

Transformational education in youth work: Theoretical concepts and empirical findings

-Under Review-

Abstract:

Today, education is no longer understood solely as the acquisition of knowledge and competences, but also as a process in which our relationship to ourselves, to others and to the world is fundamentally transformed. In particular, experiences that pose significant challenges - such as those experienced in the youth phase with its upheavals and changes - are interpreted as occasions for education because they question the usual ways of thinking and acting. Against this background, this article looks at the transformative potential of open youth work as an educational actor. By means of an empirical study based on observations in youth centres and group discussions with young people, educational experiences and processes in youth work were examined, with transformational educational theory serving as a backdrop. The results of the study particularly emphasise the value of experiential learning in youth work. Youth work offers a platform on which young people can process crisis experiences typical of life phases through social interaction and reflective dialogue and use them for personal development. In today's complex society, these educational experiences are of crucial importance as they enable young people to shape their own identity, find inner direction and take on social responsibility. In this way, youth work as a place of education makes a significant contribution to shaping an inclusive, critical and participatory society.

Keywords

Youth work, educational experiences, transformational educational theory, social recognition, well-being, self-determined learning