

**PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
IN YOUTH GROUPS. CASES ANALYSIS**

**EVALUACIÓN PARTICIPATIVA DEL EMPODERAMIENTO JUVENIL CON GRUPOS
DE JÓVENES. ANÁLISIS DE CASOS**

**AVALIAÇÃO PARTICIPATIVA DA CAPACITAÇÃO JUVENIL
COM GRUPOS DE JOVENS. ANÁLISES DE CASOS**

Xavier ÚCAR*, Anna PLANAS**, Ana NOVELLA***
& M. Pilar RODRIGO MORICHE****

*Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB), ** Universitat de Girona,
*** Universidad de Barcelona, ****Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM)

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ABSTRACT: Interpretations made by young people about their own realities are key to understand their actions and behaviours. Also for adapting to new social dynamics socio-educational programmes and projects. This article focuses on the analysis of those interpretations. What do youth understand by youth empowerment? Which specific indicators do they consider to identify it? In which spaces, moments and processes do they think that it could happen? In order to respond to these questions, 4 evaluation participatory processes with 42 young people from 14 to 25 years old in 4 Spanish cities were developed. The sample that sets the participatory evaluation groups for every case is intentional. This paper contextualizes cases, presenting the followed methodology in the participatory evaluation's development and provides the main findings of each case. The results show that youth from the analyzed cases consider the empowerment to be related with a personal or group enrichment or improvement that is normally associated with a personal process, although its social influence is recognized. The most relevant indicators for youth empowerment are autonomy and self-esteem. Young people relate youth empowerment to spaces linked to family, school and friends. The extracurricular space, the street and the associative world appear to be significant to some of them. Youth empowerment processes have to do with overcoming experiences that made young people to have a perception of success, to overcome, being important to someone or eventually, to feel well being. Participatory evaluation has proved to be a very adequate socio-educational intervention strategy to help participants building different perspectives on their own lives.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR'S ADDRESS: Xavier Úcar. Dpto. Pedagogía Sistemática y Social. Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (España) Edifici G6 Campus de la UAB. 08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès). Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB). Xavier.ucar@uab.cat.

<p>PALABRAS CLAVES: pedagogía social evaluación participativa empoderamiento juvenil investigación evaluativa</p>	<p>RESUMEN: Las interpretaciones que realizan los jóvenes sobre sus propias realidades son clave para comprender sus acciones y comportamientos. También para adaptar los proyectos y programas socioeducativos a las nuevas dinámicas sociales. Este artículo se centra en el análisis de dichas interpretaciones. ¿Qué entienden los jóvenes por empoderamiento juvenil? ¿Qué indicadores específicos consideran que permiten identificarlo? ¿En qué espacios, momentos y procesos piensan que se produce? Para dar respuesta a estos interrogantes se realizaron 4 procesos de Evaluación Participativa con 42 jóvenes, de entre 14 y 25 años, en 4 ciudades españolas. La muestra de jóvenes que configura los grupos de evaluación participativa en cada uno de los casos es intencional. El artículo contextualiza los casos, presenta la metodología seguida en el desarrollo de la evaluación participativa y aporta los resultados principales de cada caso. Los resultados muestran que los jóvenes de los casos analizados relacionan el empoderamiento con algún tipo de enriquecimiento o mejora de tipo personal o grupal normalmente asociado a un proceso personal, aunque se reconoce la influencia social. Los indicadores considerados más relevantes para el empoderamiento juvenil son la autonomía y la autoestima. Los jóvenes relacionan el empoderamiento juvenil con espacios vinculados al ámbito familiar, escolar y con las amistades. Según las características de los grupos aparecen también como significativos; el espacio extracurricular, la calle y el mundo asociativo. Los procesos de empoderamiento juvenil tienen que ver con vivencias de superación que hicieron que los jóvenes tuvieran percepción de éxito, de superación, de ser importantes para alguien o, por último, de sentir bienestar. La evaluación participativa ha resultado ser una estrategia de intervención socioeducativa muy adecuada para ayudar a las personas jóvenes participantes a construir perspectivas diferentes sobre sus propias vidas.</p>
<p>PALAVRAS-CHAVE: pedagogia social avaliação participativa capacitação juvenil investigação avaliativa</p>	<p>RESUMO: As interpretações que os jovens realizam sobre as suas próprias realidades são fundamentais para compreender as suas ações e comportamentos. Também para adaptar os projetos e programas socioeducativos às novas dinâmicas sociais. Este artigo centra-se na análise dessas interpretações. O que entendem os jovens por capacitação juvenil? Que indicadores específicos consideram que permitem identificá-lo? Em que espaços, momentos e processos pensam que se produz? Para dar resposta a estas questões, realizaram-se quatro processos de avaliação participativa com 42 jovens, entre os 14 e os 25 anos, em quatro cidades espanholas. A amostra de jovens que configura os grupos de avaliação participativa em cada um dos casos é intencional. O artigo contextualiza os casos, apresenta a metodologia seguida no desenvolvimento da avaliação participativa e indica os resultados principais de cada caso. Os resultados demonstram que os jovens dos casos analisados relacionam a capacitação com algum tipo de enriquecimento ou melhoria de tipo pessoal ou de grupo normalmente associado a um processo pessoal, apesar de se reconhecer a influência social. Os indicadores considerados mais relevantes para a capacitação juvenil são a autonomia e a autoestima. Os jovens relacionam a capacitação juvenil com espaços vinculados ao âmbito familiar e escolar e com as amizades. De acordo com as características dos grupos, aparecem também como significativos o espaço extracurricular, a rua e o mundo associativo. Os processos de capacitação juvenil têm a ver com vivências de superação que fizeram com que os jovens tivessem percepção do sucesso, de superação, de serem importantes para alguém e, por último, de sentirem bem-estar. A avaliação participativa revelou-se uma estratégia de intervenção socioeducativa muito adequada para ajudar as pessoas jovens participantes a criar perspectivas diferentes sobre as suas próprias vidas.</p>

1. Introduction

In recent years the youth appears more and more to be part of social sciences. Understanding how young people interpret their realities can be essential in order to understand their actions and behaviours. Also in order to join them in the construction of their present and future as active members of the community. This is a task that researchers and professionals from the social sphere and specifically those of social pedagogy, have devoted the last two decades (Soler, Pascual, De Juanas, Novella & Llana, 2016).

The research presented is part of the “*Proyecto HEBE. The youth empowerment: Analysis of moments, spaces and processes that contribute to youth empowerment*”, funded in the national call

for R&D (REF.: EDU2013-42979-R). This project aims to understand and analyze the mechanisms and processes involved in young people’s empowerment to guide youth policies and work.

Participatory evaluation is one of the methodological research strategies used in this project to generate knowledge on youth empowerment. It intends that young people the ones giving sense to the concept. The questions underpinning this research are: What do youth understand by youth empowerment? Which specific indicators do they consider to identify it? In which spaces, moments and processes do they think that it could happen?

We have divided the information into four parts in order to answer these questions. The first presents the theoretical bases underling the use of participatory evaluation as research

methodology. After that, the selection of cases for analysis and the participatory evaluation's methodology are explained. The third section, presents the contextualization and main results obtained from each case. Finally, the general conclusions of the participatory evaluation process of youth empowerment developed with youth groups are presented.

2. Participatory evaluation: conceptualisation and methodological considerations

Participatory evaluation is an assessment strategy and practice developed from 1990s. It does not have a homogeneous assessment approach, but it brings together a set of approaches and evaluator's proposals characterized as "participation-oriented evaluation approaches" (Núñez, Crespo, Úcar & Llena, 2014). Núñez (2015) suggests that such approaches are the result of the confluence of three research and intervention lines: (a) the generation of 4th generation evaluation models (Guba & Lincoln, 1989); (b) the participatory action research (Suárez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Sharma & Lanum, 2003); and (c) the empowerment theory (Suárez-Balcazar et al., 2003).

According to Cousins (2003), participatory evaluation is an assessment process in which persons trained in evaluation techniques and methodologies develop evaluation activities with non trained persons. This methodology intends that assessment experts and non-experts develop together the necessary activities to generate an evaluation-shared knowledge about the actions and projects in which they participate, or whose results can affect them.

There are three fundamental characteristics which, according to Cousins & Withmore (1998), define what is a participatory evaluation:

- A) *The technical assessment control must be shared by the greatest number of people involved.* This means that evaluation experts take decisions over the design and development of the evaluation process sharing it with the rest of the participants (stakeholders).
- B) Participatory evaluation must *ensure the diversity of stakeholders.* The greater the agents involved diversity is the more concrete the participatory evaluation will be (Daigneault & Jacob, 2009).
- C) Participatory evaluation must finally *ensure the involvement* of agents. That means that the participation of actors and decision-making on the assessment development must occur at all stages of the process. There must be negotiated aspects such as the objectives

and the content of the evaluation; the process timing; data collection and analysis' process and techniques; assessment's results presentation, etc.

These participatory evaluation's characteristics are combined with criteria that according to Weaver & Cousins (2004), justify the usefulness and functionality of the evaluation strategy. From their perspective, participatory evaluation is useful because it meets the following criteria: (1) it is *pragmatic*: aimed at problems' resolution; (2) it is *political*: aligned with social justice; and, finally, (3) it is *epistemological*: allows the validation of non-expert knowledge. Úcar, Heras & Soler (2014) added a fourth criterion: the usefulness or justification that they called *pedagogical or empowering*; intended to the acquisition of personal and community resources that empower the people involved. It is a socio-pedagogical strategy that facilitates the learning and acquisition of resources for those involved.

Núñez and others (2014) analyzed the main participation-oriented evaluation models: (1) *the collaborative evaluation*; (2) *practical participatory evaluation*; (3) *the transforming participatory assessment*; and, finally, (4) *empowering evaluation*. From the analysis we concluded that the two latest models of participatory evaluation are those fitting best the community action approach and the work with young people in the social pedagogy field. We agree with them that all participation-oriented evaluation models are educational processes through which people and communities can learn and empower themselves. Participatory evaluation in which we gather our actions *allows us to change and to change us, through this same process, to acquire new powers that allow us to transform the realities that we are living* (Núñez & others, 2014, p. 97).

3. Selection of cases

The research evaluation process begins with the selection of cases that will develop the participatory evaluation. We define the case as a *group of youths in an institutional or territorial community*. Each group is a case which, following the typology of Coller (2000), is characterized as: (1) *procedural*: the process of participatory evaluation that takes place in groups of young people set up within the institutional framework of territorial base; (2) *specific and unique*: each case is intentionally selected by being attached to an institutional context; (3) *contemporary*: it refers to phenomena that take place today; and, finally, (4) *analytical*:

explores how phenomena in each case are developed to analyze and draw conclusions.

The criteria for selecting young people for each case are: emancipated/not emancipated; working/not working; gender parity; foreigners/ autochtones; and university/non-university career. Given the difficulty of involving young people in the process, it is decided that young selection criteria, need to be met by the selected cases and not specifically for each of them.

The young people sample for configuring participatory assessment groups is an intentional sample that reflects both the willingness and availability to participate of young people and the institutions or organizations that protect them, as well as the possibilities of the research team access to such groups. The four groups of young people who accept to develop the participatory assessment process are:

1. "Casal de Joves" of Badia del Vallés (Barcelona)
2. "Els Químics Espai Jove" of Girona
3. "Consell de la Joventut de Barcelona" (CJB)
4. "Grupo asociación Norte joven Vallecas" (Madrid)

We worked with 42 young people (22 girls and 20 boys) between 14 and 25 years (table 1).

Table 1. Configuration of young's groups				
	Age range	Total	Girls	Boys
Group 1 (Badia del Vallés)	14 to 20 years	15	8	7
Group 2 (Girona)	17 to 25 years	8	3	5
Group 3 (Barcelona)	19 to 24 years	10	6	4
Grupo 4 (Madrid)	16 to 22 years	9	5	4
		42	22	20

4. Objectives and participatory evaluation methodology of youth groups

The starting approach in each case is that two research team members and a facilitator, usually a social educator of the institution where the process is developed, are consider the experts in

evaluation that will work with the group of young people; those are the non assessment's experts. Both are the participatory assessment's team for youth empowerment in each of the institutional areas selected as a case analysis.

Given that this participatory evaluation process with young people is part of a broader investigation, the objectives to be achieved with this process had previously been defined in the framework of the investigation. The fact that they were previously defined does not absolve the research team of the need to agree on them and adapt, reformulate or remove them, if its the case, in each group of youth participatory evaluation.

These are the initially set objectives:

- a) To build a meaning on the concept of *youth empowerment*.
- b) To evaluate, the *youth empowerment* concept elaborated by the research group.
- c) To evaluate a range of youth empowerment indicators.
- d) To relate the youth empowerment indicators with spaces, the moments and the processes in which the everyday life of young people is developed.

From documentary bases, and in order to achieve these objectives previously developed by the research group, two² specific evaluation objects are used:

- a) Concept of *youth empowerment* built by the research team³.
- b) Range of youth empowerment indicators elaborated by the research group⁴.

It's based on the premise that each group of participatory evaluation is autonomous and sovereign to decide the development and characteristics of the participatory evaluation process. Even so, a methodological structure was designed as a guide for participatory evaluation sessions' development that will also be validated by each group.

As it can be seen in table 2, sessions 2 and 3 were dedicated to what we call "*criteria construction*". Although the "*empowerment*" term has become popular in recent years, we thought that it could be strange for some of the young participants. That led us to propose two initial sessions where young people could seek on their own and discuss the meaning of being "empowered". That allowed them to build their own conceptual model to evaluate the concept proposed by the research group.

Table 2. Methodological framework for the development of participatory evaluation sessions

Sessions	Content
Session 0: Facilitator's training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training session • Research team and facilitators of each young group
Session 1: Project presentation to youth groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project presentation to young people • Analysis and validation of the proposed participatory evaluation process
Session 2 and 3: Criteria construction in youth groups ⁵ and identification of spaces, moments, and youth empowerment processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups develop their own empowerment concept and think how, where and when will be empowered
Session 4: Evaluation of the youth <i>empowerment concept</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group dynamics to evaluate the concept
Session 5: Evaluation of youth <i>empowerment indicators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group dynamics to assess the range of indicators
Session 6: Process' closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people discuss what they learned from the process and evaluate it

This was the work proposal that each of the participatory assessment teams adapted to their particular interests and characteristics. The

methodological structure resulting in each of the cases is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Methodological structure of the development of participatory evaluation in each case sessions¹

Ses.	Group Badia	Group Girona	Group Barcelona	Group Madrid
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial training 			
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project presentation. Group's commitment 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project presentation. Group's commitment • Criterion's construction (1) 	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criterion's construction (1) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criterion's construction (2) 	
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of the criterion (2) • Empowerment's concept evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of the criterion (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment's concept evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment's concept evaluation • Identification of spaces, times and processes
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of spaces, moments and processes • Identification of empowerment referents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment's concept evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators' assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicator's assessment (1)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators' assessment • Process' closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators' assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of spaces moments and processes (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators' assessment (2)
6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process' closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of spaces moments and processes (2) • Process' closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process' closure

In regards to process temporality in each case, it should be noted that they were developed between January and June 2016. The general initial

recommendation was to make a participatory assessment session each week, but the frequency was finally decided by each team.

5. Cases analysis

This section presents a brief contextualisation and main outcomes of participatory evaluation of each case.

5.1. Case 1: “Casal de Joves” of Badia del Vallés

Badia del Vallés is a town near Barcelona, with one of the highest population densities of Catalonia. The socio-cultural level is medium/low.

Participatory evaluation has been developed in a municipal equipment, the *Casal de Joves*, where young people generally tend to go in the evenings after class. Many of these young people did not know each other previously. It was a group of 17 young people; all at school (Secondary Education/High school/Vocational training).

5.1.1. Participatory evaluation results

Young people connect the idea of learning to have power, which, from their point of view, leads them to be or feel empowered. In addition, they claim that empowerment arises in situations in which they must move forward on their own or help others. The terms that, throughout the construction process of the evaluation criteria are linked to empowerment are: *power, strength, personal improvement, liability, leadership, self-control and participation*.

The youth group clearly validates the empowerment definition elaborated by the research group and uses it to reformulate their definition created during the criteria construction process. In fact, their definition incorporates elements of researchers and define empowerment as “*the power and capacity of decisions, situations, one’s strengths through interaction with a group of people that drive to an improvement*”. They considered that, although helping people to become empowered is possible, empowerment is an individual process.

The validation of indicators is done through theatrical performances. From them all the range indicators are understood and validated, with the exception of “*meta-learning*”, not easy to understand. The youth group identifies the indicator “*self-esteem*” as the most important in relation to youth empowerment. Indicators such as “*autonomy*” and “*responsibility*” are also considered to be important. All young people agree on the need to incorporate a new one: “*leadership*”.

Young people of Badia think that youth empowerment relates to areas directly linked to their lives and experiences: first, their families and, second, in the social-escolar field and with

their peer group. In the family, young people say to feel empowered when they manage to cope with difficult situations, in relation to their parents, siblings or grandparents. The second field refers to extracurricular areas as strategic locations for the interpersonal skills’ development. They can establish friendship’s ties with their peers and also discover and implement their personal interests, for example, music and sport. However, they also claim to have experienced moments in which they have had to move forward despite the difficulties. It was in this case where confidence in themselves and the external references helped them to continue.

All participants considered that the participatory evaluation process was very effective and satisfactory. They said that they have learned a new concept: “*empowerment*”. They have also learned to work as a team, “*help each other*” and to improve their interpersonal relationships.

5.2. Case 2: “Els Químics Espai Jove” of Girona

The process begins with the opportunity to coordinate the participatory evaluation with an assessment of the *Els Químics Espai Jove* developed by Girona City Council.

Els Químics Espai Jove was created in 2011, and is a meeting place for young people between 13 and 20 years. Although it is academic orientated, it also offers services and activities that respond to the concerns and needs of young people.

The 8 young participants in the participatory evaluation process are between 17 and 25 years, and have been at *Els Químics Espai Jove* users during its first opening years.

5.2.1. Results of participatory evaluation

Although the term “*empowerment*” is new for these young people, they are integrating it gradually during the working process. To do this they constantly employ personal examples recognized as empowerment and to a large extent linked to decision-making processes. Young people associated empowerment to have initiative, take risks, choose, or get out of the comfort zone (Planas, Turon, Páez de la Torre, Bartomeus & Arumí, 2016). They also identified two major empowerment aspects. On the one hand, to recognize personal abilities or aspects that rely on oneself to be empowered: self-confidence, communication, motivation, self esteem, safety, empathy, etc. On the other hand, the external conditions: society of belonging, social determination and personal situation that exists at a particular time. From this, they reflect on the importance

of being aware of reality, understanding different points of view, and being aware of the manipulation, in order to be empowered. They also add that being empowered “*in the good sense*” also requires having ethics, empathy, or respect for others.

In relation to the definition of the term presented by the research team, young people highlight the importance of the environment conditions for youth empowerment, as well as the innate abilities/potential that each one has.

Validation of empowerment indicators is performed after a previous work from theatrical dynamics, so that young people internalize these indicators in a practical and highly visual way. Young people accept all proposed indicators. They are divided into two groups to determine its hierarchy. *Self-esteem* and *autonomy* are the most important empowerment indicators for both groups. The rest acquire various positions in both groups. One of them highlight the critical capacity, *efficiency*, and *participation*, situating in last place, *identity and community knowledge and meta-learning*s. The other, highlights *responsibility*, followed by *identity and community knowledge*, and *critical capacity*, and *effectiveness and participation* are in the last positions.

The initial idea was to work spaces, moments and empowerment processes throughout the various sessions through photos that young people were posting in an Instagram profile. However, the results were not very productive, so the process was closed with a specific dynamic: a *timeline drawing*. As key areas for empowerment there are: the family, schools, street or places and associations or extracurricular activities. Critical incidents, such as the death of a family member or the change of residence, are also considered key in the lives of young people.

The general assessment of the participatory process evaluation is positive. Young people are satisfied with their learning (internalization of the empowerment concept, resources and aspects that can be developed to empower themselves, or identification of the comfort zone and how to get out of it) and acknowledge to have reached their expectations on the participatory assessment process.

The link between facilitators and young people is a key element for the process development. As limiting aspects of the process, we pointed out the dynamics of the center, the irregularity of the participatory assessment process and the participants dispersal. All that has hampered the facilitators' work in young dynamization.

5.3. Case 3: “*Consell de la Joventut de Barcelona*” (CJB)

The youth group was formed from a cooperation request of the Youth Council of Barcelona (CJB). The CJB, is an inter-associative platform that coordinates and represents the main youth organizations from Barcelona. It launched the proposal form a group to participate in the research.

The group consists of young people linked with associations connected with the CJB. It is a group of 9 participants from 19 and 24 years. All of them participate in an association or entity. The academic training of 5 of them is High school and 4 University. Some have a “precarious” job experience. Not all of them know the others.

5.3.1. Participatory evaluation results

The term empowerment was quickly accepted by the group. It was familiar because they associated it to the community or feminist movement and some initially matched it to emancipation.

Young people associate empowerment with personal growth and decision-making. They understand it as an internal transformation; as a personal process that is also social and collective. Although they give more value to the incidence of the group, association or organization. According to this group, the empowerment occurs in two areas: internal and collective. They generate a debate about whether it is a pathway, a product, a result or a personal experience between them. Much of the discussions were organized around this differentiation also relating it to the remainder of terms identified. They refer to the *social collective empowerment*, which is linked to participation, claim, movements of fight and breaking the rules.

Two of the indicators needed to be clarified at their presentation. One of them was the meta-learning, which was exemplified for its understanding and, and the other *identity and community knowledge*, that according to them it cannot distinguish whether the identity is individual or community.

To establish a hierarchy they were organized in two groups. Among the groups there was no coincidence in the most important indicators. Indeed, the most valued indicator in one of the group is little valued in the other and vice versa (*self-esteem* and *identity and community knowledge*). They agree on core indicators (*critical capacity, autonomy, responsibility and teamwork*) and in the low value assigned to efficiency. They also differ in the value assigned to *participation*.

In the evaluation of spaces, moments and processes it was easier to identify moments than spaces and processes. They consider to be empowered, but they find it difficult to identify the empowerment process. They debated whether the empowerment is the beginning of a process or its culmination. They also debate if they are already empowered before a specific time or empowerment experience.

Empowerment starts at early ages with daily events; with the assignment of responsibilities or opportunities to decide. They relate empowerment to moments and processes linked to autonomously decisions' taking: move and move around autonomously; to have responsibilities, to be chosen as reference and recognize to be influential; to say no, to contradict or to be against the flow; to trace its own identity, to differ from others, get out of what is socially expected or desired; to speak in public, do something or express an opinion; to lead collective transformation processes, to constitute an association or promote a movement to defend rights or a lifestyle; to meet challenges and dreams from personal dedication; and, finally, to the loss of significant people, to confront the duels by death or relationship break.

The general assessment of participatory evaluation has been very positive. The group has been very participatory and constructive with a high reflective capacity. The sessions have allowed them to give shape to the concept and to discover new components and dimension. They have been recognized as agents promoting empowerment opportunities for others within the leading groups in their associations. They recognize that their attitude has changed. They say that the fact of stopping to think of their personal career, how to cooperate, to share ideas and to go beyond a simple talk, has empowered them.

5.4. Case 4: "Association Norte Joven Vallecas"

The district Villa de Vallecas, where the Association Norte Joven is located, has on of the lowest average incomes of the city, as one of the most vulnerable districts in terms of unemployment, and for its high number of foreign-born inhabitants. Generally speaking Vallecas is one of the areas with a higher school drop-out rates of Madrid.

The Association Norte Joven, through its training program, offers young people access to society rights and resources and the exercise of civic duties, offering other training alternatives for the integral development of young's excluded.

They attend a specific training centre, a professional hospitality workshop. The aim is to achieve full integration in society through job knowledge

and provide them personal and social development skills. These young people are in a particularly vulnerable moment, in need for affection, for reference models and a nurturing environment.

5.4.1. Participatory evaluation results

The term *empowerment* is a new and strange concept for young people. From the beginning there is an explicit information request on the concept. Despite the initial resistance to the term, the group, without being aware of the process, has integrate it progressively.

Given their life circumstances, they understand the empowerment as not remaining static or trapped in their situation; it is interpret as: "*earn a living*". It should be clarify that the concept has been used by young people more as a process than as a result and more in persons than in their context. Despite everything, young people consider that context is an important variable for opening / closing empowerment opportunities. The formation is also considered as a very important element to empower themselves. The term definition presented to the group enables them to being part of the process and realize that empowerment was part of their lives, but without driving the exact term.

The presentation of empowerment indicators raises questions since the vocabulary used is not familiar. They are also sceptical on the term on which the indicators are formulated. They recognize them more clearly after an explanation. In the analysis and evaluation of the range of empowerment indicators, they add and relate concepts to the presented indicators. Related *self esteem* with safety, strength, motivation and energy; *autonomy* with leadership; *identity* with values and responsibility. They propose to separate the *identity from community knowledge*, considering that one refers to the singular and the other to the collective. Indicators are ranked being *autonomy* in first place, followed by the *meta-learning* and *self-esteem*. In third place there is *identity and community knowledge*. Then, and at the same level, *critical ability*, *teamwork* and *participation*. Finally, *efficiency*.

The youth group interpreted empowerment as the fact of having experienced failure situations and have survived to certain critical circumstances in their life. They polarize the ideas of "*doing nothing*" or "*empowerment*".

The evaluation of spaces, times and processes in which young people are empowered was not well developed by the group. Efforts to generate examples of spaces, times and processes (mural, telegram group, activity in the classroom) have

not been very productive, since young people are not too involved in them.

For them, the most significant learning items are moments, processes and spaces where they are able to see and understand how exactly empowerment happens. Empowerment is located in the professional field, at the time of young training and in a space such as the educational center.

In addition, they value what are their personal capacities to promote empowerment and what are that are going to make it faster. At the time of the evaluation, they are in a training process which they understand that it as being empowered.

The difficulties of these young people, with regard to the ability of expression and verbal fluency, demanded time to explain the concepts in different ways to get them to understand it.

The general assessment has been very positive. Although the process has been more productive than other moments, the motivation has been high and youth were grateful because they have felt empowered. In addition, given that participatory evaluation sessions had provided satisfaction, learning and reflection on their own processes of empowerment.

6. Conclusions of the youth empowerment participatory evaluation process with 4 young groups

Different groups configuration, in regards to cultural levels, of personal experiences and youth instruction, causes the construction of the group criteria, in relation to empowerment, in very different ways in the four groups. In spite of everything we can say that the empowerment's implication and meaning occurred in a joint way in the four groups. They built their own young empowerment's conceptualizations and definitions and put it in relation to their own lives.

All groups related empowerment to some kind of personal or group enrichment or improvement. Youth link empowerment with some perception of success and/or overcoming and connects it to *security* and *self confidence*. Also, having strength of willingness and ability to impose constraints. In the four groups empowerment is associated with clearly a personal process; an internal transformation that passes through oneself, although their acknowledge the social influence.

All groups validate the empowerment definition by the research team, although it should be noted that they incorporate, eliminated or question some of the elements.

Although the indicators understanding process varies between groups, they agree on the meta-learning understanding difficulty. The four

groups validated the empowerment indicators' range presented by the research team. Barcelona group rank *effectiveness* as a little relevant indicator. This indicator is ranked at the last level by the Madrid group and by one of the sub-groups of Badia and Girona. The indicator *identity* and *community knowledge* generates debate in Barcelona and Madrid's groups given that what is individual and community is not differentiated. The Madrid group proposes to separate the *identity* associated to personal and *community knowledge* to the collective. All groups hierarchize indicators. *Autonomy* and *self-esteem* are generally considered the most important. Youth groups intend to incorporate indicators such as *leadership*, *confidence*, *self-knowledge*, *security*, *strength*, *motivation and energy*. All of them linked to *self-esteem*.

In all groups focus the issue of space, moments and youth empowerment processes from experiences and personal experiences. Youth empowerment is related to spaces linked to family, school and friends. In the case of Badia, the extra-curricular space is significant because in it, young people can create friendship ties with their peers and also allows them to discover, express and implement their personal interests. It also appears in the group from Barcelona but characterized as an autonomous choice and decision's space. In addition, in Madrid and in Girona youth identify a new space: the street. And in Barcelona the associative space is significant.

Processes that are transversal to the identified areas have to do with overcoming experiences that made that young people have perception of success, overcoming, be important to someone or, finally, to feel well-being. Learning processes and personal growth are identified either by completing the curricula or by having the courage to abandon them for not being what they expected to be. Overcoming process to move forward against adverse situations or brittleness is detected.

In the case of Barcelona, some empowerment processes are related to decision-making at early ages and with the assumption of responsibilities. Other processes cited in groups of Madrid and Barcelona have to do with the fact of becoming independent.

Related persons within these processes and moments are friends and family (parents, grandparents, uncles, brothers).

The four groups agreed that the development of the participatory assessment process has been very successful and very well appreciated by youth groups and facilitators. Also in the fact that groups responded well to the proposed and accepted dynamics. The facilitators have been

a key element in the participatory evaluation development.

All groups claim to have learned during the process. They have two types of learning: (1) those carried out in relation to the empowerment concept, the multiplicity of dimensions that shape it and forms and ways in which this can manifest itself; and (2) learning outcomes related how themselves see this concept. Generally, it can be said that they look their vital trajectories in different way distinguishing what empowers them of what not. And finally they point out that the process

helped them to put into value what they do has given them keys to better confront their life situations.

All the above elements allow us to conclude that participatory evaluation, as used in this research, has proven to be a very adequate socio-educational intervention strategy to help young people participating to build different perspectives on their own lives. Also as a result of these perspectives, to provide them with personal instruments of analysis that can serve them to enter if necessary changes in their lives.

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Notas

- ¹ The research team is composed of Pere Soler (IP), Jaume Trilla, Ana Novella, Asun Llena, Pilar Heras, Xavier Úcar, Héctor Núñez, Pilar Pineda, Ingrid Agud, Manel Jiménez, Alan Salvadó, Anna Planas, Sonia Páez, Judit Font, Narcís Turon y Myrte Monseny. Cuenta también con la colaboración de: Päivi Garriga, Genís Martín, Pilar Rodrigo, Anna Ciraso, Feliu Fusté, Ariadna Jordà, Ariadna Alonso y Mercè Gómez
- ² Annexes 1 y 2 can be checked.
- ³ This definition as well as all the theoretical work on the concept can be checked Úcar, Jiménez, Soler & Trilla, 2016. In the first paper of this monographic there is an improved and enlarged version of the concept at Soler, Trilla, Jiménez-Morales & Úcar, 2017.
- ⁴ This personal and community empowerment range was elaborated by the research group of a previous R&D Project (Ref. EDU2010-15122) (check Soler, Planas, Ciraso-Calí & Ribot-Horas, 2014). The current research is adapted to youth empowerment and validated by specialized youth professionals.
- ⁵ In order to build the concept of empowerment and the features that an empowered individual must present, three techniques promoting debate and reflection among young people are proposed, namely: 1) *the flower technique*, which asks participants to identify words that are represented when they think about the term "empowerment", 2) *facial composite technique*, which enables young participants to display on a human figure every feature associated with their idea of an empowered person, and 3) the gathering of definitions and ideas on empowerment collected from internet and family and local environments. Each group chose the dynamics that they were going to develop.

Annex 1. Concept:

"Youth empowerment may be a process or a result of consequence of an interaction, more or less negotiated, between the capabilities of action of a young person and the options that the physical and socio-cultural environment in which life evolves provides. The term refers, generally, to the efficient growth of the young person through the overcoming of situations through the acquisition or development of skills"(Úcar, Jiménez-morales, Soler & Trilla, 2016).

Annex 2. Youth empowerment indicators range

Indicators	Identifiers
1-Self-esteem	1.1- Be satisfied with oneself
	1.2- Be able to deal with difficult or adverse situations
	1.3- Be able to show oneself to others
	1.4- Feel confident on yourself
	1.5- Know your own capacities and recognize the limits
	1.6- Feel recognized by others
2. Liability	2.1 assume commitments and tasks voluntarily and realistic
	2.2 assume roles in groups and collectives
	2.3 be able to share tasks and functions

Indicators	Identifiers
3-Efficiency	3.1 be capable of taking decisions to achieve the objectives
	3.2 be methodical and consistent in performing the tasks
	3.3 achieve the goals
4- Critical capacity	4.1 be able to analyze problems or situations
	4.2 have an own criteria in relation to problems or situations
5- Autonomy	5.1 have initiative
	5.2 be able to choose and act according to own convictions
6- Teamwork	6.1 engage in teamwork
	6.2 be able to exercise leadership roles in team work
	6.3 be able to communicate
	6.4 be able to negotiate and reach an agreement
7- Identity and community knowledge	7.1 know the history and the socio-cultural dynamics of the community
	7.2 know the different agents and community organizations
	7.3 know the services, resources and facilities of the territory
	7.4 have sense of belonging
8- Meta-learning	8.1 be aware of having acquired or improved the self knowledge and skills
	8.2 having developed the ability of learning to learn
	8.3 be aware of the acquired power to act
9- Participation	9.1 be engage in actions or projects
	9.2 be able to influence your environment

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AUTHOR'S ADDRESS

Xavier Úcar: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. Dpto. Pedagogía Sistemática y Social. (España) Edifici G6 Campus de la UAB. 08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès). Xavier.ucar@uab.cat

Anna Planas: Universitat de Girona (UdG). anna.planas@udg.edu

Ana Novella: Universidad de Barcelona (UB). anovella@ub.ed

Pilar Rodrigo Moriche: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM). pilar.rodrigo@uam.es

ACADEMIC PROFILE

Xavier Úcar: Catedrático de Pedagogía Social en Dpto. de Pedagogía Sistemática y Social de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. Presidente de la “Sociedad Iberoamericana de Pedagogía Social” (SIPS) desde el 2012. Autor de más de un centenar de trabajos que incluyen libros, capítulos de libros y artículos en revistas científicas. La última publicación (2016) es una trilogía denominada “Pedagogías de lo social”, que da título al primer libro y es complementada por “Relaciones socioeducativas. La acción de los profesionales” y “Pedagogía de la elección”. Las tres editadas por “UOC Publishing” de Barcelona. <http://uab.academia.edu/XavierUcar>.

Anna Planas: Agregada interina en el Departamento de Pedagogía de la Universitat de Girona. Coordinadora del Grado en Educación Social desde de 2014. Trabajó como técnica de cultura y juventud, y coordinadora de proyectos educativos en el sector público, privado y en el tercer sector. Su investigación se centra en la animación sociocultural, la evaluación y las políticas y programas de juventud, de los cuales ha publicado decenas de artículos y capítulos de libro. Miembro de la Sociedad Iberoamericana de Pedagogía Social. <http://www.udg.edu/personal/anna.planas.llado>.

Ana Novella: Agregada interina en el Departamento de Teoría e Historia de la Educación de la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad de Barcelona. Integrante del Grupo de Investigación en Educación Moral (GREM). Los temas investigación que desarrollo son la participación en la escuela, la participación ciudadana, los consejos infantiles y el empoderamiento juvenil. Co-Investigadora del proyecto “Los consejos infantiles. Nuevas formas de participación política y cívica de los niños y las niñas de Cataluña” (Recercaixa, 2014). Algunas de las publicaciones recientes son: *Infant, participació i ciutat. El consell d'infants, un exercici de ciutadania*. Barcelona (Horsori, 2013); *Participación y construcción de la ciudadanía*. (en Novella et al., Graó 2014). <http://www.ub.edu/GREM/professorat/ana-maria-novella-camara/>.

Pilar Rodrigo Moriche: Profesora en la Facultad de Formación del Profesorado y Educación de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM) desde 2011; Profesora colaboradora en el Dpto. de Teoría de la Educación y Pedagogía Social de la UNED. Maestra de educación infantil, pedagoga, máster TIC en Educación, y Doctora en Ciencias de la Educación por la UAM. Miembro del Grupo de Investigación para la Inclusión Social y Laboral de Personas con Discapacidad Intelectual reconocido por la UAM, de la Red OcioGune, y de la Red de Excelencia de Estudios sobre Juventud y Sociedad. goo.gl/sh9PrT.

