

## **Appropriate methods of working with disadvantaged youth**

### *I. Youth Rights*

Youth rights refers to a set of philosophies intended to enhance civil rights for young people. As opposed to children's rights groups, which tend to advocate entitlements for young people and favor paternalistic handling of minors by government, youth rights organizers seek to enhance the role of young people in society through equal rights. They reject what they see as the paternalism of the current regime as a hindrance to young people who seek active participation in society.

### *II. Youth Empowerment*

**Youth empowerment** is an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people, including youth and adults. There are a variety of activities that may affect youth empowerment, including parenting, formal education, community-based training, governmental policy-making, and social awareness-building.

The major structural activities where youth empowerment happens throughout society include:

- Community-based decision-making
- Organizational planning, and
- Education reform

False forms of youth empowerment include:

- Consumer spending
- Popular culture
- Forced participation

### *III. Youth Councils*

**Youth councils** are an example of youth voice engaged in youth-led decision-making. Youth councils exist on local, state, provincial, regional, national, and international levels among governments, NGOs, schools, and other entities. The history of youth councils extends back to the early twentieth century, when communists and Nazis formed youth-led decision-making bodies for the purpose of propaganization and recruitment. After a thirty-year lull, youth councils have come back into favor internationally with the popularity of the European Youth Council.

Youth councils have many purposes. Many are consultative bodies for more representative political bodies at all levels of government. The extent to which they have been established at all levels varies, as the United States, Canada, Western and Northern Europe have all seen a proliferation of these bodies. How they are composed varies, with some youth councils being elected by young people in the community, while others are handpicked by political officials or elected by youth NGOs.

### **Examples of youth councils**

The Council of Europe also has an Advisory Council, which is part of a co-decision structure on the Youth field in the Council of Europe, called the Joint Committee. At the present, the Norwegian Lasse Thue is chairperson of the Advisory Council.

In Israel, There is a National Youth Council, whose members are elected from 7 Regional Youth Councils, which are elected from Municipal councils, formed from representatives of School Student Councils and Youth Movements.

Many American cities, including Boston and Los Angeles, among many others have active youth councils as well. In Los Angeles, in particular, the Youth Council is sponsored by the Commission for Children Youth and their Families. Prior to being established as a program of this commission, it was operated as Mayor Tom Bradley's Youth Advisory Board. The Youth Council is currently working on creating a citywide Youth Policy, is strengthening its presence, and was recently written up in a featured article in the Los Angeles Times.

#### *IV. Affirmative action*

One particularly controversial issue is affirmative action, or positive discrimination: the idea that minorities should be granted special privileges that the majority does not enjoy. An example of this is when an individual of minority status is given preference for acceptance to a university over a more- or equally-qualified non-minority, in order to fulfill a quota of minorities in the student body. Critics of these policies often refer to them as reverse discrimination and argue that they are perpetrating new wrongs to counter old ones, and instilling a sense of victimhood in the majority. Proponents of the policies argue that the end result—a more diversified student body, police-force or other group—justifies the means. Others consider positive discrimination to have the potential to increase homophobia and racial tension, claiming that rising rates of suicide, depression and violent crime amongst young British whites, particularly males, are partly due to limited prospects caused by workplace discrimination against white male heterosexuals (in favor of women, non-whites and homosexuals) by employers who fear litigation. The debate is likely to continue into the future.