

# **Talent development in youth work**

**Maike Smid**



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A study on the successful factors of talent development programmes aimed at the empowerment of adolescents in disadvantaged urban areas.

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**Abstract** – The aim of this study is to examine what the successful factors in talent development programmes are and how they influence the empowerment of adolescents in disadvantaged urban areas. From March till May 2011 a Dutch, British and Flemish youth programme aimed at talent development have been analysed. Seventeen in-depth interviews were conducted with adolescents, youth workers and other professionals. The results indicated that the three programmes had a positive influence on the empowerment of adolescents. A pre-condition for the achievement of empowerment was long-term involvement in the talent development programmes. Providing a future perspective, increasing the social bond, and giving ownership over activities were indicated as the success factors in achieving empowerment. Lastly, it was indicated that in order to reach vulnerable adolescents, the programme must be implemented in an easily accessible youth centre.

**Samenvatting** - Het doel van deze studie is het onderzoeken van de succesvolle factoren in talentontwikkelingsprogramma's en op welke manier deze leiden tot de empowerment van adolescenten in stedelijke achterstandsgebieden. Van maart tot mei 2011 zijn een Nederlands, Brits en Vlaams talentontwikkelingsprogramma geanalyseerd. Er hebben zeventien diepte interviews plaatsgevonden met adolescenten, jongerenwerkers en overige professionals. De resultaten tonen aan dat de drie programma's een positieve invloed hadden op de empowerment van adolescenten. Een voorwaarde voor het bereiken van empowerment was langdurige participatie in een talentontwikkelingsprogramma. Het bieden van een toekomstperspectief, het vergroten van de sociale binding en het geven van eigenaarschap over activiteiten werden onderscheiden als de succesfactoren voor het vergroten van empowerment. Tot slot bleek dat een programma in een laagdrempelig jongerencentrum moet worden geïmplementeerd om kwetsbare jongeren te kunnen bereiken.

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*Key-words:* youth work, talent development, empowerment, vulnerable youth, disadvantaged urban areas.

## Introduction

In 2009 the European Union has adopted a new strategy on youth policy with the aim of empowering adolescents all over Europe (Jeugdbeleid in Europa, 2009). Empowerment can be seen as a process in which individuals gain control over their own lives and achieve their democratic participation in community life (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000). According to UCAY (2010), gaining more control over one's life is especially important for adolescents since they are in a vulnerable phase in life. By addressing adolescents' strengths rather than their limitations, their self-confidence and intrinsic motivation to change will improve. However, successful participation in society is not a matter of course for everyone. In this study, the focus will be on adolescents in the ages of 14 to 25 years who live in disadvantaged urban areas. According to the Netherlands Youth Institute (2011), the physical, psychological, social, or cognitive development is threatened by the problems vulnerable youth have to deal with. This puts them in danger of marginalizing.

Municipalities, particularly in urban context, focus more on talent development of adolescents (Stuijvenberg, 2009). The dictionary describes talent as the natural capacity to be good at something (Van Dale, 2011). According to Gladwell (2008) equally competent children do not achieve similar successes because of the deficiency of social, educational, or technological possibilities. This implies that talent is not only dependent on natural abilities, but develops in interaction with the environment. In this study, talent development is seen as a wider concept with the aim of empowerment of adolescents in stead of pursuing top talent. As a result of empowerment it is expected that the agency and social participation of these adolescents will increase (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000).

In Europe, there are several programmes that focus on talent development to achieve empowerment of vulnerable adolescents. In this study, a comparison is made between a Dutch, Flemish, and British programme. The Dutch programme evaluated is UCee Station which is a media education project for adolescents aged 12 to 23 years. The media activities are provided by media coaches. They take place at secondary schools, youth centres, community centres and cultural institutions in the four biggest cities in the Netherlands. Through activities as video, radio, and writing, the following goals are evoked: media education, youth participation, professional development, and talent development (Van Rijn & Du Cloo, 2010). The British programme is part of the umbrella organization Worth Unlimited which aims to help marginalized and excluded adolescents living in Britain. The programme evaluated is implemented in a youth centre in Bromford, Birmingham. Through this programme, adolescents learn to set up their own social enterprise. Besides having their own enterprise, the adolescents are expected to give something back to community, hence the name social enterprise (Worth Unlimited, 2010). The last programme evaluated is youth competence centre 'De Branderij' in Antwerp, which is part of the Belgian umbrella organization JES. The target group of the youth competence centre is 16 to 25 year old adolescents with fewer opportunities due to their poor socio-cultural and socio-economic position. The aim of the centre is to recognize, acknowledge and further develop the competences of adolescents. The competences are acquired in an informal way

during their leisure time in order to improve their self-esteem, stimulate personal development, and increase social orientation and participation (JES, 2010). All three programmes use talent development as an instrument to empower adolescents.

It is likely that programmes aimed at talent development contribute to the development of protective factors, for example, social skills and positive peer interactions. This is because talent development programmes are targeting the opportunities of adolescents for empowerment (Deković, 1999). Nonetheless, it remains unclear what the successful factors of the talent development practices are and how these practices influence the empowerment of vulnerable adolescent. The purpose of this study is to explore what the successful factors in the three talent development practices are, and whether they lead to the empowerment of adolescents. The research question is as follows:

*- What are the successful factors in talent development programmes that contribute to the empowerment of vulnerable adolescents?*

In the following article the risk factors that adolescents face in disadvantaged urban areas are discussed. Subsequently, the balance between risk and protective factors is examined and it will be explained how empowerment can increase the protective factors. Using a theoretical model it will be described how behavioural change can lead to empowerment. Following, the criteria that a talent development program must meet in order to lead to empowerment will be discussed. The method section describes the implementation and analysis of this study. Followed by the key results obtained from the interviews. Finally, the conclusion and discussion give the implications of the results, where after practical consequences for the Dutch talent development programme is given.

### **Theoretical framework**

The present study includes both risk and protective factors at multiple ecological levels that are particularly relevant for the behaviour of urban youth. The '*balansmodel*' (literal translation: balance model) provides a framework for discussing the balance between risk and protective factors through different levels which influence development (Bakker, Pannebakker & Snijders, 1999). The balance model can be viewed as a scale in which the risk factors are displayed on one side of the scale and the protective factors on the other side. According to Verhoeven, Davids and Schulpen (2007) the scale of vulnerable adolescents is more heavily balanced towards the side of the risk factors. Bakker and others (1999) state that when there are numerous risk factors, and less protective factors, an individual is unstable. However, when risk factors are compensated by protective factors in and around a young person, there is a better balance. Problems on community level could thus be offset by positive social and individual factors.

Research of Springer, Selwyn and Kelder (2006) indicates that urban youth are more likely to report risk behaviour than rural youth. Individual risk factors are antisocial behaviour,

psychopathology, and psychological problems (Bakker, et al., 1999). Family risk factors include a low socio-economic situation, poor parenting styles, and a poor relationship with parents and marital stress (Van der Laan et al., 2009; Bakker, et al., 1999). Van der Laan and others (2009) have also identified several risk factors in the broader social environment such as school, peers and neighbourhood. School risk factors include a poor relationship with teachers, poor school performance, inconsistent rules and a high crime rate at school. Peer risk factors are associated with delinquent peers, peer rejection, and low popularity. Furthermore, Colemann and Hagell (2007) indicate community influences as factors for problem behaviour such as disorganized, inner-city areas, overcrowded households, high residential mobility, and social housing. The behaviour of adolescents is thus influenced by their social environment. This is in line with the Social Control theory of Hirschi (1969). For adolescents living in poor urban areas the ties with society might be weakened or broken (Springer, Selwyn & Kelder, 2006). When this happens, someone is relatively detached from his surrounding society. This creates the freedom to deviate from social rules. In this case, binding with other people and with society can serve as an important protective factor in the lives of vulnerable adolescents. The internal and external risk factors as stated above can result in no or little sense of control over their lives by adolescents (Verhoeven et al., 2007). According to Abrahamson, Metalsky and Alloy (1989), the consistent feeling of negative expectations about one's future and the helplessness about changing the future, is called hopelessness. This reduces the chance of experiencing positive developmental paths and future adoption of roles, for example complete school and enter the workforce (Damon, 2008).

However, some adolescents who live in high-risk situations are able to succeed despite their circumstances. Research into resilience offers indications why some people do well in live while others are not able to overcome their problems (Moritsugu, Wong & Duffy, 2010). According to Winfield (1994) resilience is the capacity of an individual for normal development under difficult circumstances. Garmezy (1983) identified individual characteristics of resilient students in high poverty areas. These students are successful even though their living in disadvantaged circumstances. The characteristics include a range of social skills, positive peer interactions, responsiveness and sensitivity, intelligence, empathy, and critical problem-solving skills. Furthermore, Prociuk, Breen and Lussier (1976) reported a positive sense of self, a sense of personal power, and an internal locus of control as characteristics of resilient adolescents. In addition, Werner and Smith (2001) indicate several factors at family and environmental level which influence the resilience of individuals throughout their lives. Family protective factors relate to parents competences to nurture their children at critical times. At community level, the presence of caring adults operates as a protective factor.

Risk factors are associated with the individual characteristics and environment of adolescents and can result in problem behaviour (Van der Laan et al., 2009). In this study, the emphasis is on the environmental risk factors of adolescents who grown up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Vulnerable adolescents need to be supported at the personal level and in increasing the social bond. This process is called empowerment. According to Rappaport and Seidman (2000) empowerment focuses on

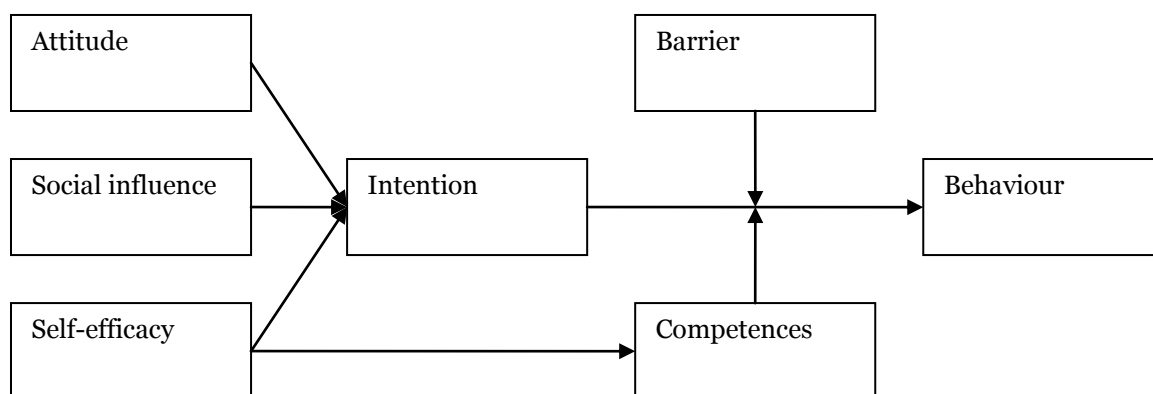


identifying powers in stead of risk factors. Empowerment can be seen as a process in which individuals gain control over their own lives and achieve their democratic participation in community life. Zimmerman (1995) distinguishes empowerment at the individual level what he calls psychological empowerment. Psychological empowerment is the self-perception of competence, participation in one's community, and an understanding of socio-political environment. Thus, psychological empowerment includes beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about the resources and aspects that hinder or increase the effort to achieve those goals, and effort to fulfil the goals. The paradigm of empowerment provides indications to explain why talent development has a positive influence on the competences and social mobility of vulnerable adolescents. It is likely that programmes aimed at talent development contribute to the development of protective factors.

### *Behavioural change*

The interventions in this study all pursue empowerment and the active participation of adolescents in society. To achieve this goal, behavioural change is required. This means that, for an intervention to be successful, behavioural determinants must be addressed. When behavioural determinants are positively related to behaviour, individuals will have the intention to change their behaviour (Brug, Van Assema & Lechner, 2008). The ASE-model is a tool to identify these determinants and to explain behaviour. According to this model, the intention of an individual is created by three cognitions: attitude (A), social influence (S) and self-efficacy (E) (De Vries, Kuhlman & Dijkstra, 1988).

Figure 1: ASE-model for behavioural change



(De Vries, et al., 1988)

The *attitude* is shaped by the amount of confidence that someone has in the advantages and disadvantages, and the expected outcomes, of the behaviour (De Vries et al, 1988). Attitudes are based on prior learning experiences. Behaviour that has resulted in benefits, will lead to positive attitudes towards that behaviour, while behaviour that has resulted in punishment will lead to negative attitudes (Assema et al., 2008).

Besides attitude, it is important that there is attention for *social influence* within an intervention. According to De Vries and others (1988), social influence consists of three concepts, namely the normative beliefs, social support (or social pressure) and modelling. First, the normative beliefs are the expectations of how other people in the environment will react to certain behaviour. Furthermore, social pressure is the negative impact on the desired behaviour, while social support is the positive influence on the desired behaviour. Finally, modelling refers to learning by observing other people's behaviour (Brug et al., 2008).

The third behavioural determinant was introduced by Bandura (1986), namely *self-efficacy*. According to De Vries and others (1988), this is the expectation people have about their own ability to show certain behaviour. In other words, do people feel able to carry out particular behaviour? As reported by Bandura (1982), self-efficacy can influence the choice of activities and the planning of an activity. Furthermore, it affects the thought patterns and emotional reactions. The estimations about one's self-efficacy do not necessarily have to correspond with one's behaviour. Someone can judge certain behaviour as difficult, but still be certain that one can successfully achieve the behaviour. Furthermore, people can have several reasons to think that they will not be able to show certain behaviour. One reason could be that they previously did not succeed in performing that behaviour. Therefore, the factors to which an individual attributes his lack of success are also involved (Brug et al., 2008). According to Brug and others, self-efficacy has many similarities with the concept of 'perceived behavioural control' which was introduced by Ajzen (2005). Perceived behavioural control is the control individuals feel over the implementation of particular behaviour. The difference between both concepts is that self-efficacy only focuses on the individual aspect of control, while Ajzen (1991) takes the structural environment into account as well.

Youth work programmes can only lead to the intention to change behaviour when all three determinants are addressed (De Vries et al., 1988). Moreover, there are two factors that could prevent the intention of actual change of behaviour, namely the skills of an individual and barriers. It is the duty of the youth worker to identify whether there is a lack of skills or whether there are barriers which cause the lack of implementation of certain behaviour (De Baat, 2009).

#### *Talent development and behavioural change*

The ASE-model indicates that programmes in youth work should focus on three determinants in order to lead to adolescent's active participation in society. The following section discusses which aspects within talent development programmes stimulate the attitude, social influence, and self-efficacy of an adolescent which in turn influences the level of active participation in society. Hereby, both the content of the programme and the role of the youth worker within the programme are relevant.

Attitude is the result of the estimation of advantages and disadvantages associated with the outcome behaviour (De Rick, Valkenborgh & Baert, 2004). To induce adolescents to show the desired behaviour it is necessary for them to understand the benefits of that behaviour (De Baat, 2009).

According to Bandura (1986), individuals are motivated to engage in particular activities when it is likely for them to gain benefits from these activities or to prevent negative outcomes. The expectation of future outcomes increases the level of involvement in activities. Miller and Brickman (2004) studied the influence of future goals on motivation and self regulation. As reported by them, the perception of future success directs self-regulation, the selection of activities, and the level of engagement in those tasks. Therefore, the content of a programme should include a future perspective for adolescent so that they will see the advantages their behaviour will have. According to Van Dijk, Sagel-Grande and Toornvliet (2006), adolescents who have a positive role model with whom they can identify have a stronger belief in their future potential. This role model could be an adult living in the same neighbourhood who has a proper job despite his own lack of education.

Besides directing attention towards the attitude of adolescents, it is important to include the social environment in talent development programmes. According to Van Oenen and Van Westering (2010) social participation, including participation, development, and well-being, occurs in interaction with the environment. The behavioural determinant social influence can be linked to the Social Control theory of Hirschi (1969). Hirschi distinguishes different ways in which people are tied to society. When these ties are strengthened, delinquent and problem behaviour is much less likely. Therefore, the content of the programmes should be focused towards binding the adolescent with society. First, the emotional *attachment* with others should be reinforced. Through this emotional bond, sensitivity to the opinions and wishes of those to whom the adolescent is attached, is developed. In this situation, the relationship functions as a barrier against deviations from the desirable behaviour. When adolescents have a lower level of attachment with their parents and school, they will deviate more quickly from conventional behaviour. In building a relationship with adolescents, Klomp Kloosterman and Kuijvenhoven (2002) distinguish several techniques to use by the social worker. First, the social worker must prove that he can be trusted. That includes living up to his promises, and being clear and consistent in his opinions. Secondly, it is essential for the social worker to show interest in the adolescent and give him the feeling of being a worthwhile person. Realistic expectations and patience of the social worker are important conditions to avoid disappointment and rejection. Besides attachment, Hirschi (1969) indicated *involvement* in daily activities as another way in which individuals are bonded to society. When someone has a daily schedule, there is less opportunity for deviant activities. For example, a job or hobby will probably keep adolescents from engaging in undesired behaviour because there is simply no time for the latter. These activities ensure that one is tied to appointments, working hours and planning. Lastly, Hirschi distinguishes *commitment* as a way people are tied to society. Once an adolescent is committed to his position in life, he is not likely to violate values that would put this position on the line. When an adolescent has a job he is proud of, he will most likely not violate the rules because he wants to keep his job (Van Dijk et al., 2006).

Individuals in the social environment of adolescents can also function as role model. The social learning theory assumes that social behaviour is learned by observing the behaviours of others

and imitation of that behaviour. Learning new behaviour or changing existing behaviour is in part a conscious process and for another part it is unconscious. Consciously imitating others is called imitation while unconscious imitation is called modelling. The youth worker can use the social learning theory by acting as a role model (Bandura, 1977). Marginalized adolescents often have a lack of bonds with persons or groups who can play a positive role in their social development. The youth worker in this respect can function as a role model and identification figure for the adolescent. Therefore, what the youth worker expects from the adolescents must be visible in his own behaviour (Klomp et al., 2002).

The last behavioural determinant that is important in the intention of behavioural change in an individual is self-efficacy. The locus of control someone has over his own life is a significant aspect of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Adolescents from disadvantaged urban areas who think lightly, or not at all about their future and who feel little responsibility for their problems, need to be held responsible (UCAY, 2010). According to Kelly (1988, as cited in Zimmerman, 1995), members of a community must have an active role in programmes affecting their lives. This includes taking part in defining the problem, developing the appropriate programme, implementing the programme, and evaluating the process and outcomes. With this ownership approach, adolescents make their own choices and are therefore in charge of their own lives. It gives them self-esteem and will make a positive self-image possible (UCAY, 2010; Gutierrez, 1990).

A precondition for ownership is that adolescents should be challenged; this corresponds with the study of Csikszentmihalyi (1998) into the development and effects of optimal experiences. He calls this phenomenon ‘flow’, a concept which can be used in research into the experience of success by adolescents at risk (Kooijmans, 2009). One important assumption is that every action is immediately followed by feedback. In contrast to the usual practice, during a flow-experience people know if they are doing things right. Another element refers to the balance between challenge and skill. In everyday life people can feel frustration or anxiety when expectations are too high or feel boredom when they are capable of more than is required from them. But in a flow, people feel that their ability fits in well with the opportunity for action (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998). The youth worker must adapt to the already existing level of skills. Subsequently the youth worker can teach the adolescents new skills (Gutierrez, 1990). The precondition for learning new skills is that the youth worker does not simply give the instructions, but communicates with young people on the same level.

By using the model of behavioural change, several criteria can be distinguished that a talent development programme must meet in order to lead to the empowerment of vulnerable adolescents. These criteria are listed in table 1 and are the starting point of this study.

Table 1: criteria talent development programmes

|         | Attitude             | Social influence          | Self-efficacy |
|---------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Content | - Future perspective | - Social bond (modelling) | - Ownership   |

## Method

On-site individual interviews has been done with eleven youth workers, four adolescents, and two project developers. These interviews were held in the spring of 2011. In total, four youth workers, one adolescent, and one project developer from UCee Station, three youth workers and two adolescents from Worth Unlimited, and four youth workers, one adolescent, and one project developer from JES were interviewed. Through individual interviews, adolescents and youth workers were given the opportunity to discuss their view, without being influenced by others. Besides interviews, other resources have been used. First, in person observations have been made in order to get a clear view of the context of the programmes. Furthermore, a content analysis of the three programmes has been carried out. The policy documents, methodologies, and other programme descriptions have been used.

Respondents were recruited through the network of the Netherlands Youth Institute. Contact details for all Dutch youth workers were obtained through the coordinator of UCee Station. Subsequently, there was contact with four youth workers and one adolescent. In addition, there was contact with the coordinators of Worth Unlimited and the JES Antwerp. In Britain and Flanders the interviews were arranged by the coordinators. The projects were chosen because of their focus on adolescents from poor urban areas.

The Dutch adolescent interviewed was a female aged 19 years who was in higher vocational education. She was involved in the programme since one and a half years. The two British adolescents were males in the age of 19 and 28 years who were both not enrolled in an educational programme at the time of the interview. They were involved in the youth programme for 5 months; one of the males was involved in the youth centre since he was little. The Flemish adolescent was a male aged 17 who was in secondary school. He was involved in the youth centre for about 11 years. A total of four Dutch youth workers were interviewed, three male and one female youth worker. Two of the youth workers were higher educated, one had vocational education, and one was lower educated. They were working at the youth centres for an average of 2 years. A total of three male youth worker and one female youth worker were interviewed in Flanders. Two of the youth workers were higher educated, one had vocational education, and one was lower educated. They were working for JES for an average of 10 years. A total of three British youth workers were interviewed, two male and one female youth worker. The three youth workers were all had a higher educated. They were working for Worth Unlimited for an average of four and a half years.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. During the interview, lists of questions were used that were derived from the research question. The first topic that was raised in the interviews was the context of the project. Both the content of the programme and the role of the youth worker within the programme were considered. The second topic in the interviews was the entry of adolescents in the programme. Discussed were the goal of the adolescents, the definition of the problem, and the way the youth worker builds a relationship with the adolescents. The third topic considered was the support of the youth worker. This was an open question but it gave indications for

the influences of future perspective, social bond, and ownership. Within this support a distinction was made between motivating, building on existing strengths, challenging, expectations and participation. The fourth topic in the interviews was the outcomes of the programme. This includes everything that adolescents learned in the programme, the new skills that they acquired and other positive individual outcomes that were obtained through the programme. Finally, both the adolescents and the youth workers were asked to suggest possible improvements for the programme. These topics were based on the criteria in table 1. The mentioned topics and points of attention were set in a topic list in advance (appendix). The interviews took thirty minutes to one and a half hours and took place at the youth centres. With the permission of the respondents all interviews were recorded. After the interviews, adolescents and youth workers were given a present to thank them for participating in the study.

By interviewing both youth workers and adolescents, combined with observations and content analysis, the reliability of the research has improved. Both views were compared and the similarities and differences were analyzed. Consequently, a more reliable picture of the programme and the support of youth workers were obtained. Through the use of in-depth interviews a greater chance of accurate and complete information was acquired. The interviews were recorded on a voice recorder. Because of this, there was no lost or misinterpreted information. Subsequently, transcripts of the interviews were made and were subsequently analyzed with the software programme Atlasti. Atlasti is used in order to uncover and systematically analyze obtained data. The programme provides tools to locate, code, and annotate the research findings.

## **Results**

The results were analysed using the criteria identified in the literature. First, an overview of the three different programmes is provided. Second, the level of impact of the programmes on the empowerment of adolescents in society is given. The impact on empowerment is evaluated by the level of social participation and agency that adolescents have over their lives. Subsequently four themes emerged that reflect the different levels of impact the three programmes had on adolescents. These four themes are: access, future perspective, social binding, and ownership. Furthermore, an overview of the context of the programmes is offered. Finally, the quality of the programmes is being discussed and the differences between outcomes and content of the programmes are given and are set in the context. All themes discussed in the results are ordered by programme, first UCee Station, than Worth Unlimited and last JES Antwerp are argued.

### *Overview programmes*

By using the programme descriptions, complemented with information obtained from the interviews, an overview of the three programmes is given. The following subjects are listed in table 2: the goal, target group, approach, executive organizations, precondition implementers, and the context of the city (Van Rijn & Du Cloo, 2010; Worth Unlimited, 2010; JES, 2010)

Table 2: short overview of UCee Station, Worth Unlimited, and JES

|                            | UCee Station   | Worth Unlimited  | JES   |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Goal                       | Media education, participation, professional and talent development  | Inclusion and participation of marginalized and excluded adolescents                                       | Recognize, acknowledge and further develop the competences of adolescents   |
| Target group               | Adolescents aged 12 to 23 years, living in (poor) urban areas  | Adolescents aged 11 years and older, categorized as marginalized   | Adolescents aged 16 to 25 years with a poor socio-cultural, and socio-economic position   |
| Approach                   | Media lessons in radio, video, and text writing, provided by a professional media coach                                  | Engaging adolescents through setting up their own social enterprise  | Counselling in work-related competences, and recognition of acquired competences  |
| Executive organizations    | Schools and neighbourhood organizations  | Youth centre the 'Hub' in Bromford, Birmingham   | Youth centre 'De Branderij' in Borgerhout, Antwerp  |
| Preconditions implementers | The previous education of the media coaches differs; they can be specialized in photography, film, radio etc.            | College qualification Youth Work, or master degree Community Work  | Animators and volunteering youth workers are offered trainings by the youth centre itself. The qualification of staff members differs from middle to higher education |
| Context of the city        | UCee Station is implemented in the four biggest cities in the Netherlands: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht. | The youth centre is stationed in Bromford, which is characterized by its British working class inhabitants | The youth centre is stationed in Borgerhout, which is characterized by high percentage of immigrants and with poor socio-economic level                               |

### *Impact programmes*

UCee Station uses media-education in order to stimulate adolescents to participate in their communities. One of the youth workers explained that the adolescents had to interview people as well as the local police in the neighbourhood. Through this approach UCee Station wants to improve people's views of deprived urban areas. One of the youth workers indicated that there was more social contact in the neighbourhood as a result of the activities. Two of the youth workers mentioned that by

facilitating discussions between Dutch adolescents and youth from ethnic minorities, the degree of respect between the two groups has improved. Two of the youth workers mentioned the importance of discussing news and politics in developing adolescents' social awareness and intelligence. Some of the adolescents continued to watch the news because they did this during the lessons. One youth worker points out that the adolescents become more confident and have the courage to give their opinion as a result of the programme. But active participation and confidence were only reached when the adolescents were connected to UCee Station on a long-term basis. This could have been through an internship or a job. One youth worker mentioned the importance of recurrence of a programme in order to see changes in adolescents' behaviour. Another youth worker gave an example of an adolescent who was connected to UCee Station for a longer term that did achieve this goal. He said the following: *"We had one guy, who started in the first project of UCee Station. He followed the programme for one year. He was so successful that he was offered an internship at Fun-X radio. He thought that was absolutely great. For others, it is fun to do it a few times, but for him it really is his future"* (We hebben een jongere gehad die is begonnen met het eerste project van UCee Station. Die heeft het ook een jaar lang volgehouden. En die is zo goed geworden, dat hij een stageplek kreeg bij Fun-X radio. Dat vond hij helemaal geweldig. Bij anderen zie je dat ze het leuk vinden om het een paar keer te doen, maar voor hem is het echt zijn toekomst). This is confirmed by a youth worker who works with UCee Station on a short term basis. He stated that UCee Station does not directly contribute to future perspective, but adolescents do get to think about certain issues.

Worth Unlimited helps adolescents to set up their own social enterprise by which they were actively participating in their community. In order to get funding for their own enterprise they had to give something back to their community. The adolescents indicated that this was one of the main reasons they participated in the programme. For the adolescents who were setting up their own bike shop it was also about mapping their local rivals and advertising for the bike shop in their community. Besides this, one of the adolescents was trained to become a youth worker for which he got the necessary qualifications. The adolescents were gaining more control over their own lives through their participation in the programme. First, the adolescents mentioned the increase in their social skills. They both pointed out the communication skills they obtained through the programme. One of the adolescents stated: *"I learned to think before I say something. I think I'm better at communicating, especially in a group"*. This quote also indicates the group skills learned through the programme. The adolescents stressed they learned the professional skills needed to set up their own social enterprise, such as planning and organizing. One of the youth workers mentioned the results of the programme on community level: *"I was given a list of 15 adolescents in Yardley who showed a lot of antisocial behaviour. Over a period of 12 months we engaged with all these adolescents and actually by the end of the year they were not confronted with the police anymore. I think the antisocial behaviour rate went down with 40%"*.



Through the different courses JES Antwerp offered to adolescents, they were given the opportunity to actively participate in their community. A lot of the adolescents who came to JES did an animator course or were volunteering as youth workers at the youth centre. One of the youth workers stated: *“The adolescents come here in their free time to spend it as meaningful as possible. Instead of hanging on the street, they can do an animator course”* (De jongeren komen hier naartoe om hun vrije tijd zo goed mogelijk in te vullen. Dus in plaats van hangen op straat kunnen ze hier een animatorcursus doen). At the youth centre, adolescents got structure and received information about daily life and work. Furthermore, JES had a job coach in service who helped adolescents in getting a job or education. Recently, he appeared in the newspaper because the number of unemployed from ethnic minorities has dropped in the neighbourhood he worked in. One youth worker explained that the animator courses that JES offers stimulated the development of social skills and groups skills. He indicated that one adolescent was afraid to speak in public a few years before he did the course. After the animator course he is better in cooperating and better able to speak in groups. Another adolescent indicated that one of the reasons he wanted to become a volunteering youth worker was because it would give him more opportunities in his future life.

#### *Access*

UCee Station is a programme that can be used in youth centres or at school. The responsibility for enrolment of adolescents therefore lies with the youth worker. According to the Dutch youth workers, working at community level was an important factor for the accessibility of the youth centre. But also the familiarity of adolescents with the youth worker influenced the enrolment of adolescents in the youth centre. Two of the youth workers were raised in the same neighbourhoods as where they worked. One of them mentioned that he knew a lot of adolescents when he started the project and it was therefore more likely for him to gain their trust and get them involved. All youth workers mentioned detached work as a way of getting adolescents involved in the project. Most youth workers got on the streets themselves and tried to engage them that way. One neighbourhood in Rotterdam in the Netherlands had a specific youth worker in service for detached youth work. This person was called a *‘jongerenmakelaar’* (youth broker). This youth worker went on the streets and talked to adolescents and tried to get them involved in the youth centre. When an adolescent came to the youth centre, it was up to the other youth workers to give him further support.

Working on community level was also an important factor for Worth Unlimited for the accessibility to the youth centre. One of the British youth workers stated: *“A lot of it is at grass root level. For example the Hub is based in a local community. The youth workers live in the local community. They have a presence there, so they get to be known. And they start the activities because people know them”*. Another way which is used in Britain to get adolescents involved is through detached work. The youth workers did a lot of activities on the streets and in local parks. That way, adolescents got to know the youth workers before they entered the youth centre. The British youth

workers also cooperated closely with the local police and other social institutions. The youth workers got adolescents referred to them by other agencies; through youth services or the police. These were adolescents at risk who were involved in minor criminal activities or were at risk of getting involved. Adolescents also mentioned the possibility to get a job or an improvement of job prospects as reasons to participate in the youth project. The British programme offered volunteering work to adolescents. During volunteering, the adolescents got training to become a professional youth worker. By participating they gained working experience and got the necessary qualifications to become a youth worker. One youth worker stated that the adolescents might get a job at the youth centre. If not, they had improved their resume and their job prospects were increased.

In Antwerp, all respondents mentioned the low threshold as one of the successes of their youth competence centre. They believed a lot of adolescents came to the youth centre because it was community based. According to the coordinator of JES Antwerp, providing accessible youth work was one of the main goals of JES. They wanted to achieve this through being psychologically and physically accessible, while at the same time being affordable and providing tailor made work. In Flanders, identification with the youth worker was also mentioned as an important factor for the low threshold. It was mentioned that when a youth worker is from the same neighbourhood he knows the other generations in the neighbourhood. Two youth workers pointed out that parents are more likely to bring their children to someone they know and trust. Additionally, the youth worker knew where to find adolescents in the neighbourhood. This was mentioned as particularly useful when doing detached work. Adolescents also mentioned getting a job or job prospects as a reason to participate. In Flanders, different courses were being offered to adolescents to become a volunteering youth worker. With this working experience they could improve their resume and job prospects.

### *Future perspective*

One of the youth workers of UCee Station explained the negative influence of the environment of the adolescents on their future perspective. According to him, a lot of the adolescents do not have the belief that they can get a normal job. They see others in their environment earning a lot of money by illegal activities and believe that it is the only way for them to earn money as well. UCee Station offered internships to some of the adolescents. This possibility was offered particularly to media students from secondary vocational learning-working programmes. There had been a number of them who moved on to Fun-X radio or who followed a media-related undergraduate education. The goals for professional and talent development were specifically designed for these students.

According to youth workers from Worth Unlimited, the motivation for adolescents to participate in the youth programme was the possibility of getting a job. This could have been through volunteering youth work, but also through the programme where they set up their own social enterprise. One of the youth workers said: *“The main goal is to offer adolescents tools to kind of flourish in society. What we mean by that is offer them skills they need to move on in society, whether*

*those are social skills, personal skills, or business skills. So the different programmes enable the adolescents to achieve something”.*

Within JES Antwerp, adolescents had the opportunity to volunteer as youth worker in the youth centre. Adolescents without qualifications could do courses to become a volunteering youth worker. Some of the youth workers believed that being a role model for the adolescents, motivated them to participate. According to the Flemish method, a youth worker must be a guide to adolescents. He must be able to give direction and be aware of his job as a role model to adolescents. One of the Flemish adolescents said the following: *“Most adolescents look up at O., they want to be like him when they grow up. The motivation comes from within. When O. is guiding an activity, you see that they like it and get motivated. Especially when he gives away compliments”* (De meeste jongeren kijken hier op naar O., van zo wil ik later ook worden. De motivatie komt van henzelf. Als O. aan het begeleiden is zie je dat ze het leuk vinden en daar komt de motivatie van. Vooral wanneer hij een pluimpje geeft). Another youth worker explained he supervised the adolescents from an early age. Because of the relationship he had built over a long period; they came to him with serious questions about work, alcohol, or sexuality.

#### *Social binding*

According to one youth worker of UCee Station, building a relationship with adolescents takes time because they are very suspicious to other people. Youth workers mentioned it was important to be trustworthy and to keep promises in order to gain trust of adolescents. Furthermore, it was stated that it is important to be at the same level as the adolescents. One of the youth workers from UCee Station explained the importance of the youth centre in the lives of young people. It is a place where young people can come to and be with their friends, he calls it their second home. The youth workers indicated that the youth centre functions as a place where young people can be in their spare time. This is of significance because there is not much else to do in the neighbourhoods. Furthermore, one youth worker mentioned that through the activities of UCee Station, adolescents come in contact with more positive role models. The youth worker said the following: *“By interviewing peers on various topics, adolescents can unconsciously learn from their peers, especially when this is someone with positive ideas. That is the kind of example they need because they do not get that on the street”* (door het interviewen van leeftijdgenoten over verschillende onderwerpen kunnen de jongeren onbewust veel leren van die persoon. Dat soort voorbeelden hebben ze nodig, want dat krijgen ze niet mee op straat).

Youth workers and adolescents from Worth Unlimited pointed out acceptance and showing interest as important factors in building a positive relationship with adolescents. Being on their level was also pointed out by one of the adolescents who said it was important for a youth worker to be like a friend. Most adolescents had been let down by their parents and sometimes by other social institutions. This was mentioned as one of the reasons why it took time to gain their trust. According to one youth worker, credibility was the precondition for trust and building a relationship. Consistency

was indicated as an important factor for being credible. If an adolescent did something wrong, a youth worker must set boundaries and be consistent. However, according to one of the youth workers it was important to let them know it was their behaviour you disapproved and not them as a person. The adolescents of Worth Unlimited mentioned they had learned a lot from their peers. The friendship that they built was important for their motivation to participate in the programme. Besides the friendships with peers, the adolescents also indicated the attachment they had with the youth workers. One of the adolescents pointed out that youth workers were more like older responsible friends, unlike school teachers who told them what to do. Besides attachment, the adolescents were also involved in activities through which they improved their social position. The adolescents got the chance to learn outside the school setting and could get an award or qualification for it. Some of these were on a local level, while others were on a national level in which case the adolescents would end up with a national qualification. Furthermore, the youth workers also functioned as a role model to the adolescents. The adolescents trusted the youth workers because they lived in the same neighbourhood as them. The adolescents observed a positive example in their environment.

According to one youth worker of JES Antwerp, adolescents came to the youth centre because of the sustainable relationship they had with the centre. The youth centre functioned as a meeting place for friends. Besides the attachment to peers, the attachment to the youth worker was another reason for adolescents to participate. Another reason for adolescents is the involvement in activities. One of the youth workers stated: *“The adolescents come here to spend their free time the best way they can. So instead of hanging on the street, they can do an animator course”* (De jongeren komen hier naar toe om hun vrije tijd zo goed mogelijk in te vullen. Dus in plaats van hangen op straat kunnen ze hier een animatorcursus doen). Since the introduction of the work counsellors, there are also activities offered to young adults. Furthermore, the youth worker acted as a role model to adolescents because they could identify with him. One of the adolescents said the following: *“M. is my example. I have always looked up to him; I wanted to do the work he did. I saw the satisfaction he got from his job”* (M. dat was mijn grote voorbeeld. Ik zag altijd naar hem op, ik wilde het werk doen dat hij deed. Ik zag dat hij voldoening kreeg uit zijn werk). The adolescent, from whom this quote is, was a youth worker himself at the time of the interview.

### *Ownership*

One of the youth workers of Ucee Station said to challenge the adolescents both physically and mentally. Physically by offering sports activities and mentally by helping with their homework. Furthermore, the youth worker explained that the adolescents have a wrong picture of reality. They want the same house as they see on MTV cribs and they know they cannot pay that by stacking shelves in the supermarket. The youth worker tries to sketch a more realistic and desirable future goal and the path an adolescent must take to achieve that goal. Two of the youth workers mention that it is important that the adolescents are motivated for the programme. One of the youth workers told he only

asked those adolescents from whom he expects that they will be motivated to participate and who will take the programme seriously. One of the youth workers indicated that youth workers must be able to sell activities to adolescents in order to motivate them. They should think of activities that would motivate the adolescents. The youth workers pointed out to build on the strengths of adolescents by developing skills, qualities and talent. One of the adolescents participating in the project said to see the developments in the other adolescents: *“They become aware of skills they did not know they had”* (Ze worden zich bewust van de talenten waarvan ze niet wisten dat ze die hadden).

Within the programme of Worth Unlimited, adolescents learned to set up their own social enterprise. By doing this, they gained ownership over the project and felt responsibility for it. Two of the British youth workers said that by giving adolescents ownership over the project, they will appreciate it more. By giving more responsibilities to the adolescents, they were more involved in the project and the community. To motivate adolescents, two of the British youth workers found it important to ask what they wanted to do, what they wanted to see happening in the neighbourhood. When it was someone’s own idea, it would be more likely he will be motivated to successfully complete the activity. Most adolescents pointed out that they must be motivated themselves in order to be successful within the project. For example, one of the British adolescents mentioned: *“They don’t really motivate us, we motivate ourselves. I really want to do this myself; I’m really passionate about it”*. According to one of the youth workers, when adolescents are not motivated, they will just stop showing up. The British youth workers indicated they built on strengths of adolescents by using a traffic light system. The red stands for weaknesses, the yellow stands for competencies that are good enough, and the green for qualities. Subsequently, the youth workers search for methods to turn yellow into green, and red into yellow.

The youth workers of JES Antwerp worked with what they called the *“participation ladder”* (participatieladder). When adolescents entered the project there were a number of phases they had to go through. In the first stage, so when people just came in, they were seen as consumers. The next step was that they actively participated in the activities, followed by participation in the organization of activities. For the adolescents there was also a method for organizing activities, which was called the *“initiative book”* (initiatiefboekje). In this book, adolescents were guided step by step, in organizing their activity. The activities varied from a small birthday party to a Halloween party. In order to challenge the adolescents, one of the youth workers mentioned she always tried to get them in a stretch zone where they had to work a little harder, but never up to their frustration level. This way, she hoped the adolescents would go home at the end of the day with a positive feeling and the idea they had learned a lot. The youth workers from JES Antwerp had developed a specific method in order to acknowledge the strengths of adolescents and to build further on that. This method was called the C-Stick, which was a digital portfolio with a personal development plan. The C-Stick included a set of techniques for recognizing skills and developing competences. The key elements were: observation of skills, feedback, group dynamics, peer learning and experiential learning. In practice, not every youth

worker used this method in their work. One of the Flemish youth workers explained that the use of the C-Stick was particularly useful in building someone's resume. But in her own work she preferred to observe the adolescents and work from there. One of the Flemish youth workers saw motivation as the most important task in his work. He called himself a "*motivator*" (motivator). According to him, motivating adolescents is essential given their lack of trust in the government. As a youth worker he must use a different approach to reach the adolescents than the government does, so they would not see him as part of the government.

#### *Difficulties in the context*

Some of the youth workers mentioned that in today's youth work, it is hard to ensure the sustainability of a programme. The Dutch, Flemish, and British government all cut back their funding on social projects. The youth workers mentioned it is hard to maintain the relationship with adolescents when a project has to stop because of financial problems. In Flanders, the programme is funded by six different resources. When one of the resources is eliminated, the remaining five can temporarily compensate. Most youth workers indicated the importance of the sustainability of a project to actually see the results amongst participating adolescents. First of all, it takes time to build a relationship with adolescents from disadvantaged urban areas. One of the Dutch youth workers said: "*It is really hard because these adolescents are very suspicious. They don't trust you over night, it takes time*" (Het is heel moeilijk want deze jongeren zijn heel erg argwanend. Het is niet zo dat ze je een, twee, drie vertrouwen, daar gaat echt tijd overheen). Two of the Dutch youth workers mentioned they only see the difference in adolescents when they visit the centre regularly. In Flanders, a lot of the adolescents in the youth centre participated since they were little kids. Two of the youth workers came there in their childhood as well, one from the age of 6 and the other from the age of 8. In Britain one of the youth workers mentions the importance of sustainability. He said: "*For these guys, it is important to be guided on a long-term basis. I have seen projects which take four or five years. For these kids you become their surrogate parent. Adolescents come to you with all their problems, also the serious ones. It is especially the length of a project which determines what you can reach with these adolescents*".

#### *Quality of the programmes*

The interviews indicated a number of issues that are related to the quality of the youth programmes. The first factor that can be distinguished is the sustainability of a programme. The results point out that empowerment was only reached when the adolescents were connected to USee Station for a long term. The length of a programme was influenced by the design of the programme. USee Station offers a lot of short term projects which consist of a number of lessons. The interviews also pointed out that the government influences the length of youth programmes by their choice of funding. It appears that the government chooses to fund those programmes which are seen as fashionable. One of the British youth workers said the following: "*I think one of the difficulties is with all the spending cuts from the*

government, we have to scale down a lot. So 12 months ago it was me and P. and about 10 concessional workers. And then 12 months later it's still me and P. full-time but actually now there are a bare minimum of concessional workers. And it is just kind of changing with time and we just have to see where it is going. So the opportunities for this moment are the social enterprises and that will change again. So we need to keep an eye on the developments". In Flanders, adolescents are involved in the youth centre from an early age and therefore they are guided on a long-term basis. One of the Flemish youth workers mentioned the importance of time in the development of sufficient methods in youth work.

The second factor that influences the quality of a programme is the professionalism of the youth workers. It is important to mention the variance in training of the youth workers because they are the preconditions for successfully implementing programmes. Professionalism refers to the education and competences of a youth workers. The interviews indicated a difference in education and competence of the youth workers between and within the countries. One of the youth workers explained he had difficulties with designing activities in which young people are stimulated to self-organize. Designing activities for adolescents and stimulating their participation is however one of the main tasks of a youth worker. When a youth worker did not obtain a specific training for social work, he or she mentioned more often to struggle with these aspects of youth work.

Table 3: content of the three programmes

|                    | UCee Station                     | Worth Unlimited | JES Antwerp |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Future perspective | ++                               | ++              | ++          |
| Social bond        | +                                | +               | ++          |
| Ownership          | +                                | ++              | ++          |
| Accessibility      | Varies by executive organization | +               | ++          |
| Sustainability     | -                                | +               | ++          |

(++ much attention given; + some attention given; - little attention given; -- no attention given)

## Conclusion and discussion

In youth work, talent development programmes are used more and more in order to achieve empowerment of vulnerable adolescents. Nonetheless, it remains unclear what the successful factors of the talent development practices are and how these practices influence the empowerment of adolescent. The aim of this study was to examine how talent development can lead to the empowerment of adolescents in disadvantaged urban areas. The research question was as follows: *what are the successful factors in talent development programmes that contribute to the empowerment of vulnerable adolescents?* The literature study indicated that to achieve empowerment of adolescents, behavioural change is required. A model of behavioural change is introduced and three criteria are

distinguished which are expected to influence the empowerment outcomes, namely: future perspective, social bond, and ownership. From March until May 2011 three talent development programmes aimed at empowerment of adolescents have been analysed using the three criteria indicated in the literature study. A comparison between a Dutch, British and Flemish youth programme is made.

The results indicated that the adolescents participating in the Dutch, British and Flemish programme gained new competences as a result of the talent development activities. Furthermore their social participation in the community increased. This indicates that the three programmes have a positive influence on the empowerment of vulnerable adolescents. However, the results show that long-term involvement in the programmes is a pre-condition for the achievement of empowerment. The involvement in the British and Flemish programmes and long-term involvement in the Dutch programme had a higher impact on the empowerment of adolescents than short-term involvement in the Dutch programme. The successful factors contributing to these empowerment outcomes correspond with the three criteria distinguished in the literature, namely: future perspective, social bond, and ownership. Besides these criteria, a fourth criterion was indicated as being important in talent development programmes. The results point out that in order to reach vulnerable adolescents, the programme must be implemented in an easily accessible youth centre.

In conclusion, this study gives indications that talent development programmes contribute to the empowerment of vulnerable adolescents. To explain this contribution, the model of behavioural change is used (De Vries et al., 1988). According to De Vries and others the amount of confidence that someone has in the advantages and expected outcomes will improve his attitude towards behavioural change. By providing a future perspective to adolescents, their motivation to behavioural change was enhanced. This is in line with research by Miller and Brickman (2004) who state that the level of engagement in tasks increases when there is perception of future success. Besides attitude, De Vries and others (1988) indicated that it is important to pay attention to social influence in an intervention. The programmes evaluated increased the social bond between the adolescents and others and between adolescents and their community. This corresponds with the social control theory of Hirschi (1969) which states that when social ties are strengthened, problem behaviour is much less likely. Lastly, De Vries and others (1988) indicated that self-efficacy must be addressed in interventions in order to create the intention of behavioural change. Self-efficacy is the expectation people have about their own ability to show certain behaviour. The adolescents in the evaluated programmes gained more confidence by giving them ownership and responsibility over activities. This is in line with previous research which indicates that by letting adolescent make their own choices they are in charge of their own lives (UCAY, 2010). Giving ownership to adolescents, asks for a specific guidance by the youth workers (Hartgens, 2010). According to the research findings not all youth workers knew how to provide participating youth work. Attention for ownership in youth work activities in the education and training for youth workers should be given.



It was stated that only when a programme meets all three criteria, empowerment of adolescents can be achieved. The results point out that the three programmes evaluated correspond with the three criteria, apart from small variances. According to Brug and others (2006) when the three behavioural determinants are addressed in an intervention, the willingness to change behaviour will arise. However, the findings in this study suggest that long-term involvement is a pre-condition in order to reach behavioural change in vulnerable adolescents. In previous research, the model of behavioural change was indicated as useful in increasing healthy behaviour (Brug et al., 2006). In this study the model is used in order to reach empowerment of vulnerable adolescents. The concept of empowerment is more complicated than changing concrete and visible behaviour like smoking or unhealthy eating. This could explain why long-term involvement in talent development programmes is required in order to achieve empowerment. This is in line with research into resilience of adolescents. Although short-term achievements are indicated as important, the process of resilience is developmental and long-term (Winfield, 1994). Furthermore, the interviews indicate that building a relationship with adolescents from disadvantaged urban areas also calls for long-term guidance. This corresponds with research into the motivation of marginalized adolescents. Research showed that the social worker must gain trust of adolescents, show interest and give them the feeling of being a worthwhile person (Klomp et al., 2002).

Besides future perspective, social bond, and ownership, accessibility of the youth centre was indicated as a successful factor in the talent development programmes. The results showed that youth workers use detached youth work in order to reach adolescents. According to Spies (1998), marginalized adolescents often distrust public agencies and do not go there on their own initiative. These adolescents are in danger of losing their social bond with society. Therefore, youth workers should adopt a work method more directed towards outreach in order to get these adolescents involved in the youth centre. The results in this study also indicated that by working on a community level, adolescents grow familiar with the youth centre and the youth workers who work there. This might increase the trust they have in the youth workers, which was indicated as important in building a relationship with marginalized youth (Klomp et al., 2002).

No striking differences in empowerment outcomes were found on national level of the three countries involved in this study. However, the British and Flemish programmes give some practical implications for the Dutch programme. Long-term involvement in programmes is of importance in the level of empowerment achieved by the programmes. Therefore, sustainability of talent development programmes is necessary. In all three countries, youth work is confronted with government spending cuts and all three programmes equally face difficulties with getting funding. In Flanders, the programme is funded by six different resources. When one of the resources is eliminated, the remaining five resources can temporarily compensate for the loss. This is no overall solution for providing sustainable youth work, but it is one way of dealing with the government spending cuts. Furthermore, in Britain and Flanders volunteering youth work by adolescents was indicated as a

method by which they gained more future perspective. Future perspective was distinguished as an important criterion in order to reach behavioural change. Therefore, stimulating volunteering youth work and the recognition of this work through providing qualification opportunities might be an interesting method for Dutch youth work to use.

#### *Methodological shortcomings and future research*

The present study has some limitations that are worth mentioning. First, the interviewed youth workers might be biased about their programme because by expressing any negative opinions towards their work they would have undermined their own work. Furthermore, the adolescents may have given socially acceptable answers because they did not want to offend the youth workers and wanted to protect their own interest. However, besides the interviews, in person observations have been made and a content analysis of the three programmes has been carried out. By interviewing both youth workers and adolescents, combined with observations and content analysis, a more reliable picture of the three programmes is obtained.

Second, the generalizability of the findings to all talent development programmes may be limited due to the fact that only three programmes have been evaluated and because of the small number of respondents. Nevertheless, the findings of this study provide some insight into the successful factors in talent development programmes. Long-term research should be done in order to determine whether the programmes have a positive impact on the empowerment of vulnerable adolescents over a longer period.

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## **Appendix 1: Topic list adolescents**

### *Introduction Young People*

#### 1. Introduce yourself

My name is Maaïke Smid and I am currently writing my master thesis for the master program Education, Socialization and Youth Policy at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. I am writing this master thesis on behalf of the Netherlands Youth Institute, where I do my internship at the International Department.

The subject of my thesis is talent development among young people in urban settings. The purpose of the study is to get more insight in the existing good practices within youth work in Europe and whether these practices create opportunities for the development of talents of young people. There will be a comparison of several European good practices, research into the crucial features that make these practices good practices, and transfer them into Dutch youth work.

#### 2. Thank you for your cooperation

#### 3. Brief explanation, objective interview, interview structure

I would like to hear from you what you do within this project and what your opinion is about the project. I would also like to hear what you think can be improved in the project. The purpose of this study is to assess the successes of this project in order to improve other projects, but also to improve this project.

First, I would like to hear what you do within this project. Then I would like to know how most people start in this project and why they wish to participate in the project. Then I would like to talk about the professionals who supervise the project. Then I want to know what you learn in the project and finally what you think can be improved.

#### 4. Duration of the interview

About 30 to 45 minutes.

#### 5. Recording the conversation, use of recorded material

#### 6. Ensure anonymity

### *Background information*

Introduction:

Organisation:

Respondent:

Age:

Education:

Years involved:

### *Context of the project*

Introduction: I would like to talk to you about what you do in this project.

Start Question: Can you tell me what you do within this project?

- what activities do you do
- what is the purpose of the activities

### *Start at the project*

Introduction: I would like to talk to you about how young people start/ enter in this project.

Start Question: How do most young people enter this project?

- What is the reason that young people sign up for this project?
- What did you want to learn / achieve?

### *Support coach/ supervisor*

Introduction: I would like to talk to you about what the coaches do within the project.

Start Question: Can you tell me what the coaches do within this project?

### Confidential relationship

- What is the role of the supervisor in this project?
- How should a supervisor, according to you, behave towards young people in this project?

### Motivation and expectations

- How do the supervisors motivate young people for the project / activities?
- What is the expected behavior of young people during an activity?

### Participation and contribution

- What is the responsibility of young people within this project?
- What decisions do young people take themselves?
- How are young people involved in solving problems?
- Do the young people collaborate within this project?
- Are the activities being evaluated at the end?

### *Results of the project*

Introduction: We just talked about the role of the supervisor. I would now like to talk to you about the impact of the project for young people who participate.

Start Question: How does the project effects young people?

- What do / did you learn?
- Does the project have any implications for your future?
- What new skills have you learned?
- Are there any other positive outcomes due to the project?

### *Improvements*

Introduction: Finally, there may be aspects of the project that can be improved.

Start Question: Are there aspects of the project that you think could be improved?

### *Finish*

- Checking if you've have everything ...
- Are there any aspects that the respondent would like to raise? Some questions that the respondent had expected in the interview? – thanking for cooperation in the interview and explain a little what happens to the data / research. - Phone / email to leave for future questions / information from the respondent.



## **Appendix 2: Topic list youth worker**

### *Introduction Supervisor*

#### 1. Introduce yourself

My name is Maaïke Smid and I am currently writing my master thesis for the master program Education, Socialization and Youth Policy at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. I am writing this master thesis on behalf of the Netherlands Youth Institute, where I do my internship at the International Department.

The subject of my thesis is talent development among young people in urban settings. The purpose of the study is to get more insight in the existing good practices within youth work in Europe and whether these practices create opportunities for the development of talents of young people. There will be a comparison of several European good practices, research into the crucial features that make these practices good practices, and transfer them into Dutch youth work.

#### 2. Thank you for your cooperation

#### 3. Brief explanation, objective interview, interview structure

I would like to hear from you what your role is within this project and how you support the young people. I would also like to hear what you think can be improved in the project. The purpose of this study is to assess the successes of this project in order to improve other projects, but also to improve this project.

First, I would like to hear what you do within this project. Then I would like to know how most young people start in this project and why they wish to participate in the project. Then I would like to talk about the support you offer the young people. Then I want to know what young people learn in the project and finally what you think can be improved.

#### 4. Duration of the interview

About 30 to 45 minutes.

#### 5. Recording the conversation, use of recorded material

#### 6. Ensure anonymity

### *Background information*

Introduction:

Organisation:

Respondent:

Age:

Function / position:

Years working with this project:

Education:

### *Context of the project*

Introduction: I would like to talk to you about the activities within this project.

Start Question: What is the purpose of this project?

- What is your role within this project?
- Why did you want to work at this project / organization?

### *Start at the project*

Introduction: I would like to talk to you about how young people start/ enter in this project.

Start Question: How do most young people enter this project?

- What is the reason that young people sign up for this project?
- What do they want to learn / achieve?
- How do you build a relationship with young people, how do you gain their trust?

### *Support coach/ supervisor*

Introduction: You just told me how youth enter this project. I would now like to talk to you about how you support the young people within the project.

### Confidential relationship

Introduction: I would like to talk to you about how you build a relationship with young people.

Start Question: What skills do you use to build a confidential relationship with a young person?

- How does a process of introduction with young person goes?
- How do you maintain a relationship with a young person?

### Motivation and expectations

Introduction: You have just told me how you build a confidential relationship with a young person.

Now I would like to talk to you about the way you motivate a young person within the project.

Start Question: how do you motivate a young person to a particular activity?

- How do you keep the motivation of a young person during an activity?
- What behavior do you expect from a youth during an activity?

### Participation and contribution

Introduction: We just talked about building a relationship and motivating young people. I would now like to talk to you about the level of participation of young people within the project.

Start Question: What methods do you use to teach young people.

- What responsibility do young people have?
- What decisions should they take themselves?

### Strengths

Start Question: How do you use the strengths of a young person?

- How do you know what the strengths of a young person are?
- To what extent do you use the strengths of a young person in your work?

### *Results of the project*

Introduction: We just talked about your role within the project. I would now like to talk to you about the impact of the project for young people who participate.

Start Question: How does the project effects young people?

- What do they learn?
- Does the project have any implications for their future?
- What new skills do they learn?
- Are there any other positive outcomes due to the project?

### *Improvements*

Introduction: Finally, there may be aspects of the project that can be improved.

Start Question: Are there aspects of the project that you think could be improved?

### *Finish*

- Checking if you've have everything ...
- Are there any aspects that the respondent would like to raise? Some questions that the respondent had expected in the interview? – thanking for cooperation in the interview and explain a little what happens to the data / research. - Phone / email to leave for future questions / information from the respondent.