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Youth, Team sports and Citizenship

ABSTRACT

At outer Nørrebro (Copenhagen, Denmark), an area with a large population of ethnic minorities, this research project took the daily life of boys from the 6 - 9th grades (approximate ages 12-16) at a local lower secondary school, as its starting point. The majority of the participants were from socio-economic deprived neighborhood (Ryom et al., 2017).

The project aimed to strengthen the young boys' life-skills, social resilience and involvement in active citizenship in order to empower their own life situation.

Through a community psychological approach (Orford, 2008 & Kloos, 2012), consisting of a team sports project as well as coaching and mentoring, the project goal was to challenge the boys to be part of a new shared and empowering community, so that they actively experienced the ability to take responsibility for themselves and others in the arenas where they lived.

In close co-operation with the local sports club 'Nørrebro United', 26 volunteer coaches (coaching the boys in school), school staff, the local community and not least the young people themselves, the intervention gradually took it's own form.

The intention of this strong local co-operation, was to clarify the young participants' life conditions and world view, improve and implement concrete actions, take a new outlook on for the participating individuals and analyze successful implementations and possible barriers.

Methods: The project was monitored and analyzed through fieldwork, interviews, focus groups and questionnaires in a multimethod approach (Brewer & Hunter (2006)).

The project yielded several positive results (Ryom, 2017):

- Enhanced self-concept
- Enhanced physical competencies
- Improved social networks at school
- Improved class co-operation

These results have raised interesting perspectives, which will be presented and discussed with the workshop participant with a focus on:

- The potential of a community psychology/action research approach with young boys on the edge
- Meaningful adults and community give the experience of being taken serious
- A lot of small steps eventually results in active citizenship
- Further research implications:
 - Building relationships
 - Recall and share of power
 - Creating incentive for participation
 - Generating concrete changes
 - Establishing credible reports

Finally we will engage the participants of the conference, by presenting specific cases from our project linked to the above bullet points.

We will use voices from the project, like volunteer coaches and the local sports club Nørrebro United.

This final discussion will broaden the local agenda of this research project towards a more general discussion with the participants.