

THESIS

Developing camp practices in Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre

Analysis of feedback gathered from camp participants and instructors through Zeffi online survey

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focused on investigating the development needs and strong points of the camp operations of Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre, one of the nine youth centres in Finland. Oivanki, established in 1982 and subsidized by the Ministry of Education and Culture, aims to promote the wellbeing of children and young people through nature and adventure-focused activities.

The inspiration for this thesis originated in a meeting with the manager of youth work at Oivanki, where the need for efficiently analyzing the collected feedback from camp participants and instructors became evident. The thesis concentrated on feedback gathered between January and September 2023 via Zeffi online survey from various camps, including confirmation camps, association camps, sport camps, and other types of youth camps. The Zeffi online survey is a central tool for feedback collection, used in all of the Finnish youth centers. The survey that was used covered various aspects, including premises, service, overall satisfaction, and specific questions tailored for camp visitors and instructors.

The objectives of this thesis included analyzing the feedback to identify development needs and strengths in Oivanki's camp operations. This analysis can support the ongoing development of the commissioner and aligns with the 2023 strategy of the Finnish Youth Centre Network.

Feedback received highlights strong points of Oivanki's camp practices, such as feeling safe, positive camp experiences, versatile activities and good customer service. Improvement needs center around sustainable development, communication among Oivanki staff and details in accommodation premises. In conclusion, the findings contribute to Oivanki's ongoing development efforts, offering insights for developing camp practices and enhancing the overall experience for their visitors. The results can also have broader benefit for the Finnish Youth Centre Network, where knowledge sharing and continuous improvement across the nine youth centers is facilitated.

Keywords: youth work, youth, camps, feedback

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I will examine the collected feedback from Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre, with a focus on feedback gathered between January and September 2023. This thesis examines the experiences and opinions of camp participants and instructors from various groups, including confirmation camps, association's camps, sport camps, and other youth camps that do not fit into any existing category within the Finnish Youth Centre Network's feedback survey.

The need for this thesis came up in a meeting with the manager of youth work at Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre. Busy day to day life of a youth centre often leaves limited time for focusing on the analysis of the feedback collected. Feedback, however, is an essential resource for the development of the organization and its camp practices. Findings of this thesis also has the potential to benefit other youth centres in their continuous improvement of camp activities and practices.

The main objective of this thesis is to analyse the feedback collected from the diverse groups mentioned above. By doing so, this thesis aims to identify potential areas for development within the camp operations of the commissioner, Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre, and to highlight the strengths of its existing practices. The insights gained from this analysis can be used to provide better services to the visitors of Oivanki.

The following section of this thesis will dive into the background knowledge required to understand the context of the thesis topic. It will provide insights into youth work in Finnish youth centres, the pedagogical values that guide their operations, camp experience as a form of youth work and the development needs and goals of a youth centre. Later chapters will explore the specific feedback survey that was used to gather the feedback and the collected data will be examined in more detail. Lastly the findings and conclusions will be presented.

2 THE COMMISSIONER AND THEIR NEED

2.1 Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre

Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre is located in Northern Ostrobothnia in the municipality of Kuusamo. It is one of the nine youth centres in Finland and is part of the Finnish Youth Centre Network which was established in 1993. It is subsidised and supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Operations at Oivanki started 1982, but the history of organizing different types of camps goes all the way back to 1970s. Throughout the years, the main objective of Oivankis' operations has always been to promote the wellbeing of children and young people. Oivanki wants to offer a versatile and safe environment to experience, participate and connect with one another. Very central part of operations in Oivanki are nature and adventure focused activities and its location surrounded by nature provides various options for that. (Oivanki ry 2023b.)

Oivanki was incorporated in 2015 and is now owned by the Town of Kuusamo. Their operations consist of different types of youth camps and events, Nuotta training for young people in need of support, and international youth work. Besides the youth groups, Oivanki offers its services to any individual or group and they have excellent premises to organize various type of gatherings and conferences. All their sales proceeds are directed to youth work. (Ibid.)

2.2 Need for the thesis

Youth centres are the biggest organizer of camps in Finland (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023b). All nine youth centers in Finland use the same Zeffi online feedback survey to gather feedback from their camp visitors. In the year 2023 strategy of the Finnish Youth Centre Network, one of the objectives under the chapter Communication is to use the feedback gathered in Zeffi (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023c, 11). This thesis can contribute in meeting that objective of the strategy.

In a meeting with the manager of youth work in Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre, the need to examine the feedback collected came up. Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre is constantly learning and evolving organization, but sometimes hectic day to day life of a youth centre can leave only a little time to go through and gather information from the collected feedback. Feedback however, is very crucial for the development of the organization, and the camp activities

and practices that they provide. In this thesis I will focus on analysing the feedback that has been gathered between January and September 2023 from groups including confirmation camps, association's camps, sport camps and other youth camps that do not fit under any other category in the Finnish Youth Centre Network's online feedback survey.

During the year 2023 Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre started updating their pre-information packages and guide book for teachers and other visiting groups. This development work in the organization could also benefit when the feedback gathered from camp visitors could be examined more throughoutly. Findings of this thesis could also benefit other youth centers when developing their camp practices. Finnish youth centres form a nationwide network and they share the same strategy and development objectives. When one part of this network develops their practices, I believe it can be beneficial to the other centres if the knowledge gained through the development work and the key findings gets shared. Finnish Youth Centre Network organizes regular meetings between the youth centres and this provides opportunities to share the gained knowledge with other operators within the network.

Objective of this thesis is to analyse the feedback collected from the previously mentioned groups, and to point out possible development needs of the commissioners camp operations and also the strong points of their current practices. This information can then be used to provide better services for all the youth groups and other visitors coming to Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre.

3 KNOWLEDGE BASE

3.1 Youth work in the Finnish youth centres

Youth centres in Finland are places designed to be safe and goal-oriented environment for youth work (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2018). Youth centres can provide various camp packages, environmental education, social youth work services, and international activities, and the main function of the youth centres is to provide young people guided services all year round (Youth Act 2016, 20 §). In addition, organizations, municipalities, and groups can organize their own camps, trainings, and seminars at the centres (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2018).

There are nine youth centres in Finland and together those centres form a nationwide network that is a central part of the development of the youth work sector. Fields of outdoor and adventure education, experiential learning and Nuotta training are included in the strategy and development objectives of the Finnish Youth Centre Network. (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023c.)

Work in the youth centres follow the current Youth Act and the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme. Youth centres are subsidized by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and all the youth centres in Finland provide non-formal education which supports the Finnish curriculum. (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023a.)

Youth Acts purpose is to promote the social inclusion of young people and provide them with opportunities for exerting an influence and improve their skills and capabilities to function in society; support the growth, independence and sense of community of young people and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and adoption of skills necessary for this purpose; support young people's free-time pursuits and engagement in civic society; promote non-discrimination and equality among young people and the realisation of their rights; and improve young people's growth and living conditions. Youth Acts core principles are solidarity, cultural diversity and internationality; sustainable development, healthy lifestyles, respect for life and the environment; and cross-sectoral cooperation. (Youth Act 2016.)

As youth centres follow the Youth Act, they should promote those principles and aim to meet the objectives it sets out. On the next chapter I will cover the basic idea of youth centres' pedagogical approach that has been developed to help every youth centre meet the objectives of the current Youth Act.

3.2 Youth centres' pedagogical approach and values

Youth centres' pedagogical approach was developed to ensure that youth centres can provide high-quality non-formal education. The pedagogical foundation also helps all the youth centres to meet the objectives and aims of the Youth Act (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2022).

The pedagogical approach of youth centres is based on the humanistic view of a man, experiential theory of learning and youth centres as operating environment. The humanistic view of a man means that each person is seen and heard, and their abilities and skills are noticed and supported. Humans are seen as equal, and each person is respected. (Villa Elba 2023.)

Experiential learning, together with the humanistic view of a man, builds the pedagogical approach that emphasize learning through experience. In the core of experiential learning is reflection as an essential part of the learning process (Humberstone, Prince & Henderson 2016, 45-46). Youth centres provide experiences where participants can learn new things and reflection is used to enhance this learning process (Villa Elba 2023).

Operating environment as part of the pedagogical foundation does not only mean the physical environment itself, but also the values of providing safe and authentic place to learn and experience new things. One key objective of youth centres is to strengthen the human nature connection. Youth centres are located close to nature to provide great learning environment and possibilities for various activities. (Ibid.)

Below you can see the image 1, which demonstrates how humanistic view of man, experiential theory of learning and youth centres as an operating environment are in the basis of the pedagogical approach of youth centres. This basis is important when aiming to implement youth focused practices where activities and dialogue go hand in hand, and when aiming to provide safe and diverse environment for all visitors of a youth centre.



Image 1: The Youth Centres' Pedagogical Approach (Villa Elba 2023).

Pedagogical approach of a youth centre is implemented in a way that activities can be used as a tool to gain wider understanding of a young person. Environment is aimed to be open and warm, so that every individual can be themselves. This type of environment enables interaction between young person and a staff member of youth centre to be open and reciprocal. Staff member of the youth centre also maintains an open communication between the educator staying in the youth centre with the young person, such as teacher or youth worker. (Nieminen & Pietilä 2014, 137-138.)

Youth centres provide diverse environment to learn and experience new things. Some of the key principles of the pedagogical approach of a youth centre includes that programs are goal-oriented, participation is voluntary and young person can choose the adequate level of challenge suitable for themselves. Small parts of the organized programme can be seen to form a bigger picture where learning can happen in multiple levels.

Common pedagogical approach has been developed to be a tool to help strengthen the knowledge and awareness of every professional working in a youth centre (Nieminen & Pietilä

2014, 134). When youth centres have a common pedagogical foundation, this also proves partners and outside operators the significance of youth work provided in the youth centres.

Besides following the pedagogical approach, all nine youth centres that are part of the Youth Centre Network have agreed to shared values that contribute to meeting the goals of the Youth Act.

Shared values of the youth centres are:

- valuable youth work
- authentic experience
- respect for life and nature
- evolving organization.

(Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023b.)

Values to provide equal, authentic, and safe experiences are visible in the everyday work of youth centres. Every employee of the youth centre is part of a community, where each member works by these shared values. These values and the pedagogical way of work are in the core of the youth centre operations and providing camp activities and services to the groups visiting youth centres.

3.3 Camp experience

Camps are in the core of youth centre operations and youth centres are the most popular camp school organizer in Finland (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys rya 2023). Besides the camp schools, there are various other camps that can be organized in the youth centres, such as confirmation camps and sport camps. Camp can mean many different things, but when talking about camps as a form of youth work it usually has certain features, like having the pedagogical approach mentioned in the previous chapter, and a wider context of providing non-formal education. Camps organized in the Finnish youth centres are goal-oriented and provide guided programme with activities. One key element of camps is that they offer a possibility to be part of a group and work together with other people.

Camp experience could be seen to represent a concept of community as it includes elements such as being part of a group, having needs fulfilled and connecting with others emotionally. Social hierarchies in a group can change and new skills can arise in an environment where the group faces new challenges and takes part in various activities. (Smith, Steel & Gidlow 2010,

137-138.) The American Camp Association has described how camp experience can help children to feel part of a larger community (American Camp Association 2023). Being part of the camp community can help develop, for example, self-esteem, responsibility and cooperation skills that can contribute to the overall development of an individual. Camp experience can offer participants to develop their cognitive, social and emotional skills regardless of age (Humberstone, Prince & Henderson 2016, 227-228).

Camp environment enables the basic needs of a human to be fulfilled, as there is a regular dining schedule, appropriate time reserved for sleep and rest, possibilities to connect with other people and to be active. Camp in a youth centre offers a change of scenery and this already provides many new possibilities for the participants and can offer a chance to have a meaningful break from the daily life and habits.

3.4 Programme and goals of the target groups

Feedback examined in this thesis is collected from the participants and instructors of confirmation camps, association's camps, sport camps and other youth camps that do not fit under any other category in the feedback survey. All of these camps usually have their own programme for the duration of their stay in a youth centre. The camps own programme is instructed mainly by the responsible instructors of the group, not by an instructor or a youth worker of Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre. Every camp, if they wish, can also have activities included in their programme that is organized and instructed by Oivanki's youth workers or instructors.

It is good to note that depending on the type of a camp, the goals can vary. For example, confirmation camps main goal is to give the young participants tools for life as a Christian and strengthen their faith in God (National Church Council 2018, 3), when a camp for families in need of support, usually have the main goal of providing a chance to have a moment in a different environment with organized and instructed activities (Oivanki ry 2023a). Besides the camp participants own goals, the activities that Oivanki staff instructs have their specific goals that are based on the youth centre pedagogy and values mentioned earlier in the knowledge base.

One example of an activity organized and instructed by Oivanki staff could be Wilderness skills. This activity has goals such as working as part of a team, taking others into account, learning about safe actions in wilderness, learning skills such as making a fire, and reflecting

ones own connection to nature. These goals link to the pedagogical foundation such as learning through experience and strengthening the human nature connection.

All activities, like Wilderness skills mentioned above, can be modified depending on the groups needs and preferences. Programme for each group coming to Oivanki is created together with camp participants and instructors, and the programme is designed in a way that it takes into account the different needs and goals of the group.

3.5 Development needs and goals of a youth centre

Finnish youth centres that are part of the Youth Centre Network follow a common strategy. As mentioned earlier in the knowledge base, Finnish Youth Centre Network follows the current Youth Act and the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme, and those guide the development of youth centres. Development goals and measures are drawn from the Youth Act and Youth Policy, but development needs can also arise from development discussions held in the youth centres, or from the Ministry of Education and Culture. (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023c, chapter 1.)

The current strategy of the Youth Centre Network has set out development goals and objectives for the youth centres to follow and implement in their work. There are designated task forces for different development areas within the network, like Nuotta training, international youth work and outdoor and adventure education. These different sectors have their own focus areas and developmental objectives. The main developmental team within the Youth Centre Network is called NuKe (Nuorisokeskusten kehittäjät). In the core of their work is to develop the pedagogical approach and build and strengthen the partnerships. (Ibid., chapter 1.)

As mentioned earlier in the Need for the thesis -chapter, using the feedback gathered through Zeffi online survey was one of the objectives in Youth Centre Networks strategy 2023. Using authentic customer feedback can certainly be beneficial for communications of any organization, but feedback can also help meet and identify many development needs of the youth centres as is intended in this thesis.

4 FEEDBACK SURVEY

4.1 Zeffi online survey

Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre uses Zeffi (zef.fi) online survey tool to gather feedback from their visitors. Name Zef comes from “Z-scored Electronic Feedback” and the patented Intelligent Zoom analysis method that Zef uses, is based on this statistical method. AI-analysis using Intelligent Zoom (patented method) highlights which development targets matter the most. (Zeffi 2023.)

Zeffi online survey is used in all the Finnish youth centres that are part of the Youth Centre Network. This method of gathering feedback was put to use in 2022. Using the gathered feedback is one of the objectives in the Finnish Youth Centre Networks strategy 2023 (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023c, 11). In the beginning of the feedback survey, it is stated for the respondent that Youth Centre Network intends to use the collected feedback for assuring quality, in communication and to develop activities (see Appendix 1). Feedback survey provides the Youth Centre Network valuable information on how well the youth centres meet the objectives set out by the Youth Act.

Feedback survey is shared via sending a link. Oivanki staff usually shares the link by sending it to the responsible instructor of the camp and they then share it with the camp participants. Each respondent then should fill the survey, but it cannot be guaranteed that this happens every time.

In this thesis I will analyse feedback that has been gathered from participants of confirmation camps, association’s camps, sport camps and other youth camps that do not fit under any other category in the feedback survey. There is a different survey used for camp visitors and camp instructors that come to Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre. To clarify, camp visitor in this feedback survey means mainly young people participating a camp and camp instructor means instructor who comes to visit Oivanki together with the group they are guiding and responsible of. All the feedback is collected anonymously. It is good to note that anonymity affects the analysis done in this thesis, as there was no possibility to ask any further clarificative questions from the respondents.

Zeffi platform offers sentiment analysis option when analysing textual data. This analysis method lists the textual feedback from positive to negative on scale -10 - +10. (Vainikainen

2023.) However, I decided not to focus too much on the given scale, as I did not see it very valid. Questions in the survey were formed in a way that the listing of answers from negative to positive did not really add more meaning to the answers. Question like "What was good about the day/camp? Why?" would automatically receive a more positive score and "How could we improve our activities?" would receive a negative score.

For analysing the qualitative data, it can be a challenge to be sure that it is not misunderstood or misinterpreted what the respondent wanted to say (Kuada 2012, 100). Especially in this case, when there was no chance to make any clarifying questions to the respondents, I just tried my best to make correct interpretation of the written feedback received from the respondents.

For the quantitative data analysis, Zeffi platform is very user friendly as it automatically combines the answers and counts the averages and percentage of consensus. I used these offered methods for analysing the feedback in this thesis.

4.2 Survey content

In the survey, respondents were asked to answer questions with either using a rating system from one to five, using a Likert scale with the following options; Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree or Undecided, or by leaving written comments. Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered. It is good to note that in the survey, responding to each question was not required and therefore some questions received less responses than others. This difference could be mostly seen between questions that required written answer and using the Likert scale to answer. Not every respondent left written feedback.

Survey for camp visitors includes section with questions regarding premises and service of the youth centre they visited, section with rating of general satisfaction on different topics, and lastly, a section with general feedback and chance to leave written feedback. Below you can see an example of the survey question.

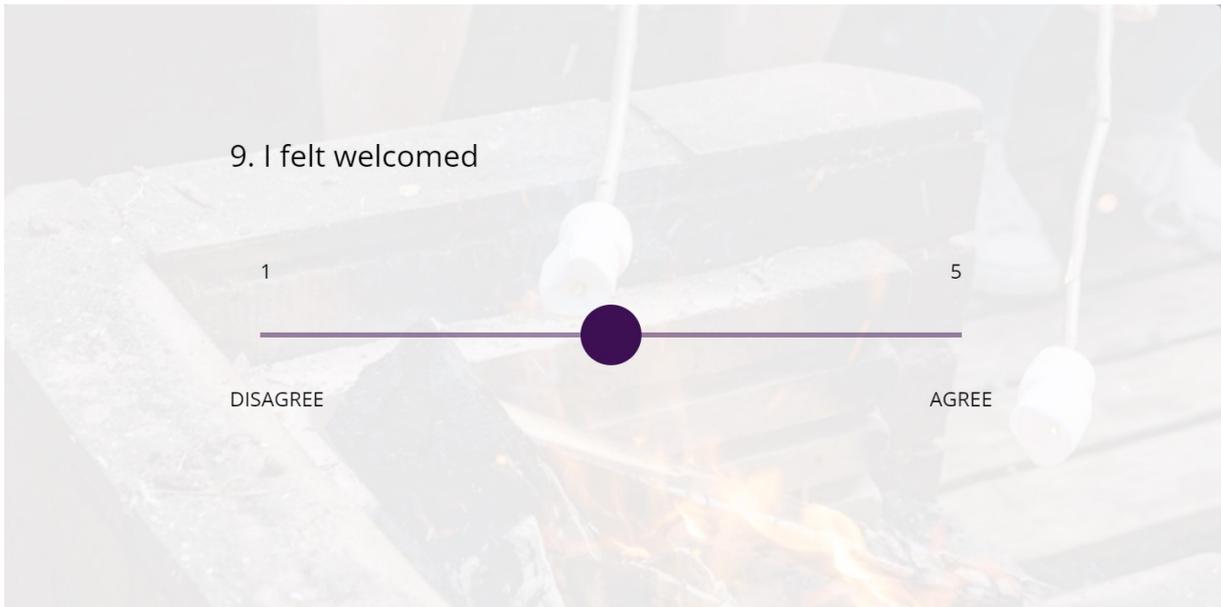


Image 2: Example picture from camp visitor survey (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023).

Survey for camp instructors also includes section with questions regarding premises and service of the youth centre they visited and second section with general feedback questions and a chance to leave written feedback. Below you can see an example of the survey question.

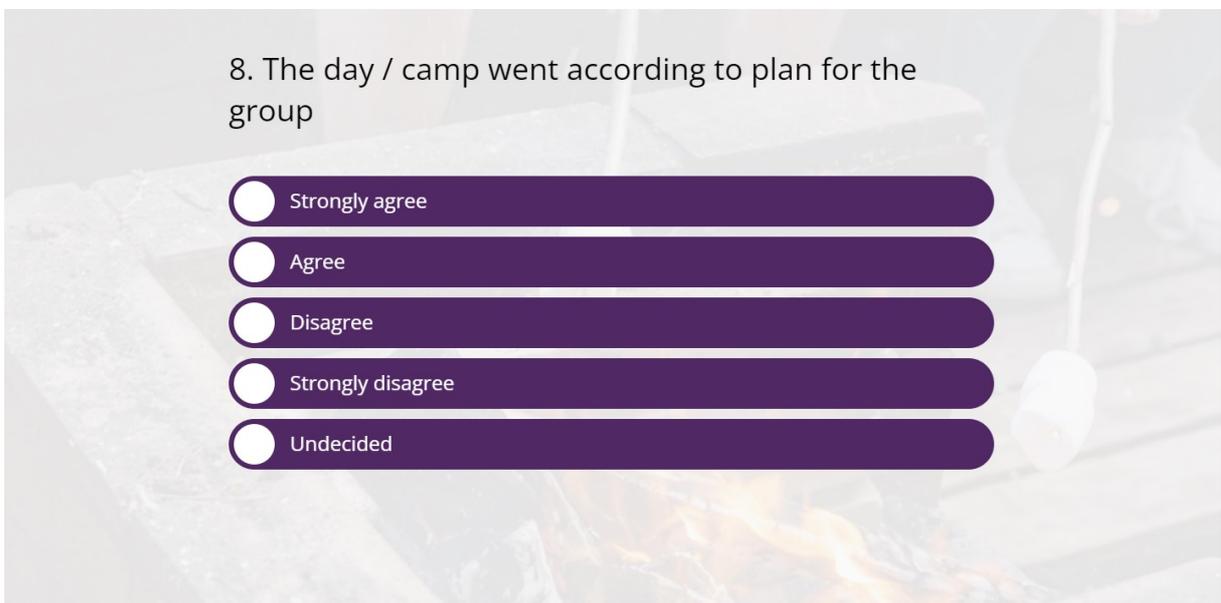


Image 3: Example picture from camp instructors survey (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023).

5 FEEDBACK ANALYSIS

5.1 Camp visitor feedback

Between January 2023 and September 2023 there was 205 answers received from camp visitors. 91 answers from confirmation camp participants, 16 from association camp participants, 15 from sport camp participants, 45 from other children or youth camp participants and 22 from some other type of camp participants. These other type of camp participants answered in the follow up question that they were part of parish trip or camp, sport camp, scouts camp, family camp or association's youth camp. Few school camp participants had also answered this camp participant feedback survey, although they have their own feedback survey. From the respondents, 5 answered that they are 6-9 years, 33 answered 10-13 years, 128 answered 14-16 years and 34 answered over 16 years. Consensus between the respondents was 71 %. This percentage shows how similar their opinions were on average.

When analysing the camp visitors feedback it was important to note the limitations of anonymous survey. Limitations can include respondents failing to tell the truth and lacking a contextualisation of responds (Bradford & Cullen 2011, 121). Collected feedback included few answers that seemed to be some kind of an inside joke of the respondent, and these answers were left out when analysing the data. Another thing to note is that many of the camp visitors had also activities that were not organized by Oivanki staff and were only part of their own programme with their own instructors. Therefore, the feedback gathered could have included answers that were directed towards camps own instructors or programme and did not concern Oivanki's practices or staff.

Feedback received from camp visitors was mainly positive. When the scale from 1 to 5 was used, the premises and service section of the survey got 4.2 total average score and section for satisfaction the total average score was 4.4. Below you can see the tables of average answers given for the premises and service section and for satisfaction. On the next chapters I will examine the feedback received from camp visitors a bit closer.

Table 1: Premises and service answers. Scale 1 = disagree, 5 = agree.

	A. Premises and service. (total average: 4.2)
	1. The food was good (average: 3.6)
	2. The premises were tidy (average: 4.2)
	3. It was a pleasant environment (average: 4.4)
	4. There was good customer service (average: 4.5)
	5. Environmental issues / sustainable development was taken into account in diverse ways (average: 4.1)
	Scale 1-5

Table 2: Rate of satisfaction. Scale 1 = disagree, 5 = agree.

	A. Please rate your satisfaction. (total average: 4.4)
	1. I felt welcomed (average: 4.5)
	2. I liked the camp (average: 4.6)
	3. I felt safe at the youth centre (average: 4.7)
	4. I learned new skills and other things (average: 4.1)

	5. I believe I did well in camp (average: 4.4)
	6. I made new friends (average: 4.0)
	Scale 1-5

5.2 Strong points of the operations based on camp visitor feedback

Feeling safe at the youth centre got an average score of 4.7 from the camp visitors. This indicates that one of the core values of youth centres, providing safe experiences, has been fulfilled very well based on this feedback. Most of the camp visitors also said that they liked the camp they participated as the average score was 4.6 and in the section of rating the camp from 1 to 5 the average was 4.4.

This positive feedback was also backed up on the written comments. Positive written feedback about diverse activities and opportunities to be active in many ways, were received from camp participants. This type of feedback shows that camp participants are actively participating in the program. Based on this, it seems that Oivanki has been successful in meeting one of the objectives set out in the pedagogical approach and is able to promote the active participation of young people.

“Spending time with other people and doing things together.”

Comment above was received from one camp visitor as an answer to the question “Please, describe the nicest thing on the camp?”. Being together with other people, simply spending time with friends and being surrounded by nice people seemed to be one of the common themes amongst answers received. This I believe is, and should be, in the core when organizing camps for young people. Supporting the agency and involvement of young people and social empowerment are one of the main objectives of youth camps organized in the youth centres (Suomen nuorisokeskusyhdistys ry 2023d). Teamwork and doing things together with other people are very central part of the camp experience and this feedback shows the importance of it to the young people.

5.3 Improvement needs based on camp visitor feedback

On the premises and service section of the survey, food received the lowest average score (3.6) from camp visitors. This can partly be due to matter of taste, but perhaps could be examined further. Food lacking versatility and overall taste received also written feedback from the camp visitors.

On the second section, overall satisfaction, lowest average score 4.0 was on the claim of making new friends during the camp. Here it should be noted that often camp visitors join the camp with people that they already know. However, in the written feedback there were multiple comments about making new friends and getting to know new people. It often depends on the camp instructors and the programme they create, how much they promote group forming and team building in the program. Focusing more on this topic could be beneficial and it is often a theme in the activities that Oivanki offers for the groups.

Satisfaction on learning new skills received an average score of 4.1 from camp participants. Learning new skills, and noticing what has been learned, very often requires reflection. Theoretical concepts in the field of experiential learning point out the importance of reflection when it comes to learning new skills. Like in the Kolb's learning cycle, reflection is emphasized as one part of the process where experience leads to reflection and observation, then to conceptualization and then to experimenting. Kolb suggests that effective learning happens when a person goes through each state of this process. (Jeffs & Ord 2017, 40-43.) Reflection as a tool for learning is also part of the pedagogical approach that youth centres use. As was mentioned in the knowledge base, dialogue and activities should go hand in hand when designing and executing programs.

Lastly, condition of the accommodation premises and lack of cleanliness received few written comments from the camp visitors, and this could be examined further between Oivanki staff members.

5.4 Analysis of camp instructor feedback

Between January 2023 and September 2023 there was 51 answers received from camp instructors. From the respondents, 33 were from parish, 3 from association, 7 from municipality and 5 from some other type of operator and from those 5, 4 answered in the follow up questions

that they were part of a sports club. 0 answers were from private operators. Consensus between the respondents was 68 %. This percentage shows how similar their opinions were on average.

As most of the answers were from camp instructors that were from parish, it is good to note that most of the confirmation camps have their own programme during the camps. Usually, few activities that are organized and instructed by Oivanki staff is included in the confirmation camp programme. Another thing to note is that in the feedback gathered from camp instructors, there could have been some answers from camp visitors included, as it cannot always be guaranteed that the respondents choose the correct survey to answer.

Below you can see a table of average answers given for the premises and service section by camp instructors. On the next chapter I will examine the feedback received from camp instructors a bit closer.

Table 3: Premises and service answers. Scale 1 = disagree, 5 = agree.

	A. Premises and service. (total average: 4.4)
	1. The food was good (average: 4.4)
	2. The premises were tidy (average: 4.3)
	3. It was a pleasant environment (average: 4.7)
	4. There was good customer service (average: 4.7)
	5. Environmental issues / sustainable development was taken into account in diverse ways (average: 4.2)
	Scale 1-5

5.5 Strong points of the operations based on camp instructor feedback

Overall services of Oivanki received very positive feedback from camp instructors. Main subjects on the positive written feedback seemed to be versatile possibilities for different activities, seeing young people enjoy and have fun, and good customer service from the professional staff of Oivanki. On the premises and service section of the survey, highest average score of 4.7 was given for good customer service and pleasant environment. General satisfaction with the services received the good average score of 4.6.

“Versatile activities where everyone got to succeed and exceed oneself.”

Comment above was received from one camp instructor as an answer to the question “What was good about the day/camp? Why?”. Several similar comments were made by other respondents.

On contradictory to camp visitors feedback, quality and diversity of food received mainly positive feedback from camp instructors. On the premises and service section of the survey, food received the average score of 4.4, when in the camp visitors survey the average score was 3.6.

5.6 Improvement needs based on camp instructor feedback

On the premises and service section of the survey, environmental issues and sustainable development matters received the lowest average score (4.2). This topic also received some written feedback from the camp instructors, noting things like recycling possibilities. However, it should be noted that Oivanki has already done a lot of development work recently in this area and they have received a Green Key certification in the autumn of 2023. This certification and the Green Key programme require continued focus on sustainability on various aspects of the operations (Going Green Oy 2023).

From the written feedback section, two key areas of development arose: communication and condition of the premises. Improvement suggestions from the camp instructors were mainly concerning communication between different operators of Oivanki and unclear instructions originating from the lack of clear communication. Other topic that came up more than once, was the condition of accommodation and communal spaces.

Enhanced communication among Oivanki staff and consistent instructions for all employees could be beneficial for the operations and improve the camp experience. Additionally, addressing the condition and comfort of accommodation facilities, including small factors like curtains or blinds, could contribute to overall satisfaction.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In a conclusion, the camp operations in Oivanki Outdoor Education Centre received mostly very positive feedback from both, camp visitors and camp instructors. Here are the key conclusions drawn from the feedback analysis:

Strong points of operations:

- **Feeling Safe:** Camp visitors felt safe at the youth center, indicating that Oivanki successfully provided secure experiences, that align with the core values of Finnish youth centers.
- **Enjoyable Camp Experience:** Most participants expressed a high level of satisfaction and enjoyment during their camp stay, emphasizing the importance of social interactions, teamwork, and spending quality time with friends.
- **Versatile Activities:** Camp instructors appreciated the diverse activity options, enabling every participant to succeed and exceed their expectations. Diverse activities received positive comments also from the camp visitors.
- **Good Customer Service:** Oivanki staff received praise for their professionalism and excellent customer service, contributing to a positive environment during camps.

Areas of improvement:

- **Environmental Sustainability:** Although there has been huge development in this sector, there is always room for improvement in environmental initiatives and sustainable practices.
- **Communication:** Clear and consistent communication among Oivanki staff is crucial for a seamless camp experience for every person involved. Addressing communication gaps could improve overall operations.
- **Accommodation and Premises:** Feedback received was emphasizing the need for attention to details and overall comfort of the premises.

Ensuring that participants feel safe and supported reflects the core values of youth centers. Each individual is respected as who they are. The knowledge base highlights the importance of creating an open and warm environment, fostering reciprocal interactions between staff of Oivanki

and camp participants. This aligns with the positive outcomes derived from the camp experiences, such as connecting with other people during the camp and feeling safe. Good customer service also received positive feedback, and this supports how important it is to create an open and safe environment where everyone can feel welcome.

Versatile activities and the feedback indicating that participants were able to have positive experiences shows the importance of the experiential learning methods and learning by doing that are in the core of youth centres' pedagogical approach. These positive experiences and feeling of succeeding can promote the positive outcomes of camp such as increased self-esteem.

It is important to note that anonymous surveys have their limitations, such as the potential for respondents to provide inaccurate information or lack contextualization in their responses. Furthermore, some camp visitors' feedback may have been directed at their own programme or instructors rather than Oivanki's practices or staff. Another thing to note is that the feedback analysed in this thesis is only just a small portion of the total feedback that Oivanki receives from their visitors. To be able to obtain even better perception of the topics that were chosen to the feedback survey used in this thesis, the chance to ask further questions would be useful, but cannot be obtained when using an anonymous online survey. Zeffi online platform offers a lot of useful tools to examine the collected feedback, and to be able to put focus on the feedback regularly can be very beneficial.

I wish that the analysis of camp participant and instructor feedback in this thesis can provide some valuable insight for Oivanki to build upon its strengths and address areas for improvement. These findings can guide future efforts to enhance the camp experience, ensuring that Oivanki remains a safe, enjoyable, and enriching environment for all their visitors.

In addition, this thesis work can hold potential to benefit other youth centres in their development of camp practices. The key findings presented here offer ideas how to enhance the overall camp experience for participants and instructors, and other youth centres could possibly adapt these findings to the unique needs of their visitors. This thesis draws focus on the important topics such as sustainable development and communication and indicates how these themes are important from the visitor point of view. The collaboration opportunities within the Finnish Youth Centre Network can further improve the impact of these findings, promoting development across all youth centers in Finland.

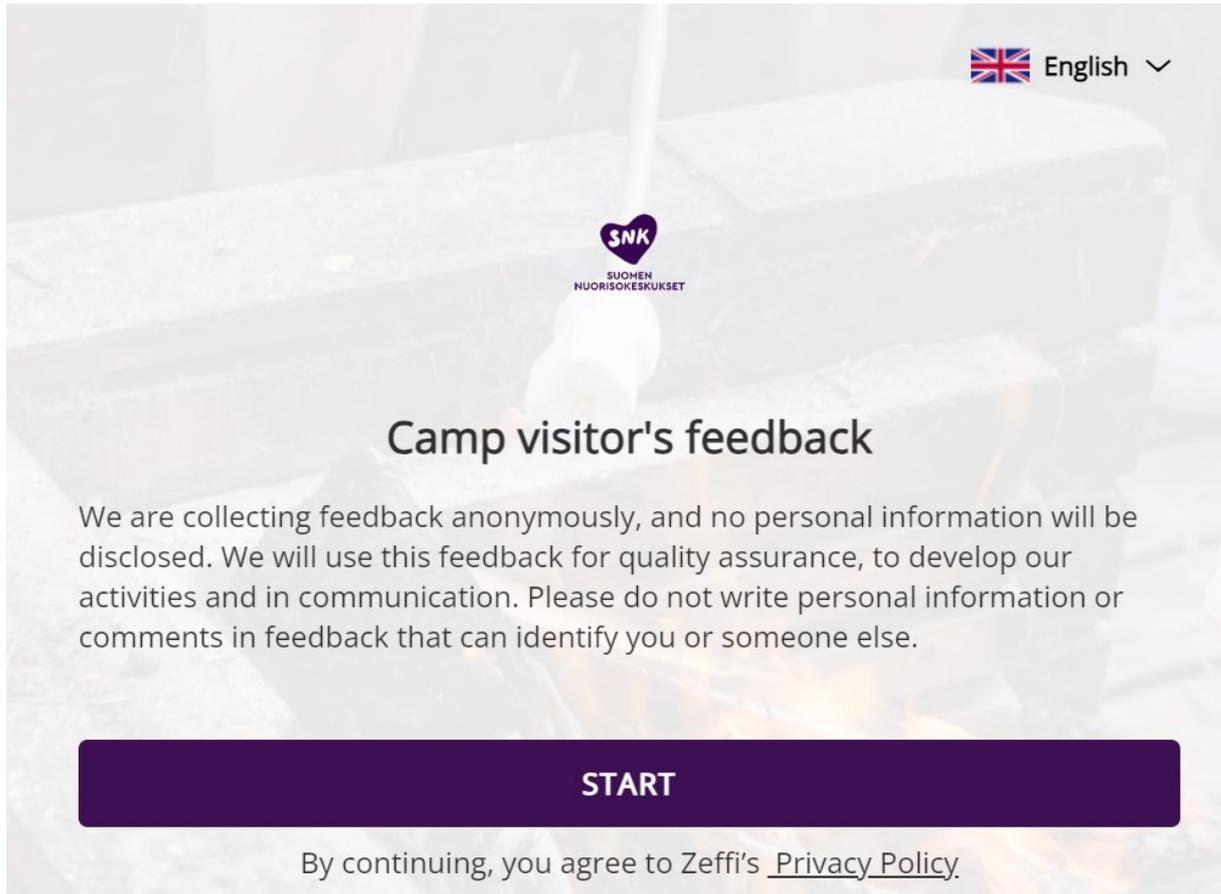
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Example picture of feedback survey start page



Appendix 2: Camp visitor survey questions

Age:

- 6-9 years
- 10-13 years
- 14-16 years
- Over 16 years

What kind of camp did you visit?

- Confirmation camp
- Association's camp
- Sport camp
- Other youth camp
- Something else, what?

Premises and service:

On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being DISAGREE and 5 AGREE. Choose the number that best describes your opinion.

- The food was good
- The premises were tidy
- It was a pleasant environment
- There was good customer service
- Environmental issues/sustainable development was taken into account in diverse ways

Please rate your satisfaction:

On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being DISAGREE and 5 AGREE. Choose the number that best describes your opinion.

- I felt welcomed
- I liked the camp
- I felt safe at the youth centre
- I learned new skills and other things
- I believe I did well in camp
- I made new friends

Feedback:

How many stars would you give the camp? (1 to 5)

Open feedback:

Please, describe the nicest thing on the camp.

Would you like to give us any additional feedback?

Appendix 3: Camp instructor survey questions

The organization I represent:

- Parish
- NGO
- Municipality
- Private actor
- Other, what?

Premises and service:

On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being DISAGREE and 5 AGREE. Choose the number that best describes your opinion.

- The food was good
- The premises were tidy
- It was a pleasant environment
- There was good customer service
- Environmental issues/sustainable development was taken into account in diverse ways

Feedback section: (Choose one option)

The day/camp went according to plan for the group:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Undecided

I got new ideas and/or tools for my work:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Undecided

What we did corresponded to what we agreed on:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Undecided

The instructors had a professional way of working with the group:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Undecided

Open feedback:

What was good about the day/camp? Why?

How could we improve our activities?

Please rate your satisfaction with our services: 1 being satisfactory and 5 being excellent.