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**BEFORE AS A FATHER I LACKED
CONFIDENCE, BUT NOW I FEEL EXCITED
ABOUT THE FUTURE AND EVERY DAY I
SPEND WITH MY CHILDREN**

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**YOUNG
DADS TV**
IMPACT EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KARL ROYLE

MAHMOUD EMIRA

MICHAEL JOPLING

CeDARE

Centre for Developmental &
Applied Research in Education



UNIVERSITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
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This summary details the impact of the Young Dads TV Project (YDTV) interventions on Young Dads (YDs) and stakeholder organisations. YDTV is a project initiated by Media for Development to improve young fathers' visibility and recognition and help address the complex web of challenges and barriers which all too often result in young fathers being distant figures in their children's lives. The project ran from 2010 and concludes in 2013. This evaluation ran between September 2012 and May 2013. The capability approach, derived from development studies underpinned the evaluation design in order to examine the project from a social justice perspective.

CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG DADS

1 THE MEDIA

Young dads have negative views about how they are portrayed in the media, although one young dad thinks 'we are not portrayed at all really!' YDs associated YDTV with more positive media interest, feeling YDTV was 'the only good source of media showing the positives of YDs'.

2. UNFAIRNESS OF THE BENEFITS SYSTEM

YDs felt unsupported by the benefits system and that parental rights were disproportionately granted to mothers. The social housing system also did not support young dads.

3. FINANCE

YDs felt that they did not receive the financial support they needed for their children, something they had no control over, and that their performance as a father was still judged by how much they could provide.

4. PERCEIVED NEGATIVE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND CRITICISM OF YDS

This came from the YDs themselves: 'If I am pushing the buggy down the road and not working they automatically think 'oh, he's scrounging off benefits' whereas actually I can't work because I've full custody of my children so it isn't that I don't want to work'.

5. SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Stakeholders noted that 'statutory services will generally prioritise the needs of the mum' and 'the opportunities and support we give to young fathers to be involved are practically non-existent while the barriers are HUGE'.

6. CHILDREN'S SERVICES

All the YDs involved in the evaluation agreed that men are invisible to children's services providers and most of them feel that services did not recognise or cater for fathers' needs however the YDs in the survey want to engage with support services and in some cases had actively done so. **Reciprocity was key.** Men also needed to be more active in engaging with service providers themselves

FROM CAPABILITIES TO FUNCTIONINGS

The initial impetus of YDTV was to address the ability of YDs to take an active role in parenting their child/children in a context in which mothers are regarded as the primary carer. YDTV's intervention strategy explicitly focused on developing both individual and collective agency among young fathers and by so doing converting capabilities into valued functionings such as: social connectivity, friendship, sense of purpose and achievement, social belonging; accessing parenting services; feeling more visible; establishing an identity as an individual and a father; making a contribution to the community and increased confidence.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOR YDS ASSOCIATED WITH YDTV

IMPROVED PARENTING SKILLS

By being part of the YDTV project, YDs were more likely to feel they were effective and engaged parents. 'I have no qualifications at all but I am an expert in something and that's being a good dad to my children'.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE

This manifested itself in the ability to talk to people about parenting, helping other dads by setting up local networks and fulfilling academic aspirations.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO PROVISION

Stakeholders reported YDTV provided insights into how to improve or enhance their services for YDs.

ATTITUDINAL CHANGES

Stakeholders also reported a growth in confidence in the YDs they worked with and a change in attitudes towards being a parent and understanding mothers' needs.

INCREASED CAPABILITY AND FUNCTIONING

YDTV enabled YDs to: find information about parenting services; pursue personal goals; take part in groups concerned with policy issues; know their legal rights before the law; and promote YDs' issues to service providers. Nearly all YDs had developed and maintained self-respect. The most effective activity was facilitating the development of support groups and networks. 'It's made me more confident and less worried because now I know there are other dads going through the same problems'; 'it has helped me come out of my shell'; 'you go in proud and knowing who you are...you know you are important'.

YDTV INTERVENTIONS

1. YOUNGDADS.TV WEBSITE

“FIND HELP, WATCH FILMS, MAKE FRIENDS”

This focused on helping dads to find local support via the digital ‘Dads’ Map’ and break down social stigma. The web site has over 10,000 users. YDTV presence in social media channels is growing: Twitter: over 1,300 followers; Facebook: over 300 followers Mailing list: over 200 subscribers.

2. COUNCIL OF YOUNG DADS

“THE AUTHENTIC VOICE OF YOUNG DADS IN THE UK”

The council was made up of young dads involved in the first phase of the project. This group became involved in policy around young fathers and contributed to the government’s ‘young fathers steering group’ and the subsequent recommendations made to statutory services (in the ‘Are we nearly there yet, dad?’ report, published December, 2012). Also attended All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Fatherhood in June 2013.

3. LOCAL GROUPS

“EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE”

Council members established their own, informal groups for young dads in their areas. YDTV helped to establish or support nine local groups. Other activities:

Young Dads TV worked with over 100 young dads from 11 Local Authorities in order to find out about the problems they face. These sessions produced over sixty films hosted on the Young Dads TV YouTube Channel, which has received over 35,000 views winning the Nominet Internet Award 2011 for ‘Empowering Young People and Citizens’ and took runner-up in an international award for supporting the UN’s ‘Millennium Development Goals’.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The YDTV interventions were instrumental in converting the existing capabilities within YDs into functions that they valued.

The inherent capability of YDs to do things for themselves should underpin any intervention.

Interventions should focus on converting capabilities into functioning that the participants themselves value. Too often the functions that are valued are prescribed by the intervening agency, such as employability skills for example. Focusing on developing inherent fatherhood capabilities and “identity” can bring economic and community benefits to both individuals and society as a result.

Interventions that target Young Dad’s and other underrepresented groups should focus on activities that enable participants to develop personal and collective agency. The very act of doing it themselves with support will lead to them becoming self-sufficient.

Engaging YDs in engaging with issues of policy formation and access to services, so taking positive steps to change their own situation in a supportive network to increase resilience.

Interventions should use conversion activities that lead to the inherent capabilities of participants being enacted as valued sustainable functions.

Conversion factors such as networks, increased agency, sense of purpose, belonging and identity should derive their value from the communities they serve and be sustained by developing self-esteem and resilience within the participants that allow networks to grow and develop beyond their initial purpose.

Statutory services should focus on activities that convert capabilities into functioning rather than focus on skills delivery to YDs in a ‘deficit’ model.

“ YDTV helped me find a voice and realise that there are other people in the same situation ”



ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

This evaluation explores the impact of the Young Dads TV Project (YDTV) interventions on the Young Dads who have engaged with it. YDTV is a project initiated by Media for Development to improve young fathers' visibility and recognition and help address the complex web of challenges and barriers which all too often result in young fathers being distant figures in their children's lives. The project was initiated in 2010 and concludes in 2013. This evaluation was carried out between September 2012 and May 2013.

This impact evaluation was undertaken by the Centre for Developmental & Applied Research in Education (CeDARE) at the University of Wolverhampton.

Full details can be found at: www.wlv.ac.uk/ydtv

VIDEO CASE STUDIES

Three video case studies have been created as part of this evaluation.
You can see them at www.youtube.com/uowcedare.



Centre for Developmental & Applied Research in Education
University of Wolverhampton, Gorway Road, Walsall, WS1 3BD
Tel: 01902 32 3242
Email: cedare@wlv.ac.uk
Web: www.wlv.ac.uk/cedare



Media for Development
16 Hoxton Square, London, N1 6NT
Tel: 0207 033 2170
Email: scottc@mediafordevelopment.org.uk
Web: www.mediafordevelopment.org.uk



Soundhouse Media
Tel: 0114 266 6808
Email: info@soundhouse-media.co.uk
Web: www.soundhouse-media.co.uk

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