

Case: NEET Reduction Through Art: Understanding How to Measure Impact

Problems and Purpose

‘Domino Effect’ is a relevant case study examining how to measure the impacts of art on NEET youth. Many young people find themselves without education, employment or training. This population is commonly referred to as NEET youth. With funding from the Dorset Foundation, the National Portrait Gallery in the U.K. created a three-year practical photography project, ‘Domino Effect,’ to partner with local community organizations to provide ongoing photography programmes for NEET youth. Participants were matched with program facilitators, and the dates and times of workshops were tailored to suit the partner and participant's needs. This flexibility benefited participants, as they could choose whether to attend concentrated or fractioned workshops. A practical approach to photography as a creative practice aimed to raise confidence levels, respond to issues of social exclusion, and help participants gain practical, transferable skills.¹

Background History and Context

Given their disengagement from social and economic structures, NEET youth often face multiple health, economic, and psychosocial challenges. There are many reasons young people may become NEET. Some face barriers such as labour market conditions, lack of job skills, or difficulty integrating into educational and employment structures. It has been identified that there is a demand for a wide variety of complementary services to help NEET youth. The solution may lie in developing integrated community agencies that can help holistically address mental health, substance abuse, housing status, educational status, employment integration and overall general well-being. A critical component of NEET reduction via public support is through community art centres.

The transformative power of art has become increasingly recognized, specifically as the literature on artistic discipline grows. Young people can experience a sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and individuality by bringing new creative works into existence. In cultivating these qualities, individuals prepare for the next opportunity to pursue education, employment or training. These art centres often help youth reduce barriers to employment through creativity, relationship-building, and networking

¹ The National Portrait Gallery. Domino effect: Neet Photography Project. Domino Effect: NEET Photography Project - National Portrait Gallery. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.npg.org.uk/learning/young-people/youth-projects/domino-effect-neet-photography-project/>

opportunities. Art centres can help NEET youth develop the skills to find and retain meaningful work. They engage new audiences, strengthen practical skills, raise confidence, and create pathways for progression into art careers. However, many art organizations face increasing challenges in illustrating their work's positive impact and cost-effectiveness due to the complicated nature of measuring KPIs (key performance indicators) within this topic.²

What Went On: Process, Interaction, and Participation

The team at the National Portrait Gallery created sustainable progression routes for NEET youth to continue their participation within the program over multiple years through three main factors: timing, communication, and peer-to-peer collaboration. Developing the ongoing structure of the program was crucial so that even after the project had ended, the young people still had opportunities to continue weekly photography sessions in the environment they had become familiar with. Amongst facilitators, they were confident working with. Additionally, ensuring they had correct and updated contact information for all young people within the program was essential to remain in contact with them to keep up with their progress. Furthermore, developing a 'buddy system' for partnerships amongst NEET youth allowed them to feel more comfortable and less overwhelmed during project meetings.³

Evaluating these sessions was critical for the NEET youth, community, and funding partners. Observation forums were used during and after sessions, asking questions about what went well, what should be changed for next time, and overall opinions on sessions. Many forums and interviews with participants were captured on audio or video recording, as this approach felt less intimidating, allowed for easy reflective dialogue, and maintained a conversational approach. Furthermore, program coordinators discovered that open-ended questions proved more useful than limiting participants to specific questions.⁴

Influence, Outcomes, and Effects

A long-term goal of the Domino Effect was to create sustainable, long-term progress for NEET participants, specifically with participation in arts programmes at museums and galleries. This goal was achieved, as after the third year of the Domino

² The National Portrait Gallery. Domino effect: Neet Photography Project. Domino Effect: NEET Photography Project - National Portrait Gallery. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.npg.org.uk/learning/young-people/youth-projects/domino-effect-neet-photography-project/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Effect, three NEET youths joined the Gallery's Youth Forum, and fifteen participants signed up for events within the Gallery's Young People's Programme.⁵

Analysis and Lessons Learned

In this ever-changing economy, like in the U.K., young Canadians find it increasingly difficult to secure employment that enables them to support themselves. 42.3% of all young Canadians between the ages of 20 and 29 continue to live with their parents. Furthermore, NEET youth in Canada are more likely to engage in substance use and crime than their non-NEET service-seeking counterparts. Overall, concurrent disorders and multiple intersecting needs are substantially more frequent among NEET youth than their non-NEET counterparts, primarily due to the higher levels of substance abuse.⁶

Like the National Portrait Gallery, art-focused establishments in Canada have programs that support NEET youth. A prime example is Centre[3] in Hamilton, Ontario. Using the Domino Effect as a prime example, Centre[3] can re-evaluate how it uses different evaluation methods to advocate for the continuation of its work and ensure it has positive progression; not just for the young people but also for community and funding partners.⁷

⁵ The National Portrait Gallery. Domino effect: Neet Photography Project. Domino Effect: NEET Photography Project - National Portrait Gallery. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://www.npg.org.uk/learning/young-people/youth-projects/domino-effect-neet-photography-project/>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

References

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