tools for any kind of topic available and several links to resources can be found in the last section of this chapter.

Closing

Don't forget to always reserve some space at the end of the session for a proper closing. This can be used to sum up the process and discussions by the club leader or to give some preview on what will happen next. You can also use it for a short feedback round from the participants in order to give them a space to speak about how they felt and if there is anything they would like to share before leaving.

Tools and methods

On the next pages you will find some tools and methods, which you can use to make the discussion of the club content more interactive and dynamic. For this we have focused on several basic schemes which you can use for any topic. If you are looking for specialized tools in an educational field you can find several links to toolboxes and manuals at the end of the chapter.

Before looking at concrete tools and methods to facilitate a discussion, we would like to give you some hints, which you should take into consideration while choosing a method.

Suitability

Does the method fit with the objectives you want to reach? Try to first understand for yourself what are the core aspects, which the method touches and see if they really fit with the chosen topic of the club. Another aspect to be taken into consideration in this field is if the participants are psychologically ready for it. This counts especially for methods, which use a lot of self-expression, such as theatre or other creative methods. In general you will need first to create a certain level of trust among the group before you can use methods, who demand a lot of personal involvement.

Time management

Will the duration of the method fit into your schedule? This is a very crucial aspect as we often tend to underestimate the duration of exercises. For this also bear in mind that if you are doing an interactive exercise, you will need to reserve enough time to have a debriefing and discussion on the experiences afterwards.

Debriefing

Are you capable of leading a debriefing on the exercise? Especially if you take a new method, which you found somewhere, take your time to reflect about the aspects you want to focus on in the discussion after the activity part is over. It is rather easy to technically implement a method but the most important part for the learning experience of the participants will be the way of reflection on it.

Definition exercises

Introduction

Definition exercises are a great way to get started with a topic. They are an efficient tool to make the seemingly self-evident a bit more doubtful and to find starting points for discussions. Especially if it comes to general terms, such as culture, education, society, justice etc. we often assume that we know what we mean with it and that other do share our meaning. However, if we are asked to give a more precise answer, we often need to realize that either we are not able to do so or at least that our understanding differs in many ways from others.

Description

In a very simple version, you can divide the group into smaller sub-groups and give them the task to come up with a common definition of a term and to present it to the whole group afterwards.

In a more sophisticated version the procedure can be the following:

1. Everybody in the group has 5 -10 minutes to individually write down their own definition of the discussed term.

2. Participants are asked to pair up and to come up with a common definition.

3. In a third step, the already existing pairs should find another pair and will again have some time to come up with a common definition in the small group.

4. Depending on the size of the group, this can be repeated until only one or two definitions remain, which will then be presented.

Some questions for the debriefing can be:

- How did you feel during the process?

- Was it easy/difficult to come up with a common definition?

- What were the most controversial points of discussion?

- Did the individual versions differ a lot from the final results?

- Did your view on the topic changed during the discussions?

Association exercise

Introduction
This is a quick, easy-to use exercise exercises to get started with a topic. Realizing that when we talk about a word, very different association are evoked in us also helps us to better understand the different layer of meaning related to them and to explore new facets of the topic.

Description
1. The club leader reads out a term (e.g. culture, society, gender) and the participants are asked to write down their very first association while hearing this word on a post-it.

2. The post-its are then collected on a flip-chart paper and similar aspects are grouped into bigger categories.

3. The results can then be used as a starting point for discussion on the different meanings related to the word and to further explore different aspects of it.

World café

Introduction
World cafe is a very efficient method which allows us to work with the whole group on different aspects of a topic simultaneously. It's also a collaborative method, during which everybody can contribute to all discussed aspects whilst building on previous discussion results.

Description
1. The club leader arranges several sheets of flip-chart paper with key discussion questions around a main topic written on them on tables in the room. For the topic of active citizenship this could be: "What does being an active citizen mean?", "Is it important to be an active citizen?", "What are activities which I could do in my community to improve living conditions?" etc.

2. The group is divided into small groups with an equal number of participants and are assigned to a starting table. Within the small groups they will start to discuss the questions and take notes of their discussion results on the flip chart paper. It is however important that they do not immediately fill up the paper.

3. After a given amount of time, the groups will rotate and move to the next table. Based on the already written notes, they will continue their discussion and write down their additional ideas.

4. This procedure will go on until the groups reached their initial table. Returning back to their initial questions, they will have some time to sum up everything that is written on the flip chart and then to present the summary to the whole group.

Statement exercises

Introduction
Statement exercises help to get participants into more lively discussions - especially on controversial topics. A big advantage of those methods is that they are dynamic and involve everybody at the same time. In general they are a nice way to also break the seating order and to get a bit of physical movement in the discussion circle.

Description
1. The club leader reads out a controversial statement related to the topic of the club, e.g. "National security is more important than human rights"

2. Participants are then asked to move to one side of the room depending if they agree to the statement or disagree, e.g. "left side of the room" = agree, "right side of the room" = disagree

3. Participants are afterwards asked to explain and defend their choice. This can either be done freely or with specific rules, e.g. statements will alternate between agreement and disagreement or a person is only allowed to talk once for each statement.

Variation
Instead of using the binary division of agree/disagree you can use an imaginative scale between 0 and 100 % on which participants are asked to position themselves according to their level of agreement.

Additional resources for tools

SALTO toolbox: https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/search/
Multilingual Educational Toolbox: http://educationaltoolsportal.eu/platform/
tools_front

Both websites have huge collections of tools for non-formal education for a variety of topics. There is not a lot of quality control on the sites but there are certainly some gems in the collections to discover.

Compass - manual for human rights education
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/eycb/Source/Compass_2012_FINAL.pdf

A manual on human rights education by the Council of Europe with a lot of background information and quality tools, which you can use for your clubs.

T-Kits http: //pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kits

The T-Kits are a collection of publications, done in collaboration between Council of Europe and European Commission in the youth field. They cover a huge variety of topics, from basic training methodologies to conflict resolution and are certainly worth having a look at while starting to get involved in youth work.

Introduction to Non-formal education. Manual for trainers

This manual is in Armenian and aims to provide theoretical and methodological support to people who specialize in the field of trainings, as well as to present them the basics of non-formal education: It also showcases methods required for the implementation of practical exercises.

Out-of-club activities to consider

We have already covered the history, types and development of events held outside the clubs in Chapter 1. But the types of these events are not limited to what we presented. Our experience seeks to inspire and serve as a source of fresh ideas.

Here we will talk about the details of their organization.

First of all, keep in mind that such events offer a good opportunity to do something together. "Together" we mean not only with friends or club participants, but also all of those living with you in the same town or village since most of them are not even aware of your work and the clubs. "Something" can be many different things, starting from raising awareness of a topic to the solution of a problem of the town or the village, e.g. improvement of a certain area.

When organizing events, a number of circumstances need to be taken into consideration in the course of preparation:

Picking the day

When setting the day of the event you should check whether that day falls on a significant church, national or international day (e.g. Easter, Independence Day or Victory Day), since any other event held along with celebrations of the day with a topic that is not consistent with the overall logic of the day may potentially interfere with getting your message across. For example, if the event is dedicated to focusing the public attention on the issues of people with disabilities, indeed, it will be more advisable to pick specifically the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Here the balance is important: when deciding the format of the event you should keep in mind the message you want to get across. Often it happens that at the preparation stage when the topic is already chosen and you start thinking about the kind of events to hold, an interesting idea is born and afterwards all the work serves the development of this idea, while the topic and content are pushed further back.

Venue selection

When picking the venue you should again make sure ahead of time that no other events are planned in the same place on the same day. Depending on whether it is indoors or outdoors the organizational aspects are different. If the event is going to be held in a park, you should necessarily have permission from the town municipality (village municipality). If the area has an owner you should secure

their permission as well. Keep in mind that owners have their specific rules and requirements, so you should take these into account and be ready to come to an agreement. When organizing it outdoors you need to follow the weather forecast. If it's in summer and during the day, you need to pick a tree-covered area or think of pavilions. In the rainy season it is better to avoid outdoor events or choose an indoor venue.

Cooperation

Seems like it is straightforward and no issues will arise, however lo and behold that if the invited guest doesn't have a clear understanding of the aim of the event or what is expected of him/her, this can ruin the entire event. The willingness of the two sides to work together and achieve a common goal is one of the keys to success, especially if the event is not a one-day thing but a long process, such as experience sharing events.

Format + content

Here the balance is important: when deciding the format of the event you should keep in mind the message you want to get across. Often it happens that at the preparation stage when the topic is already chosen and you start thinking about the kind of events to hold, an interesting idea is born and afterwards all the work serves the development of this idea, while the topic and content are pushed further back.

These are general factors and each event can in its turn have its own features. Here is an example of such an event which, by the way, is one of the dearest and most successful formats for our team.

By the example of the "Living Library" let's see how you should arrange the organizational matters. The goal of this event was to set up a "library" where the "books" were people representing different groups, and the "readers" were going to visit with them hearing their life story, asking different questions, learning about their lifestyle.

Now, here are the organizational tasks put in order:

- Make the list of the "books" (we did this through a facebook survey and chose the "books" that were found the most interesting). If you are organizing this for the first time, 10-15 "books" is the most optimal number.

- Then start looking for the right people. Tell about it everyone you meet. This way the probability of finding those you are looking for among the people you know or people these people know, is great. Look for those who will be willing to talk about themselves and answer the questions of the "readers". Remember that the success of the event depends greatly on the "books".

- While searching for them also choose the day and the venue (we had picked Komitas Park in Yerevan, since it's very compact and makes it possible to keep the entire event in under control which is critical in this case). Outdoor events allow people who for different reasons are usually far from this, to participate. In this case they are driven by curiosity to check it out and become a participant. You should be ready to have unpredictable "readers". Once you have picked the venue don't forget to get permission (we had written a letter to Yerevan Municipality).

- Once you have picked the day and the venue start inviting the "books". They should get clear instructions as to what their role is and what is expected of them. Be sure to notify them that the event is going to be outdoors and it is not known who the "readers" are going to be so they might ask personal questions. If the question is too personal the "book" can choose not to answer it. There might also be provocative questions: the "books" should not add fuel to the fire flames and turn the conversation into an argument. In this case the role of the organizers is critical. They should follow the course of the meeting closely and intervene when needed.

- The "books" are invited, the day and the venue are chosen, so you can start advertising the event. Make posters, leaflets and an announcement on facebook (event), send a letter through e-mail, etc.

- On the day of the event you should be at the venue at least an hour ahead of time and set up the area as a "library". Place a poster by the entrance that has in big letters: "Living Library". For each "book" set up a separate area with 1 table and 6 chairs (1 for the "book" and 5 for the "readers"). The tables have to be set up the way that the conversation around one table doesn't interfere with the other. A separate table should be set up for the "librarians", who will host the "readers", present the "list of books" and will be in charge of registration.

- Set up chairs for those waiting, since it is possible that the maximum number of "readers" around a "book" will be reached and people will need to wait. Stick a note by the entrance indicating the working hours of the "library".

- At the end of the event carefully clean the area.

Here we present the main actions. You can find the details of organization of this event in the guide "Don't judge a book by its cover! The living library organiser's guide 2011" developed by the Council of Europe.

Monitor, Evaluate and Recommend on Changes

What does evaluation mean and why is it necessary?

With the topic of evaluation we have reached an important part of the educational process; the part which gives us the chance to better understand the impact of our activities and how we can improve our work. If you think that this sounds like a complicated task which should be better left to experts and researches, we would like to convince you that it is not the case. In a wider sense all of us are actually already experienced evaluators. In our daily life we are in a constant process of receiving information, judging it and based on this, making changes in our attitudes and behaviour.

So what is the actual difference between this everyday process and evaluation in a stricter sense? The first and foremost the difference lies with intentionality. In contrast to ongoing observations and judgments, evaluation does and should not happen randomly. It needs a specific time and space and at least some awareness of when and how the evaluation is happening. Secondly, evaluation is always a conscious reduction of the complexity of the world. In everyday observations, we are not very much aware of most of the information which comes into our perception. While leading a session of a club we might observe if participants look rather sleepy or excited, or we might notice that one person is talking more than others. For an organised evaluation though, we will need to understand beforehand what part of the reality we want to concentrate on and what information we would like to receive. Last but not least, evaluation always refers to a declared ideal, which sets the standard for judgements. To be able to evaluate we need to know: what is the aim of our educational activity? What would be a good project result for us? Planning an evaluation therefore also forces us to get clear about our goals and objectives.

Why evaluate?

The need for evaluation can be seen as a reaction to a major difficulty inherent to the educational process - we simply often don't know about the impact of our actions. Educational practice doesn't have a clear product in the same way as a baker baking his bread or a carpenter producing a table does. As it is an

interaction of humans with humans there is no clear causality between our action and the results it has on the addressed person. To get an idea about the impact we therefore need strategies and tools to make it visible. By doing so evaluation becomes a valuable learning experience for youth workers as well as young people.

Evaluation as a learning experience for youth workers and young people

For youth workers, educators and organisers of a project, evaluation gives feedback on the impact it has had on the participants and the chance to compare it with our intentions. By doing so we might find out that our intentions and impact fit perfectly fine but most likely at the same time, that some activities did not work out the as planned or that they were even leading to unwanted results. The outcomes of an evaluation will therefore give us valuable hints on how to improve our educational activities and how to suit them better to the needs of the participants. It furthermore allows us to become better youth workers as through the feedback on our actions we can improve our (self-) understanding on how to act to get closer to the intended results.

While trying to gather feedback from young people we might however encounter an obstacle: the young people themselves are sometimes not aware of the impact the educational activity had on them. It lies in the nature of a learning experience that once we have learned something it becomes a part of us and it is difficult to imagine how we were before. Once we are grown up we can't see the world with the eyes of a child anymore or once we know how to swim or to ride a bike it's hard to imagine how it is not to be able to do so.

Evaluation therefore can also be seen as a help for the young people to understand their own learning process better. By being asked to reflect on the educational experience in a structured way it raises the self-awareness on their learning process and their personal development. Evaluation therefore becomes a valuable part of the learning experience for the young people as well.

Evaluation as documentation of project outcomes

Apart from being a learning experience for youth workers and young people, evaluation also serves some more pragmatic reasons. If you have received a grant for your activity it is often simply a requirement of the donor to be able to show what has happened with the money. The grant scheme of the donors are usually connected to specific purposes and it will be in your responsibility to

provide evidence that your activity has contributed to them. If the donor is giving you money to raise the active role of young people in their community, you will need to have indicators, which shows the results related to this requirement and you will need to evaluate the activity accordingly.

Regardless of being an external request, proper documentation of learning outcomes can help us in general to get recognition for our activities from the outside world. Whereas in formal education the impact is measured by standardized test results, in non-formal education it is a more difficult task to show the value of what we are doing. A good document of the impact and the personal reflections on learning outcomes by participants will therefore make it easier to get recognition and future support.

Although being an important part, those pragmatic reasons for evaluation should not take precedence. As we have seen, evaluation goes beyond a necessary evil to please donors and should foremost seen as an educational experience for the educators and participants themselves.

The process of evaluation

Before we can jump into our evaluation activities, we need a little bit more patience in order to have a look at the necessary steps and preparations for implementing an evaluation.

Evaluation plan

The first aspect we need to be clear about is what we actually want to measure. On which aspects of the activity will we focus? Do we want to know how people like specific aspects of clubs? Or do we want to know more about the impact on the young people? Do we want to get a feedback on our performance as youth club leaders? By defining the questions, which we want to answer with our evaluation activity, we already create a clear guideline for the next steps. Apart from personal preferences the decision about "what to evaluate" can of course also be influenced by external factors. As briefly mentioned earlier, the funding for our activity might be connected to certain expected outcomes and we will therefore need to include those aspects into our evaluation scheme.

After getting clear on "what to evaluate" the next step will be to think about the "how". Based on our evaluation interests we will be able to choose and design the

methods, which will provide us the answers to our questions. Hopefully, you will find a lot of inspiration in the methods section which can be modified according to your specific evaluation needs.

In general, while transforming objectives into measurable data the question will always be "How do we know that this specific objective was achieved?". If the objective was e.g. to increase active participation of young people in their communities, the question will be "How do we know that their active participation was increased?". This can e.g. be done by checking on how many local initiatives were developed as a result of the club activities or by running an evaluation activity with people from the community on their perception on active participation of young people.

For an evaluation plan we will also need to decide on the frequency of evaluation activities. Depending on the type and duration of the activity, the evaluation can be a one-time event (e.g. at the end of a day-long workshop) or an ongoing process involving different methods of various length and focus (e.g. for an ongoing evaluation of a discussion club throughout the whole year). From our experience from the clubs a short weekly evaluation works very well - but, again, there is no universal rule for it and you will need to carry out a little bit of trial and error to see what frequency suits your activity best.

Quantitative vs. qualitative

When gathering data it is helpful to be aware of the difference between quantitative and qualitative data. The easiest way to distinguish between the two is if we look at the way the questions are formulated and what kind of answers are given. Simply put, quantitative data is connected to question to which the answer can given as a numeric value.

This could e.g. be:

- How many people attended the club in average this month?

- What is the percentage of male/female participants in the activity?

- How would you rate the activity on a scale from 1-5?

The main advantage of collecting quantitative data is, that it can be easily compared and developments can be tracked over a longer period of time. It allows us for example to see that in March we had a much higher number of participants in our club than during the other months. Or we can see that out of the last four club meetings one of them was evaluated with a very high average rating. The main disadvantage of this kind of data is, that unfortunately numbers never speak for themselves. We will have to interpret the results and as there are multiple ways of interpretation we can never be sure if we actually have the right one. Why did people not come to this specific club? Was it because the topic was not interesting? Was it because there was exam period at university? Or was it because there was a popular event happening at the same time? The number itself does not give an answer to that. Quantitative data alone therefore is a rather weak base for drawing conclusions and making changes.

Qualitative evaluation on the contrary is focusing on "why-questions" and individual interpretations, e.g.:

- Why do you think that this activity was (not) important? What were the individual judgements that led to this decision?

- Why do you think that your expectations were (not) met?

- What does the development of intercultural competence mean for you?

The clear advantage of this kind of data is that it allows us to go deeper into the reasons behind judgements and therefore gives us better clues for changes. It certainly makes a difference for drawing conclusions if a club leader is receiving critical feedback because he is perceived not strict enough or because he seems too strict. The main disadvantage is that due to the highly individualised answers it is difficult to track developments over a long time. With regard to visibility and presentation of project outcomes, qualitative data is also harder to present to an audience who was not involved in the process and in this context can be rather used as additional illustrations to "hard" quantitative data.

Gathering of data

After having designed our evaluation approach, the second step will be the collection of data. The most common way for gathering data is to run specific

evaluation activities for which you can find methods in the next section. The collection of basic indicators, such as such as number of participants or gender ratio, can however also happen on an ongoing base by simply taking notes. Gathering data is certainly a crucial step but it should never be an end in itself. It is unfortunately a common practice to implement evaluation activities, gather the feedback and put the information into a desk drawer without ever looking at it again. By doing so the most valuable part is lost which is using the outcomes and feedback for an actual improvement of our work.

Analysing the data and drawing conclusions

To be able to discuss the gathered feedback you will need to do some small preparations. For the quantitative data you will often need to make a simple calculation to find out about the average rating of a specific club session or of the rating of the club leaders, for example. For the qualitative data it is worth grouping similar statements in an evaluation summary. You can for example group all statements made regarding the work of the club leader or all statements made regarding the quality of the facility to have a better overview on the gathered feedback.

The deeper analysis and discussion of the evaluation outcomes should then be done together with your colleagues in a team. There is always more than one way to react to detected problems and weaknesses and it will need a thorough discussion with others to come to conclusions about what changes should be made. What can be done to avoid the detected weakness? How can we adjust the project better to the needs of the participants?

The dimensions and parameters of change itself are manifold: Do we need to change something about programme elements? About the frequency of our club activities? Or, even, do we need to sit down and revise our general objectives of what we want to reach? It can always happen that our objectives were too ambitious at the beginning or during the course of the activity we find out that they don't match with the actual needs of the young people.

By having completed these three steps, we have gone through an important learning process and gained a lot of valuable insights on what we actually do while running our activities. We have better understood what is important for the participants and what they learned through their participation. We have also given them the chance to actively participate in the process of re-shaping the activities and to suit them better to their needs. All in all it gives us the chance to constantly improve our educational work and to base our decisions about changes on the real feedback of the participants.

METHODS

In the following section we would like to give you some hands-on examples of methods which you can use to gather feedback by participants and at the same time help them to reflect about their own learning process and preferences. Most of the methods are schematic andcan be easily modified according to your specific evaluation interest. We always tried to already give you some variations of the methods but feel free to adapt, change and improve those suggestions and come up with your own modifications.

Feedback circle

Description
The feedback circle is probably the most simplistic way to evaluate a process. Simply put, participants form a circle and are asked to share their impressions on the activity. This can be done either by following the order of the circle or by spontaneous expressions. There are of course numerous variations possible, of which we would like to present you a few.

Variation 1
The participants are given time to think about 3 words which sum up their experience and then to express them afterwards, e.g. new - interesting - complicated. BY taking notes on the words and their respective frequency the youth club leaders can be use this exercise as a starting point for a group discussion, why did those specific words get chosen and what are the associations related to them.

Variation 2
Participants are asked to express their experiences in a metaphor. This can e.g. be: "If the day had been a journey, how would you describe it? What means of transportation were used? Did you travel fast or slow? With whom did you travel?" Another good metaphor is a meal: "What were the ingredients? What was the taste?" The advantage of using metaphors is that they often facilitate a new way of thinking about the process and if used spontaneously they often reveal more than initially thought of. One has to be aware though that it can create an uncomfortable situation for people who are already shy to express themselves and it is therefore more suitable for small groups or groups who already know each other well.

Variation 3
Participants are given a clearer structure to express themselves, e.g. by using their 5 fingers: thumb ("something I really liked"), index finger ("something

I have learned") middle finger ("something I didn't like"), ring finger ("atmosphere in the group") and small finger ("a small memory I will take home with me"). For using this variation it will be necessary to draw or write the instructions on a flipchart paper to make it visible during the process.

Variation 4

The person who speaks has a ball of wool in his hand and after passing it to somebody else in the circle, they keep one end. This works simultaneously as a farewell ceremony as step by step a visible connection between the participants is created.

Comments

Although being simple, the value of the method should not be underestimated. It is easy to use, can be done spontaneously after any activity and especially in with variation becomes a full-blown evaluation exercise which can give valuable insight on the learning process and the mood in the group.

Name
Thermometer

Description

1. Two signs are put on opposite walls of the room, with one stating 0% and the other 100%.

2. The youth club leader reads out questions related to the quality of the activity, e.g. "To which extend were your expectations fulfilled?", "How much ready do you feel now to take a small step about the topic of today?"

3. Participants are asked to line up on the imaginative line between the two poles according to the approximate percentage they feel.

4. After finding their positions they are free to explain their position if they want.

Variation

Instead of using a percentage scale you can use the binary division "agree"/"disagree" and modify your statements accordingly, e.g. "My expectations towards the activity were met."

Comments

The method combines several advantages. Firstly it is dynamic and fosters active participation through moving within the room. Secondly it involves all participants at the same time without forcing anybody to explain themselves in public. Thirdly it nicely combines a quantitative with a qualitative approach. Through their position in the room, participants already express their tendency in numeric terms and at the same time have the chance to give further explanations of their choice. One challenge is certainly that due to the group dynamics, participants might tend to not stand out of the group and rather choose a position where others already gathered. The answers therefore can't be taken as accurate as an anonymous questionnaire.

Meeting expectations

Description

1. At the beginning of the evaluated process (e.g. during the first minutes of a club meeting), the participants are asked to write down their expectations on post-its and to put them on a big sheet of paper. It is important that only one expectation is put on each post-it.

2. At the end of the evaluated process, participants are asked to take off all the expectations which were met and leave the ones which were not fulfilled.

3. The post-its which are left are then used as a basis to discuss why those specific aspects were not fulfilled and what could be changed for the next time to improve the activity.

Variation

Apart from expectations you can also make collections for "possible contributions by participants" and "fears". The task in the end will then be to take away all the contributions which were made and all the fears that did not happen.

Comments

A big advantage of this evaluation activity is that the criteria for the evaluation are set by the participants themselves. Their expectations become the standard for measuring the process. It also gives an important insight already from the beginning if the expectations of the participants actually fit with the planned objectives of the activity. Last but not least it nicely connects the beginning of the evaluated process with the end by going back to the collection of initial expectations.

Name
Silent Feedback

Description

1. Several sheets of white paper are spread on tables in the room with evaluation questions to be commented on. Regarding the specific questions there is no limit and they can be formulated according to the evaluation interests.

2. Participants are given some 15 minutes to write their impressions to the questions on the papers without talking to each other. They are allowed however to comment on previous statements on the paper with their own ideas.

3. After the process, the youth club leaderreads out some aspects and can ask questions if something is unclear.

Variation

Instead of questions you can use symbols on the paper, e.g. a suitcase (impressions you want to keep/take with you), a washing machine (something to improve) and a fire (something to be forgotten).

Comments

The advantage of this method is that participants can express themselves more anonymously compared to explaining themselves in front of the group.

At the same time it is still happening as a group process and the chance to comment on statements by others make it more interactive than a simple questionnaire. For the club leaders it is also useful to have the written feedback, which can be afterwards used for a deeper discussion within the team.

Target

Description

1. The club leader draws a target on a big white sheet of paper with sections on different topics, such as atmosphere, teamwork, club leaders, training facility etc.

2. Participants are given some minutes to mark their satisfaction with the evaluated categories on the target. The closer the mark is to the centre, the more satisfied they are with it.

3. The picture can be used as a basis for discussion with the group about the mentioned aspects, especially if a category is rated very badly.

Variation

Instead of an anonymous marking, participants will make their marks one by one and immediately express with a short sentence why they chose this position for it. This variation can result in a very intensive group process but also has the risk that due to a felt group pressure you might not get honest answers.

Comments

This method works very well as a mid-term evaluation during a training or seminar as it helps to identify possible problems and weak points of the project in an efficient way. The visual representation of the level of satisfaction also makes it easier to discuss possible solutions within the group.

Name
Human Body

Description

1. A giant human body is drawn on the ground by the participants. This should preferably happen with chalk or with natural materials (if outdoors) to not waste much material.

2. Participants are then asked to find a position on the body, which relates to their feeling about the evaluated activity, e.g. head, leg, heart etc.

3. One by one the participants explain why they choose this specific potion on the body, e.g. "I have chosen head because I learned a lot of new things" or "I have chosen the heart because

it was a very emotional experience for me".

Comments

The exercise works very well as a final activity of a club meeting or even final meeting of the club to evaluate the year. Creating the shape of the human body is a fun group activity and the explanations of their chosen positions also serve as some nice final words to the group.

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Anahit Minassian
Engaged in NGO sector for the last 12 years, is committed to the development of youth work and non-formal learning in Armenia. She designs and leads events of different scale focusing on youth work and youth policy development both in Armenia and across Europe (working mainly with different agencies of European Union and Council of Europe). She combines her international training and consulting activities with her role of the director of KASA Foundation, where together with her team she creates various possibilities for civic engagement, employment, entrepreneurship and personal growth of youth.

Active citizenship formula:
Commitment for growth

Areg Tadevosyan
Vice-president of the International Center for Intercultural Research, Learning and Dialogue, youth worker, researcher and freelance trainer, with more than 20 years of experience in NGO sector. He has taken part in the development and implementation of a number of all-Armenian and International projects and has authored a number of publications in youth and noon-formal education fields. His main spheres of expertise are research and training in the fields of intercultural dialogue, personal development, non-formal education and community development.

Active citizenship formula:
Motivation+Awareness

Anush Hayrapetyan
has over 8 years experience in youth field working and motivating young people for engagement in community development, in conflict affected communities predominantly, leading a number of local and international youth initiatives aimed at youth empowerment. Anush has a Master's degree in Human rights law and researches the practices and opportunities of human rights realization through non-formal and citizenship education.

Active citizenship formula:
Awareness+Optimism+Persistence

Karine Stepanyan
has joined Young Citizens of Armenia project since its launch in 2011 and is currently leading the project. Having Studied Linguistics she found a new passion in working with her peers by supporting them in fulfilling their initiatives and revealing their hidden skills. She is particularly interested in daily coaching of young people and personal growth through developing one's creativity.

Active citizenship formula:
Think+Act+Create

Hermine Papikyan
is a project coordinator, youth worker and trainer, with more than 8 years of experience in NGO sector focusing on women entrepreneurship, election administration and youth empowerment. She has taken part in the implementation of various local and international projects in peace-building, community capacity building and youth empowerment. Her main spheres of expertise are youth work, self-development and enhancement of professional skills, non-formal and itizenship education.

Active citizenship formula:
You are the one to create active citizenship. You don't search for it.
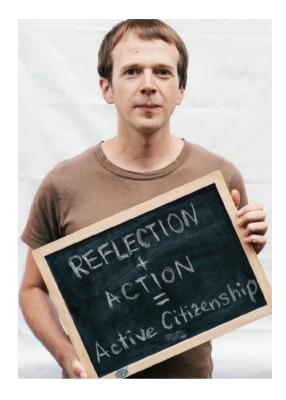
Simon Thornton
has a background in both Eastern European and post-Soviet studies and philosophy. After spending several years living and working in the NGO field in Russia and Armenia, he became a PhD candidate in philosophy at the University of Essex in England. His research interests focus on ethics, political theory and theology and the philosophy of religion. Simon led the "Young Citizens of Armenia" project in 2012-2013.

Active citizenship formula:
Hope + Love + Faith
(St Augustine's three virtues)

Oliver Wiechmann
is an international youth work trainer from Germany, currently residing in Armenia. He has been involved in the non-formal education field since 2007, having gained experiences in organisations in Germany, Vietnam and Armenia. Having a scientific background in educational science and sociology, he has a strong interest in the relation between educational theory and practice and the mutual benefits of an exchange between them.

Active citizenship formula:
Reflection+Action

WHAT IS YOUR FORMULA OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP?

CONTENTS

Komitas Action Suisse-Arménie

KASA Foundation is a Swiss-Armenian organization committed to sustainable development of Armenia since 1997. Working with and for young people as well as promoting development of youth work field in Armenia is one of its main activities. Various programs of KASA aim at harmonic personal and social development, well-being and self-realization of the young person through education, counseling, information and other activities.