

Alexander Foundation

A Short Overview

The Dutch Alexander Foundation is a non-profit and nationally operating institute for youth participation and youth oriented action research. Supported by 20 years of experience in all life domains of young people - from youth care and health care, through education and culture, to housing and employment - we are able and enable others to bring participation to a higher level. Our approach results in genuine involvement and stronger social ties in the communities we work with.

The team and our approach

The Alexander Foundation consists of a multidisciplinary team with enthusiastic and highly motivated professionals who are committed to their promises. In a variety of creative ways we succeed in getting the youth, the parent, the neighbour, the professional and the official up and about; as well as establishing dialogue among them as to realise genuine and meaningful participation with our specific approach.

We design project made to our clients

The query of our clients is pivotal for our work, to the extent that the participatory trajectories that we design fit in well with the wishes, demands and organizational environment of our clients. Depending on these wishes we conduct research, bring about innovation or change processes, develop new tools and / or ensure implementation. Furthermore we convey and transmit our expertise by means of coaching, training, classes, workshops and publications.

Young people are always involved

Whereas the query of our clients is pivotal for our work, children and youth are and remain the focus of all our efforts. We don't consider Alexander Foundation to - or even to be able to - represent their interests; but instead enable them in creative

and practical ways to represent their interests themselves. Young people are actively involved in all phases of our projects: as fellow researchers or fellow trainers, as advisors and translators of the results. Furthermore young people in our projects initiate and engage actively in dialogue with adults on their recommendations, as well as become actively involved in the implementation of improvements in cooperation with adults.

Methods

The Alexander Foundation applies a range and variety of tools and participatory methods aimed at enabling participation of young people in institutional as well as municipal settings. In addition to so-called 'single method training', we also train professionals and officials in handling and applying several methods concurrently, while at the same time becoming knowledgeable in adapting the acquired methodology to the specific needs of different target groups.

Key examples of recent projects in research, training and coaching:

- Youth on quality and effectiveness of regional's youth care
- Risk indications within residential youth care from the perspective of young clients
- Incentives and impediments for integral cultures in schools
- Integral youth policy in rural settings
- Local youth campaign against drugs abuse
- On the job training of local youth workers in developing a municipal system of integral participation (schools, youth centres and public space in neighbourhoods)

Some examples of activities on European level.

Lithuania: In 2006, The Alexander Foundation provided training in Lithuania using a 'train the trainers - model'. 20 professionals were trained in



youth participation during a two-days training, using the techniques the Alexander Foundation used in the Netherlands and developing their own youth participation plans for their local contexts. The last training day, local youths were invited to perform a part of the training together with the Alexander Foundation. The first training, two Lithuanian trainers acted as co-trainers. In the second training, during which another 20 professionals were trained, the Lithuanian trainers performed the training their selves, Alexander Foundation acted as coach. After these first trainings, the Lithuanian trainers have already given the training to several other groups of professionals in Lithuania.

Moscow: The NGO 'Women and Children First (WCF) has our foundation invited to provide two trainings during 2008 en 2009. In the first year the training will be on general skills for youth participation in research highlighting best practices developed internationally. In the second year the training will be more specifically directly at how to organize research into the quality of services in institutions through Youth Inspection Teams. We will train WCF trainers and 'leaders' amongst the institution workers in methods to organise youth research into the quality of services. WCF will then adapt the trainings for specialists in the orphanages and conduct follow up trainings for specialists from orphanages and community centres. For this moment WCF is waiting for the decision from the European Commission if they will finance this project. If this will be the case, we can start.

Publications available in English

• **Participatory action research with youth:** Social scientist Mrs. Kitty Jurrius works as project leader at the Alexander Foundation. She supervised a number of participatory youth research programmes. She's carrying out doctoral research into the quality of participatory youth research. A short review of the research-design you can find on our website.

• **Young people as partners in creating leisure environments:** (Pehlivan, T. ,2005). Colleague Mr. Tarik Pehlivan attended the conference of the European Association for Leisure Time Institutions of Children and Youth (EAICY) in Prague in November

2005. He conducted a workshop and published this article in the December issue of Youth of Europe - Bulletin EAICY. The article is available in English and Russian and can be download.

• **Perspective taking through PAR with youth:** (Mrs. Kitty Jurrius, 2007). The article focuses on the results of research on the quality of Participatory Action Research with youth. Young people interviewed mentioned several skills they gained through performing research themselves, like communication skills, organizational skills, interview skills and listening comprehension. Noteworthy was that a number of skills were connected to perspective taking. Perspective taking is generally seen as an important social skill. Through this skill people are able to take the perspective of other people and to solve their conflicts. There are various theories about how children's perspective taking skills improve. Some theories stress the importance of growing older, while other theories stress the influence of the environment. These second group of theories teach that perspective taking is a skill that young people can learn through, for example, training, games and role-playing. If young people can gain perspective taking skills through participating in PAR, it would be very interesting to explore this further. This article focuses on the question how perspective taking skills can be recognized in the skills young people say they have gained through participating in PAR.

Several factsheets en leaflets

- Overview of the Standards Q4C
- One Example of a Standard Q4C
- InspectieTeams Q4C
- Children's Research Group
- Designing Natural Playgrounds
- If you really want to know! (Be Involved)

For more information on Alexander Foundation, our clients, methodology, products and publications, please consult our website:

www.st-alexander.nl

(there is an English submenu in the right corner). And if you want contact us directly, please don't hesitate.

Mr. Leo RUTJES, director
Telephone 00 31 20 626 39 29
Info@st-alexander.nl

