The background is a collage of torn paper and colored blocks. The colors include teal, red, yellow, and black. The paper has some faint text and a large word 'NOVEMBER' visible. The text is overlaid on a black background.

An Evaluation of the Advancing Equity, Building Youth Capacity Certificate For Youth Workers

A Program of the Transformative
Community Education Network

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*"It (the Certificate Program) has reignited the fire inside.
I now have much more resources, with faces to put to them.
I can now look at my work from numerous perspectives,
instead of just head-on" (Youth Worker).*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The key challenge is not producing a Youth Work Certificate that has *academic integrity*. The key challenge is introducing a Youth Work Certificate that has *street credibility*”¹.

THIS REPORT PRESENTS FINDINGS of the evaluation of the professional development certificate, ***Advancing Equity, Building Youth Capacity*** developed by the Transformative Community Education Network (TCEN) for frontline youth workers and direct services workers in the Toronto youth sector. The certificate was developed in collaboration with the York Centre for Education and Community at York University.

TCEN’s mission is to prepare youth workers to be transformative agents of change through education, networking, support, and service coordination. Their vision is to be a driving force in strengthening youth service delivery to advance equity and excellence for positive youth development.

The goal of the ***Advancing Equity, Building Youth Capacity*** certificate is to introduce participants to various critical elements, strategies and approaches to providing effective leadership to young people in the community sector. Through various interactive, participatory activities in the classroom and in community settings, the certificate seeks to deepen participants’ analysis and understanding and provide them with the critical knowledge, tools, capacities and resources to provide effective youth leadership in the sector. The course utilizes an anti-colonial, anti-oppression, anti-racist, and equity framework. The certificate included three modules: Self, Values and Social Location; Youth Social Context: People, Politics and Power; and Change, Agency and Leadership.

¹ Frontline Youth Workers Initiative (FLWI) Course Outline and Qualitative Data Analysis by Chris Harris, PhD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The certificate was piloted with two cohorts of youth workers in late 2013 and early 2014. Cohort One included 24 participants and Cohort Two included 27 participants.

This report describes the findings of a mixed methods exploratory evaluation that was conducted by an external evaluation group, the Applied Social Welfare Research and Evaluation Group based at York University between 2013 and 2015 to understand the outcomes of the certificate.

To understand if and how the certificate increased the competence of participants in working with youth, a mixed method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative methods was employed. It was chosen as the most suitable approach to understand the outcomes of the certificate and identify areas that TCEN can improve on.

The evaluation questions were:

- How do front-line youth workers experience TCEN's Certificate?
- What do they see as the benefits and learning they gain from the Certificate?
- What impact does the Certificate have on youth workers' knowledge?
- What impact does the Certificate have on youth workers' practice?
- To what extent does the Certificate increase their competence in youth work settings?
- What is the impact of TCEN on the youth sector?
 - What program elements of TCEN are considered beneficial by youth sector initiatives?
 - How does TCEN address the gaps and challenges in the youth sector?
 - How can TCEN be further strengthened?

To answer these questions, the following data were collected and analyzed:

1. A pre and post survey was completed by Cohort One and Two participants
2. Participants completed an evaluation of each of the three modules that make up the certificate once that module was completed.

3. Two focus group sessions and seven in-depth interviews were completed with participants post completion of the certificate.
4. Eight qualitative interviews were conducted with TCEN's key stakeholders and a focus group was conducted with TCEN's 2013-2014 Advisory Board.
5. Thematic content analysis of TCEN's project documents including the funding proposal, terms of reference, quarterly reports to their funder, and conceptual framing documents from the project development phase.

Findings from these data sources were integrated to answer the evaluation questions.

Nine key findings emerged that overwhelmingly indicate that the certificate was effective in building the capacity of youth workers. The findings provide insights into participants' experiences with the certificate; what they considered to be the benefits and gains of the program; the issues and factors that influenced their learning; and the impact the training has had on practice as well as the extent to which their learning had resulted in increased competence in youth work.

1. Networking Opportunities

Participants perceived that the certificate provided a great environment to engage with other youth workers, share ideas and resources, and learn more about other youth-serving agencies.

2. Professional Development

Participants widely acknowledged the importance and value of professional development and that the certificate allowed them to develop core competencies and professional skills that are essential to youth development work.

3. Work Experience Accreditation and Academic Credentials

Some participants perceived the certificate as an important step towards getting accreditation for their work experience thus enhancing their employability and prestige while for others, the benefit of the certificate is the value added to their academic credentials, which would boost their post secondary education and career pursuits.

4. Program Content:

Participants found the course content to be interesting and worth knowing. They felt it was current, had immediate usefulness, and was relevant to their field.

5. Environment:

Participants found the training environment conducive to learning. They reported the learning atmosphere as welcoming, safe, engaging and respectful.

6. Increase in Knowledge and Skills:

Participants overwhelmingly affirmed the effectiveness of the training program. They indicated a deepened awareness and understanding of youth development issues and highlighted some insights gained from working in collaboration and cooperation with the youth and within the youth sector.

7. Best Practices:

Participants were confident that their new learning would positively affect the work they do with youth and that they were committed to supporting youth development work through industry best practices. Specifically, participants highlighted instances where the training has already shown evidence of increased competence in their work.

8. Wellness and Wellbeing:

Participants were appreciative of the increased awareness and insights they received from the Self-Care Module which taught them the importance of tending to their own health and wellbeing while undertaking youth work. Furthermore, participants considered various ways to enhance their quality of life by introducing self-care into their youth programs and their personal lives.

9. Value of Certificate:

Participants were proud that the training they received put them at a distinct advantage over their peers. Also, participants felt that the professional certificate would open doors to better employment opportunities since youth serving agencies tend to hire and retain job applicants with professional certificates.

Participants identified several program gaps and provided suggestions for future improvements that include the following:

- Class location and Schedules
- Fidelity to Course Outline
- Curriculum Structure/Program Duration
- Leveraging TCEN's Certificate for PSE
- Power of Peer Learning

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“The skills and knowledge I gained will improve my programming for youth. Taking care of self will allow me to serve youth better. This course has rejuvenated my soul.”

THE YOUTH SECTOR IN ONTARIO provides essential services² to young people, many of whom are faced with complex challenges and issues that threaten their wellbeing. Youth-serving organizations are frequently called upon to respond effectively to the needs of these young people despite the many restraints that they themselves face in terms of human resources and funding.

Funding restraints have meant that youth-serving agencies must do more with less funding³. The shift from core funding to a short-term and unpredictable project-based funding has resulted in increased precariousness in the form of part-time and contract employment, lower wages, increased shiftwork, as well as fewer benefits and pensions. Cutbacks in funding have

also had implications on the capacity of nonprofits to provide internal leadership and opportunities for career development for their staff. Youth-serving organizations are heavily affected by such issues as many of the staff are youth themselves, and are often forced to switch between jobs frequently in order to reach leadership positions in an organization.

While young people are drawn to work in the youth-service sector because of the rewarding experience it offers to contribute to the wellbeing of marginalized and underserved youth, many of these organizations are limited in their ability to provide their youth workers with professional development and educational opportunities.

² The youth sector provides culturally and locally relevant services and opportunities to youth who may not otherwise have access. Reported outcomes for participants include “reduced school drop-out, improved academic performance, reduced delinquency, increased civic engagement, and decreased substance abuse” (Ross, L., Buglione, S., & Safford-Farquharson, J., 2011)

³ McIsaac, E., Park, S. & Toupin, L. “Human capital renewal in the nonprofit sector: Framing the strategy. Ontario Nonprofit Network”. Retrieved on October 29, 2013 from <http://www.theonn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/HCRS-Framing-the-Strategy.pdf> (2013).

1.1 Why the Need for a Professional Development Certificate for Youth Workers?

Youth workers, as frontline staff, are vital components of community-based youth programs. Through their interactions with young people, they get to know youth on a meaningful level and often become role models, mentors, teachers and sometimes even surrogate parents to the young people who participate in youth programs.⁴ Youth workers are regarded by the agencies that employ them, as being the most critical factor in the success of a youth program. McLaughlin and his colleagues capture the influential roles youth workers and other program staff play in the lives of young people by describing them as “wizards” because they “succeed where most other individuals and institutions have failed.”⁵

Yet despite the influence youth workers have in shaping the daily experiences of young people who participate in youth programs, they are given few opportunities for professional development and skill advancement.⁶

This need for professional development training for youth workers is the subject of extensive discussion in the research literature. Recent research has found that the quality of youth programs rely heavily on the skill development of program staff, particularly staff that work closely with youth. This is apparent in findings reported by Hall and Cassidy⁷, which shows that staff education and training, results in better program quality by improving positive interactions between program staff and youth participants. In addition to fostering positive staff-youth interactions, Evans and his fellow researchers also note that adequate training for youth

workers enable staff to feel confident about their ability to address the complex needs of the young people they serve.⁸

Professional development and training opportunities contribute to staff competency in various ways – such as building the capacity of staff to understand and relate to youth participants as well as enhancing their ability to develop and implement activities that are engaging to youth. According to Walker and his team, when young people are engaged, they are more meaningfully seen as “partners, co-creators and key contributors to program decision-making and success” rather than as “clients”⁹. This encourages youth to continue engaging and participating in programs.

Professional development training also presents opportunities for enhancing youth workers’ competence in promoting positive youth development. A positive youth development framework emphasizes the resilience and strengths of young people, viewing them as resources in their own development rather than as problems. This approach fosters the developmental assets of young people and prepares them for future wellbeing. Hartje and her colleagues found that staff training was related to increased competency and confidence in carrying out program features grounded in positive youth development.¹⁰

The need for professional development training is also evident when considering the concerns youth workers have about challenges they encounter in their work. While youth workers may come into the profession with energy and good intentions, many have expressed feeling overwhelmed by the different competing priorities that they face ranging from event coordination and program management, to self care

⁴ Ross, Laurie, Suzanne Buglione, and Jennifer Safford-Farquharson. “Training the “wizards”: A model for building self efficacy and peer networks among urban youth workers.” *Child & Youth Services* 32, no. 3 (2011): 200-223.

⁵ McLaughlin, Milbrey W., Merita A. Irby, and Juliet Langman. *Urban sanctuaries: Neighborhood organizations in the lives and futures of inner-city youth*. Jossey-Bass, (1994).

⁶ Ross et al. “Training the ‘wizards’: A model for building self efficacy and peer networks among urban youth workers.” 201; Vance, Femi. “A comparative analysis of competency frameworks for youth workers in the out-of-school time field.” In *Child & youth care forum*, vol. 39, no. 6, pp. 421-441. Springer US, (2010)

⁷ Hall, Alice Henderson, and Deborah J. Cassidy. “An assessment of the North Carolina school-age child care accreditation initiative.” *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 17, no. 1 (2002): 84-96.

⁸ Evans, William P., Lorie L. Sicafuse, Eric S. Killian, Laura A. Davidson, and Deborah Loesch-Griffin. “Youth worker professional development participation, preferences, and agency support.” *Child & Youth Services* 31, no. 1-2 (2010): 35-52.

⁹ Walker, J., Gran, C., & Moore, D. “Once we know it, we can grow it: A framework for quality nonformal learning opportunities and youth work practice”. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Extension:Center for Youth Development (2009).

¹⁰ Hartje, Joyce A., William P. Evans, Eric S. Killian, and Randy Brown. “Youth worker characteristics and self-reported competency as predictors of intent to continue working with youth.” In *Child & Youth Care Forum*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 27-41. Springer US, (2008).

and responding to the individual needs of the youth. In a research study that sought to understand the challenge of improving the quality of adult leadership in community youth development programs, youth workers were asked what they needed to succeed in their work.¹¹ The youth workers stressed the importance of sound preparation for the challenging work they do and wanted access to a flexible range of education and training options as well as to a system of ongoing professional development. They also wished to improve their knowledge and understand how to apply it to their work. In addition, they expressed a need to have time away from work to pursue training and education options, stating a preference for practical adult learning experiences grounded in their work and role.¹²

Factors that Influence Professional Development Training & Learning

There are certain factors that influence the degree of learning achieved in professional development training programs for youth workers. Two that are frequently cited in research include *support networks* and *type of training*.

Strong Support Networks

For youth workers to develop their skills and enhance their knowledge, their supervisors and organizations must commit to supporting their learning and creating pathways to specialized training opportunities. McRoberts and Leitch¹³ note that support from key personnel is a critical factor that influences the degree of learning in professional development training. Indeed, to take part in and fully benefit from training opportunities, youth workers must invest a portion of their time. This might be difficult to do without the support of

supervisors in areas such as providing release time, or allowing for flexibility in scheduling.

Participation in training programs is made all the more challenging for youth workers because youth work is often viewed as an entry-level position, characterized by a lack of professional distinction.¹⁴ Youth-serving agencies that have limited resources may choose to invest in providing training programs to long-term and more experienced employees.¹⁵

Type of Training

Findings from research studies indicate that though most youth workers agree that participating in training and professional development opportunities result in positive outcomes, professional development training programs must do more than just enhance youth workers' knowledge and skills. Ross and his colleagues note that it is one thing for a youth worker to obtain knowledge and skills but an entirely different matter for that youth worker to believe that they have the ability to utilize those skills.¹⁶ This has led many in the field to argue that youth-work training should focus on fostering self-efficacy.¹⁷

Self-efficacy is the belief that an individual has about their ability to successfully organize patterns of behaviour and exercise control in situations that are unpredictable and stressful.¹⁸ An evaluation of a 13-week youth worker training program found that one program's focus on social interaction, networking and peer learning were associated with increased feelings of efficacy among the participants. Participants felt inspired by working with trainers and peers with similarities to themselves. They also found the opportunity to network and build relationships to be invaluable.¹⁹

¹¹ Walker, J. A. "The essential youth worker", (2003). In F. A. Villarruel, D. F. Perkins, L. M. Borden & J. G. Keith (Eds.), "Community youth development: Programs, policies, and practices" (pp. 373–393). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

¹² Ibid, 375

¹³ McRoberts, Robin, and Ruth Leitch. "Best of the old alongside the new: evaluating an integrated training programme for part-time youth workers." *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 50, no. 1 (1998): 21-40.

¹⁴ Evans et al. Youth worker professional development participation, preferences, and agency support, 36.

¹⁵ Bowie, Lillian, and Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew. "The importance of professional development for youth workers." Washington, DC: Child Trends (2006).

¹⁶ Ross et al. Training the "wizards": A model for building self-efficacy and peer networks among urban youth workers, 203.

¹⁷ Shek, Daniel TL, and C. L. Y. Wai. "Training workers implementing adolescent prevention and positive youth development programs: What have we learned from the literature." *Adolescence* 43, no. 172 (2008): 823-845.

¹⁸ Ross et al. Training the "wizards": A model for building self-efficacy and peer networks among urban youth workers, 203

¹⁹ Ibid, 218

This emphasis youth workers place on supportive relationships and shared learning is also apparent in an earlier research that studied the views of youth workers who participated in professional development.²⁰ Ninety-one per cent of youth workers in the sample studied reported receiving training related to their agency's mission and goals. However, many expressed an interest in receiving training focusing on staff support and ways to include community partners in programs.

To foster self-efficacy and leadership among youth workers, it is then critical for training programs to provide opportunities for program staff to network, build relationships and engage in shared learning. With increased self-confidence, youth workers are then better able to handle challenging situations, interact with and relate to youth in ways that support asset building, and execute activities that foster empowerment and positive development of youth.

Although there exists a strong link between professional development training and a range of positive outcomes that translate to better program quality (i.e. higher levels of confidence and self-efficacy, development of new skills and knowledge etc.) it is clear that youth workers have limited access to such opportunities. On the rare occasion that they are provided with professional development opportunities, many feel unsatisfied with the content of the training. Thus, it is not only important that staff are given training but the type of youth-worker training must also be responsive to the challenges and needs of youth workers.

²⁰ Evans et al. Youth Worker Professional Development Participation, Preferences, and Agency Support, 43.



OVERVIEW OF TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY EDUCATION NETWORK

“The key challenge is not producing a Youth Work Certificate that has *academic integrity*. The key challenge is introducing a Youth Work Certificate that has *street credibility*”²¹.

TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY EDUCATION

NETWORK (TCEN) formerly known as the *Frontline Youth Workers Initiative* (FYWI) was established in 2009 as a response to the different levels of knowledge and skills presented by youth front line workers in the City of Toronto. Funded by the Youth Challenge Fund and trusted by Woodgreen Community Services, TCEN was established by a collaborative of grassroots groups, mainstream organizations and individuals working in some capacity with frontline or direct service workers to develop “sector supported training and certification program for frontline and direct service workers underlining the social determinants of health”²².

TCEN’s main objective is to build capacity and transform the way frontline and youth workers deliver their services in the city. Capacity building, a broad concept that encompasses “*education and training, technical assistance, coaching, peer networking and operational support*”, is a key strategy in strengthening the infrastructure of non-profits and social agencies especially capacity building activities that support “*evidence based practice*”²³.

²¹ Frontline Youth Workers Initiative (FLWI) Course Outline and Qualitative Data Analysis by Chris Harris, PhD

²² Youth Challenge Fund Proposal by the FLWI

²³ Sobeck, Joanne L. “How cost-effective is capacity building in grassroots organizations?.” *Administration in Social Work* 32, no. 2 (2008): 49-68.

TCEN's Professional Development Certificate: Advancing Equity, Building Youth Capacity

The goal of TCEN's certificate is to introduce participants to various critical elements, strategies and approaches to providing effective leadership to young people in the community sector. Through various interactive, participatory activities in the classroom and in community settings, the certificate hopes to deepen participants' analysis and understanding of social, economic and political forces impacting youth and youth work in Toronto. The certificate's goal is to provide youth workers with critical knowledge, tools, capacities and resources to provide effective youth leadership in the sector.

The curriculum for the certificate was developed by Professor Carl James, The Director of the York Centre for Education and Community (YCEC), York University and built on the extensive conceptual work by Chris Harris who was hired by the TCEN in the early stages to develop a conceptual framework for the certificate. The instructor for the pilot of the certificate with the first two cohorts of participants, Nene Kwasi Kafele, extensively revised the curriculum of the certificate to include an anti-colonial, anti-oppression, anti-racist, and equity framework.

The certificate was piloted to two cohorts of frontline youth workers from across the City of Toronto. Cohort one had 24 participants while cohort two had 27 participants. Since this initial pilot, several communities have quickly embraced the need for a professional development program and have begun offering versions of this curriculum in their communities. For example, the Region of Peel has introduced the certificate for youth workers in their region.

The objectives of the certificate include the following:

- Build general youth awareness, knowledge, skills and capacity by examining critical issues impacting frontline youth workers, the role they play in the larger helping professions, and the need for ongoing professional development;
- Build effective youth leadership, advocacy planning, programming, evaluation and collaboration skills;
- Build critical understanding of social, economic and

political forces impacting youth and youth work in Toronto, using examples and experiences from Toronto and other jurisdictions;

- Enhance collaboration, community capacity, strategic networking and coalition building;
- Share vital resources for youth change management and youth change leadership.

TCEN's *Advancing Equity, Building Youth Capacity* certificate recognizes the fluid role that frontline youth workers play in the lives of youth. As organizers and facilitators, educators and life coaches, social workers and much needed critical friends to the youth that they serve, they require ongoing professional development initiatives so they can assess their own "tools of the trade" and find new methods to work with youth in various capacities.

TCEN's certificate has three sessions: Self, Values and Social Location; Youth Social Context: People, Politics and Power; and Change, Agency and Leadership. Each session provides opportunities to engage in a dialogue about participants' experiences while providing them with an understanding of the common theories and approaches to youth work that impact their work with youth.

The course draws from an anti-oppressive, equity-based, participatory, interactive, adult education approach to learning and engaging. The certificate aims to promote critical self-reflection that encourages critical thinking and meaningful action.

By supporting participants to develop an understanding of why, when and how particular approaches work in the field, the certificate aims to prepare them to work more effectively with youth while building a strong, supportive and insightful community dedicated to developing qualities that are integral to continued professional growth.



EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

“It [the program] has already made a difference. I’ve implemented so many things that I have learned, in this class, to my program planning at work. For example, I’ve added the “skill bank” to our list of activities. This activity gives the youth an opportunity to find out how many skillful people that are living in their community.”

THE EVALUATION OF THE TCEN’S *Advancing Equity, Building Youth Capacity* certificate was undertaken by an external evaluation group, the Applied Social Welfare Research and Evaluation Group based at York University between November 2013 and November 2015 and included elements of both formative (process) and summative (outcome) evaluation.

To understand if and how the certificate increased the competence of participants in working with youth, a mixed method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative methods was employed. It was chosen as the most suitable approach to understand the outcomes of the certificate and identify areas that TCEN can improve on.

The evaluation questions included the following:

- How do front-line youth workers experience TCEN’s Certificate?
- What do they see as the benefits and learning they gain from the Certificate?
- What impact does the Certificate have on youth workers’ knowledge?
- What impact does the Certificate have on youth workers’ practice?
- To what extent does the Certificate increase their competence in youth work settings?
 - What is the impact of TCEN on the youth sector?
 - What program elements of TCEN are considered beneficial by youth sector initiatives?

- How does TCEN address the gaps and challenges in the youth sector?
- How can TCEN be further strengthened?

To answer these questions, the following data were collected and analyzed:

1. A pre-certificate and post-certificate survey was administered to all Cohort One and Two participants. While 25 participants in Cohort One completed the pre-certificate survey, less than 33 percent (8 participants only) completed the post-certificate survey. For Cohort Two, 27 participants completed the pre-evaluation certificate survey and 25 participants completed the post survey. The low numbers of participants who completed the post survey by Cohort One participants made it difficult to run meaningful statistical analysis to test for differences between the pre-certificate and post-certificate scores for cohort one participants. Therefore, only the pre and post survey scores of cohort two participants were included.
2. Participants completed an evaluation of each of the three modules that make up the certificate once that module was completed. Each evaluation form included six quantitative questions and several open-ended questions. Majority of participants completed these forms as they were administered in class immediately after each session.
3. Two focus group sessions and seven in-depth interviews were completed with participants post completion of the certificate. These interviews were transcribed verbatim and thematically analyzed.
4. Eight qualitative interviews were conducted with TCEN's key stakeholders and a focus group was conducted with TCEN's 2013-2014 Advisory Board.
5. Thematic content analysis of TCEN's project documents including the funding proposal, terms of reference, quarterly reports to their funder, conceptual framing documents from the project development phase were conducted.

Findings from these data sources were integrated to provide insights into participants' experiences with the certificate; what they considered to be the benefits and gains of the program; the issues and factors that influenced their learning; and the impact that the training had on their practice as well as the extent to which their learning had resulted in increased competence in youth work.



THE PARTICIPANTS: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

“Sometimes in the sector we’d like to put a lot of weight on credentials and talk about credentials in so many ways ---- but I think TCEN is about providing youth workers with new skills to use for the change that they want to see in young people --- giving them the opportunity to have new lenses with some guiding tools—

The following table describes the socio-demographic characteristics of participants in the TCEN program.

Twenty-five participants registered for TCEN’s cohort one certificate and completed the pre-evaluation certificate while 27 participants registered for Cohort Two.

Cohort One Participants: A little over half of the students were male, with female students making up 44 percent of the course participants of Cohort One participants. Almost 80% of the participants were under the age of 40. The majority of the students in cohort One identified as Black, followed by 24% who identified having multiple racial identities. The majority of students were born in Canada.

Cohort Two Participants: The proportion of females to males of Cohort Two participants was larger with over 70 percent being females.

Roughly half of the participants in the TCEN program had completed some level of postsecondary education (mainly a college diploma or a Bachelor’s degree) although close to half of the students did not have postsecondary educational diplomas or degrees.

The participants of the **Advancing Equity, Building Youth Capacity** certificate (24 Cohort One and 27 Cohort Two participants) came from a range of professional positions and responsibilities.

TABLE 1 Continuum of Capacity Building Supports for Youth-Led Organizations

Socio-Demographic Characteristics		Cohort One (n=25)		Cohort Two (N=27)	
		Number	%	Number	%
Gender	Female	11	44%	20	74%
	Male	14	56%	7	26%
Age Groups	24-30	7	28%	4	15%
	31-36	6	24%	8	30%
	36-40	6	24%	4	15%
	41-45	2	8%	4	15%
	46-50	1	4%	2	7%
“Race”/Racial Identity	Black	15	60%	17	63%
	Latin American	2	8%	1	4%
	Other (Arab, Multiethnic, etc.)	6	24%	6	22%
	White	2	8%	3	11%
Birth Country	Canada	16	64%	14	52%
	Outside Canada	9	36%	13	48%
Highest Level of Education	Some high school	1	4%	1	4%
	Some postsecondary education	7	28%	6	22%
	Trades diploma	1	4%	0	0%
	College diploma	8	32%	10	37%
	Bachelor’s degree	7	28%	8	30%
	Graduate degree	1	4%	2	7%
Total		25	100%	27	100%

These included a children and youth program supervisor who supervised an after-school program; camps and youth programming for a multi-service agency; an employment consultant and job search facilitator who worked with newcomer youth; an employment marketing and outreach consultant who works with both adults and youth; a community health worker who works to build community capacity through partnerships with other agencies in order to address the social determinants of health; the creator of a book club for young girls; a youth drop-in space coordinator;

a team lead working in a youth justice education program; a mentoring coordinator in schools; and a student/parent support worker who helps students to complete their high school diploma and move on to postsecondary education.

Most of the participants in the TCEN program had several years of experience working with youth.

Prior Work Experience with Youth

The participants in the TCEN certificate entered the courses with a range of professional experience working with youth. Their experience included working with youth in the shelter system, youth justice, education, employment as well as civic and social engagement. In addition to the range of work experience the participants brought to the course, they also had also worked with youth across the GTA.

Most Recent Work Experience with Youth

The current and past professional roles of participants also included a range of positions from program development and evaluation to project coordination and youth facilitation.

Reasons for taking the TCEN certificate

The participants provided several reasons for registering in the TCEN certificate program.

Among them, participants felt that the course would provide more resources to support their work with youth – for example, through having a better understanding of youth issues; support their efforts to apply more critical thinking and self-awareness in their work; broaden professional skills and opportunities in the sector; some also cited the good reputation of the program director and instructors as further reasons why they enrolled in the course as well as a love of learning and commitment to develop their expertise working with youth.

The following quotes illustrate the diversity of experiences that the TCEN had working with youth:

“Working with marginalized female youth within the Regent Park community... I’ve also worked with youth to organize a booth selling local products”

“I’ve been involved in a program that enables local youth to volunteer abroad...I’ve also taken youth to different parts of Canada to experience different parts of the country”

“My two most recent youth related work experiences prior to what I am doing now was working as a mentor with Toronto Community Housing and a monitor with St.Alban’s Boys and Girls club. My recent job and the job before were similar in a sense of working with youth, but now my role is more of a developing role, where I develop and implement what I feel is best for the youth in the program”

“Worked as a daycamp coordinator and youth facilitator in education”

“Conducting workshops for at risk youth aged 15-29”

“I oversee youth programs and staff at a Boys and Girls Club... I’ve also worked as a recreational staff with the Town of Ajax, overseeing youth programming”

Course Expectations and Fears and Anxieties

At the beginning of the course, 6 of the 25 participants in the course reported fears and anxieties about taking the course such as having to take part in group projects, engage in public speaking, and nervousness about how they would be perceived by their colleagues in the course. The following quotes illustrate the fears reported by the participants at the outset of the course:

Fears and anxieties regarding taking the course

Participants' expectations for the program included expecting the course to challenge their assumptions and understanding of youth work; expecting to learn new ideas and issues; attaining new skills to bring back to their work and engaging in a "radical space to affect change".

The following quotes illustrate the fears reported by the participants at the outset of the course:

"I'm not sure if it is a fear or anxiety but I do feel nervous being in the room with so many people that are at different capacities."

"I am uncertain of the assumptions being made in the space regarding students/peers and subsequently, the safety of the space."

"My fears are rooted in the exchange of information between the students but I understand that this is required for the course."

"Group projects. Public speaking."

"I don't know the people here."

"Have not been in a classroom for over 15 years. I'm unsure of the content and feel that I may be unfamiliar with the concepts."



PRE-POST EVALUATION: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

“To learn how to really transform a youth’s life, as the instructor said, we need to do more than just provide a workshop, or provide a space for youth to play, but what is that? How can we know what else they need? I want to be as effective as I can be!” (Cohort 2)

Quantitative Comparison of Pre and Post Self-Assessment by Cohort Two Participants

A pre-certificate and post-certificate survey was administered to all Cohort One and Two participants. The questionnaire includes nine questions about participants’ objectives for taking the certificate and what they want to achieve.

The questionnaire also included seven questions that asked participants to assess their current youth work practices (please see the seven questions in the table below). After completing the certificate, participants were again asked to complete the same questionnaire asking them about their objectives for the certificate and to now describe their current youth work practices.

Pre and post certificate analysis of Cohort Two participants’ self-assessment of their current practices before and after completing TCEN’s certificate showed though their objectives for taking the certificate showed no statistically significant difference, **all** participants that completed the post-survey agreed that they had achieved the nine objectives they were asked to rate as yes or no.

Pre and post certificate analysis of Cohort Two²⁴ participants’ self assessment of their current practices before and after completing TCEN’s certificate showed that there is a positive impact on their practices post completion of the certificate for all the seven questions they used to assess their practices.

²⁴ The pre and post certificate analysis for Cohort One participants is not included because only 8 participants completed the post survey.

PRE-POST EVALUATION: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The pre and post survey data were collected in Likert scale and were ordinal scale data. To detect the pre and post certificate difference, we used the Mann-Whitney U statistic to check if the mean rank of their pre-certificate scores is significantly different from the mean rank of their post-certificate scores. Correlation test measures the casual association between two variables. The difference

between the pre and post certificate means rank for all seven questions were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, most were significant at $p < .001$.

The table below provides the statistic and asymmetric significance level of the analysis.

TABLE 2

Self-Assessment of Current Practices Pre and Post Completion of TCEN's Certificate by Cohort Two Participants	Test Statistics	Significant Differences between Pre and Post Scores
I am familiar with the youth development framework.	Mann-Whitney U: 132.500 Wilcoxon: 510.500 Z: -3.438	p<. 001
I am aware of my cultural identity	Mann-Whitney U: 52.000 Wilcoxon: 430.000 Z: -5.201	p<. 001
I am aware of the cultural identities of the youth that I work with.	Mann-Whitney U: 82.000 Wilcoxon: 460.000 Z: -4.559	p<. 001
I know that my personal identity influences my work.	Mann-Whitney U: 58.000 Wilcoxon: 409.000 Z: -4.983	p<. 001
I recognize the impact of power and privilege in youth development work.	Mann-Whitney U: 82.500 Wilcoxon: 460.500 Z: -4.556	p<. 001
I possess intercultural skills that foster inclusion and empowerment of all youth.	Mann-Whitney U: 108.500 Wilcoxon: 486.500 Z: -3.905	p<. 002
I have a defined plan for improving inclusion and empowerment in youth programming.	Mann-Whitney U: 158.000 Wilcoxon: 536.000 Z: -3.068	p<. 005

Qualitative Analysis: Cohort One and Two Participants

Answers to open-ended questions to the pre and post evaluation surveys completed by Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 participants provide insights into their experiences with the training program; what they considered to be the benefits and gains of the program; the issues and factors that influenced their learning; and the impact the training has had on practice as well as the extent to which their learning had resulted in increased competence in youth work. In order to ensure the anonymity of participants they have been given pseudonymous identities.

HOW DID THE YOUTH WORKERS EXPERIENCE THE TRAINING PROGRAM PROVIDED?

Firstly, the pre-post qualitative data was analyzed to understand how the youth workers experienced the training program. The following three main themes emerged from the data: Fears and anxiety about taking the certificate training program; Anticipated experience with training program; and Actual experience with training program.

Fears and Anxiety about Training Program:

Though excited about the opportunity for enhanced learning, a few of the participants expressed initial fears and anxiety about taking the certificate training in the pre-survey evaluation. Understandably, some participants who had been out of school for a considerable length of time, lacked confidence in their learning skills and ability to succeed in the program:

“Have not been in a classroom for over 15 years. Lack of related education; terminology unfamiliarity” (Cohort 1, Pre-P14)

“My biggest fear in this course is failing and not being able to gain the knowledge that is required of me.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P19)

“I am not very good at note taking and fear this will be an obstacle in my learning.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P24)

Also, a few of the participants were apprehensive about meeting new people:

“Getting to know new people, but most seem welcoming.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P2)

“I do feel nervous being in the room with so many people that are at different capacities. Also, because I am not familiar with them.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P6)

“I fear that I do not personally have as much networking as various people in the room. I hope to change that.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P21)

Other participants were concerned that the classroom atmosphere may be judgmental and unaccepting of different worldviews:

“I am uncertain of the assumptions being made in the space regarding students/peers and subsequently, the safety of the space.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P1)

“Fears are rooted in the exchange of information re: peer to peer but understanding that it is required for the course.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P13)

“I hope that this course will provide a space that is hospitable for a healthy exchange in perspective.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P10)

Yet, other participants were unsettled about the complexities involved in group work and public speaking:

“I shy away from public speaking and expressing my thoughts and ideas verbally.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P7)

“I am pretty shy, and have a challenging time competing with others for talk time. During debates I like listening rather than talking because this is my particular learning style.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P16)

“Doing group work where some participants don’t do their share.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P2)

Anticipated Experience with Training Program:

Majority of the participants hoped that the training would expose them to current research and best practices they can incorporate in their youth programs. Participants looked forward to acquiring knowledge and skills that would enhance their ability to support young people make safe, healthy, intelligent and successful transition into adulthood:

“To learn how to really transform a youth’s life, as the instructor said, we need to do more than just provide a workshop, or provide a space for youth to play, but what is that? How can we know what else they need? I want to be as effective as I can be!” (Cohort 2, Pre-P5)

“To come to another level of consciousness, accountability and growth in the work that I do.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P25)

“Rejuvenation of tense language and articulation ... to advocate in more equitable manner.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P13)

“To better understand youth in violence and strategies to help them.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P26)

Again, participants hoped to experience the training in ways that empower them to challenge stereotypes and public misconceptions about youth:

“To challenge myself and better be able to work with youth in the present and future - the challenge of opening myself up more and unlearning and re-wiring certain thoughts and ideas previously held.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P9)

“To feel comfortable speaking publicly and addressing the issues as I see them through my interaction with my youth ... I would like to feel more empowered and confident in my role as a youth outreach worker to provide transparency with my managers with what they think I should do compared to what I actually do.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P7)

As well, participants hoped that the training would result in a positive impact on their personal lives:

“To impact my life and personal goals in such a positive way.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P19)

“A sense of guidance on how I can continue to help create a change in first myself and then reflect to my community.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P21)

Actual Experience with Training Program:

Participants provided an overall positive feedback on their actual experiences with the training program. For instance, majority of the participants found the training to be beneficial and “good for professional networking”:

“Participating has allowed us to network with other people from other agencies.” (Cohort 2, Post-P27)

“[Gained] a better understanding of engaging with other youth workers.” (Cohort 2, Post-P17)

Furthermore, participants noted the following as moments they valued which also allowed them to share knowledge and experiences with others were:

“The network that was built from downtown to Scarborough to the West end of the city.” (Cohort 1, Post-P11)

“The people I met; the people at TCEN and York. I was really exposed to a lot of great things.” (Cohort 1, Post-P4)

PRE-POST EVALUATION: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

“Meeting other youth workers; hearing their experiences.” (Cohort 2, Post-P5)

As well, participants reported remarkable personal and professional growth as a result of their participation in the training program:

“I have learned many valuable life lessons that I’m willing to implement it in my daily life. But most of all I have learned success doesn’t come easy. We must strive for what we want.” (Cohort 2, Post-P20)

“Learnt about myself, my skills and challenges...” (Cohort 2, Post-P23)

“It was timely in my life. Allowed for me to process my work. Allowed for me to be critical and more.” (Cohort 2, Post-P8)

“I have learned how to appreciate new ideas when working with larger groups.” (Cohort 2, Post-P10)

“I have learnt ways to think outside of the box and look at things in different perspectives.” (Cohort 2, Post-P16)

“I learned the value of long-term thinking and embedding that in our work rather than just thinking day-to-day. I believe my work moving forward will be more strategic.” (Cohort 2, Post-P14)

“I have gained new perspectives and I have allowed myself to think differently about situations, which is an important skill when working with youth.” (Cohort 2, Post-P10)

Other participants noted renewed confidence in their work with youth and their determination to better serve youth:

“The skills and knowledge I gained will improve my programming for youth. Taking care of self will allow me to serve youth better. This course has rejuvenated my soul!!” (Cohort 1, Post-P3)

“I will be more confident in clarifying with my youth with the information that I gained, plus I will transfer my learning skills to my day-to-day work.” (Cohort 2, Post-P20)

“More confidence in our skills to better serve our youth.” (Cohort 2, Post-P27)

“It arms me with techniques to better engage young people.” (Cohort 2, Post-P21)

“This will give me the drive to even do better at my work with youth.” (Cohort 2, Post-P20)

“It will help me work more better with youth and take my time to get to know them and find a way to work well with them.” (Cohort 2, Post-P22)

WHAT WERE THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND LEARNING GAINS OF THE PROGRAM?

Secondly, the qualitative data was analyzed to identify participants perceived benefits and learning gains of the program. The following four main themes emerged: Networking Opportunities; Professional Development; Work Experience Accreditation; and Academic Credentials.

Networking Opportunities:

Participants perceived the training would provide a great environment to engage with other youth workers, share ideas and resources, and learn more about other youth-serving agencies:

“The skills and knowledge I gained will improve my programming for youth. Taking care of self will allow me to serve youth better. This course has rejuvenated my soul!!” (Cohort 1, Post-P3)

“A wonderful opportunity to network and learn about how different types of people outreach to the community.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P21)

“Network and dialogue with others working with youth in various capacities.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P18)

“Gain ... awareness of youth events, organizations and programs to direct youth to.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P19)

Professional Development:

The importance and value of professional development was widely acknowledged by the participants who perceived that the training would allow them to develop core competencies and professional skills that are essential to youth development work:

“To be able to better understand some of the key challenges faced by youth; to obtain tools/resources to better work with youth in such a way that they feel empowered.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P8)

“Broaden my skills and knowledge in my work with youth. To be better equipped to empower youth.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P10)

“To increase understanding of best practices, inclusive frameworks, youth engagement/engagement strategies and enhance understanding regarding effective tools regarding youth engagement/development.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P13)

“To expand my understanding of youth related issues and how things such as poverty, environment, mental health, etc. impact outcomes.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P18)

“To have a better understanding of youth in violence and how to better understand them and why they choose the path they do.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P26)

As well, participants perceived that the training would teach them how to incorporate their new learning into programs and activities that help youth assess their own strengths and aim for success:

“To gain more knowledge in understanding at risk youth and how to make them accept changes and make a difference.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P17)

“To learn skills, knowledge and strategies on how to change and better the lives of the young people I work with through the work I do.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P15)

“To have the tools to encourage youth to help themselves and their peers.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P17)

Work Experience Accreditation

Some participants perceived the training as an important step towards getting accreditation for their work experience thus enhancing their employability and prestige:

“I wish to pursue post-secondary education just so I have accreditations that will open doors for me and give my experience value. I am tired of being discriminated and my skills overlooked just because I don't have a Bachelors degree, when I have more experience and common sense than most degree holders.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P5)

“I don't have formal or institutionalized training in working with young people. I have learned so much from youth themselves, mentors in the sector and my own reading, reflection and analysis. I'm looking for a place to hold and build this knowledge.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P16)

PRE-POST EVALUATION: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

“To gain credentials. I don’t have educational background and have a passion for youth development. I work/volunteer with different groups and a lot of my techniques, strategies are self-taught.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P14)

“The chance to certify my work experience with a post-secondary institution.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P4)

“It will help advance me further for social career choices that require such certification outside my attainments.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P12)

Academic Credentials:

Another perceived benefit of the certificate training by participants is the value added to their academic credentials, which would boost their post secondary education and career pursuits:

“I wanted a certificate being that I have no diploma/ certificates or degrees, and it was specific for front-line workers.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P3)

“Receive a credit from York University because I am not University trained. I learned through experience and self-knowledge.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P15)

“I have always strived and wanted to make a difference not only in my community but as well as the world. And as I got older I learned that maybe that will not be possible if I do not have the paper certifications. Then a friend of mine informed me about this amazing opportunity, I jumped at the chance. And now I know that I’m able to get the jump-start ahead and take advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity and be a voice to the youth.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P19)

“It will help advance me further for social career choices that require such certification outside my attainments.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P12)

“A gateway to taking my Masters in Education.” (Cohort 1, Pre-P18)

“I am hoping to apply to graduate school in the near future so this experience will get me back in an academic environment.” (Cohort 2, Pre-P15)

What issues and factors influenced the degree of learning achieved?

Thirdly, the analysis of the comments provided in the pre-post survey highlighted some issues and factors that influenced the degree of learning achieved by the participants. Two main themes were identified: Program content; and Training environment.

Program Content:

Participants found the course content to be interesting and worth knowing. They felt it was current, had immediate usefulness, and relevance to their field:

“The modules spoke to the youth I serve. Techniques were relevant. The team delivering the program really cared!” (Cohort 1, Post-P3)

“I had done criminal justice before, and even though we looked over youth justice it did not go into the piece of trying to support the youth.” (Cohort 2, Post-P25)

“Good understanding of various youth programs available in the city.” (Cohort 2, Post-P23)

Training Environment:

Participants found the training environment conducive to learning. They reported the learning atmosphere as being welcoming, safe, engaging and respectful:

“Great instructor. Great atmosphere. Open and safe space to explore issues in youth work” (Cohort 1, Post-P12)

“I really appreciate class discussions and visuals such as the documentary.” (Cohort 2, Post-P10)

“Small groups; interactive.” (Cohort 2, Post-P3)

Is the training effective? What impact does the program have on practice? To what extent is participant learning manifested as increased competence in the youth work setting?

Fourthly, the qualitative data was analyzed for program effectiveness, the impact the training has had on practice and the extent to which participants learning had manifested as increased competence in their work with young people. The following four main themes emerged: Increase in knowledge and skills; Application of best practices; Wellness and wellbeing; and Value of certificate.

Increase in Knowledge and Skills:

Participants’ comments overwhelmingly affirm the effectiveness of the training program. These comments indicate a deepened awareness and understanding of youth development issues. Below are some of the responses participants provided on knowledge and skills learnt:

“I have learned a lot on how to be critical with working with youth and also the world out there. I have learned a lot about youth issues and systematic discrimination and how to work with the youth in understanding the all system.” (Cohort 2, Post-P20).

“I have learnt things such as program evaluations the purpose and types of evaluations out there. I have learnt about civic engagement, anti-oppression, how to deliver an effective program.” (Cohort 1, Post-P11)

“Having more awareness on how to be a better leader and the solutions we need to work for with the work with young people.” (Cohort 1, Post-P14)

“I have learnt the importance of fostering excellent relationship with youth. I have also developed a keen knowledge of leadership.” (Cohort 1, Post-P21)

“Better understanding of how to address the barriers they [youth] face.” (Cohort 2, Post-P23)

“I’ve learnt a lot about programming for the youth I serve.” (Cohort 1, Post-P3)

Furthermore, participants highlighted some insights gained about working in collaboration and cooperation with the youth and within the youth sector:

“I’ve learned so much. But what sticks out is understanding the youth culture and being that adult allies that can help our youth transition into our ‘mainstream’ culture. I will be bringing so much more tools to my organization.” (Cohort 1, Post-P2)

“I have learned that just like youth programming needs youth to help run them. Elders are also needed to help youth workers navigate the systems. I learned to always look for allies, to help the cause. ... I also learned that there are a lot of people doing good work in Toronto.” (Cohort 1, Post-P4)

“The way youth serving agencies create their policies and procedures must be reexamined with an eye toward youth inclusion and transparency... There are ways to talk to youth about broader societal issues once their basic needs are met” (Cohort 2, Post-P19)

“I learned about how to work effectively with youth who have a lot going on in the community.” (Cohort 2, Post-P22)

PRE-POST EVALUATION: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Best Practices:

Overall, participants shared a common goal to support youth development work through industry best practices. Participants noted the impact the training has had on them and how their new learning would positively affect the work they do with youth:

“I learned about how to work effectively with youth who have a lot going on in the community.” (Cohort 2, Post-P22)

“It has reignited the fire inside. I now have much more resources, with faces to put to them. I can now look at my work from numerous perspectives, instead of just head-on.” (Cohort 1, Post-P14)

“It will change my approach with the youth. Some youth come from a fatherless home and demand a different attention. I will be able to implement some of the different evaluation strategies.” (Cohort 1, Post-P11)

“It will allow me to be more understanding of the different styles of youth work also the delivery of programs.” (Cohort 1, Post-P21)

“I will think more about how I fit into my clients’ overall support network. I am more willing to identify challenges in current programming and create more recommendations for moving forward.” (Cohort 2, Post-P19)

Specifically, participants’ highlighted instances where the training has already shown evidence of increased competence in their work:

“It has already made a difference. I’ve implemented so many things that I have learned, in this class, to my program planning at work. For example, I’ve added the ‘skill bank’ to our list of activities. This activity gives the youth an opportunity to find out how many skillful people that are living in their community.” (Cohort 1, Post-P2)

“It has given me skills to empower young people. It has already made a difference where I have incorporated what I have learnt in my work with young people.” (Cohort 1, Post-P12)

“It already has made a difference in my work. I share everything I learned with them. I am less frustrated at work and in my life.” (Cohort 1, Post-P4)

“Making change to my agency policies to serve youth and the community” (Cohort 1, Post-P24)

“A refreshing examination of my work with youth; I was able to critique and review from the outside.” (Cohort 2, Post-P6)

Furthermore, participants registered their determination to support initiatives that value youth contributions and their capacity to nurture resilience and respond to challenging situations:

“I have also learned that we must dissect the material and ideas we are presenting to the youth for better understanding, also, we must look deeper at the issue so we are able to support effectively.” (Cohort 2, Post-P5)

“I have learned the importance of incorporating cultural experiences and history in youth programming.” (Cohort 2, Post-P3)

“To be aware of the circumstances youth are facing at home. Trauma, violence - How to speak with young people on these subjects” (Cohort 2, Post-P9)

“I will find better ways to interact with the youth that I work with by challenging them with different ideas.” (Cohort 2, Post-P16)

“To be critical of programs, to ensure programming is meaningful.” (Cohort 2, Post-P9)

Wellness and Wellbeing:

Participants were appreciative of the increased awareness and insights they received from the Self-Care Module training which taught them that their health and wellbeing is extremely relevant in their kind of work and that they need to take responsibility for their own health:

“The work that I am doing is crucial and important to society and communities. Self-care is very important! Learned how to apply it; also what it can do if not applied.” (Cohort 1, Post P6).

“I’ve learnt ... how to better take care of self to prevent burn out.” (Cohort 1, Post-P3)

“I have learnt the importance of self-care for self and youth.” (Cohort 1, Post-P21)

“I learned the value of self-care and also keeping my integrity.” (Cohort 2, Post-P25)

“I have obtained a better understanding of mental health wellness.” (Cohort 2, Post-P26)

Furthermore, participants considered various ways to enhance their quality of life by introducing self-care into their youth programs and their personal lives:

“I will look at adding more mental health pieces into my programs and also consider adding some social health pieces.” (Cohort 2, Post-P25)

“Establish 2014 Mental Health Plan for self.” (Cohort 2, Post-P8)

“I will take care of myself so I can help those around me to take care of themselves.” (Cohort 2, Post-P2)

Value of Certificate

Participants were proud that the training they received puts them at a distinct advantage over their peers. Also, participants felt that the professional certificate would open

doors to better employment opportunities since youth serving agencies tend to hire and retain job applicants with professional certificates:

“Once this certificate is added to my resume, organizations will know that I understand the youth culture (practical and theory) and will consider me for a position.” (Cohort 1, Post-P2)

“It will open doors for me to be able to work with most communities who have youth that are at risk.” (Cohort 2, Post-P22)

“It is going to help me to carry on in my field, working with youth and open my opportunities for other youth worker jobs.” (Cohort 2, Post-P16)

“I can use it to gain experience working with youth.” (Cohort 2, Post-P20)

Additionally, participants felt the certificate would enhance their resume:

“Should be valuable when showing on resume.” (Cohort 2, Post-P9)

“It’s something good to add to my accomplishments.” (Cohort 2, Post-P17)

Also, participants were of the view that the certificate acknowledges their skills, knowledge and expertise as the youth worker professionals:

“Makes us experts in the field. Gives us more of a drive to make change. Validates our work. Shows our organization that we are key to change and success.” (Cohort 1, Post-P6)

“Should be valuable when showing on resume.” (Cohort 2, Post-P9)

PRE-POST EVALUATION: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

“Proves resiliency. Sense of accomplishment: It’s my first Uni/College level certificate. Proud to share this with my classmates.” (Cohort 1, Post-P14)

“Acknowledge work [we] do as youth workers and increase value.” (Cohort 2, Post-P21)

“The certificate shows people what we learned took some time and effort.” (Cohort 2, Post-P14)

Again, participants were pleased that a tertiary institution recognizes the certificate:

“The greatest thing is that it is recognized by York University.” (Cohort 1, Post-P21)



FINDINGS: EVALUATION OF THE THREE CERTIFICATE MODULES

“To learn how to really transform a youth’s life, as the instructor said, we need to do more than just provide a workshop, or provide a space for youth to play, but what is that? How can we know what else they need? I want to be as effective as I can be!” (Cohort 2)

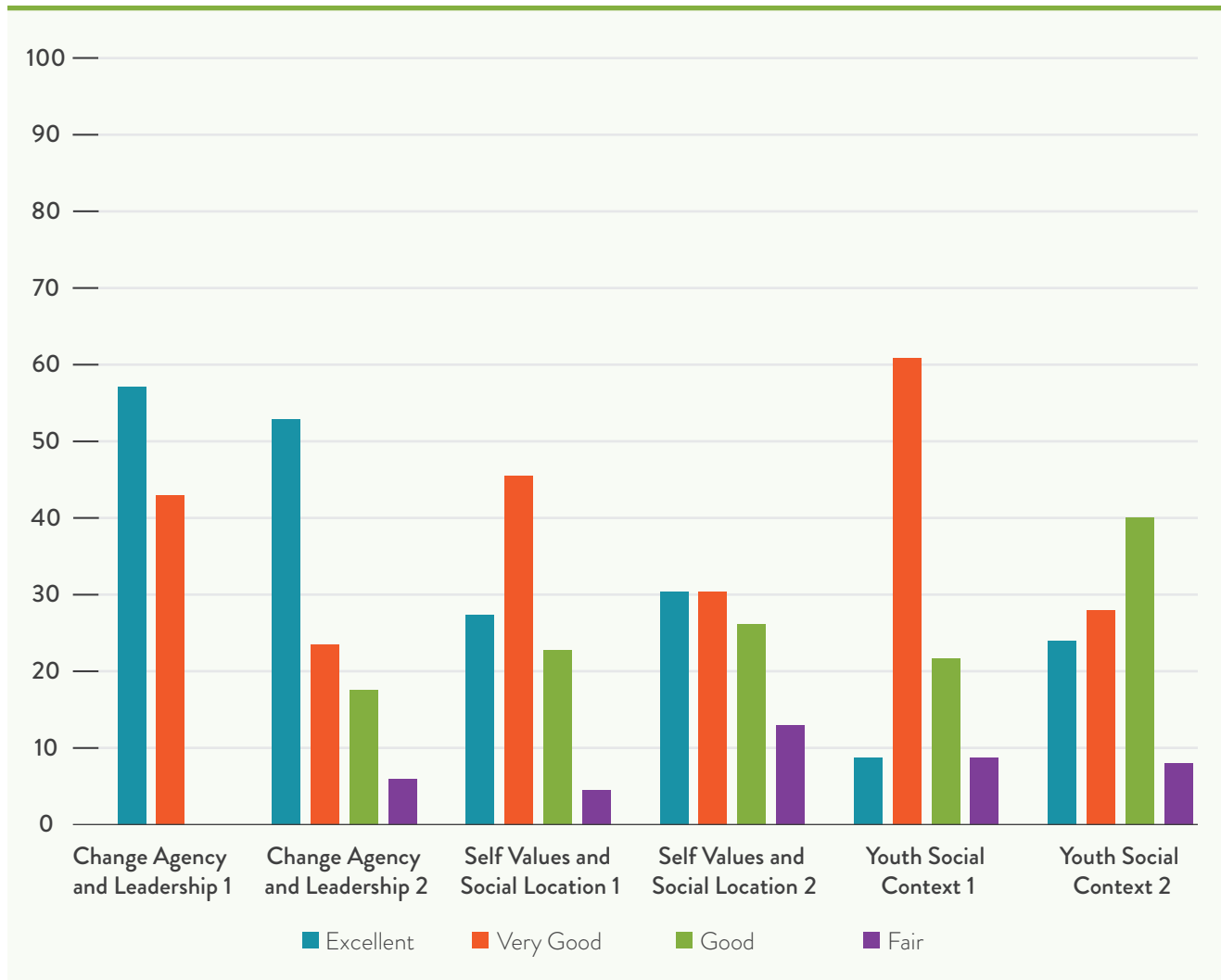
The certificate was made up three modules:

- Self, Values and Social Location
- Youth Social Context: People, Politics and Power
- Change, Agency and Leadership

At the end of each module, participants were asked to evaluate that module as excellent, very good, good, or unfair using six questions. The responses labeled ‘1’ refers to responses from cohort one participants while ‘2’ refers to cohort two participants. Overall, the Change, Agency and Leadership modules were rated the highest.

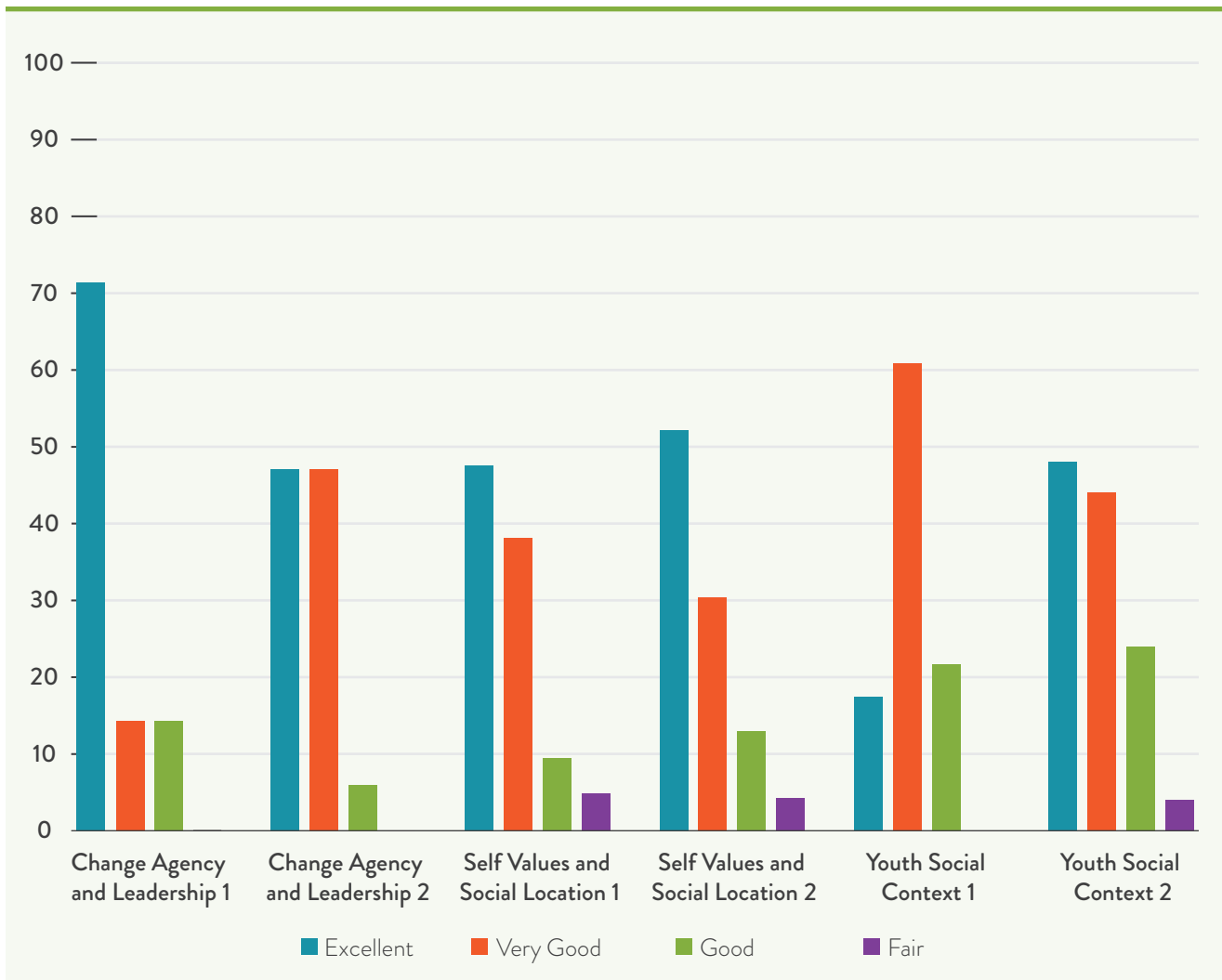
For example, all of the participants rated the Change, Agency and Leadership Module 1 as either ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’.

01 Compared to other professional development courses/training you've taken, how would you rate this Module?



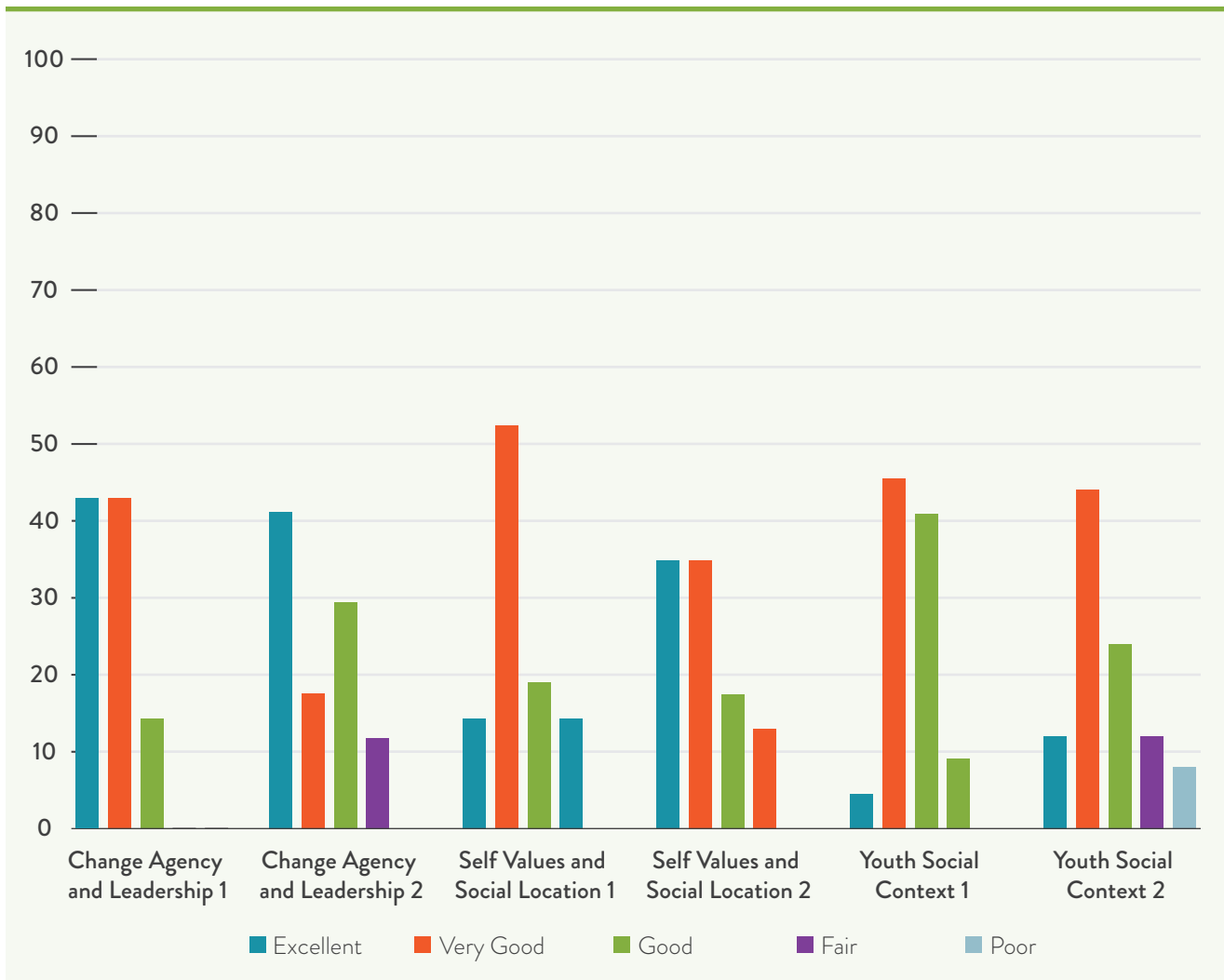
Roughly 76 percent of the participants rated the second module of Change, Agency and Leadership as either 'excellent' or 'very good'; 76 percent rated Self, Values and Social Location as either 'excellent' or 'very good'; 72 percent similar rated Self, Values and Social Location; and approximately 70 percent and 63 percent rated Youth Social Context either 'excellent' or 'very good' for Modules 1 and 2, respectively.

02 How relevant and valuable is this Module to your work with youth?



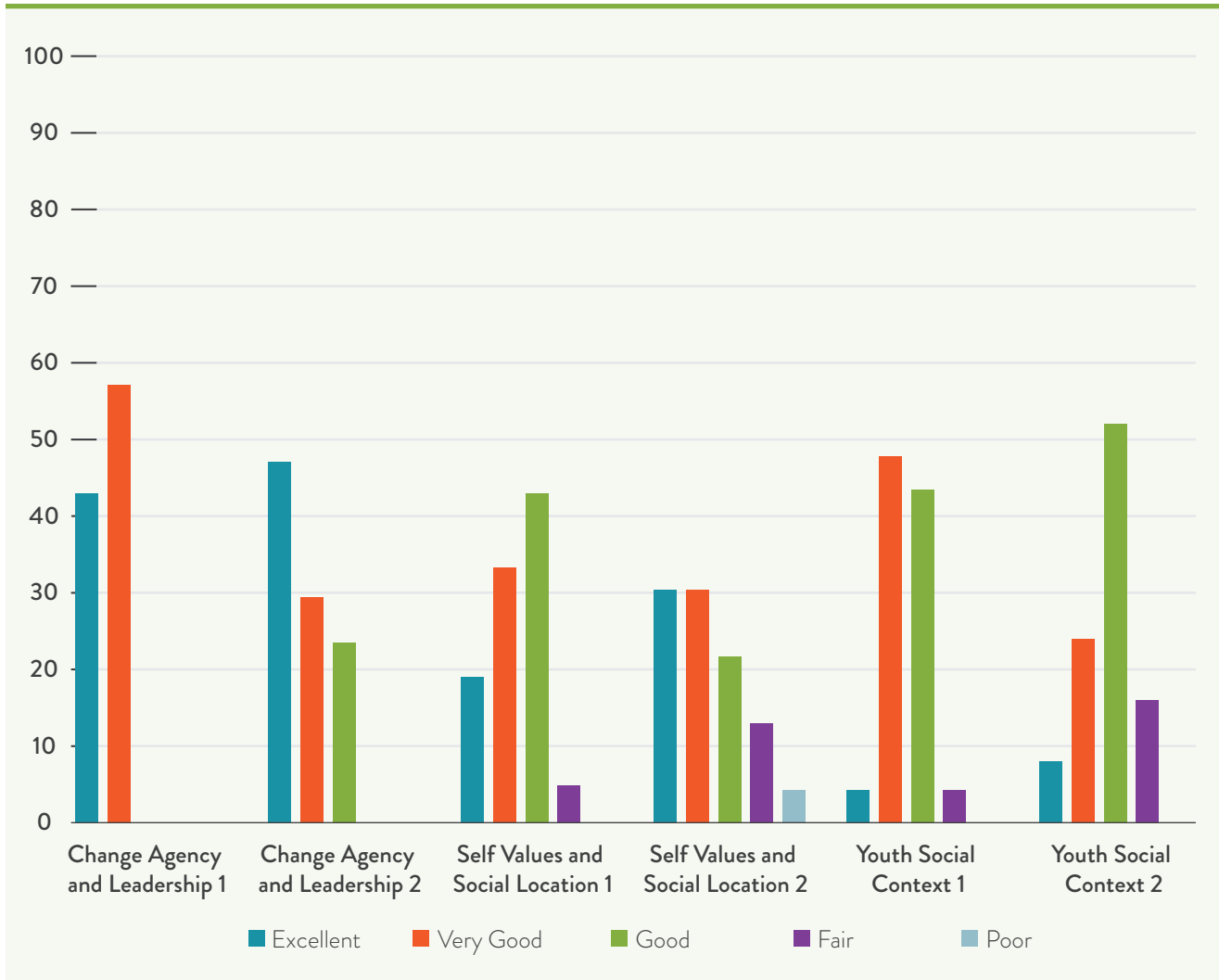
There was a similar result for the relevance and content of the Modules. The Modules that were rated as having the most relevant and valuable content for the participants work with youth were Change, Agency and Leadership, followed by Self, Values and Social Location and Youth Social Context.

03 How well did the Module content match the stated goals of the certificate?



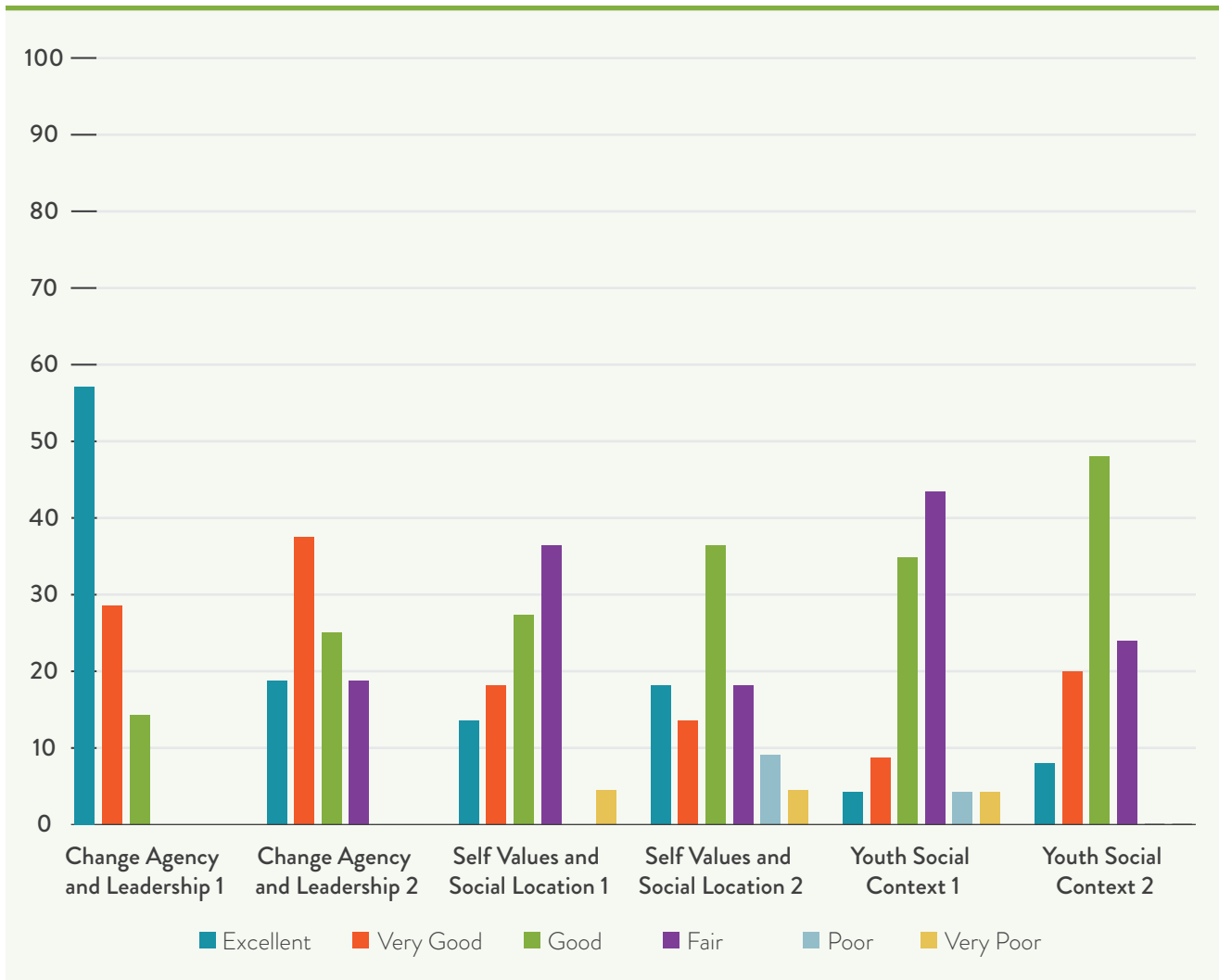
Roughly 85 percent of participants reported the content for Module 1 of Change, Agency and Leadership was either ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ followed by approximately 59 percent for Module 2; approximately 68 percent rated the content in Modules 1 and 2 of Self, Values and Social Location as either ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’; 50 percent and 56 percent rated the content in Modules 1 and 2 of Youth Social Context as either ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’, respectively.

04 What was the overall quality of the Module materials such as readings, handouts, guest presentations, etc.?



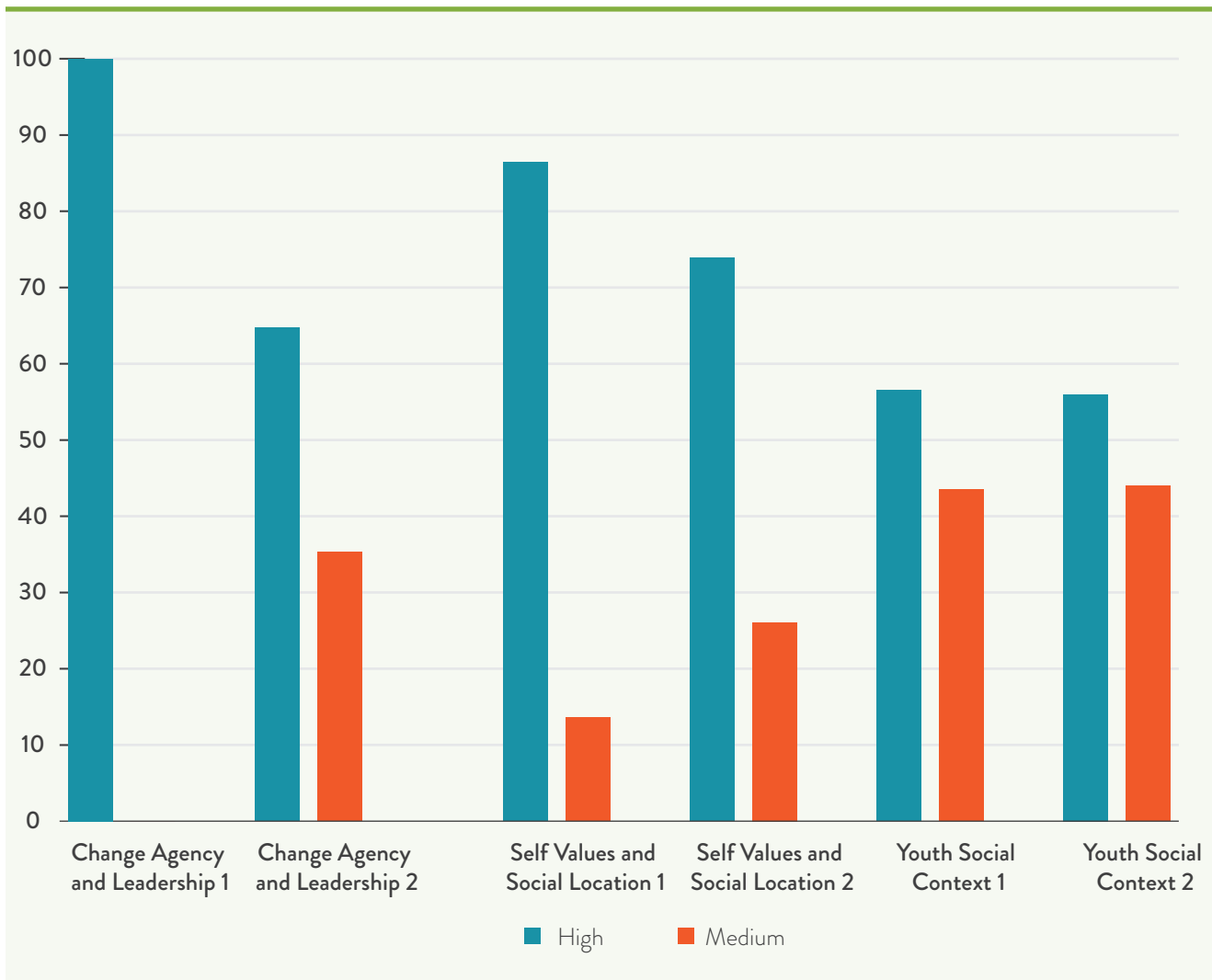
The evaluation also considered the quality of the readings, handouts, and guest presentations. Almost all of the program participants reported that the materials provided for the first module of Change, Agency and Leadership were either ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’. Close to 76 percent of program participants similarly rated the materials for Module 2 of the same unit. The results for the Self, Values and Social Location and Youth Social Context modules were more mixed; however, the majority of respondents to the survey (>80 percent) reported the materials were at least ‘good’.

05 Please rate the difficulty of the Module content?



05 shows the results for participants’ rating of the level of difficulty of each module. In terms of difficulty, the first module of the Change, Agency and Leadership course was rated as having the most appropriate level of difficulty followed by the second module of the same unit. The ratings for the level of difficulty were worse for the other modules with over 30 percent of participants Self, Values and Social Location (module 2) as having ‘fair’ or worse level of difficulty.

06 What is the level of your enthusiasm for the certificate at the completion of this module?



The evaluation results indicate that there was some variation in the level of enthusiasm for the course after each module (06). All of the program participants were enthusiastic after the first Change, Agency and Leadership module. The level of enthusiasm for the overall course was also high following Module 2 of same unit, and Modules 1 and 2 of Self, Values and Social Location. The level of enthusiasm was roughly even-split between ‘high’ and ‘medium’ after completion of both Youth Social Context modules. In both cases, more than 40 percent of respondents to the survey, rated their enthusiasm as ‘medium’ following completion of the module.



FINDINGS: KEY THEMES FROM FOCUS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

“To learn how to really transform a youth’s life, as the instructor said, we need to do more than just provide a workshop, or provide a space for youth to play, but what is that? How can we know what else they need? I want to be as effective as I can be!” (Cohort 2, Pre-P5)

Data from focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews were analyzed to understand participants’ experiences with the certificate training program; what they considered to be the benefits and gains of the program; the issues and factors that influenced participants learning; and the impact the training has had on practice as well as the extent to which participants learning had resulted in increased competence in youth work. In order to ensure the anonymity of key informants and participants they have been given pseudonymous identities.

1. How did the youth workers experience the training program provided? s

Overall the youth workers found the training to be an invaluable experience as it allowed them to develop essential professional skills that support the rigorous demands of youth development work. For example, one of the participants shared:

“I feel like this course is a door that could really take on young people who have lost hope in the system, who have lost focus, ... don’t care about school, ... feel that school is unreachable, unattainable, is not for them.”
(YW-1)

In addition, many of the participants were of the view that the certificate training provided participants, their organizations and the youth sector with strong networks for information sharing and growth:

“It’s a great way to connect with other fellow community youth workers. I mean I enjoy the learning process, I enjoy the activity, I enjoy the hard questions and I like the conflict that takes place in the learning space because it’s through conflict that we learn and so if we don’t create spaces like that we will never change ... this entire sector.” (NCP-2)

Furthermore, some participants stated that their participation in the training program reaffirmed their passion for youth work and increased their desire to expand their academic knowledge base of the field:

“It really gave me more. I think about a boost of confidence. It assured me that this is what I wanted to do. It connected my interest with the academic sense ... from an attractive kind of alluring manner and it wanted me to just learn more and do more.” (YW-1)

WHAT WERE THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND LEARNING GAINS OF THE PROGRAM?

Secondly, analysis of the interview data highlighted the benefits and learning gains of the program as perceived by the participants and key informants. Increased opportunities to interact and network with other youth workers were cited by participants and key informants as a benefit and learning gain of the training program. For example, a key informant observed the following learning gain:

“A sense of support that the students felt from being in the program. ... Going through the course, meeting with other people in their field, also learning about their troubles, sharing them, and learning ways in which they could deal with that together was really empowering experience.” (FG-2)

Another perceived benefit of the training program is its capability to professionalize and legitimize the field of youth work, which is yet to have an accreditation body recognized by all and sundry:

“I think ... this certificate ... validates their work, it validates their experiences, and it validates their voice and their knowledge ... These are key important ... benefits ... in terms of the theoretical learning that takes place ... So it’s like a pathway in a sense towards doing best practices.” (NCP-2)

“This sector is one area that there isn’t any straight up certification or even an association. ... So I really think that ... there’s certain sort of structures and processes that everybody needs to understand in order for them to work and function ... in a very healthy safe environment in their organizations.” (NCP-2)

Again, another perceived benefit is the opportunity for participants to build professional competencies that are essential to providing support to the demands of youth work; in particular, cultural competencies around race and racism.

Race and racism are complex and difficult topics to discuss because very often such discussions are tempered with tensions that may take away from learning objectives. A participant explained this tension:

“There’s a lot of discussion about race - the black youth, and I could tell the youth workers were really uncomfortable because they were not black. So it was all about racism against black ... I felt like the facilitator was really focused on being empowering but it was with a group of people who were not black. So then it was kind of like ‘Are you saying that I am an issue? Are you saying that they are not connecting because I’m not black?’” (NCP-1)

Yet, another perceived benefit of the certificate training is that it promotes the awareness and recognition of youth work as a profession:

“TCEN is ideal place to highlight a lot of ... issues and ... bring people in a way to have conversations about it, develop ideas around it, engaging, learning about it, ... document and develop tools and make things available and accessible (FG-5).

3. What issues and factors influenced the degree of learning achieved?

Thirdly, the analysis of the qualitative data highlighted some issues and factors that influenced the degree of learning achieved by the participants. Participants identified the training delivery method as a major factor. They found the facilitator teaching style practiced by TCEN instructors appealing as it encourages independent learning, collaboration and problem solving:

“The way the facilitator wasn’t like a teacher and told us the answers but he ... guided us and now ... that’s something that ... as a facilitator now ... I do. Those are one of the things that truly helps with becoming great facilitators ... not giving people answers but leading them on their own journey to finding the truth.” (YW-1)

“We’re all encouraged to learn about each other’s organization and what we do and I think that’s what really carried over. Trying to make young people do the same ... help each other ... kind of unity and community collaboration.” (YW-1)

4. Is the training effective? What impact does the program have on practice? To what extent is participant learning manifested as increased competence in the youth work setting?

Fourthly, the interview data was analyzed for effectiveness of the training program, the impact it has had on practice and the extent to which participants learning had manifested as increased competence in their work with young people. The importance and value of professional development was identified by majority of the interviewees. In particular, participants stated that the certificate training had provided them with diverse perspectives on youth work and enhanced their ability to work effectively with different demographics in the youth sector. For example, a youth worker reported having taking on increased responsibilities and active participation in decision making processes:

“I do workshops all over the City of Toronto. I work with policy makers, advisors, youth organizations and I also work with young people. So through this ... certificate I’ve been able to use my talent in different demographics and pockets across Toronto.” (YW-1)

Participants also stated that the certificate training had motivated them to explore better ways to build and strengthen youth work such as sourcing for funding opportunities to expand programs that are relevant and specific to youth needs:

“I also decided to explore more ways that I could strengthen the youth work that I was already doing. So it gave me kind of confidence to look for more streams of funding. I was able to secure funding for another year where I could run a girls group and expand that girls group ... I secured more funds, ... more opportunities, and [the] ability to be with young people expanded my program. So now I get to work more intensely with young people.” (YW-1)

As well, obtaining the certificate was viewed as a major accomplishment and commitment to professional youth work. It enhanced participants' employability, improved their skills set and empowered them to successfully compete with degree holders for better employment opportunities:

“After receiving the certificate at York I felt like I was really academically stimulated. I guess you can say I was really interested in exploring more of the themes that came up and some of the things that I realized I was going through. So I eventually started looking for more employment where I could ... explore these themes and these issues going on in the community. So I applied ...[and] got my job at ... a few months after my graduation. ... I think having that certificate really allowed me to have a chance at the employment because I competed with everyone. Literally everyone on my team has a degree in something. I'm the only person with nothing so that certificate I think ... [was] some type of stepping stone.” (YW-1)

“Sometimes in the sector we'd like to put a lot of weight on credentials, talk about credentials in so many ways ... but I think TCEN is about providing youth workers with new skills in which to use to change that they want to see in young people's lives and I think much like you are saying is to giving them the opportunity to have the new lenses with some guiding tools, and then those tools.” (FG-4)

Again, participants cited increased awareness of wellbeing and wellness. Especially, participants noted how their increased knowledge of self-care and mental health has allowed them to become better reflective practitioners:

“I really learned self-care. In that certificate, I didn't really know the term before although it is popular in the social sector. I really learned it and understood ... and it has grown with me. Self-care is something that ... we incorporate now in our curriculum, in our programs, in our daily sessions. We always try to advocate for self-care. We talk about trigger warnings ... self care techniques and tactics as a method of healing a lot [of] oppressive behaviours that young people are experiencing. So self care was a huge theme to me that I definitely carried on from the certificate course into my daily life and curriculum planning.” (YW-1)

5. What is the impact of TCEN on the youth sector?

The positive impact of TCEN's certificate training program on youth workers, their organizations and communities were widely evident in the interview data. Participants and key informants described their experiences and expectations in varied ways. For example, a key informant expressed the following:

“I know some people who have talked of going back to university to do further work, ... some who want to do a second part. I know people who say the six weeks or the twelve weeks was not enough to me those are evidence of some level of impact the course is having.” (KI-1)

FINDINGS: KEY THEMES FROM FOCUS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Furthermore, participants described TCEN's impact as a ripple effect that will promote collaboration and cooperation within the youth sector: the view that TCEN is the beginning of something.

“Slowly with this certificate we'll start seeing slow, small ripple effects of people doing great work but at the same time of people communicating, cause the biggest issue is people not knowing. ... I have about almost eighteen agencies that are in this neighbourhood that are serving young people but majority of them don't communicate. Some of them are actually just across the street from each other but there isn't any sharing process that's taking place. Maybe ... if there's a new grant and it's asking for collaboration people will step up and do that. So ... the certificate ... will create a class of people saying ... let's start doing stuff together ... and it actually does amazing things for our young people cause now all of a sudden that whole sort of turf war or ... 'this is my hood and I ain't going to no downtown' ... end up breaking ... Funny thing is, there's a lot of youth workers who think that way, who believe that way and they need to grow. And I think TCEN's certificate ... provides that sort of platform for them to grow and open their eyes.” (YW-2)

“I think that the course is a very fine opportunity for people who work with youth to think through, talk and critically analyze the social, political and economic context that youth are faced with today. ... In a way youth workers are being called upon to help youth, to guide youth, to support youth in such a dynamic world.” (KI-1)

“[TCEN] is a stepping stone for the next journey, ... a spark that has kind of lit some of them, whether be education or personal.” (FG-1)

“What struck me about graduation is the connection that they made within that course. It ... provided them new direction that they can pursue down the road.” (FG-)

6. What program elements of TCEN are considered beneficial by youth sector initiatives?

Various elements of the certificate were highlighted as being helpful to youth sector initiatives. These elements ranged from self-care to the incorporation of the lived experiences of those leading the courses.

“I think the good thing about the certificate is that it's a whole 12 weeks of sustained discussion of youth on youth issues which youth workers do not necessarily always get.” (KI-1)

“Personal care ... was a very useful piece.” (KI-1)

“Systematic issues impacting youth ...brought light to the issues within the community especially, the black community because a lot of the youth workers aren't black ... so they were able to see first hand kind of what issues the youth are facing within their home life.” (NCP-1)

“There were a lot of academics and practitioners who came to present and teach some of those courses, I think bringing in people with that real lived academic and work experience, like where I work we like to call it the lived and learned experience. I think bringing in those folks is huge. It really brings credibility to what is being taught and it allows workers like ... our frontline staff to be able to ask really challenging questions of situations they're dealing with, ... hypotheticals and stuff that's happening and be able to get adequate ... satisfied responses.” (KI-1)

7. How does TCEN address the gaps and challenges in the youth sector?

Insights from both participants and key informants highlighted the need to have a common criterion of skills and competencies for the field of youth development work and applauded TCEN's efforts to bridge the gap:

“When I look at what TCEN is doing, there is an opportunity to provide some really practical knowledge base which has got the theoretical framework but practical application to deal with today’s challenges for that [marginalized] population. I don’t know if your average child and youth worker coming out of college has those skills necessarily and it makes it really difficult because I’m going through a hiring process right now, where we have benchmark hiring criteria and so we want you to have that diploma and in most cases youth work doesn’t pay a lot, so with what we’re able to pay you, most likely we’re just going to be getting someone without a lot of experience but the ... lack of experience actually becomes a problem, in terms of this type of work because they’re not always as adequately prepared as we need them to be. I think TCEN is absolutely ... helping to fill that gap.” (KI-1)

Also, TCEN gave the youth workers the ability to help each other understand and deal with difficult situations. For example, one of the participants applauded TCEN for:

“Creating this circle of community and youth workers; ... building a strong network of youth and community workers so that when they end up seeing certain things are not working they end up backing each other up and they’re able to sort of support the young people who are being faced with this or also the families.” (NCP-2)

“I think the mix of subject matter is a good thing because ... it brings the importance of every single one to the table and it allows for discussion because some people might have more expertise in certain areas than others and some participants do not even realize this is something they should be aware of or think about or something that impacts the people they work with.” (FG-8)

“Organizations are so caught up with what the funders’ mandates are in terms of what they got the grants for and what not and so there isn’t fluidity between the funding process and what actually happens ... in the communities ... Another thing is ... there’s no constructive criticism of the practice and this is where TCEN has an opportunity by creating this training; ... creating a process where people coming through ... should know how to work.” (NCP-2)

“I think one thing is we need to empower our youth workers ... because there’s a lot of youth workers who’ve been broken. And they’ve been broken because they need to make a living. They love what it is that they’re doing but they need to make a living and so it’s hard for them to challenge their organizations on their practices that they implement. ... For those people going through the training I think there’s an opportunity of them getting the tools to become their own advocate within their agencies.” (NCP-2)

8. Challenges in the Youth Sector

In terms of youth programming participants acknowledged the need to improve quality in youth work and stressed the relevance of organizational efforts at meeting this goal. Particularly, many of the participants echoed the need for agencies to ensure quality experiences for young people through youth programs that are gender neutral, diverse, creative, and responsive to youth needs:

“The youth don’t really want to go to these programs cause they don’t think they are going to get anything out of it ... [A] lot of these youth are hungry. They have no food, so they come in after school and they’re starving. So, they’ll look for a program if there’s food involved of course.” (NCP-1)

FINDINGS: KEY THEMES FROM FOCUS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

“I had a meeting with the youth and the youth workers and ... asked them what you want and ... there was one guy there who’s just like, ‘There’s all these programs for girls but there’s none of them for boys, so why can’t I go in and sew because I want to learn about clothing, I want to know about these things but you specifically say it’s for females ... why is that?’” (NCP-1)

“Divisions within the sector ... end up dividing the communities [and] ... young people. There’s “my youth” and so they’re coming to “my program” and they’re not coming to your program and people feel threatened. ... Young people that live in the community have a right to know what is theirs and what is in their community and they should be able to go from one place to the other.” (NCP-2)

“I find that the gap between ... youth who don’t have a lot of risks factors who are going to graduate and go onto post secondary ... and the vulnerable marginalized youth that I work with which are new comer youth, youth that face mental health challenges, African-Canadian Caribbean youth, Aboriginal youth ... is growing. ... In terms of their academic achievement, attainment, and employment outcomes ... that’s where we see the impact that’s growing and I would say that the challenge comes in not having a long term strategy for how to properly engage that marginalized population in something that’ll have positive outcomes for them. So there’s lots of initiatives being done but I feel that there hasn’t been a long-term strategy around that group of young people.” (KI-1)

“A lot of young people are dropping out of school. Young people are disengaged in the institution, some from a very young age starting in high school. Young people are drifting off losing focus not really interested in school. We see a high unemployment rate amongst young people. Not a lot of full time jobs so this really leads the young generation into poverty trouble that we see young people are just getting into gangs and just issues of trying to find money, trying to find themselves.” (YW-1)

“Priority areas and the hard to reach young people. Many of the services that are out there are not really reaching those youth out there that are on the brink. ... Far too often we forget about young people and mental health. A lot of our young people are suffering from mental health and nobody wants to acknowledge just because of the stigma and because they have to do something about it.” (FG-1)

“Money is not there to deal with opportunity gaps that we place, so they move from opportunity gaps to income gaps and ... young people are very impacted by that transition from one gap to another.” (FG-1)

“I find that a lot of the youth workers and the youth don’t connect ... especially in this neighbourhood where you’ll have majority ... [of] the youth here are black and the youth workers are not. Some of them [youth workers] come from privileged ... and they don’t understand where these kids come from or why they act the way they do, so there’s a disconnect I find.” (NCP-1)

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THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

Yet, some participants highlighted how the political (challenges of the youth sector) intersects with the personal issues that youth workers are dealing

“There’s a lot of stress. There’s a lot of pressure ... Youth workers are some of the lowest paid. Youth workers are suffering from the most highest personal sort of depression, ... alcoholism ... just in order for them to cope with the stuff that they’re dealing with.” (NCP-2)

“Skills set of the workers within the sector ... is affected by the turnover rate” (FG-1)

“A lot of ... conversations that I’ve had with youth workers are that they feel like they’re in the middle. They’re in between the organization verses ... the other side of the community and so sometimes they find themselves ... torn. That they’re not supported ...” (NCP-2).

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Participants identified program gaps and provided suggestions for future improvements. Three main themes emerged from the data analysis: Class location and Schedules; Fidelity to Course Outline; and Course Structure and Program Duration.

i) Class Location and Schedules

Participants identified the following gaps and observation:

“York too far.” (Cohort 1, Post-P3)

“Have class at one location.” (Cohort 1, Post-P11)

“Have an east location.” (Cohort 2, Post-P21)

“The travelling to different sites really hurt my pockets for gas.” (Cohort 1, Post-P2)

Some suggestions for future improvement were as follows:

“Consider peoples actual work schedules. We all have different schedules (9-5, 1-9, 12-8, etc.). It’s hard to meet up with group members when everyone has different work schedules.” (Cohort 1, Post-P2)

“Offer courses downtown.” (Cohort 1, Post-P3)

“More Saturday classes.” (Cohort 1, Post-P3)

iii) Fidelity to Course Outline

Participants identified program gaps and provided suggestions for future improvement with respect to the fidelity to course outline. The following program gaps were identified:

“Did not cover all topics in course outline. Textbook was irrelevant.” (Cohort 2, Post-P23)

“Not using the book that we purchased and sometimes not following the syllabus.” (Cohort 2, Post-P20)

“I felt the book wasn’t as useful as I would have liked. Most of the course was based off in-class discussion.” (Cohort 2, Post-P27)

Participants noted the following suggestions for future improvement:

“We bought a book with excellent readings and we should make more use of it. I would also like use of more journal article readings and online material. We need time to discuss/debate issues at greater depth. The syllabus should be followed.” (Cohort 2, Post-P14)

FINDINGS: KEY THEMES FROM FOCUS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

“Need to follow the course outline. Didn’t have enough time to cover everything and hard to follow for readings.” (Cohort 1, Post-P12)

“Follow the syllabus and utilize all the resources that are provided in the class. We should have discussions on the topics we are asked to read eg. Roots of violence.” (Cohort 2, Post-P20)

“Use the book more; give a moment from each to give a reflection on the reading.” (Cohort 2, Post-P5)

Curriculum Structure/Program Duration

With respect to curriculum structure and program duration, participants identified the following gaps:

“Certain things and topics were rushed through.” (Cohort 2, Post-P3)

“The workload should keep in mind the heavy workload for youth work.” (Cohort 2, Post-P21)

“I think time management was done very poorly. I believe that if we are doing a group project that the program should be longer.” (Cohort 2, Post-P25)

“Not enough time, make course longer, time wise, days.” (Cohort 2, Post-P5)

“Constraint on time; the depth of conversations were not great because we had to stop.” (Cohort 2, Post-P8)

Participants also provided the following suggestions for future improvement:

“More interactive workshops and modules.” (Cohort 2, Post-P13)

“Have more guest speaker/topics.” (Cohort 2, Post-P8)

“Give more time to complete group presentations.” (Cohort 2, Post-P23)

“Longer time frame for better learning, understanding bonding and conversation.” (Cohort 1, Post-P6)

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

• Location for Classes (York and Multiple Locations)

“Travel across the city was definitely challenging for the participants but that was ... intentional because ... we had the people who come purely from academic background and we have individuals who are familiar and comfortable with community, but their own community.” (FG-8)

• Schedule of Classes

“I think that the trainings were so short. ... It’s like you have to finish everything within the ... four hours, so the conversations were cut short ... I think ... it needs to be a longer training where people can actually sit down ... have actual discussions.” (NCP-1)

• Fidelity to Course Outline

“Giving the youth workers more time in thinking through presenting an issue or a question with which they are grappling.” (KI-1)

“In the beginning of the sessions ... asking people to come up with particular questions that bring them to the course ... we have a curriculum that we offer but sometimes curriculum ... might develop with the people who are going to participate in it and they help to develop the content.” (KI-1)

• Leveraging TCEN’s Certificate for PSE

“I think this course ... should be seen as prior learning experience that people could use in going further whether that is university or college.” (KI-1)

“Creating a certification body. An association ... allows you to start advocating. It allows you to start changing

policies towards youth workers and ... can sit on an equal level with the provincial government, ... the city, whatever it is and say you know what these are the challenges ... For example, we have a huge mental health issue. A lot of young people are falling through the cracks through the mental health system. A lot of youth workers are caught in between because they know this person is suffering from mental health [but] they don't know what kind of mental health ... or maybe some of them don't even know that the young person that they're working with has mental health." (NCP-2)

"For TCEN ... to work very collaboratively with ... post secondary institutions around the curriculum within the courses themselves. There's always going to be room for professional development once that person is in the job." (KI-1)

"I'm really looking forward to see how TCEN can collaborate with post-secondary folks who are training youth workers, collaborate with school boards that actually house children and youth until they're eighteen so that we can make sure that we start to address those risks factors at an earlier stage." (KI-1)

- **Power of Peer learning**

"Create a community of practice of the individuals who have gone through the certificate so that all the time you could check in whether ... people remember everything they learn ... and ... still applying it like a month later, six months later so." (KI-1)

"Creating opportunities for people to come back and enact in mentorship kind of role. ... They could help [with] facilitating, co facilitating." (FG-7)

- **Training for management**

"There should be training for EDs because they're the ones who stop things from happening; their protocols ... EDs and supervisors need to have those trainings as well so that they understand that it's not about just your organization, it's about the youth." (NCP-1)

- **Course Design and Content**

"Maybe more hands out, some people are more visual and need to see more... Like an actual handout in front of them, ... if there was [a] booklet; something that they could take with them to refer to later on." (NCP-1)

"In the curriculum more representation from an Indigenous or trans homosexual perspective ... would be great." (YW-1-1)

"The dialogue was great. I wish we had more time to talk and decompose. Obviously our schedules are busy you know but once everyone got there it was just an amazing energy." (YW-1-1)

"Having participants facilitate and exchange or share their experiences with group of managers or supervisors." (FG-3)

"A serious commitment from York, ...TCEN, ... [and] various youth serving agencies to really start promoting this program to young people. Packaging it in a way it's accessible and understandable to young people. Putting 'the cool' in this program and ... giving it the platform as a way to change Toronto." (YW-1)

"From organizational standpoint being able to understand the needs of front line workers. That we have the ability to connect with organizations looking for support to develop a new skills set for their workers and in a sense we're kind of carrying not just for information but putting together the pieces for further professional development for frontline workers... for networking." (FG-1)

"Encourage workers to think through the experiences that they're doing everyday with the youth and bring that to the course; ... develop presentations, which ... reflect on what they've been doing, what they've done well, what they've not done so well, and how they can think through and ... how they might do it in a way that will be useful for youth." (KI-1)

FINDINGS: KEY THEMES FROM FOCUS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

“Institutional partnership would be critical to move forward. ... We need to engage the employers and the supervisors, get their feedback on what’s happening, what’s different. ... I think more than anything else there’s a clear need to engage managers ... We have many supervisors and managers who were the work and now they’re doing the work and perpetuating the same sort of issue that plagued them when they were involved and they are doing it [to] other youth workers and they don’t realize it.” (FG-3)

“TCEN working with the agencies and forging that partnership ... to create ... like a foot in ... the door.” (NCP-2)

All in all, such comments indicate that participants of the program see great promise in the certificate and its ability to make an impact in the field of youth work. Their ideas indicated that they possessed good insight as to the needs and challenges of the field, and that they were eager to learn more in order to better equip themselves with the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their roles optimally.



FINAL THOUGHTS: LESSONS LEARNED AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The participants identified several areas of learning as a result of taking the TCEN certificate. Among these, participants acknowledged learning more about the cultural diversity among youth and the ways that their identities inform and could act a bridge to better engagement with youth. In addition to the positive impact the courses had on their

capacity to engage youth, participants also identified learning more about the various methods used to evaluate the youth impact of their work. Self-care and seeking out allies in the sector was another theme among the learning identified by the TCEN program participants.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	PROGRAM DESIGN & EVALUATION	SELF-AWARENESS & SELF-CARE
<p>“I have learned that just like youth programming needs youth to help run them. Elders are also needed to help youth workers navigate the systems.”</p> <p>“The importance of fostering excellent relationship with youth. I have also develop a keen knowledge of leadership.”</p> <p>“What sticks out is understanding the Youth Cultural and being that adult allie that can help our youth transition into our “mainstream” culture. I will be bringing so much more tools to my organization.”</p>	<p>“I have learnt things such as program evaluations the purpose and types of evaluations out there. I have learnt about civic engagement, anti-oppression. How to deliver an effective program.”</p> <p>“I’ve learnt a lot about programming for the youth I serve.”</p>	<p>“Aggressive selfishness when it comes to self care. There are tonnes of like-minded individuals who encounter similar road blocks/problems. Structural Violence can be fought.”</p> <p>“The work that I am doing is crucial and important to society and communities. Self care is very important! Learned how to apply it also what it can do if not applied (great class on self care)”</p> <p>“I have learnt the importance of self care for self/youth.”</p> <p>“That I can continue/finish my post secondary education.”</p>

Themes Identified about Lessons from the Program

THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM FOR PARTICIPANTS' WORK WITH YOUTH

Participants felt that the course would have a considerable impact in the way they continued their work with youth. The program was acknowledged to be a source of inspiration and a knowledge base for youth work. The program was seen as bringing a critical edge to youth work and new skills for program design, program evaluation and youth engagement. The following quotes illustrate the immediate and expected future impact from taking the program.

“It has reignited the fire inside. I now have much more resources, with faces to put to them. I can now look at my work from numerous perspectives, instead of just head-on.”

“It will allow me to be more understanding of the different styles of youth work also the delivery of programs.”

“It [the program] has already made a difference. I’ve implemented so many things that I have learned, in this class, to my program planning at work. For example, I’ve added the “skill bank” to our list of activities. This activity gives the youth an opportunity to find out how many skillful people that are living in thier community.”

“It already has made a difference in my work. I share everything I learned with them. I am less frustrated at work and in my life.”

“It will enhance what I am doing with them but really provide my critical thinking to how to better support them.”

“The skills and knowledge I gained will improve my programming for youth. Taking care of self will allow me to serve youth better. This course has rejuvenated my soul!!”

Participants' Reflections on the Impact of the Program for their Work

POSITIVE REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

There were several positive comments about the program. The main comments were focused on the course content; that the course would be a useful credential for their career; that there was a sense of collegiality among the students; and that the course provided a safe space to discuss important issues regarding youth and working in the youth sector. The following quotes highlight the positive feedback from the participants:



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Once this certificate is added to my resume, organizations will know that I understand the youth culture (practical and theory) and will consider me for a position."

"The greatest thing is that it is recognized by York University."



VALIDATION

"Proves resiliency. Sense of accomplishment. It's my first Uni/ College level certificate. Proud to share this with my classmates."

"Makes us experts in the field. Gives us more of a drive to make change. Validates our work. Shows our organization that we are key to change and success."



NETWORKING & EXPERIENCE

"Great instructor. Great atmosphere. Open and safe space to explore issues in youth work. Connecting and having the opportunity to network."

"The people I met. The people at TCEN and York...I was really exposed to a lot of great things."

NEGATIVE REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

There were few negative comments about the program were also received. The main critical responses were that the course wasn't held in an accessible location – “York [University] is too far” – and that travelling to different sites was expensive. One participant also indicated that the days and times for the class were inconvenient to their work schedule.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE TCEN CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

The suggestions for improving the TCEN certificate program centered on making the course more flexible and accessible to suit the busy schedules of participants and to improve the time management in the delivery of the course material. The following quotes highlight the main suggestions given by participants to improve the courses.

Conclusions

The professional development certificate, Advancing Equity, Building Youth Capacity was developed to equip frontline youth workers and direct service workers in the Toronto youth sector with the knowledge, skills, network and support to provide effective youth leadership. The findings from a mixed methods exploratory evaluation indicate that the certificate was effective in building the capacity of youth workers. Nine key findings emerged and are summarized below:

1. Networking Opportunities

Participants perceived that the certificate provided a great environment to engage with other youth workers, share ideas and resources, and learn more about other youth-serving agencies. They were appreciative of the new perspectives that the course had brought as a result of bringing together youth workers from across the GTA.

2. Professional Development

Participants widely acknowledged the importance and value of professional development and that the certificate allowed them to develop core competencies and professional skills that are essential to youth development work. It also allowed them to gain insight as to the issues and struggles faced by youth, which they believed would help them in program design and development.

3. Work Experience Accreditation and Academic Credentials

Some participants perceived the certificate as an important step towards getting accreditation for their work experience thus enhancing their employability and prestige while for others, the benefit of the certificate is the value added to their academic credentials, which would boost their post secondary education and career pursuits. It was expressed as an important consideration, especially for some youth workers who were not academically trained to deal with youth.

4. Program Content:

Participants found the course content to be interesting and worth knowing. They felt it was current, had immediate usefulness, and was relevant to their field.

5. Environment:

Participants found the training environment conducive to learning. They reported the learning atmosphere as welcoming, safe, engaging and respectful. The instructors and the teaching methods were highly praised by the participants.

6. Increase in Knowledge and Skills:

Participants overwhelmingly affirmed the effectiveness of the training program. They indicated a deepened awareness and understanding of youth development issues and highlighted some insights gained from working in collaboration and cooperation with the youth and within the youth sector. Many of the participants mentioned that they became more confident in dealing with the youth after completing the certificate.

7. Best Practices:

Participants were confident that their new learning would positively affect the work they do with youth and that they were committed to supporting youth development work through industry best practices. Specifically, participants highlighted instances where the training has already shown evidence of increased competence in their work.

8. Wellness and Wellbeing:

Participants were appreciative of the increased awareness and insights they received from the Self-Care Module which taught them the importance of tending to their own health and wellbeing while undertaking youth work. Furthermore, participants considered various ways to enhance their quality of life by introducing self-care into their youth programs and their personal lives.

6. Value of Certificate:

Participants were proud that the training they received put them at a distinct advantage over their peers. Also, participants felt that the professional certificate would open doors to better employment opportunities since youth serving agencies tend to hire and retain job applicants with professional certificates.

In addition to the comments above, participants also identified several program gaps and provided suggestions for future improvements that include the following:

- Class location and Schedules
- Fidelity to Course Outline
- Curriculum Structure/Program Duration
- Leveraging TCEN's Certificate for PSE
- Power of Peer Learning

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

POST CERTIFICATE SURVEY

SECTION A: YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE CERTIFICATE

Please tell us:

1. What have you learnt from completing the certificate?
2. What difference will this make to your work with youth?
3. What are some good things about the certificate?
4. What are some bad things about the certificate?
5. Please provide some suggestions on how we can improve the certificate?

SECTION B: YOUR OBJECTIVES FOR THE CERTIFICATE

Please rate how important the following learning objectives are to you and whether you achieved them:

OBJECTIVES	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Uncertain	Important	Very Important	Did you achieve this objective?
I will like to build my personal resilience and capacity by addressing issues like burnout, self-care, workload, stress, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to improve my political and social analysis of current urban youth realities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I want to improve my overall leadership skills in this area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to improve my program planning and delivery skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to improve my evaluation skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve my collaboration skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to improve my understanding of the social determinants frameworks as they affect young people's reality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to improve my team work / interpersonal skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to build my collaboration and networking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (s): please specify					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION C: A SELF-ASSESSMENT OF YOUR CURRENT PRACTICES

This section asks you to reflect on your current youth work practices and assess your self with regard to where you think you are on these practices. Please mark only one response for each question.

On a scale of one to five with five being that you are doing really well on this issue and one being that you have a lot of work to do on this issue, please rate yourself on the following:

OBJECTIVES	1 I have a lot of work to do on this	2 I have just a bit more work to do on this	3 Uncertain	4 I am doing well on this	5 I am doing really well on this
I am familiar with the youth development framework.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware of my cultural identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware of the cultural identities of the youth that I work with.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know that my personal identity influences my work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I recognize the impact of power and privilege in youth development work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I possess intercultural skills that foster inclusion and empowerment of all youth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a defined plan for improving inclusion and empowerment in youth programming.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX B

MODULE AND INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Please rate the Module you have just completed and the Instructor by checking (✓) in the appropriate box. Your rating will be used to improve the effectiveness of certificate offerings to future participants. Completion of this survey is completely voluntary and your responses will remain confidential. A summary of responses from all students with no identifying information will be provided to your instructor after this certificate has been completed in December 2013 and all students have graduated.

PLEASE RATE THE MODULE – “CHANGE, AGENCY AND LEADERSHIP”

(1) Compared to other professional development courses/training you’ve taken, how would you rate this Module?

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

(2) How relevant and valuable is this Module to your work with youth?

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

(3) How well did the Module content match the stated goals of the certificate?

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

(4) What was the overall quality of the Module materials such as readings, handouts, guest presentations, etc.?

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

(5) Please rate the difficulty of the Module content?

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

(6) Considering your experience with this Module, would you recommend it to other participants?

Yes No

(7) What is the level of your enthusiasm for the certificate at the completion of this module?

Low Medium High

Continued on other side →

APPENDIX B MODULE AND INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION

PLEASE RATE THE INSTRUCTOR: “NENE KWASI KAFELE”

(1) The instructor’s apparent knowledge of the Module material was:

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

(2) The instructor’s ability to explain concepts and principles was:

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

(3) The instructor’s sensitivity to participants’ difficulties:

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

(4) The instructor’s overall teaching ability is:

Very Poor Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING IN THE SPACE PROVIDED BELOW:

- (A) Please indicate some of the particularly good things about this Module.
- (B) Please make some suggestions on how this Module can be improved.
- (C) If you have any additional feedback on the module, please feel free to provide it here.

Thank you!

