

FORMATION OF YOUTH WORKER PROFESSIONALISM: PROBLEMS IN ESTONIA

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Abstract

Youth field has been in constant evolution during the restoration period of Estonian independence, since 1991. The theoretical overview is about youth worker professionalism, associated with the developments in the European and Estonian youth field and in the context of the Berliner competency levels development model. It explains the expectations set for youth workers, to teaching and youth field institutions.

Youth work is expected, like formal education, with more clearly defined educational goals, and it is emphasized that it is a non-formal education. An important aspect is enjoying of the activities and its educational elements. The National Curriculum for Basic Schools and Gymnasium (2011) sets the expectations that the non-formal education will give more support to students to complete the curriculum of formal education. Youth work in Estonia is an essential component of the educational system. Therefore, the professionalism of youth workers and their coping with new challenges is very important. Over the last ten years, major changes in the Estonian youth worker professionalism and in the aspects of professional development haven't been mentioned.

The answers are briefly: in Estonia youth worker profession has been associated with the development of youth field, but the staff preparation is very different and characterised by low working experience. Berliner presented development model of competency levels, treats the professional development as long-term, complex process, distinguishing between the five stages of development of the professional staff, which are also regarded in the context of the professional development of the youth worker. Youth work quality is dependent on the availability of professional youth workers and in order to gain it, the high mobility inside the sector should be reduced, a better situation and more support should be created for the formation of youth worker professionalism at the various levels of the professional growth.

Key words: *competency, professional level, professionalism, youth work, youth worker.*

Introduction

High staff exchanges, occupational mobility creates uncertainty for the quality of youth work, and raises the question of how effectively the non-formal education is expected to support the formal education in Estonia. Youth worker is seen as a key personality of providing change implementation of youth work, supporting young people and solving problems as well as achieving the goals in the field of youth work, using non-formal learning and methods. It can be assumed that a youth worker's work has become more complex as the demands and expectations have increased and it requires a new kind of professionalism to cope with their work.

Youth workers have the important general and professional knowledge and skills for social-pedagogical work with young people, experiences for successful work, but the staff is highly variable. Youth worker study revealed that nearly half of the respondents had mostly acquired their higher education or applied higher education during the last 4 years and most often in youth work or pedagogy, but despite this, it has been already then appointed an important problem of scarcity of competent workers in the field (Ümarik & Loogma, 2005).

In the Murakas et al (2011); Beilman et al (2010) study about a fifth of the respondents have a youth work-specific education.

Rannala (2015) mentioned that Tallinn youth workers' length of employment is average 2.9 years. 39% have worked for more than three years and 1-3 years 39% as well. Less than a year worked 22%. In 2008, there were fewer long-term study of more youth workers (employed for more than three years): 15% and even 47% had worked for less than a year (Reiska, 2008). In total, 73% of youth workers have higher education (Rannala, 2015), which has not changed significantly compared to the 2008 survey by Reiska (74% of the youth workers were with higher education). Tallinn is here in a little better shape than other places in Estonia: higher education had more than 67% of the Estonian youth workers (Veski, 2010). A third of Estonian citizens live in capital city Tallinn.

Problem – there is nothing remarkable in the view of changes in Estonian youth worker professionalism and aspects of professional development during the last ten years (Rannala, 2015; Murakas, Rämmer & Visnapuu, 2011; Taru, Mäe, Laanepere & Reiska, 2010; Ümarik & Loogma 2005). As a non-formal learning mentors youth workers have high expectations for that. Certainly they cannot be satisfied with the high exchange of staff, which inhibits the development of the competent, proficient youth workers or experts in youth work.

Incomprehensible fact is: although the average length of employment is low, youth workers' job satisfaction is high (87%) (Rannala, 2015).

The aim is to identify what characterizes the youth worker professionalism and professional development in the context of general changes in the youth field in Estonia and how it is regarded considering the Berliner development model of competency levels.

The key questions are: how changes in youth field development affect the expectations of the youth workers in Estonia? What is the professionalism and professional development in youth work? What are the required competences for youth workers and the development of competencies in the context of the Berliner competency levels model?

Youth Work Challenges Arising from the Developments in the Youth Field

Youth work changes with the society, and becomes dependent on many social processes. Youth work has become more visible in society, but it can be increased through professional youth workers and their work with young people. Youth worker's good training and commitment are prerequisites for high-quality youth work. Hoyle & John (1995) emphasize the three factors of professionalism: knowledge, independence and responsibility.

Youth worker quality can be assessed on the basis of the professional standards of the youth worker (Eesti Noorsootöö Keskus, 2012; Talviste, 2012). The social expectations have been described in the professional standard. In the updated professional standard grant system youth worker qualification levels 4, 6, or 7 have been acquired by 66 youth workers (Noorsootötaja kutse... 2015). Youth worker profession has been associated with the development, but the youth field staff preparation is very different, and in addition, the security of a professional youth worker is not supported by a variety of factors (low wages, project-based work, an abundance of stress, lack of networking and mentoring etc.) that affect the professional development of a youth worker differently. There are different ways to develop into a youth worker.

The curricula of youth work have been under developments and changes in institutions of higher education (youth work has been taught on special and higher vocational education levels since 1992. Since the autumn of 2015 at the masters' level at the Tallinn University as well). Training received in educational institutions should be applicable to the labor market (Kutsekoda. Kutsesüsteem, 2015). Smooth cooperation between the leaders of different programs supported by the European Social Fund has improved the quality and sustainability of Estonian youth work.

Young people today and in the future have a decisive role in the European Union and its citizens face many socio-economic, demographic, cultural, environmental and technological challenges and opportunities (Euroopa noortevaldkonna., 2009). In the context of Estonian youth work it is concerning young people aged 7-26. On the first of January 2014 there were 288,492 young people aged 7-26 in Estonia, who accounted for 22.4% of the population of Estonia (Noortevaldkond, 2014). There is a perspective in Estonia that the youth who is coping well with the surrounding society, is a creative force for the prerequisite of the development. According to the conscious integrated youth policy, a young is as a resource for innovation that provides solutions and is an active designer of surrounding (Slümmer, 2013; Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2013). An altered perception of young people means that they are rather a more active subject of youth work, than a passive object (Taru, 2014).

Youth work area has evolved over the decades in Estonia where operation is defined in the legislation of strategically planned goals with certain activities and resources (Slümmer, 2013). Estonia's positive involvement and multi-faceted development of personality-based youth policy is based on the tradition and values of youth work. Youth work is based on non-formal and informal learning, works outside the formal education system, has been organized by young people, in collaboration of young people and youth workers (Euroopa., 2012; Sprecht, 2011, 2014; Siurala, 2013; Araste, 2014). Youth work content is according to the Youth Work Act (2010), the social, cultural and health education, which should be the very important starting point. Youth work is not anywhere regulated by the law of the field, as it is in Estonia.

According to the European Union's Priorities for Youth Work (Siurala, 2013), the Youth Work Development Plan 2014-2020 provide the youth workers challenges and the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 objective 1: it is important that the youth workers of the 21st century would be in addition to the data providers, also the links' creators and the value attitudes' designers developing their and young people's critical, creative thinking; analytical skills; entrepreneurship; teamwork, and written and oral expression skills.

According to Strategy 3: goal of lifelong learning opportunities and compliance for the world of work requirements, it is necessary for the curricula to be relevant and the goal is also to increase the number of people with professional qualifications in various age groups and regions (Siurala, 2013). Youth workers have big challenges based on the new Youth Work Development Plan for 2014-2020, based on the state of youth and the objectives set by Estonia, it is necessary to focus the following:

- more opportunities for the development of creativity, initiative and joint action.
- Reducing the impact of unequal conditions of development opportunities for the young and prevention of exclusion.
- The active participation in the community and decisions.
- The success in the labour market.
- High-quality youth policy and youth work.

Internationalization is also a challenge, which results in critical linguistic skills, knowledge of the area and the activity of its operating requirements of other countries and intercultural communication skills (Volmari, 2008). Working in international teams in youth work today it is quite normal already. Taru (2014) notes that according to the Agenda 2020 Agreement of the Council of Europe Youth Development, the role of youth work is seen a supporter of the development of multicultural society.

Merton (2004) explains that, compared to the main areas of the budget the youth work gets little support. In this case, it is extremely important to maximize the impact of the available sources. The best way to achieve this is by following a well-defined, well-known and generally accepted youth work process. There is a need for a more detailed evidence-informed approach. This should be based on the integration of the experience, estimates and expert knowledge with the best evidence from systematic research, and could help the youth work to be better

justified. According to Taru (2014), it is believed that youth work does not have a clear role in society, because there is no clear evidence of an individual's level of change (attitudes, skills and behaviour) reached the level of society.

Professionalism and Professional Development

Broader changes in society have led to the concepts - professionalism (including the profession), professional and professionalization - rethinking of meanings, and these are often in the focus (Loogma, 2014; Barbed et al., 2014; Evans, 2008; Noordegraaf, 2007), as professions are changing, some of them disappear or change much, or there will be new ones, etc. Professionalism is a sociological concept and is related to professional status in society (Loogma, 2013). Youth worker is rather a half and helpful profession.

The term of *professionalism* means professional mastery, high-quality, such as a very good integrity of professional knowledge and pedagogical-practical skills. This concept is compared with expertise (Haridussõnastik, 2015). Professionalism is related to the elements of work such as knowledge, skills and practices they need in their practice (Loogma, 2013), in addition professional ethics, professional language, occupational solidarity and a way of thinking (Kosti, 2009).

Professionalism includes professional knowledge and skills to mediate them; the ability to spot the young person's specificity and take it into account in work; the ability to create an environment conducive to motivation, effective use of techniques of assertiveness; ability to cope with unexpected situations as well as with oneself to avoid burnout. It is important to prepare and develop one's own philosophy, - that is beliefs or principles that give directions for action, this is the way in which the employee sees things, events and people and relationships (Koik, 2006; Säljö, 2003). In order to cope there is a need for knowledge and skills of what is taught (field of action) and the Action Plan (*content knowledge*); the young people with whom one works (*knowledge of learners*); the laws and principles of learning-teaching (*pedagogical knowledge*). Colton & Sparks-Langer (1993) emphasize that one must be aware of and be able to take into account the context (*context knowledge*) (Poom-Valickis, 2007; Säljö, 2003).

Professional is a person who holds modern knowledge and the best skills to implement them. Its important quality is to see the result as a whole, understand the structure of the result and to distinguish the important part of this (Nurmekivi, 2006). The word *professional* is derived from Latin and means professional; vocational, occupational (Eesti entsüklopeedia, 1994).

Feiman-Nemser (2001) explains that *professional development* is a continuous process, including the initial training, such as a year of professional teachers (adaptation to occupation, entering the world of work), and the subsequent years of employment and training (continuous further training) (Eisenschmidt, 2006). Vocational year is not used in professional youth work, but it could be paid attention to.

Korthagen (2004) emphasizes that the changes take place in the learners of specialty at different levels: studies influence student behaviour, competence and beliefs, and the most profound identity and mission (Timoštšuk, 2011). Students come from their everyday reality of stereotypes, perceptions and experiences. Murakas et al (2011) study revealed that the youth issue requires extensive qualitative research, which would contain the important information of youth work students (personal characteristics, background, interests, etc.).

The prospective students to learn the profession of the youth work in Tallinn University Pedagogical College (here in after TU PC) in 2014 stated the reasons for the submission of documents: a personal interest in the specialty, personal qualities and strengths in the youth field, interesting subjects, etc. The students' age is generally in the range of 18-25 years, the majority of those with secondary education, in addition to nearly a tenth of the secondary specialized education. The prospective students' social activity is characterized by: a tenth of

NGO (non-government organisation) members, in addition, the same number belongs to youth organizations or youth councils. Nearly a quarter of the students did not belong to associations (Harjo, 2014).

L.Lilleoja & L.Lilleoja (2013) study revealed that youth work students have 40% lower salary expectations, as compared to a nation-wide study of students' salary expectations. Therefore, future salary is not an important factor of career choice of TU PC student, but it may also reflect the objective perception of labour market reality.

The same study revealed that the students were moderately satisfied with their studies, but less than the distance learners, who were also more positive about finding the professional work or working in this field. Distant learners are generally older and start studying in a more prudent decision, the form of learning is more flexible that can affect satisfaction. Working in their field of speciality is frequent. Willingness of transitions to congenial professional labour market is estimated on average.

The most important values were considered: benevolence and the related care and faithfulness. Valuing stimulation and domination higher than the average was explained by the researchers as the factors that determine the choice of speciality, and is consistent with its specifics, reflecting through the dominance the necessary leadership role of youth work and through the stimulation a more general nature of youth work. Youth work learners are open to change and self-transcendence.

On the basis of Beilmann et al (2010) youth work students need examination. The students who started studying in 2014 in Tallinn University Pedagogical College are motivated to learn to acquire the professional, they are open to change and all-surpassing effort (Harjo, 2014).

Murakas et al (2011) point out the importance of intertwining of further education and training courses, as well as development of graduate studies of youth work. Educational objectives of the curriculum are important in connection with primary studies based on the principles of R. W. Tyler, as well as educational experiences that learners can set as the objectives. Effective organizing of experience and reflection are significant for perceptions of whether objectives are being achieved (Ruus & Mikser, 2013). The Foundation Archimedes European Youth Estonian Office has implemented through the support of Europe in-service training for staff and youth development program until 2013, their training classes, methods, publications in social media, educational materials, as well as the field-based cooperation with European countries. The learner itself is a big responsibility that after training do actually start to do something differently.

Several authors (Berg, 2002; Hargreaves, 2001, 2004) have pointed out the part of emotions, beliefs and convictions in the professional development - they significantly affect the employee's decisions and actions, through which one reflects the opinions of its work and learning. Berg (2002) claims that the professional dedication depends on the thoughts and beliefs.

Bandura (1998) defines self-efficacy: it is the belief in their ability to perform an activity that leads to certain achievements. It discusses self-efficacy as the cognitive motivational constructor that includes two components: self-efficacy and outcome expectations. An individual may believe that certain activities may lead to certain outcomes, but it can also feel uncertainty. The more insecure the person is, the less he is willing to act on behalf of the goal. Consequently, people are more influenced by their own efficacy than outcome expectations (Williams, 1997). Additionally, because of the complexity of the reforms, changes, and lack of clear information one may perceive themselves professionally incompetent, which can cause stress and burn-out (Berg, 2002). Education and socio-political standards and requirements which must be assumed, can lead to a reduction of independence and autonomy in the work (Goodson, Hernandez, Norrie & Müller, 2010).

Conley & Odden (1994) emphasize that the feedback and support from colleagues can significantly reduce the uncertainty and confusion about identity. Adult human development, according to social-cognitive theory, is based on their personal beliefs efficiency (Bandura, 1997). An important goal could be the formation a youth worker as self-directed learner with an independent critical thinking and conscious of training offered in the market as well as other self-improvement opportunities. Youth workers considered themselves quite important in the general communication and cooperation skills rather than specific expertise (Murakas et al, 2011). In addition, there are opportunities of further training through the Erasmus + program. European Youth Estonian Office organized a seminar of teaching materials and methods for youth workers, and it was said that there have been presented many materials and methods of various kinds, including the ones easily found on the web, but the youth workers are not aware of them.

Growing up in the professionalism, more than it can be used and appreciated - youth centres have become more equal partners and involved more often in cooperation with various organizations, local authorities and schools. There is little cooperation with hobby schools and it is often awareness of youth worker's work predominantly on the basis of their activities, which are directly related to youth.

Youth worker is part of the active networking with associates and interest groups and the broader promotion of the field. After the relevant knowledge and skills, it concerns equally open attitudes, and interest in the related fields to take an active role in new, so-called integrated cooperation initiatives (Enn, 2013).

Murakas et al (2011) study revealed the fact: since the youth workers value highly, in addition to continuing training also learning from their own experience, and colleagues, in the field of youth work could take place further supporting the networking, supervision and covision as well as mentoring. More recently, they have been the focus, but have not been implemented or in this regard it is not clear.

Development of Youth Workers' Competencies in the Context of the Berliner Model

Illeris (2009) calls the key word in today's world the concept of "competence", which is not only the people's knowledge, skills and abilities, but also the potential to solve the challenges encountered. It is important to address the challenges of adult human awareness of the self, what to learn, how to adapt and resist failures or deal with challenges.

Competence is the set of relevant knowledges, skills, behaviour, personality character properties and attitudes necessary to ensure that the capacity of certain activities in the work field are effective. (Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Ruohotie, 2002; Loogma, 2004; Illeris, 2009; Haridussõnastik, 2015).

The system is part of the Estonian Vocational qualifications system that links education to the labour market and contributes to lifelong learning and the development, evaluation, recognition and comparison of professional excellence. The new youth worker professional system that supports quality of youth work is based on youth worker professional standard (2012), which presents a youth worker occupational levels 4,6,7 necessary to apply for compulsory (for example, the level 4 - organization of youth work, youth information exchange and youth counselling, administration and management, networking, and communication with the public, ensuring a secure environment, a professional self-development), and the permanent competencies and performances. Youth worker is competent if he has a certain educational background and complex mastery of work experience and skills, personal qualities and attitudes.

Employers consider formal education fairly significant when they employ youth workers (Ümarik & Loogma, 2005). For youth workers to work with youths it is important to have the

knowledge and skills for understanding young people and to be successful in their work. It is important to reach a meaningful way to do things, to reflect and to follow the developments. The widely used self-assessment process in non-formal learning requires an awareness of oneself and the events that occurred.

Berliner development model of competency levels presents the teacher's professional development in a long and difficult process, distinguishing the five stages of development in the formation of professional staff (Okas et al, 2014; Barone et al, 1996; Õim, 2008). Next the competency development theory is dealing in the context of professional development of youth workers:

1. Level of novice, newcomer. Students studying the speciality (youth work) and the number of first year (youth work) employees may be on the novice or newcomer level. At this level one learns to understand and implement simple, but not context-sensitive rules. Its activities are relatively inflexible. At this stage the practical activities are a daily practice and the knowledge / skills derived from that are much more important than what they have learned in school (training). (Barone et al, 1996)

2. An advanced beginner level. Usually this level will be reached by the second and third year employees. At this level practical experience will be associated with the theoretical knowledge acquired in school (training) and its episodic and situational awareness will become whole and complement the theoretical knowledge. Berliner emphasizes the importance of this moment, because tying the practice with theory, provides an opportunity to finally understand and experience. This step improves the strategic knowledge - it is able to behave, to act as the context requires, rather than strictly following the rules. Experience does affect the behaviour positively, but the advanced beginners cannot distinguish between important and less important. Berliner and his colleagues emphasize here the importance of mentoring - mentor should help the novice employee to make the right decisions (Ibid).

3. Level of competent (youth) worker. Youth workers of at least three to four years of experience have reached a competent level. They will be able to set priorities in their work, and to make informed choices as setting (learning) objectives, designing action plans, and decision-making. He is able to distinguish between significant and insignificant (e.g., which topic to be addressed in more detail).

At this stage they are able to make study (action) plan and guidance related decisions, i.e., when to deal with what topic, what could follow it in the context of the non-formal learning and related to the youth. He is able to control the things around him and feel more responsibility for their work. Not all of those in the advanced beginner level reach the level of competent employee (Ibid). Competent (youth) worker is still not always fast and flexible in their behaviour and decisions. The above qualities characterize just the last two levels.

4. Proficient (youth) worker level. Few of the youth workers of at least five years of experience reach the stage of development of a skilled worker. This stage is characterized most by intuitive decision-making. Thanks to its rich experience the skilled worker will be able to see situations in a holistic way. He is able to quickly recognize similar events. The better generalization ability and speed allow him to foresee events, and on this basis prevent many problems, and where appropriate, ignore them. It is an intuitive perception of situations and he knows how to behave, there is still analytical and deliberative decision-making (Okas et al, 2014; Barone et al, 1996).

5. On the level of expertise (expert level) one acts more quickly, flexibly and smoothly. One is able to intuitively perceive situations and make the right decisions without any further analysis or discussion. The simplest methods of teaching (action) operations are carried out automatically, leaving more time to immerse themselves the most important problems (Ibid).

According to Berliner competency levels of the development model more adept worker is the one of 4-5 years of service. As there is a large mobility in the youth work sector, according

to this model the number of youth workers reached the last three steps (competent, experienced employee, expert) is obviously small. Youth worker occupational levels 4 and 6 correspond to the first two steps of the above described model specifications. However, if the daily practice of the youth worker professional level 6 was in the author's opinion, or rather, as expected, a competent or experienced employee level and level 7 explained / considered by the expert level.

The most important that the youth workers themselves must understand what, why and how they do things and its productivity can be confirmed. Practice analysing and performance expressive indicators are important for youth organizer who needs information to explain, justify and develop, as well as for funding decision-makers, representatives of other areas - it expresses the professionalism of the sector and increases confidence.

It is important to understand that youth work is engaged in personal and social development (Bamber, 2013; Merton, 2007). It means to support young people's wishes, get different experiences and, in the same, to be protected from risks. The challenges of youth worker is designing youth work agency environment and activities suitable for young people, involving young people in organizing activities. Open, respectful, supportive relationships with young people are important (Merton, 2007). Conscious work to create an inclusive environment is important, including work with themselves and the attitudes of young people. Knowledge-based and evidence-based youth work could explain in the everyday context of each activity what the goal of one or the other practice is and whether this action is the best possible way to achieve this goal. Knowledge-based approach in "the site" youth work is interfered with, as well as in society as a whole, the dominant project-based work style (Paabort, 2013). If the ability can be demonstrated to achieve its objectives in a broader context, it is possible to characterize the youth work in the community and convince the stakeholders and society at large in youth work capability of a specific task (Taru, 2014).

Youth work is expected, similar to that of formal education, more clearly defined educational goals, and it is emphasized that it is a "non-formal education" (Talur, 2013; Araste, 2014). An important aspect is enjoying of the activities and its educational element (Merton, 2007).

Learning is so much a matter of the acquisition of information, skills and the evolution of understanding, as also the ability to decide what kind of information, skills, and understandings are important in a certain context and operating system (Säljö, 2003). Even if the youth workers know what non-formal learning is, the knowledge does not necessarily apply to their everyday work. And the young person who participates in the activities of the youth centre in the same way might not be aware of the fact that he learns.

All of the foregoing, in the light of the historically significant changes, the development of a professional youth worker is important. Changes in the field have created for youth workers constantly new situations and challenges to cope with these problems.

Discussion

Over a 20-year period in the development of youth work in Estonia there has been plenty of changes, but it is the sufficient time to creation of the professional and experienced staff.

Based on the above-described professional development circumstances, the youth worker-related points and explanations on the aspects of formation of professionalism in the context of the development model of Berliner competency levels, it could be argued that:

- First, according to Berliner development model of the competency levels, generally the development to the competent level the youth worker is going for 3-4years. As there is a large mobility in the youth work sector in Estonia (Rannala, 2015; Murakas, Rämmer & Visnapuu, 2011; Taru, Mäe, Laanepere & Reiska, 2010; Ümarik & Loogma 2005), according to this model, the number of youth workers reached the last three steps (competent, experienced employee, expert) is obviously small.

- Second, youth worker occupational standard levels 4 and 6 correspond to the first two steps of the above described Berliner model specifications. However, in the daily practice of the youth workers professional level 6 is rather as expected a competent or experienced employee level and level 7 explained as the expert level. There is apparent contradiction between length of employment mentioned by Berliner and in daily practical youth work.

Third, youth worker is seen as a key personality of providing change implementation of youth work, supporting young people and solving problems as well as achieving the goals in the field of youth work, using non-formal learning and methods. It can be assumed that a youth worker's work has become more complex as the demands and expectations have increased and it requires a new kind of professionalism to cope with their work. Youth work quality is dependent on the availability of professional youth workers and in order to gain it the high mobility inside the sector should be reduced and a better situation should be created for youth workers to support the formation of the professional youth worker and the evolution and changes of professionalism in relation to the factors of professionalism. Employee training and commitment to work in youth centres characterized the quality of the service provided by youth centres. Better vocational education and training and the longer-serving employees can generally provide a higher quality service to young people, and thus provide greater value for society as a whole (Taru, Mäe, Laanepere & Reiska, 2010).

- Fourth, employers consider formal education fairly significant when they employ youth workers (Ümarik & Loogma, 2005), but very important is special education of youth work.
- Fifth, the security of a professional youth worker is not supported by a variety of factors (project-based work, an abundance of stress, lack of networking and mentoring etc.) that affect the professional development of a youth worker differently. Vocational year is not used in professional youth work, but it could be given to further.
- Sixth, youth workers' personality factors, including professional identity, are not adequate for sustainable professional growth. The average length of employment is low, but youth workers' job satisfaction is high (87%) (Rannala, 2015).

Conclusions

Many authors studied during last ten years Estonian youth workers' competences and training needs.

It is important to become an expert in youth work and develop oneself as a person on the basis of self-analysis to improve competitiveness. There are possibilities for flexibility and innovation in youth work, but more often more familiar methods, activities and techniques are used. Reflection skills development supports the professional development of youth workers.

Supporting the professional development of youth workers, must call for a long-term plan (training program). Important issues are: targeting job, job analysis.

It is unclear how youth workers themselves feel experiences, changes in their working life, and professionalism, how they cope with changes in youth field. These are questions worthy of further investigation. It is necessary to identify the factors that characterize the professionalism of youth workers and those related to changes (pedagogical beliefs, practices, methods of cooperation, work attitudes), which, together with the work environment characteristics are important in the development of youth workers, as well as understanding the coping strategies.

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