STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS: WHAT FUTURE FOR YOUTH WORK?

Edited by Ian Fyfe & Stuart Moir

CONCEPT

THE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION PRACTICE THEORY

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2"><h2 align="center">CONTENTS</h2></td></tr>
<tr><td>1. **Introduction**
Ian Fyfe & Stuart Moir</td><td>**3 – 5**</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. **Standing at the crossroads – What future for Youth Work?**
Ian Fyfe & Stuart Moir</td><td>**6 – 18**</td></tr>
<tr><td>3. **What ever happened to radical Youth Work?**
Tony Jeffs</td><td>**19 – 25**</td></tr>
<tr><td>4. **Being critical, creative and collective: renewing radical Youth Work.**
Tony Taylor</td><td>**26 – 33**</td></tr>
<tr><td>5. **An empowering approach to working with young people.**
Dod Forrest</td><td>**34 – 45**</td></tr>
<tr><td>6. **Young People, social inclusion and social action.**
Ian Fyfe</td><td>**46 – 56**</td></tr>
<tr><td>7. **Without conditions attached: Towards making participation rights a reality for all Scotland's children and young people.**
Lynne Tammi</td><td>**57 – 70**</td></tr>
<tr><td>8. **The Democracy Challenge: Young people and voter registration.**
Stuart Moir</td><td>**71 – 80**</td></tr>
<tr><td>9. **Are we really moving forward? Evaluating the impact of the national Youth Work strategy.**
Mike Bell</td><td>**81 – 93**</td></tr>
<tr><td>10. **Does Youth have a future?**
Stuart Waiton</td><td>**94 – 100**</td></tr>
<tr><td>11. **Ready, steady, race to the bottom! The dangers of Youth Work serving as a sector of the economy.**
Lynn Hill</td><td>**101 – 111**</td></tr>
<tr><td>12. **Poverty and youth transition.**
Alan Mackie</td><td>**112 – 122**</td></tr>
<tr><td>13. **Notes on Contributors.**</td><td>**123 - 124**</td></tr>
</table>

CONCEPT
THE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION PRACTICE THEORY

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

1. Introduction

For over 20 years *Concept* has been engaging critically with theoretical ideas and policy discourses that shape youth work practice. Over that time, the journal has published a diverse range of articles and reviews focussed on aspects of youth work from the perspective of practitioners and academic commentators alike. In 1998 *Concept* published an edited collection of articles relating to youth work theory and practice entitled *Conceptualising Youth Work: Back to the future*.

This second youth work reader brings together some of the published work from *Concept* over the past decade, together with new writing that reflects current thinking, challenges and concerns for practice. The publication of these contemporary pieces of work is in part the culmination of collaboration between *Concept* and youth work colleagues engaged in face-to face practice. Also, the re-published archived papers have in most cases been updated by the respective authors, bringing fresh meaning to topics explored in the original work. The result is a snapshot of the dominant ideas pervading policy and the field of practice.

There has been a growing sense that youth work is under a critical spotlight; resulting in a range of responses that defend and reaffirm the merits, traditions and principles that set youth work apart from other approaches to working with young people. The specific political and policy context of Scotland provides the backdrop for the bulk of the written contributions in this collection, although the issues considered will surely resonate across a wider community of youth work colleagues.

The opening paper by the editors suggests that the field of youth work is at a metaphorical crossroads. It takes a look back at the policy and practice developments over the last ten years in order to explain where we are and how we got here. Yet it also attempts to highlight some of the possible routes open to the field into the future. Following on from this, Tony Jeffs poses a deep and challenging question. He asks "what ever happened to radical youth work"? Underlying such a question is an attempt to reengage the reader with the historical

antecedents of contemporary youth work practice. For Jeffs, radical work is characterised by 'workers committed to not merely working with young people, but working with young people in order to try to create a better society' This is a sentiment reflected throughout this collection of papers which is presented as an addition to the recent swell of youth work-related publications and commentary.

The papers in this series go on, in their own way, to address Tony Jeffs' question as well as showcase the possibilities for change and development in the future. A number of themes emerge which point to some key issues faced by young people today whilst at the same time highlighting the challenges, constraints and opportunities faced in contemporary practice. These include: the identity, role and purpose of the youth work practitioner; young people's rights and their perceived lack of political participation; the impact of the negative perceptions of young people in the media and policy; youth unemployment, and the impact of the economic crisis. Consistent across the selected papers is acknowledgement of a dominant managerial culture of performance measurement and outcome-focused approaches. Central to this is consideration of how practice can be shaped in the future.

The papers in this volume fall into general thematic groupings starting with Tony Jeffs challenge to revisit the ideas of radical youth work. The following articles from Tony Taylor, Dod Forrest and Ian Fyfe, explore in different ways approaches to working with young people which help them think about their world and find their own ways to act to change it for the better.

The papers by Lynne Tammi and Stuart Moir analyse the relationship between young people's rights and their political participation. Tammi explores the opportunities and constraints involved in young people achieving their rights as envisioned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), whilst Moir looks at the lack of electoral participation by young people and offers a possible means to increase their participation in the electoral process.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Both Stuart Waiton and Mike Bell take a critical look at aspects of the current policy context and the ways they frame work with young people. Bell offers a critical review of policy in Scotland and suggests that there is a conceptual tension between the thrust of government policy and the traditions, methods and approaches of youth work. Waiton investigates the way in which negative perceptions of young people as 'neds' and 'yobs' can have an impact on policy which sees young people as presenting problems that need to be 'fixed' rather than in terms of the need to promote and support their positive development for the future.

The closing papers from Alan Mackie and Lynn Hill review the current economic crisis and how this impacts on the lives and lifestyles of young people and the professional field of practice. Both authors raise concerns about the dangers of narrowing down and allying the purpose of youth work with the demands of the labour market.

We think this volume of papers will provide those with an interest in young people and youth work with a critical analysis of the current policy and practice context, but perhaps more importantly it can also offer some practical tools and approaches which may motivate and inspire those in the field who want to develop or sustain a more critical approach and who want to "work with young people in order to try to create a better society".

Ian Fyfe & Stuart Moir

July 2012

2. Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Ian Fyfe & Stuart Moir

Introduction

The collection of papers in this reader straddle a period of significant political change. The first decade of the twentieth century will inevitably be synonymous with the ongoing global economic crisis. In this opening paper we map out the journey ahead for youth work with a glance back over some key markers of the past decade that have shaped the priorities for contemporary practice. Symbolically, youth work appears to be a crossroads - looking to the past for inspiration in order to make better sense of the current context and ultimately gauge the best way forward. There are choices, albeit limited, about which direction to take. The available routes ahead are significantly shaped by the political and policy imperatives of government. Metaphorically, reliance on a 'GPS' to inform the future journey for youth work is likely to be locked into the priorities of the state; subsequently the directions for practice are predetermined. We conclude that the future challenges for youth work practitioners include a need to critically take stock of the ever-changing context in order to assist in taking the best steps forward.

The Scottish Context – Looking back

The election of the UK New Labour government in 1997 paved the way for a programme of constitutional reform ultimately leading to the reestablishment of a Scottish Parliament in May 1999, the first for almost 300 years. The resultant devolution of power from the UK Westminster government realigned responsibility for key policy areas affecting children and young people to the Scottish Parliament. The subsequent implementation of state-sponsored services targeted at young people was steered by the three discrete policy themes of lifelong learning, social inclusion and active citizenship, the pillars of the new Labour vision for Scotland (Scottish Office 1998).

The historical period covered by this reader is generally referred to in the British context as the 'New Labour' years (Banks 2010). The political rhetoric of the respective UK governments and in post-devolution Scotland has shifted inevitably. Yet, for some

6

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

commentators the ideological thread of neo-liberlism has weaved through the various political machinations providing an ideological link between the changing administrations (Davidson, McCafferty, & Miller 2010). In essence, we have experienced a distinct political era characterised by regimes that span a left-right ideological spectrum and form 'part of the broader international hegemony of neo-liberalism' (Simmons & Thompson 2011, p.4). Such a trend has been evident across many western democracies.

The political configuration of the Scottish Government[1] has changed through the post-devolution elections held respectively in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. However, it is not the intention here to elucidate in detail the specific changing political climate in Scotland. By way of a summary, the first two post-devolution elections resulted in a coalition between the Labour and Liberal Democrat Parties in control of the Scottish Executive. Power shifted in 2007 with the Scottish National Party forming a minority government. Their position of influence was consolidated in 2011 when the electorate returned them to power, on this occasion with a clear majority.

Whilst the underlying political project of new Labour was generally welcomed across the UK in the late 1990s, significant changes in the perceived priorities for youth work provoked new tensions. Shifting emphasis highlighted an apparent imbalance of resource-driven intervention directed at addressing specific 'youth issues', such as risk-taking behaviour, employability (unemployment) and community safety. Consequently, concern with each of these broad jurisdictions for practice was fuelled by an underlying deficit discourse; blame was commonly apportioned to the lives and lifestyles of the youth of the time.

Since devolution in 1999, the relationship between young Scots and the policy agenda targeted at them has at times been confusing and contradictory. Generally, the public image of young people has become poor, generating new pressures on youth workers to respond to the alleged growing youth problem. Despite the visionary policy rhetoric that proclaimed the emergence of a 'new' Scotland 'where everyone matters' (Scottish Executive 1999), young people have all too often been portrayed in public discourse as victims of a perceived

---

[1] The name Scottish Government was adopted from 2007 onwards, previous post-devolution administrations operated under the title of the Scottish Executive.

generational slide towards political apathy, social exclusion, poor health, criminality and welfare dependency resulting from long term unemployment.

Historically, youth work has responded in principle to the expressed needs of young people; as Wylie argues 'at its best, youth work has been a service driven by local imperatives' (2010, p.7). Practitioners often lay claim to having the creative capacity to hone their methods and approaches to engage meaningfully with the changing lives and lifestyles of the younger generation. In recent times, the unrelenting drive of policy has taken hold with the result that the sector, from community level up to strategic management has 'been too ready to take on the jargon of funding bodies' (Davies 2011, p.25). The homogenised labelling of young people is nothing new, but current practice initiatives also appear to be increasingly locked into the language and outcome-driven priorities of policy.

The past decade has been characterised by an emerging paradox between a desire to build the democratic capacity of our young citizens to take more control of their lives, alongside an ever-increasing expectation that modes of youth work practice can and should control their perceived deviant behaviour (Barry 2005). This conflicting vision has become all too pervasive and succinctly captured by Bradford (2004) who observed:

> Youth work has been increasingly drawn into initiatives explicitly designed to manage specific groups of young people, particularly those thought to be 'at risk' of involvement in criminal activity…..Youth work's history is predicated on the idea that young people (*qua* adolescents) are *essentially* vulnerable (and thus at risk). Young people are likely to remain a source of political and social concern, and no doubt new aspects of youth risk wait to be revealed or constructed. Youth work, in one form or another, will continue to offer a flexible means of contributing to the governance of young people (p. 252).

It is within this contested policy terrain that youth work has been positioned, resulting in shifting priorities for the practitioner, allied with competing demands on resources.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

For many governments, austerity measures have become necessary to ensure efficiency of public spending within diminished budgets. In funding terms 'things have got a little less flexible over the last decade or so' with governments becoming 'more adept at managing community organisations' (Sercombe 2010, p.79). Added to the bureaucratic mechanisms of government, youth work services and agencies are also faced with external inspection of the outcomes of their work.

The financial resources available for youth work have become highly competitive, with dwindling funds available to the respective state-sponsored and third sectors. This, in turn, has impacted directly on the role and purpose of the youth work practitioner. For Wylie (2010), the contemporary economic and political landscape is 'chilling', with youth work operating within a context dominated by neo-liberal notions of market competitiveness (p.7). More and more we witness the goals of practice shaded by dedicated funding streams frequently at odds with the real needs of young people living in local neighbourhoods. For many youth-oriented services, competitive bidding for dedicated funding has become the norm, shaping practice priorities set against predetermined outcomes; often with tokenistic or indeed no consideration of the views of young people themselves. Whilst youth work practitioners find themselves in direct competition for funds, the common expectation is they also work together in partnership.

Increasingly, youth workers are engaged in a multi-disciplinary field of practice occupied by a diverse range of professional colleagues with whom they are strongly encouraged to form alliances and plan shared goals. Indeed, the integration and co-location of youth services is now a commonplace scenario and an overriding feature of the Scottish policy context (for example Scottish Government 2009 & 2012a). Across Scotland, the once-discrete profession of Community Education, of which youth work was a core domain of practice, has become subsumed within a diverse range of local government departments and subsequently marketed by the Scottish Government more as an 'approach' to service delivery (Scottish Executive 2003).

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Essentially, the longstanding principles, traditions and characteristics that typify youth work in Scotland (and beyond) have been embraced by a diversity of professional colleagues in other practice areas such as social work, leisure, recreation, health promotion and law enforcement. The impact of this context on the collection of voluntary, faith-based and uniformed organisations that make up the Third Sector will undoubtedly have a far-reaching and devastating effect on the long-term stability of discrete local youth work services and projects.

Jeffs (2011) suggests we are witnessing a post-statutory era in terms of the make up of the broader youth work sector, evidenced in some parts of the UK amongst other things by the growth of youth workers employed by faith-based organisations. A sole reliance on state funding now seems an unrealistic prospect, particularly in the Third Sector. It would appear then that, alongside a genuine desire for the integration of services across sectors and between discrete professional disciplines, there is increased competition in bidding for limited funding and inevitable caveats applied to outcomes.

Against the backdrop of an emerging economic crisis over the past decade, there has been mounting emphasis on the measurement of the outcomes of youth work practice, and the perceived impact of discrete services on the lives and lifestyles of young people. For Ord (2007):

> Clarity about the outcomes and the educational achievements of youth work is enormously beneficial…Evaluation is integral and a critical perspective on the effectiveness of our interventions is crucial in the development of good practice (p.30).

The implementation of evaluative frameworks has become associated with a rise in perceived managerialist approaches to decision-making and resource allocation, described by Rose (2010) as an 'accountability model' (p.156). As a consequence, evaluation of the outcomes of youth work approaches has become an often-confusing and multifaceted activity that is characterised by a range of contrasting perceptions and purposes that tend to

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

rely heavily on a technocratic systems approach (Subrha, 2007). For Ord (2007) youth work is a qualitative process and the application of crude calculations of efficiency based on inputs and outputs is problematic and 'does not allow for the subtlety of the process' (p.81).

That said, the systematic introduction of approaches to measurement has given much-needed legitimacy to established, yet unheralded, aspects of youth work practice. A case in point is the current emphasis on post-school transitional destinations; supporting young people's development towards adulthood being a long-standing feature of youth work practice. Furthermore, the thrust for integration and joined-up working highlights the benefits of a common approach to measurement that acknowledges the discrete contribution of youth work whilst removing any ambiguity over the collective desired outcome. However, Morgan (2009) highlights some potential pitfalls and offers further insight to the marginal role of young people in shaping services:

> Outcomes may, in the short-term, drive the development of more targeted approaches to youth work but appear to be focussed on human and economic capital at the expense of social capital. The real needs of young people are often not at the centre of the policies as they continue to be viewed as recipients of programmes that are shaped 'for' them not 'by' them (p.62).

As a core feature of developments over the past decade, the predominance of pre-set targets appear in the main to be concerned with accountability and the efficient delivery of political imperatives; in other words, an approach to measurement geared towards a market-orientated mode of practice. Hence, the notion of a proactive and flexible approach to youth work – the old adage of starting where young people are at - appears to have become sidelined in favour of a compromised deference to and uncritical implementation of particular policy themes.

Taking Stock of the current context – Are we there yet?

Despite the socioeconomic changes of the past decade, the long-standing 'traditions' and values of youth work continue to feature strongly in contemporary policy literature *and*

11

academic commentary. The Scottish Executive (2007) acknowledges that the overriding purpose of youth work is:

> To promote achievement by young people through facilitating their personal, social and educational development and enabling them to gain a voice, influence and place in society (p.12).

In definitional terms at least, youth work in Scotland is still above all concerned with the social, personal and political development of young people. The antecedents of contemporary practice continue to hold leverage in determining the overall purpose of youth work. The *Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work* published by Youthlink Scotland (2009) refreshed some long-standing principles of youth work: young people choosing to participate; the work must build from the interests and experiences of young people; recognising the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process. More recently, a call was made on the Scottish Government to give greater recognition to the impact of youth work in terms of positive outcomes for young people, delivery of core policy imperatives and the social return on investment in services (Youthlink Scotland 2011).

Moreover, significant progress has been made in terms of cementing the professional identity of the youth work practitioner in the broader field of youth service providers. Greater consideration has been given to the ethical dimensions of youth work practice with a flurry of publications (for example Banks 2011 & Sercombe 2011). Contemporary response to this important aspect of practice is further evidenced in the publication of a code of ethics for Community Learning and Development workers in Scotland, with an emphasis on youth work practice (CLD Standards Council 2011). Workforce development has also become a feature of the youth work sector typified by the delivery across many local communities of a *Professional Development Award in Youth Work*, an accredited training programme targeted at volunteer and part-time youth workers (SQA 2012). The sector in Scotland appears to be on the offensive in relation to the long-term future and security of youth work services through establishment of a national introductory-level training programme and enhancing the professional profile and approach of practitioners.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

This is not to suggest a *fait accompli* for the practice profile of the modern-day youth worker; or alternatively that complacency is an option. Batsleer (2010) contends that contemporary youth work:

> occupies an ambivalent space; on the one hand appearing to be under
> threat and on the other hand being valued and in demand, on
> condition that it constantly reinvents itself (p.153).

A timely reminder of the dynamic agency of the youth work practitioner is set out by Coburn (2010) who states that youth work is a 'negotiated venture, involving young people and youth workers in collaboration to develop the work they do together' (p. 35). The primary goal in this collaborative endeavour is to strike a balance between the political priorities enshrined in policy and the educational possibilities of practice in meeting the needs of young people. Perhaps an ongoing objective is to tip the balance in favour of practice that more effectively responds to the needs and aspirations of young people. The resultant markers of 'good practice' could provide more meaningful alternatives to those based merely on technocratic measurement regimes applied to outcomes relating to political imperatives. Returning to our metaphor, it is essential that the youth work road map shows the minor roads to change as well as the major motorways!

The ongoing need for reinvention and repositioning of youth work is also influenced by the changing social conditions affecting young people. As is the case in similar advanced democracies, the spectre of unemployment hangs over the current generation of young Scots. The transition between the perceived status of youth and adult is atypically characterised for many young people by protracted and broken pathways between education, training and insecure employment. There is a genuine concern for the future of today's youth related to a fear of the potentially lasting effects of negative destinations faced in the course of the transitional experience. Clearly, youth work has a key role to play in supporting successful navigation towards independent adulthood, regardless of how we determine positive destinations in the future.

13

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

A consistent criticism aimed at young people over the past decade has been their apparent disengagement from the institutions and processes of politics. Whilst the rhetoric of youth participation has given way to broader policy notions of community engagement, a desire to nurture the agency of young people through testing their opinion on services, supporting their involved in local decision-making, governance and action persists (Fyfe 2010). The impending referendum on the constitutional future of Scotland (Scottish Government 2012b) directly raises questions about the role of young Scots in democratic participation offering up a rich arena for youth work to nurture political literacy and action amongst the next generation of voters. In itself the debate around the voting age provides exciting new terrain for informal educational work.

The Future of Youth Work - Going in the right direction?

Youth work in Scotland and farther a field is at a crossroads. Metaphorically, the journey ahead continues to be mapped against the political and policy imperatives of government at all levels. A glance at the state-programmed 'GPS' confirms a suggested route for contemporary youth work towards models and modes of practice that encompass policy themes such as employability, accreditation, well-being and crime prevention. In the Scottish policy context the goals and outcomes of youth work have been clearly aligned with the new school Curriculum for Excellence (Learning & Teaching Scotland 2010 & Youthlink Scotland 2012). The primary client group appears to be those young people in the post-school years, confirming a key role for youth work in supporting successful transitions – albeit governed in part by pre-determined destinations.

One potential negative dilemma to emerge over the past decade is whether youth work has or is losing its place as a discrete practice in the policy-driven context and burgeoning emphasis on partnership and integration. Talk of growing crisis in the broad field of youth work practice seems tangible. The current economic climate has ushered in a culture of instability (verging on fear) surrounding funding and subsequently job security. The space for creative and innovative responses to the changing lives and lifestyles of the rising generation

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

runs the risk of being squeezed by bureaucratic regimes of measurement and encoded practice outcomes.

Claims of a creeping despondency taking hold in the youth work sector appear all too real. The response in some quarters has been organised resistance to and rejection of particular changes in policy in order to protect the unique and discrete role youth workers play in the lives of young people (for example Taylor 2010, Davies 2011). Batsleer (2010) recognises the standpoint of 'permanent opposition' as a long-standing characteristic of youth work (p.153). However, such a position is in contrast to those agencies, organisations and projects continually chasing funding opportunities with chameleon-like adaptability. So how does youth work strike a balance between the political and economic uncertainties affecting practice priorities and a desire to respond effectively to the changing nature of youth? This collection of papers presents an opportunity to engage with the contested identity, role and purpose of the youth worker and interrogate the impact of current policy on modes of practice. The road ahead remains somewhat uncertain. If nothing else the time seems right for youth work practitioners to take stock, draw meaning and inspiration from the past to help understand the present and build a creative and innovative way forward in the future.

Dr Ian Fyfe
Ian is a Lecturer and Programme Director of the BA (Hons) Community Education degree programme based at the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. He has a professional background in community education and youth work. His teaching and research interests include youth work, youth studies, education for citizenship and political participation

Stuart Moir
Stuart has worked in the field of Community Education in Scotland since 1995 and always in a Local Authority context. He has been both a senior and Community Education Worker, and for a period was an Integration manager with a New Community School. In August 2012 Stuart moved from the field into an academic post at the University of Edinburgh's Moray House School of Education.

References

Banks, S. (2010) *Ethical Issues in Youth Work* (2nd Edition). Abingdon: Routledge.

Barry, M. (2005) *Youth Policy and Social Inclusion: Critical Debates with Young People.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Batsleer, J. (2010) Youth work prospects: back to the future? Batsleer, J. & Davies, B. (eds) *What is Youth Work?* Exeter: Learning Matters Ltd, pp.153-165.

Bradford, S. (2004) The management of growing up: Youth Work in community settings. Roche, J., Tucker, S., Flynn, R. & Thomson, R. (Eds.) *Youth in Society: Contemporary Theory, Policy and Practice*. pp. 245-254.

CLD Standards Council for Scotland (2011) *CLD Code of Ethics: A Youth Work Commentary* http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/files/YWC_FULL
 (Accessed July 2012)

Coburn, A. (2010) Youth work as border pedagogy. Batsleer, J. & Davies, B. (eds) *What is Youth Work?* Exeter: Learning Matters Ltd, pp. 33-46.

Davidson, N., McCafferty, P. & Miller, D. (Eds.) (2010) *Neo-liberal Scotland: Class and Society in a Stateless Nation.* Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishsing.

Davies, B. (2011) Youth work stories: in search of qualitative evidence on process and impact. *Youth & Policy*, No. 66, pp. 23-42.

Fyfe, I. (2010) Young People and Community Engagement. Tett, L. (Ed) *Community Education, Learning and Development.* Edinburgh: Dunedin, pp.69-85.

Jeffs. T (2011) Running Out of Options: Re-Modelling Youth Work. *Youth & Policy*, No.106, pp. 1-8.

Learning & Teaching Scotland (LTS) (2010) *Bridging the Gap: Improving Outcomes for Scotland's Young People through School and Youth Work Partnerships* http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Bridging_The_Gap_tcm4-552837.pdf (Accessed July 2012)

Morgan. T (2009) Measuring Outcomes in Youth Work in Northern Ireland. *Youth & Policy*, No.103, pp. 49-64.

Ord, J (2007) *Youth Work Process, Product and Practice*. Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing.

Rose, J. (2010) Monitoring and evaluating youth work. Jeffs, T. & Smith, M. (Eds.) *Youth work practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 156-167.

Scottish Office (1998) *Communities: Change through Learning* Edinburgh: HMSO

Scottish Executive (1999) *Social Justice….a Scotland where everyone matters*. Edinburgh: HMSO.
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/158142/0042789.pdf
(Accessed July 2012)

Scottish Executive (2004) *Working and learning together to build stronger communities.*
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47210/0028730.pdf
(Accessed July 2012)

Scottish Executive (2007) *Moving Forward: a Strategy for Improving Young People's Chances through Youth Work*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/169328/0047167.pdf
(Accessed July 2012)

Scottish Government (2009) *Valuing Young People: Principles and connections to support young people achieve their potential*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Scottish Government (2012a) *A guide to Getting it right for every child*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00394308.pdf
(Accessed July 2012)

Scottish Government (2012b) *Your Scotland, Your Referendum*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0038/00386122.pdf
(Accessed July 2012)

Sercombe, H. (2011) *Youth Work Ethics*. London: Sage.

Simmons, R. & Thompson, R. (2011) *NEET young people and training for work: learning on the margins*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) (2012) *PDA Youth Work*
http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/36628.html
(Accessed July 2012)

Subrha, G. (2007) Reclaiming the evaluation agenda. Harrison, R., Benjamin, C., Curran, S. & Hunter, R*. leading Work with Young People*. Milton Keynes: The Open University, pp. 285-298.

Taylor T (2010) "Defending democratic youth work" *CONCEPT Journal Vol 1. No2 2010*.
http://concept.lib.ed.ac.uk/index.php/Concept/issue/view/15 accessed August 2012)
(Accessed August 2012)

Wylie, T. (2010) Youth Work in a Cold Climate. *Youth & Policy*, No. 105, pp. 1-8.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Youthlink Scotland (2009) The *Statement on the Nature and Purpose of youth work.*
http://www.youthlinkscotland.org/webs/245/documents/StatementnatureYW.pdf
(Accessed July 2012)

Youthlink Scotland (2011) *Communiqué from the National Youth Work Summit, September 2011.*
http://www.youthlinkscotland.org/Items/View.asp?ItemID=365484&MainID=7616&ID=245
(Accessed July 2012)

Youthlink Scotland (2012) *Young People and Curriculum for Excellence – Building Capacities through Youth Work*
http://www.youthlinkscotland.org/webs/245/file/YW&Schools%20booklet%20alt.pdf
(Accessed July 2012)

3. Whatever happened to radical youth work?

Tony Jeffs

This article first appeared in Concept Volume 12, Number 2 in 2002. It is the transcript of his contribution to a Seminar of Fieldworkers held at Summerhill Education Centre, Aberdeen in November 2001

Whatever happened to radical youth work? This is a stirring question. There has always been a radical tradition within youth work, of workers committed to not merely working with young people, but working *with* young people in order to try and create a better society. Something that is about radical, root and branch reform. And that is one reason a lot of radicals have been attracted to youth work.

I'll just illustrate it by talking about a woman called Hannah More, who is probably the first modern youth worker. Operating in the 1780s, she set up girls clubs in particular, in a very poor and under-privileged area on the outskirts of Bristol. She was a very rich and famous woman, but one great campaign dominated her life - anti-slavery: the cessation of slavery. A brave area of work to be in, especially in Bristol which, along with Liverpool, was the area where those who profited most from slavery lived and worked. She was at one time one of only 6 members of the Anti slavery League in Bristol. This she largely funded from her money earned as a playwright and writer. There was a clear relationship between her desire to eliminate slavery, to remove that blight, and her determination to develop work with young women, in particular, through group work and outreach work. This is what we would now call detached work. She went from village to village, running groups in church halls and when they accused her of being a Methodist and threw her out of Church halls, she ran her groups on village greens and in church yards as a protest. It was an amazing development. That radical tradition within youth work has been around for 200 years. It has always attracted radicals – people committed to social change.

But then I asked another simple question for I had a sense that this radical tradition has been pushed aside, denigrated and its influence severely reduced over the last 20 or 30

years. I concluded it was not accidental, but the result of a quite deliberate set of policies, not just directed at youth workers and community education workers, but at welfare workers in all sectors. First, it was the end-product of strong anti-trade union laws designed to weaken our self-confidence and to convince us that working together - collective action - would not be successful; that if you tried it you would be defeated; that the only way forward, the way to success and survival, is by compliance and good behaviour. The breaking of trade unions here, but also elsewhere, abroad, has been a clear aim of governments.

The second fact was the control, the reigning in of local democracy, so that the councils and the local elected bodies that we work with and in a sense, work against, had their powers stripped from them. The ability to set budgets, the ability to determine policy, to manage schools, to manage social services, in any real sense - these were taken from them. That made our lives very much more difficult, because it meant that for the young people we were working with and the communities we were working with, we had little opportunity to promise them that collective action and working together would achieve real results. Because those local politicians in the Town Hall really had less and less room for manoeuvre - so we had to become more reluctant to lead, or to be involved, or to engage, or stimulate or encourage movements of protest and movements for change in localities. Because we knew that their chances of achieving any major success, and that the power of local authorities to do imaginative and creative things were being taken from them. Not totally, but they were reigned in, by all sorts of controls from Edinburgh and Whitehall.

With regard to our way of working, inspection and evaluation became more and more intrusive, more and more controlling over what we did. We were firmly taught that funding was short term, dependent on good house points and models of behaviour, smartness and respect for authority. To get on, even if you just wanted to survive, good behaviour was essential.

We were taught that the 'project down the road' wasn't run by colleagues but by rivals, by competitors, people bidding for the same pot as we were. I always think of the 14 different

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

short-term projects operating in the last 20 years in an area where I work. Every one of the people there, the community workers, have to bid for funding. Invariably, most fail. So, you are working with people, but you mustn't build up expectations. That is really significant for, historically, our work has been about creating expectations, creating hopes, inspiring people for the future. But these workers have to say: 'We will bid for this. There's probably got to be a community involvement in the bid, but you are probably going to fail.' That's a dispiriting and difficult way to work. It reigns us in all the time and teaches us, or tries to teach us, constantly that our first duty is not to young people, not to the community, not even to the elected representatives in the area. But, our first duty is to the funder; and if we don't recognise the primacy of the funder, there are all sorts of punishments reaped upon us. But more importantly, for those we work with, projects close, resources disappear and often so do we. It is no accident we have moved to that model.

Finally, I believe that there is an ideological offensive, an offensive around ideas; the notion that we are preparing young people to be producers and increasingly to be good consumers. And one of the ways that happens is that you can't do anything now without sponsorship. You have to go to big companies, big organisations, local companies. And the young people have to learn to beg. That's fascinating! I was thinking back to the great row between Smith and Baden Powell - one founded the Boys' Brigade, the other the Scouts. They fell out - they were great friends - but they fell out for a period because the Boys' Brigade went round with cans and collected money on street corners. Baden Powell insisted that Boy Scouts and Girl Guides would never beg. He was uncompromising about that; young people must never be reduced to begging for resources. So the only thing they could do was 'bob a job'. They may earn money, but a Scout never begs. There was also a thing about the boys' clubs. The boys' club often stood on street corners, raising money. Powell would never have that, and some others like Basil Henriques never allowed their members to beg. If they couldn't pay for it themselves, they wouldn't do it – that was the rule.

What we are now obliged to do, actually we are forced to do, is beg - matched funding, and all that sort of thing. We are taught that young people must have it impressed upon them that the power of capital is much more important than the power of their ability to achieve

21

things themselves; that they and us are small cogs in big wheels, rather than actors, and agents of social change.

You see it when you walk into a school now! It's full of pictures - not of philosophers and artists, great men and women - but it's full of pictures of, I have to say, grubby local employers and PR people from snotty little firms, handing out cheques to the head teacher, who is smiling like a supplicant. When you walk into the foyer there is always a certificate from BT, or someone saying how generous BT is. It tells the kids, speaks to them, very powerfully, about who runs these things and where they belong. Clubs are the same, and that's no accident that has grown up in the last 20 years.

One of the things I'll deal with quite quickly is that youth work has been driven, like society, to focus much more on the individual. There has been a tendency to abandon what was at the very core of youth work, which was the notion of the club or association: collective working and joining together. This notion was that there was something bigger than the individual - and that was a society which we created. We are driven, much more to working around things like advice and information, counselling, therapy and individualised detached work and case work, which I think is significant. The notion of the young person, not as a member, not as somebody who is part of a great enterprise, but as a case whom we have records on, whom we work on, and if necessary, whom we hand over to others, is growing.

I don't want to go over this too much but there have always been two strands in youth work; a radical strand and one that has never been happy with change. Within contemporary youth work, those who see it as a means to building a better future, other than for oneself, have found themselves up against very powerful national and local forces. There has also always been a tradition of managing and controlling. That social control element of youth work has been given great encouragement over the last few years. And that has resulted in a shifting of resources away from young women, towards young men - because 90% of crime is committed by young men - and they are a social problem. Likewise, truancy is perceived as a social problem for young men and public truancy - the control of young people in public space - that's the control of young men. Research shows as many young women meet

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

friends on the street as young men but the problem of young people and public space is a male problem, so again, it is that which directs resources.

And there are a lot of youth workers who haven't been unhappy with that, who are quite delighted with that withdrawing of resources from young women and putting women back in their place, controlling the 'uppity woman worker', who feel this feminism has gone just a bit too far. There wasn't a struggle against that. There hasn't been collective struggle to protect work with young women.

The reigning in of radical youth work has protected the lazy and incompetent youth worker. You see, I don't think it is evaluation and inspection that sustains standards in the final analysis; it's the questioning, debate and dialogue of worker-to-worker. In the collective sense, it occurs when we sit down and analyse our own and other's practice. That always raises standards and pulls forward and makes the lazy and incompetent feel uncomfortable and embarrassed, driven to leave or to do something else. But the myth is that what controls bad youth work is managers and inspection and evaluation. What formulisation does is allow the unthinking worker - those who don't analyse and reflect on their practice - to survive because they simply go through the motions. They go through the processes that are set out for them by others - much as the national curriculum has not raised, not improved by very much, the standards of the poor teacher. In fact it has enabled them to survive by delivering a formulised package. You can see it in FE where skill and artistry have gone, where people just simply pick up the pack and go in, deliver the unit and may never reappear again. A completely interchangeable package. You don't need to be a teacher, you just need to be a technician. So a lot of workers have welcomed a system that protects them from debate and analysis and the conflicts that emerged within the old system.

I do think a radical youth work tradition remains, and is reinvigorating itself. For we are becoming very dissatisfied with what has happened over the last few years. More workers - not all, because there will be many that will never be happy with this - want to focus on education, on the centrality of our role as educators, as philosophers, as people who are engaged in dialogue. The things that are really important to people like happiness, security,

CONCEPT

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

a sense of self-worth, love, caring are not things that you can buy in the supermarket. They are things that are constructed by people in communities, in dialogue and in relationships with each other. You can't buy those ready-packaged off the shelf. But they are what youth work is about. Those fundamental things are what we talk about. We don't talk about NVQs; we don't promise an NVQ, but we do promise the opportunity for young people to reflect and think and discuss and look at really deep and meaningful things in their lives. I think that's what good youth work has always been about. I think many workers know that and want the space and opportunity to do it, but they know they are going to have to struggle to get space and opportunity to do so.

There is this notion of the democratic deficit, people beginning to realise that democracy, in tiny ways has been snatched from us. I'm not saying we have become an undemocratic society, but democracy has been eroded in very important ways. People sense this and they know that all these silly little projects about encouraging young people to vote are not worth the paper they are written on. They know, as workers in the nineteenth century did (the old girls' club workers for example), that democracy is something that is lived, not taught. And youth work has always been about offering young people opportunities for lived democracy; those tiny, small little pockets in which real democracy grows. I think many workers sense this. A lot of us wish to create these opportunities for young people.

I believe we are in a period where real social change is taking place and I think the pace of change may escalate. I would very strongly recommend that if you have got the time you should read an essay by a man called Richard Titmuss, Anne Oakley's father, a wonderful man, called *War and Social Policy,* written shortly after the second world war. In it, he reflected on the relationship between periods of warfare and the way in which working people, during and after these periods, secure real gains in terms of things like housing, education and health. For all the evils and horrors of war, and as we may be entering a period of sustained war, you can already see it, a government that has refused to raise taxes to eliminate child poverty, may come to us to raise taxes to fight a war. That is a powerful political point that has to be made. You want to tax us for war, then you can tax us as well to eliminate child poverty, and we can raise the list. That's what Titmuss says: wars open up

political opportunities for ordinary people that are denied us in other periods of our history. We have to be aware of that.

David Donnison warned 20 years ago, in a very prescient article, that the end of large-scale warfare is going to create real problems for welfare workers, because governments no longer need to buy off the working class because they don't need to produce cannon fodder. And he said that now we have come to that point in history, the end of mass warfare, we may have come to the end of mass welfare. Sure enough as we saw the cold war end we saw the rolling back of the welfare state!

Tony Jeffs
Tony teaches at Durham University and is member of the Institute for Social research, Bedfordshire University.

4. Being critical, creative and collective: Renewing radical Youth Work

Tony Taylor

This article first appeared in Concept Volume 18, Number 1, 2008.

"I've never thought of myself as a radical, but the other day I was accused of being one because I asked a question." Thus spoke a quizzical youth worker participating in a workshop, 'Is there a history of radical youth work?' at the 2007 History of Youth & Community Work Conference. The lively discussion sparked by this cry of confusion moved me to ponder, exploring anew the possible character of radical youth work today. Hoping not to patronise the worker's bewilderment, I looked to argue that whilst questioning is vital, it is hardly the sufficient condition for being radical. I flirted with writing a Draft Manifesto! However it was not long before doubts set in, some serious, some self-indulgent. Then I dithered as I heard myself caressing clichés and trotting out truisms as if it was still 1977 not 2007.

Thinking historically though was helpful. It took me back to an illuminating moment in 1984 at the height of the great miners' strike. At a Community Education conference in Leicestershire the question was posed, "are you a radical youth worker?" To the consternation of those present, Malcolm Ball known as a troublemaker, on and off the campus, on and off the picket line, responded in the negative. "No", he continued, "I am a radical who happens to be a youth worker." In cold print this reply may seem unremarkable or a mere play on words. Yet my own experience suggests this distinction is profound in its implications. Within Youth Work I have met only a minority who have grasped its significance.

Immediately it implies that being radical, imagining and striving for a revolutionary transformation of society, is something that touches every part of our lives. Though I have fallen well short of the mark it means that I've tried to be a radical companion, a radical parent, a radical trade unionist and, hopefully, a radical youth worker. It suggests that being a radical youth worker is not some cloak of identity to be worn at work, only to be divested

on the way home to the travails of 'ordinary' life. It stresses that being radical rests ultimately on the existence of supportive groups, however small, inside and outside of work. It demands our involvement in the (re)creation of social movements opposed, if you'll forgive a clumsy but useful definition of yesteryear, to racially and sexually structured patriarchal capitalism, dressed nowadays in its global neo-conservative garb. For the sake of brevity I will call this plurality of social and political struggles, the Radical Project.

So I'm going to test out some thoughts on the reciprocal relationship between the overarching Radical Project and Radical Youth Work. It will be my contradictory contention that without the Radical Project, Radical Youth Work is an illusion, but that Radical Youth Work could be an influential thread within the Radical Project itself. My starting point is that both the Radical Project and Radical Youth Work are haunted inevitably by similar dilemmas, although I will speak largely to the Youth Work side of the coin.

Having a Vision

Imagination, passion and commitment are vital. Embracing together a vision of emancipation from the chains of capitalist consumption, dreaming that 'another world is possible', is crucial. Yet such an optimistic outlook is derided as utopian. The contemporary arrangements for life are held to be the final solution. Our Market-given Western leaders claim that this is as good as it gets and the rest of the World is going to get it, like it or not. An arrogant pragmatism prevails. The tactics are behavioural, people being objects, in need of management by diktat. Sadly this pessimistic perspective is insinuating itself deep into the character of Youth Work. By and large both management and workers have abandoned purpose and philosophy in favour of the banality 'do what works'! In this claustrophobic climate, youth workers who defend an unpredictable practice rooted in dialogue with young people are dismissed as politically naïve. Feeling isolated and disillusioned is a distinct danger. In arguing for a Radical Youth Work vision, 'informed by political and moral values: opposition to capitalism and authoritarianism, belief in equality and respect for the environment', Tania de St. Croix challenges us to decide which side we are on. 'Unless we want capitalism and social control to become permanently entrenched in the work, neutrality is not an option'. [St. Croix 2007]

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Theory and Practice

However proposing the necessity of a shared sense of political purpose begs more than a few questions. It returns us to the theory-practice divide criticised caustically as 'actionless thought' versus 'thoughtless action' [Ledwith, 2007]. In pursuing this further, following Castoriadis [2005], I am inclined to be suspicious of Theory as it is usually constructed, which is not the same as being hostile to Thinking, forever thinking. In particular social and political theory is so often the imposition of an explanatory template upon the shifting complexity of social relations. This dogmatic tendency, exemplified by Leninism, but to be found in Feminism too, has played its part in weakening the vitality of the Radical Project. It is reflected in Youth Work, where the negative response of many youth workers to the ideas served up to them in Training is not as 'anti-intellectual' as is often suggested. In reality, faced with young people on a street corner or wherever, youth workers conclude that the theories advocated without sufficient argumentative debate in the institutions, make no better sense than that mainly conservative ragbag of ideological bits and pieces called common-sense. Toeing the Party line has damaged deeply the Radical Project. Imposing a correct professional line, informed by the pyrrhic victory of Anti-Oppressive and Anti-Discriminatory perspectives, forgetful of class, has undermined the growth of Radical Youth Work.

In the last fifty years the Radical Project has been rejuvenated, shocked and divided by the demands of the social movements based on gender, race, sexuality and 'dis'ability, but has also retreated problematically from class. In the light of this contradictory experience how might we build a formidable movement of humanist solidarity, which remains ever alert and sensitive to the differently exploited and oppressed within its ranks? From the 70s Youth Work was thrown into turmoil by the impact in particular of feminist, black, gay and 'dis'abled workers. Yet the advances dissipated as the radical agenda was recuperated, alongside the system's incorporation of some of its leading advocates. Neither the Radical Project nor Radical Youth Work require disciples of a particular theory or ideology, but

rather philosophers, who interrogate ceaselessly whatever ideas or proposals are put before them, in the service not only of interpreting the world, but of changing it.

A Radical Psychology

The Radical Project has never been informed by a Radical Psychology. This failure to develop a deep and useful understanding of why individuals think and act as they do, a working insight into how personality is formed, has caused great harm. I grew weary in Marxist circles, in the trade unions, of arguing for the importance of a more informed feel for how individuals tick, when all I got in return were crude dualist assertions about human behaviour more at home in the pub or kitchen than the corridors of the working class's supposed leadership. For a brief period I threw myself into a short-lived affair with the likes of Rogers and Goffman, but it ended in tears. To my mind they did not grasp the inextricable relation of individual and society, captured in Marx's thesis that 'the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of social relations' [Marx, 1977]. Ironically, Youth Work itself, given its desire to be a profession of adolescent psychologists, has foundered on the shortcomings of its eclectic mix of social psychological generalisations, largely ignorant of the relations of exploitation and oppression. It pains me to reflect that I have not found youth workers as a whole to be any more insightful about why young people do this, that, or the other than anyone else.

Common-sense stereotypes dominate discussion. Of course I need be wary of slamming the door shut on the oft-hidden world of voices of practice, full of complexity and contradiction [Spence, 2007]. It would be fruitful to pursue this research further and indeed expose my failure perhaps to see the positive even when it's staring me in the face! However I do maintain that Radical Youth Work cannot take for granted that somehow the Youth Work basics are right; that Youth Work possesses an adequate grasp of social individuality, backed up by all the necessary communicative skills; that all it has to do is breathe some politics into the profession's technical excellence. In my view there is a tragically neglected body of thinking, featuring such folk as Seve, Vygotsky, Elias and Castoriadis, which strives to

29

overcome the present dichotomy between individual and society [Burkitt, 1991, Castoriadis, 1997].

I harbour hopes that a revitalised debate about the social and political self, our struggle to be personally and socially autonomous is possible, within which those of us from youth and community work, adult education and teaching might be leading participants.

Against Hierarchy

Notwithstanding, for example, anarchist and feminist efforts to be otherwise, the history of the Radical Project is blighted by our inability to resist the certainties of hierarchy and the bureaucratisation of our attempts to organise. I am not blaming in the time-honoured way a treacherous leadership betraying the cause. Rather I am emphasising the insidious hold on our individual and collective consciousness of the socially created belief that without authoritarian structures, without strong leadership, without an army of experts, society could not function.

In this context the task of organising inclusively, 'horizontally', in ways that guard against the tendency to authoritarianism but also enthuse through their appropriateness, is a requisite for the re-emergence of the Radical Project. Interestingly Radical Youth Work, drawing on the 'non-directive' tradition, ought to have something to say in this debate. At the same time it must criticise and oppose both the bureaucratisation of Youth Work's structures and of the very relationship of youth worker to young person. It must challenge the instrumental imperative of 'new managerialism'. Uncomfortably, it ought to confront its own profession, the closed ranks of a group which claims to have a special expertise on the basis of its own rhetoric and illusions. Radical youth workers have much more in common with, say, radical teachers or social workers than with the majority of their own profession, who are embracing, willingly or otherwise, an agenda of social conformity.

Democracy, the Power of the People

Rethinking Democracy is at the heart of the Radical Project. This makes it all the more disappointing that a great deal of argument about this abused concept rarely goes beyond

proposals for improving representative democracy itself. This perspective cannot see beyond an elected House of civic-minded souls, who in some mystical way will truly represent the people, even though the system itself remains the same. To put it plainly, there can be no democracy without economic equality, without Aristotle's citizens capable of both governing and being governed. In the meantime Radical Youth Work must struggle for direct democracy in the workplace and for direct democratic control by young people over resources. It will criticise the charade of consultation and participation within which power remains firmly in the hands of councillors and managers. To argue this is not utterly far-fetched. A large number of adults and young people are rightly disillusioned with the barrenness of democracy as presently practised. It is not our job to return them to the passivity of the fold set aside for them by the ruling class. In contrast we have to explore ways of making decisions in which all those affected participate, to put in place ways of keeping our representatives under proper manners. We can only become more democratic by forever trying it out, by doing democracy.

Doing it for Ourselves

To mean anything the Radical Project will rest on our own self-organisation. Leaning on the past, the inspiration of workers' councils and autonomous women's groups, learning from the present, the dissenting groups at the G8 Summit, we will work out in concert creative ways of managing our affairs. Radical youth workers will emphasise their own self-organisation, independent of their paymasters, but most crucially, they will prioritise support for the self-organisation of young people, reclaiming the future for themselves [Waiton, 2007]. The truth is that such a stance remains rare across Youth Work, precisely because it is threatening to so many quarters, not least the profession itself.

Underpinning such an emphasis on 'doing it for ourselves' is a commitment to a radical pedagogy, to self-reflective activity, to a never-ending mutual quest 'to identify, explore, reflect upon and resolve, individually and collectively, issues and contradictions in **our** social existence' (my change of pronoun: Moir, 1997). That we struggle to do so is no surprise. Capitalist society seems to hold all the cards, imposing a closed agenda, declaring that its norms and values are the Last Word. However, as ever, the basis of our resistance, the

desire to create a way of living together that is always up for grabs, is rooted in the myriad of major and minor moments, wherein people refuse to do as they are told.

A Plea

Radical Youth Work, subversive and oppositional in its intent, cannot exist separate from the Radical Project itself. But, in developing our own critical praxis as educators, we can do something for ourselves and offer an important contribution to the wider political struggles, which make up the Radical Project. As usual, this is easier to say than do - *'all I did was ask a question?'* The bottom line is that in our efforts to be critical, creative and collective, we need one another or we are lost.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Malcolm Ball, who is still stirring things up and to Tania de St. Croix, who led the workshop at the History conference of Youth and Community Workers for their stimulus.

Tony Taylor

Tony is a formerly a youth worker, trainer, senior manager and lecturer. Tony acts presently as the Coordinator for the In Defence of Youth Work campaign, which seeks to make the continued case for youth work as informal education, "that is volatile and voluntary, creative and collective – an association and conversation without guarantees".

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

References

Burkitt, I. [1991] *'Social Selves: Theories of the Social Formation of Personality'*, London: Sage

Castoriadis, C. [1997] *'The World in Fragments'*, edited and translated by David Ames Curtis, Stanford: Stanford University Press

Castoriadis, C. [2005] *'Figures of the Unthinkable'*, edited and translated anonymously as a public service at http://www.notbored.org/cornelius-castoriadis.html

De St. Croix, T. [2007] *'Taking Sides: Dilemmas and Possibilities for 'Radical' Youth Work'* at http://www.critically-chatting.0catch.com/recentarticles/index.html

Ledwith, M. [2007] 'Reclaiming the radical agenda: A critical approach to community development', *Concept*, 17/2

Marx, K. [1977] *'Selected Writings'*, edited by David McLellan, Oxford: OUP

Moir, S. [1997] 'Theory in Practice; Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Youth', *Concept*, 7/1

Spence, J. [2007] 'Youth Work: An Everyday Journey', at http://www.critically-chatting.com/recentarticles/index.html

Waiton, S. [2007] 'Does youth have a future?', *Concept,* 17/2

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

5. An Empowering Approach to Working with Young People.

Dod Forrest

Introduction

This paper addresses the question - how can young people, from a starting point of powerlessness, become empowered? It is argued that the immediate future for many young people will be the experience of injustice, impoverishment and inequality. Paradoxically, this experience can also be the starting point for change at a personal and political level. Youth workers can assist a movement from powerlessness to empowerment in these circumstances of austerity. Perspectives on empowerment that facilitate this process are identified alongside a case study of this practice.

Young people in the UK now inhabit a world where significant changes in family circumstances, the labour market, leisure facilities, lifestyle, communications and levels of dependence and independence now seriously affects the transition from being a young person to becoming an adult (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). This is an era where transitions to adulthood are now extended further into the life cycle than experienced by previous generations and this trend has been exacerbated by the impact of the global economic crisis within the UK.

The shift of responsibility for the welfare of young people from the state to the family and community, coupled with structural unemployment has created pressures, especially for young men and many young women that have seriously increased the incidence of suicide, depression, eating disorder and self – harm as identified in a report published by the British Medical Association (2006)[2]. This report reveals that one in ten under 16's in the UK experience some mental disorder such as eating, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The

---

[2] Certain groups of children and adolescents are at greater risk of suffering mental health problems. As this report highlights, socio economic factors play a significant role, and there is a higher prevalence of mental health problems among children from deprived backgrounds. Looked after children (ie children brought in the care of local authorities) are at particular risk, as are refugee and asylum seeker children, and young offenders.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

BMA estimated that 1.1 million children would benefit from help with problems such as depression, anxiety, bulimia, hyperactivity, anger, self harm and suicide.

Millions of young people in Britain now experience material and cultural impoverishment. In many instances school playing fields have been sold for speculative development. The libraries in the same area have closed or restrict opening hours. Community Centres remain understaffed and are increasingly managed by volunteers. This is an economic environment with diminishing local authority support towards the development of play, education and youth facilities. It is evident that impending austerity measures will mean core services for all young people will increasingly require entry charges or face closure. Clearly this impacts most on the increasing number of young people living in poverty.

In this new era of the governing Coalition's 'big society' empowerment has been adopted as a key idea that underpins recent social policy as identified in David Cameron's speech in Liverpool in July, 2010:

> The three strands of the big society agenda include social action (for which the government had to foster a culture of voluntarism and philanthropy); public service reform eliminating centralised bureaucracy "that wastes money and undermines morale" – and community empowerment, "creating communities with oomph", the neighbourhoods being "in charge of their own destiny" (Watt, 2010)

This is significant in that the concept of empowerment has repeatedly been contested. I have argued that empowerment is both ideological and conscientised (Forrest, 1999). Baistow (1994) and Rappaport (1981) have analysed this contested paradox of empowerment, concluding that it is an idea that is both liberatory and regulative. Rappaport makes a plea for professionals to become more part of a social movement for change so as to resolve the contradictions of human needs and human rights:

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Our task as researchers, scholars and professionals should be to 'unpack' and influence contemporary resolutions of paradox and that to do this we need to be more of a social movement than a profession (Rappaport, 1981:1).

In the context of the present UK government initiatives the poorest communities and families are to be empowered to manage the consequences of poverty and inequality with less resources and more responsibility. It is also the case that following the New Labour Project, there continues to be an ideology of blame as a rationale for shifting responsibility for the ills of society onto the so-called 'undeserving' poor. Consequently, the children and young people of such families live in circumstances of considerable stigma and ill health.

For many such young people the official remedy all too often is a 'pill for every ill' - in many cases a dose of Ritalin to be taken every day as a substitute for discussion in the first place and activity that could be spent creatively in play and sport. Interestingly, a new disease 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (ADHD) that is supposed to affect up to 10% of UK children has been created and diagnosed as an explanation for the behaviour of hyperactive young people. However one neuroscientist captures this situation in social rather than behavioural terms and raises an important question:

> The 'disorder' (ADHD) is characterised by poor school performance and inability to concentrate in class or to be controlled by parents and is supposed to be a consequence of disorderly brain function associated with the neurotransmitter, dopamine. The prescribed treatment is an amphetamine-like drug called Ritalin. There is an increasing world-wide epidemic of Ritalin use. Untreated children are said to be likely to be more at risk of becoming criminals and there is an expanding literature on the 'genetics of criminal and anti-social behaviour'. Is this an appropriate medical/psychiatric approach to an individual problem, or a cheap fix to avoid the necessity of questioning schools, parents and the broader social context of education? (Rose, 2006: 6)

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Arguably, personalised blame individualises a social problem. However, there is evidence from the literature on empowerment (Rappaport et al 1984; Kieffer, 1984; Lord and McKillop Farlow, 1990; Wallerstein, 1993; Wallerstein and Sanchez-Merki, 1994) that this process can be countered by fostering collective association that facilitates empowerment for group and community action.

Perspectives on Empowerment

Empowerment emerges from personal experience (Kieffer, 1984). It begins with action, in many instances provoked by an acute sense of injustice, which leads to reflection and analysis of this action, which can lead to further action. Who participates in this action and engages with the individual and in what manner this experience is generalised and developed into group, association and community action is the core issue addressed by this paper. It is argued that the role of the youth worker should be essentially that of an educationalist who adheres to certain explicit values and engages with young people in a dialogical manner. This approach to empowerment is described later in this paper by means of a case study of an action research project undertaken by the author and colleagues during the late 1990s in the Mastrick area of north Aberdeen (Wood, 1997; Forrest and Wood 1999). The principal aim of this empowering approach was to generate an environment where young people and young women in particular, could develop their own forms of communication and association amongst each other, with the support of youth workers, working towards an analysis of their life situation.

One contemporary example of this perspective on empowerment which seeks to specifically mobilise women is to be found in the work of the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (1993). The TGNP has the following perspective on empowerment;

> ...a process which increases the capacity of women and other disempowered people to analyse and know the world at all levels i.e. household, village, national, global; to act on their own behalf; to increase their power and control over the social resources necessary for sustainable and dignified life (p 29).

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

This perspective is put into practice through the building of 'networks'. This means generating solidarity with other women through creating alliances and taking collective action. The development of women's autonomous organisation is central to this process. This requires the growth of organisational skills and leadership and the raising of funds to service the membership. The issues of injustice and exploitation that affect women are highlighted by using the media, producing publications and generally making public the issues of poverty. The demands of this movement are for greater democracy in the process of decision-making as it affects the day to day life of villagers.

Within this framework of empowerment a study of community activism proposes a view of empowerment as a necessarily long-term process of adult learning and development (Kieffer, 1984). Kieffer describes this process as the 'construction of a multi-dimensional participatory competence...[which] encompasses both cognitive and behavioural change' (p9). Accordingly engagement of this sort with young people creates a more positive self - concept for the young person and sense of self competence. It also generates a construction of a more critical and analytical understanding of the social and political environment and the cultivation of individual and collective resources for social and political action.

At a more personal level Lord and McKillop Farlow (1990) sought to investigate how and why certain individuals, in spite of being labelled 'rejects' by the wider community, because of ill health, disability or age, were still able to gain control of their own lives and to assist others in the community. Their study was designed to find out from 'the empowered' the essential elements which make up this process of gaining control from a starting point of powerlessness.

At the heart of these perspectives on empowerment lies an examination of the power relationship between educator and educated. Freire (1976) argues that education cannot be neutral, in a society of oppressor and oppressed. Conscientised[3] education can liberate

---

[3] Conscientisation represents the development of the awakening of critical awareness. It will not appear as a natural by-product of even major economic changes but must grow out of a critical educational effort based on favourable historical conditions. (Freire,1976: 19)

the mind from ideological domination that sustains the existing power relationships; conversely education that is manipulative can act to domesticate and deceive the majority of the population – a process that is essentially ideological, acting to reinforce the status quo[4]. Freire (ibid) captures this perspective by querying whom reality hurts, and equally, if not more importantly, whom reality serves?

Empowerment as an Educational Process

A process of dialogical education is essentially empowering if that education avoids the pitfalls of traditional education (Freire 1973, 1976). Traditional education is dismissed as a ' banking system' where the individual learner becomes a mere receptacle and teaching becomes an act of deposit-making, devoid of creativity and critique (Freire, ibid). This form of education is now increasingly standardised and exemplified by 'learning outcomes' and pre-defined 'competencies', and it is this form of machine-model, systems-evaluation methodology that underpins most managerial supervision of youth work practice. This emphasis on the management of pre-defined targets has substantially influenced the practice of contemporary youth work. In this setting the youth worker is expected to pre-define the knowledge requirements of the young person, invariably within the context of a social problem e.g. teenage pregnancy; anti-social behaviour; drug abuse - to mention only a few of the periodic moral panics that surround the lives of young people today. An increasingly centralised curriculum also means that youth workers in turn are set parameters of legitimacy by the state, albeit Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence* offers some opportunities to reverse this trend. (Scottish Executive, 2005).

Freirean youth work practice seeks to promote a quite different relationship between the youth worker and the young person. This informal education is only possible where there is a setting that offers control, participation, power and resources. In these circumstances young people will voluntarily come in from the street corner and engage with youth workers in an environment of mutual respect and dialogue. In this respect , Kieffer (ibid) found that a key link in the chain of this process was the adult who adopted the role of mentor in the

---

[4] The meaning given to ideology in this pejorative sense is the concealment of contradiction and conflict. This is ideology defined in the classical Marxist sense as a set of ideas that seeks to manufacture consent and obscure the real world of economic exploitation.

dialogical relationship described by Freire. The following case study illuminates this mentoring youth work role when complimented by an action researcher or action research brief. It is this relationship that can make this link and become this kind of informal mentor (Philip, 1998; Philip, 2000).

Techno Teenagers: a case study of an empowering approach to youth work

This case study (Forrest and Wood, 1999) illustrates the work of a particular youth project that sought to prevent harm to young people and encourage self respect, by offering the opportunity to develop their music and media interests and participate in a democratic process of programme planning. The project aimed to involve young people in decision making. The concept of empowerment was translated into the following practices:

- The formation of a youth advisory panel which brought together young people, workers and Community Education Centre management representatives.

- The introduction of the 'open meeting' i.e. an invitation to all young people to participate in the setting of the programme agenda for a 10 week block.

- The formation of a 'Rave Committee.' This was a group of teenagers elected by their peers to represent the interests of the rave music followers in the area.

- The introduction after a period of debate and argument of the 50% ruling. The Rave Committee must have at least 50% female membership.

- The 'looking back' meeting whereby the advisory panel reviewed the successes and failures of the previous 10 week programme.

- The decision to work with the girl friends of the main group of boys through a writing and magazine project.

The young people identified the main elements of the programme of work throughout the year. This became 'dj'ing', learning about techno music, organising monthly raves at the centre, forming discussion groups, publishing a magazine called *The Mastrick Magazine*, organising occasional outdoor residential weekends and specific sports events over the summer period.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Drugs issues and educational sessions were introduced when they grew out of the ongoing work with the young people. The interest in raves and techno music came from those young people who were travelling to the clandestine music events in the North East of Scotland at the time. Specialist organisations equipped to handle serious drugs and alcohol use were brought in to compliment the work done by youth workers. Advice work became a growing feature of the youth work as the young people sought help over financial matters, jobs, housing, breaking the law etc. It was significant that the project was able to attract older teenage girls into involvement in the magazine production and discussion groups.

The boys who met each other in the shopping precinct, originally identified as the group demanding more resources and attention from workers due to continually being 'moved on' by the police, became the music and dance organisers on the one hand and brought their girlfriends along as well. This piece of work allowed the girls to make more demands; to assert their rights to be more involved, having more of a say in the running of the project. As one young woman explained, "Now I'm on the committee, I want to put my own opinion over".

The Young Women Writers' Group

It is significant that *Sophie's World*, a mystery story set in the context of the history of Western philosophy, was, at one point, in the 1990s, one of the most popular books amongst young people in Europe. We found that young people were passionately interested in why the world is the way it is, according to their experience, but are rarely given the opportunity to philosophise. These are some of the questions posed in the first issue of *The Mastrick Magazine*[5] by members of the writer's group:

"Why are we brought up the way we are? I mean we grow up, go to school, work, have kids and get married - why? I often wonder why life has gone past so quick and I wonder why we do things we regret later and why we have to take responsibility at a young age. I often wonder why life is the way it is and why it is so hard sometimes. Have you ever wondered why bad things happen to the kindest of people?"

---

[5] The Mastrick Magazine project was initiated by a group of older teenage girls living in Mastrick and attending the Community Education Centre during 1996. The project became the starting point for the development of the Mastrick Youth Café at the turn of the century.

41

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

These young people were angered by racism, pollution of the environment, the sudden death of some of their closest friends from drug taking and the local policing practice of 'moving them on'. The following were the main concerns they identified and wanted to discuss and write about:

- Coping with bereavement

- Spiritualism

- Their rights as young women to be treated with respect and equality

- Finding out more about 'green' issues

- How to complain about police behaviour

Conclusion

Acknowledgement of the interests and aspirations of young people is perhaps the greatest contribution to empowerment. In a world where education has become yet another commodity to be bought and sold on the open market (Smith, 2002) it is essential that we bring this new sense of urgency to the working relationship we establish between young people and ourselves as youth workers.

Freedom for children and young people is a daily struggle for basic rights and requires support for those young people, parents and professionals in the classroom, at home and in the youth projects who will have to defend basic services in the immediate future. In a multitude of small but significant ways youth workers can listen to children and young people, take their side and shift the unequal power relations that now underpin government and citizen.

In the first instance, it is imperative that in all youth work settings certain key values are explicit. This is necessary to avoid the manipulation of a form of empowerment that can have a controlling agenda and a setting devoid of challenge in terms of racism, gender issues, disability rights and sexuality. Thus, central to these values should be a commitment of autonomy, democracy and accountability for resources and the planning of a programme

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

(Forrest 2010; Gilchrist, 2010). In this setting the process of dialogue and empowerment should reflect the interests of the general user of the club or project.

One antidote to the process of privatisation, alienation and individualisation within contemporary youth work (Jeffs and Smith, 2002, Smith, 2002) is collective association, informal education and protest. We can assist this process by ensuring that our institutions are democratic and that our planning for engagement is participatory. It is imperative that our values of social justice equality and equity are paramount and that we are on the side of young people who want to inhabit their own space on street corners, youth clubs, commercial establishments, workplaces and schools. Many young people still want to change the world for the better. We should assist them in this endeavour. After all as one old philosopher now enjoying a resurgence of interest put it, 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the point is to change it' (Marx and Engels, 1970).

Dod Forrest
Dod is retired from Aberdeen City Council's Community Learning and Development section during 2009 after more than 40 years of uninterrupted work in the form of welfare rights, social work education, community and youth work and small-scale educational research. Now developing an organic smallholding; writing the occasional article and periodically an activist in opposition to Coalition austerity.

References

Baistow, K. (1994) Liberation and Regulation? Some Paradoxes of Empowerment in *Critical Social Policy*, Issue 42, Vol 14 No 3 Winter 94/95 pp 34-46.

British Medical Association (2006) *Child and Adolescent Mental Health - a guide for healthcare professionals.* London: BMA Board of Science.

Forrest, D. and Wood, S. (1999) An Empowering Approach to Working with Young People in *Concept* Vol 9 No 3 pp 8-11.

Forrest, D. (1999) Education and Empowerment: towards untested feasibility in *Community Development Journal*, Issue 34 (2) pp 93-107. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Forrest, D. (2000) Theorising empowerment thought: illuminating the relationship between ideology and politics in the contemporary era, *Sociological Research Online*, 4,4, http://www.socresonline.org.uk/4/4/forrest.html

Forrest, D. (2010) Cultivating Gifts in all Directions in *Youth Work Practice*, pp 54 – 69 in Jeff, T and Smith M.K. *BASW Practical Social Work Series*: Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Furlong, A., Cartmel, F. (1997) *Young People and Social Change. Individualisation and Risk in Late Modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Freire, P (1973) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.

Freire, P (1976) *Education: The Practice of Freedom.* London: Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative

Gaarder, J (1995) *Sophie's World. A Novel About The History of Philosophy*. London. Phoenix of Orion Books.

Gilchrist, R. (2010) Programmes, Planning and Practice in *Youth Work Practice* pp 70-84 Jeffs, T. and Smith M.K. (eds) BASW Practical Social Work: Basingstoke.
Jeffs, T and Smith, M.K. (2002) Individualisation and Youth Work, *Youth and Policy* 76 pp 39-65

Kieffer, C.H. (1984) Citizen Empowerment: A Developmental Perspective in *Prevention in Human Services* 4:2 pp9-36.

Lord, J. and D'Arcy McKillop Farlow (1990) A Study of Personal Empowerment: Implications for Health Promotion, *Health Promotion, Health and Welfare*, Canada Vol 29 No 2 fall pp 8-15.

Marx , K and Engels, F (1970) Theses on Feuerbach in *The German Ideology* pp.121-123. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Philip, K. (1998) *New Perspectives on Mentoring: Young People, Youth Work and Adults*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. University of Aberdeen.

Philip, K. and Hendry, L.B. Young People and Mentoring: towards a typology? *Journal of Adolescence*, Vol. 19, pp 189-201.

Rappaport, J. (1981) In Praise of Paradox: A Social Policy of Empowerment Over Prevention, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol 9 No 1 pp 1-25.

Rappaport, J., Swift, C., and Hess, R. (eds) (1984) *Studies in Empowerment: Steps Toward Understanding and Action.* New York: Haworth.

Rose, S. (2006) *The 21st - Century Brain: explaining, mending and manipulating the mind.* London: Vintage.

Scottish Executive (2005) *A Curriculum for Excellence.* The Curricular Review Group. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

Smith, M.K. (2002) 'Globalization and the incorporation of education' the encyclopedia of informal education, www.infed.org/biblio/globalization.htm

Tanzania Gender Networking Programme TGNP (1993) *Gender Profile of Tanzania.* Dar es Salaam

Wallerstein, N. (1993) Empowerment and Health: the theory and practice of community change in *Community Development Journal* Vol 28 No 3 pp218-227.
.
Wallerstein, N. and Sanchez-Merki, V. (1994) Freirean Praxis in Health Education: Results from an Adolescent Prevention Programme, in *Health Education Research* Vol. 9 No 1 pp 105-118.

Watt, N. (2010) *David Cameron Reveals 'Big Society' Vision – and denies it is just cost cutting*. The Guardian, July 19th: Manchester.

Wood, S. (1997) *Techno Teenagers: young people's involvement in music and media projects.* Mastrick Community Centre: Aberdeen City Council.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

6. Young People, Social Inclusion & Social Action

Ian Fyfe

This article first appeared in Concept, Volume 14 number 2, 2004

Introduction

The lives of young people are constantly under scrutiny. The social construction of their roles and responsibilities within civil society appears to be increasingly controlled by a dominant discourse promoted by the state. They are consistently presented within a contradictory framework that describes them as a perceived threat to social order and the moral fabric of society as well as a pillar of the nation's future. Their relationship to an adult dominated society has become an arena for constant attention from the state and reactive intervention by youth workers and other service providers. The various pathways through the transition from adolescence to adulthood have become indicators of social exclusion and to a greater extent deviancy. Young people's lifestyles and their progression through the pathways of transition are measured against a framework of milestones and objectives constructed by the central and local state to measure their success and failure (Scottish Executive 1999). The potential role of young people as citizens within civil society is pre-determined by their position within the transition towards adulthood. The pathways from adolescence present young people with increasingly extended routes within which decisions have to be made and numerous obstacles overcome. The transition from youth to adult has subsequently become prolonged and often fractured (Wyn & White 1997).

For some commentators young people are navigating through a so-called risk society where they find themselves negotiating a transitional journey aligined by social structures and systems that are unrecognisable to their parents (Furlong & Cartmel 1997). The past two decades have seen a stream of policy driven initiatives that have impacted upon the lives and lifestyles of young people. The systematic restructuring of the youth labour market, restricted access to welfare benefits, age banding of the minimum wage and a limited choice of suitable and affordable housing have created greater dependency upon families (Jones & Wallace 1992, Coles 1995 & MacDonald 1997). As a society we appear to have become preoccupied by school failure, unemployment figures, levels of homelessness, teenage pregnancy, drug misuse and the perceived threat of young people hanging around the

streets of our, and their, communities (MacDonald 1995, Blackman 1998 & Dwyer & Wyn 2001). The emerging discourse is supported by the media who report the lives and lifestyles of young people with the use of alarmist stereotypes and the promotion of moralistic judgements about the perceived threat that they pose to social stability. The tendency is to identify these problems as youth problems and subsequently particular sections of the generation have become labelled as problem youth, in essence there is a danger of young people being treated as how they are defined. The effect is the alienation and stigmatisation of young people as outsiders and subjects of the rhetoric of social exclusion rather than being seen as social actors with the ability to make a valuable contribution to the community. The intervention of policy and the resultant raft of issues faced by young people present structural barriers to those who are striving to achieve a successful transition through adolescence to the perceived independence of adulthood (Hall 1997). Despite these barriers some young people have shown 'a strong sense of community pride' (ibid: 875) and a willingness to participate in local partnership initiatives within their own neighbourhoods (D.E.T.R. 1997).

The challenge for youth work

The current political rhetoric that promotes the tripartite goals of lifelong learning, social inclusion and active citizenship appears to offer new opportunities for the involvement of young people as stakeholders and partners in the regeneration and local governance of their own communities. The dialectic emerging from an analysis of the dominant discourse provides a context within which models of youth work practice can be developed that aim to build young people's capacity to participate as active citizens within their local community and the wider civil society. The action of young people becoming more involved in local and national democratic processes is being addressed by the Scottish Government through a comprehensive programme of education for citizenship. Cathy Jamieson MSP recently stated that;

> Educating young people in ways that prepare them for living effectively and responsibly as members of local, national and global communities is vital to the well-being of humanity, now and in the future….the overall goal of education for

citizenship in Scotland should be to develop children and young people's capability for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life.

(Learning & Teaching Scotland: 2002: ii)

The idea of active citizenship provides a vehicle to assist young people with the navigation through the transition towards adulthood and provides a clear challenge for youth work. A potential role for practitioners is the development and implementation of an approach that encourages young people to undertake a critical analysis of their own situation in an attempt to gain a broader understanding of how wider structures affect them with the goal of developing a collective agenda for change. The social action model of youth work practice developed by the Centre for Social Action offers a framework for practitioners and young people to work in partnership on issues young people themselves identify as important in their lives.

Social Action – definition and principles

Social Action is defined by the Centre for Social Action (C.S.A.) as:

> *an approach which enables groups of people of all ages and in a range of settings, to empower themselves by taking action to achieve their collectively identified goals (C.S.A. 2000:6)*

The approach is based upon a clear set of principles that are set out by the C.S.A. as:

> Social Action workers are committed to social justice. We strive to challenge inequality and oppression in relation to race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, class, culture, disability or any other form of social differentiation.

> We believe all people have skills experience and understanding that they can draw on to tackle the problems they face. Social action workers understand that people are experts in their own lives and we use this as a starting point for our work.

48

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

All people have rights, including the right to be heard, the right to define the issues facing them and the right to take action on their own behalf. People also have the right to define themselves and not have negative labels imposed upon them.

Injustice and oppression are complex issues rooted in social policy, the environment and the economy. Social action workers understand people experience problems as individuals but these difficulties can be translated into common concerns.

We understand that people working collectively can be powerful. People who lack power and influence to challenge injustice and oppression as individuals can gain it through working with other people in a similar position.

Social action workers are not leaders, but facilitators. Our job is to enable people to make decisions for themselves and take ownership of whatever outcome ensues. Everybody's contribution to this process is equally valued and it is vital that our job is not accorded privilege.

(C.S.A. 2001:3)

What begins to emerge from the above definition and principles is a model of practice that is underpinned by a commitment to social justice and social inclusion, two of the pillars of the New Labour government and Scottish Executive. There is an acknowledgement of a rights based approach that promotes a view of the participants (in this case young people), which recognises their abilities to analyse and collectively address problems they face. In other words this is an approach to youth work which is explicitly designed to distance itself from a starting point of viewing the young people in 'deficit' or the 'victim' which is an analysis perceived by some to dominate contemporary youth work (Williamson 1995:11). Social Action youth work is a model of practice that is guided by the range of issues that directly affect the social condition of young people living in civil society. It is an alternative approach to tackling the perceived problems of young people that focuses upon their aspirations and capacities as citizens rather than the negative stereotypes promulgated through the discourse of the State and fuelled by the media. According to Skinner et.al.:

49

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

> Much current work with young people has at its heart – despite all the accompanying rhetoric – the principle that "adults know best". The Social Action approach starts from the other end. It begins with the concerns, issues and perceptions of young people. It allows young people themselves to set the agenda rather than adults or professionals. This approach goes further than those which offer (token) involvement or participation.
>
> (Skinner et.al. 1997:19)

Social Action youth work is a model of practice that is aimed at groups of young people and provides a vehicle that allows personal issues to become part of a collective agenda (Fyfe 1996). As a process it provides an opportunity for critical analysis where 'personal troubles can be translated into common concerns' (Ward & Mullender 1991:28). According to Fleming, Harrison and Ward (1998) there are three main points that distinguish Social Action youth work from 'traditional' youth work:

- It is underpinned by a recognition that all people have the capacity to create social change and should be given the opportunity.

- Professionals work in partnership with young people in the community.

- The agenda is handed over to the young people themselves.
  (Fleming et.al. 1998: 47)

So what characterises the Social Action approach to youth work that challenges contemporary practice?

The Social Action process
At the heart of the social action process are the five key stages of development where the workers and young people work in partnership to identify and analyse issues, plan and take action and evaluate the outcomes. The process, as illustrated below, begins with the worker

## Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

helping the group to identify **what** are their issues and concerns? The starting point may also reflect the group setting and purpose with the what question being focussed upon a particular issue within the community such as safety, employment or education. With ongoing support from the worker the group explores **why** the identified issues and concerns exist through a collective analysis of their complexity and causes. The group members then decide **how** they can bring about change. Once these questions have been explored and answered collectively by the group the worker facilitates the young people in taking **action** for themselves. Through **reflection** the group assesses the effectiveness of their action to decide what has been successful, what has not, and so the process begins again with a new agenda. For Fleming, Harrison and Ward:

> Asking the question why is the keystone. It enables young people to move, by putting the issues in the wider context, towards awareness, raised consciousness, the pursuit of rights and ultimately to forms of social change activity that challenges the status quo in which such rights are denied……It enables them to conceive of new explanations in the wider social, political and economic context and to consider how they can identify and engage with these. It turns the spotlight round from the young people as a problem in themselves, to the problem they encounter, and enables young people to see opportunities to develop a much wider range of options for action and change. (Fleming et.al. 1998: 48-49 drawing upon the work of Mullender & Ward 1989).

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

The Social Action Process

   (C.S.A. 2000)
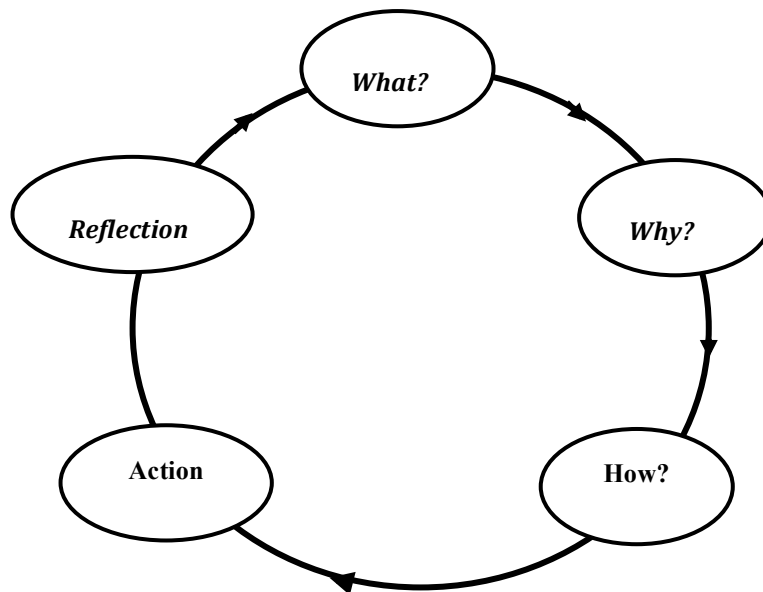
Through participation in this cyclical process the group themselves undertake a critical analysis of issues affecting them in their lives, make informed choices and ultimately take control and responsibility for their collective actions. The involvement of young people in a collective process that is analytical, creative, visionary, developmental and educational is perhaps a tall order for contemporary youth work practice, but the Social Action process offers the possibilities for such an experience. Through working in partnership with youth work practitioners young people have the potential to develop their critical understanding of social and political issues as well as acquiring new skills such as; organising, planning, campaigning, lobbying, challenging, negotiation, monitoring and evaluation. All of these skills are transferable to other parts of their lives and are essential tools for active citizenship.

Some conclusions

The Social Action process is rooted in the traditions and themes that have pervaded youth work policy and practice over the past two decades. Notions of informal education,

52

participation, social and personal development and capacity building are at the heart of a methodology that is legitimised within the 'new' policy context of social inclusion, lifelong learning and active citizenship. In a challenge to the increasing emphasis upon service provision funded and supported to work with young people perceived to be in or causing trouble Social Action offers a different approach that according to Skinner et.al:

> Can demonstrate its effectiveness in engaging with the most alienated and disaffected young people. It not only engages with them, but by tapping into young people's interests, concerns and motivation it activates them to be involved in community work or social change that is relevant to them. They organise and do it for themselves thereby learning new skills and accepting more responsibility along the way.

> (Skinner et.al. 1997:19)

Rather than colluding with the dominant view of young people as deviant or in deficit, practitioners need to recognise them as citizens in their own right whose potential political agency should be acknowledged and supported. The Social Action process as defined by the eponymous centre based in De Montfort University is grounded in a distinct theoretical model informed by a set of practice principles that reflect the experiences, needs and goals of both practitioners and service users. As an approach to working with young people the Social Action process clearly demonstrates theoretical and practical merits that respond to the demands of the current policy context. It is not however the only model of youth work practice that can effectively promote social inclusion and must be seen as a complimentary approach alongside other initiatives that have influenced the development of young people as stakeholders within their local communities and the wider civil society.

At the heart of the democratic renewal of Scotland is a genuine desire to invest in young people not only as the future of the nation but also as citizens whose collective voice should be informing the ongoing agenda for change. This is evidenced in the development of a

53

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Scottish Youth Parliament and a national network of youth councils and forums. At the time of writing we are witnessing thousands of young people across Scotland and the rest of the world taking part in anti-war demonstrations. However rather than their involvement being heralded as an opportunity for the politicisation of the future electorate it is being met with criticism from politicians and the media who are more concerned with issues of their truancy and anti-social behaviour. What the Social Action approach does offer is a methodology that embraces the goals of social inclusion and education for citizenship through clearly seeking to empower young people by seeing them as agents of change rather than a problem to be solved.

Dr Ian Fyfe

Ian is a Lecturer and Programme Director of the BA (Hons) Community Education degree programme based at the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. He has a professional background in community education and youth work. His teaching and research interests include youth work, youth studies, education for citizenship and political participation.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

References

Blackman, S. (1998) – *Young homeless people and social exclusion in Youth & Policy,* Issue No. 59, Spring 1998, ppl – 7.

Centre for Social Action (2000) – *Youth Agenda: A Good Practice Guide to working with young people on their home ground,* Centre for Social Action & Guinness Trust Group, Leicester.

Centre for Social Action (2001) – *Newsletter*, No. 3, January 2001, Leicester

Coles, B. (1995) – Youth and Social Policy: *Youth Citizenship and Young Careers*, UCL Press, London

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1997) – *Youth and Regeneration: Good Practice Guide,* D.E.T.R. London.

Dwyer, P. & Wyn, J. (2001) – *Youth, Education & Risk: Facing the future* – Routledge Falmer, London.

Fleming, J., Harrison, M & Ward, D. (1998) – *Social Action can be an Empowering Process*: *a response to the scepticism of Monica Barry in Youth & Policy, Issue No. 60,* Summer 1998, pp46 – 61.

Furlong, A & Cartmel, F. (1997) – *Young People and Social Change: Individualisation and risk in later modernity,* Open University Press, Buckingham.

Fyfe, I (1996) – *Youth Work in Scotland: Reactive or Proactive? In Social Action*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1996, pp 10 – 14.

Hall, P. (1997) – *Regeneration Policies for Peripheral Housing Estate: Inward and Outward - looking Approaches in Urban Studies,* Vol 34, Nos, 5-6, ppp 873 – 890, May 1997.

Jones, G & Wallace, C. (1992) – *Youth, Family and Citizenship,* Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

Learning & Teaching Scotland (2002) - *Education for Citizenship in Scotland: A paper for discussion and development*, Learning & Teaching Scotland, Glasgow.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

MacDonald, R (1995) – *Youth, Crime and Justice: Editorial Introduction in Youth & Policy* Issue No 48, spring 1995, ppl-5.

MacDonald, R (1997) – *Youth, ,the 'Underclass' and Social Exclusion,* Routledge, London.

Mullender, A. & Ward, D. (1989) – *Gaining strength together in Social Work Today*, 20, (50), pp14 – 15.

Scottish Executive (1999) – *Social Justice*: *A Scotland where everyone matters*, HMSO, Edinburgh.

Skinner, A., Boulton, I. & Harrison, M. (1997) – Listening to Young People in Social Action Today, ISSUE No. 5, July 1997, pp17 – 19.

Ward, D. & Mullender, A. (1991) – Empowerment and oppression: *An indissoluble pairing for contemporary social work in Critical Social Policy,* No. 32, pp21 – 30.

Williamson, H. (Ed.) (1995) – *Social Action for Young People: Accounts of SCF youth work practice,* Russell House, Lyme Regis.

Wyn, J. & White, R. (1997) – *Rethinking Youth*, SAGE, London.

7. Without conditions attached: Towards making participation rights a reality for all Scotland's children and young people.
Lynne Tammi

Abstract

The UK government became a signatory to the UNCRC on 19th September 1990. Eighteen years on, it can be argued that the universality of children and young people's human rights, in particular their participation rights, remains, more of an ideology than a global reality.

The following article looks at the current understanding and positioning of children and young people's participation rights and seeks to provide a working definition and define a common approach for those working to make participation rights a reality for all Scotland's children and young people.

In principle

All human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. They are all of equal value and they apply to everyone. They are self evident universal norms, rooted in the concept of dignity of the human person. As Jack Donnelly rightly asserts;

> "human rights are general rights, rights that arise from no special undertaking beyond membership of the human race. To have human rights one does not have to be anything other than a human being. Neither must one do anything other than be born a human being". Marcuzzi, (2002)

An ethical, rights-based society is one in which each person is guaranteed a decent and dignified life and opportunities for personal development, but is also guaranteed freedom of expression and freedom of association. This means that, as outlined in 1.8 of the World Conference on Human Rights' Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,

> "... the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the [local], national and international levels should be universal and conducted without conditions attached" (United Nations General Assembly, 1993)

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Understanding and positioning

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has sought clarification on what the UK Government plans to do to make participation rights a reality for all children and young people. Additionally, they have raised concerns regarding the impact of Anti Social behaviour orders (ASBOs) (particularly dispersal orders) have on children and young people's right to share public spaces: to enjoy their freedom of assembly rights.

These concerns, and others relating to participation rights, are reflected in the following extract from the Committee's Concluding Observations (2008):

[Article 12] Respect for the views of the child

32. The Committee welcomes the Childcare Act 2006, and associated guidelines, that require local authorities to have regard to the views of young children when planning early years services as well as the requirement on inspectors to consult children when visiting schools and other institutional settings. [....] However the Committee is concerned that there has been little progress to enshrine article 12 in education law and policy.

33. The Committee recommends that the State party, in accordance with article 12 of the Convention, and taking into account the recommendations adopted by the Committee after the Day of General Discussion on the right of the child to be heard in 2006:

a) promote, facilitate and implement, in legislation as well as in practice, within the family, schools, and the community as well as in institutions and in administrative and judicial proceedings, the principle of respect for the views of the child;

b) support forums for children's participation, such as the UK Youth Parliament, Funky Dragon in Wales and Youth Parliament in Scotland;

c) continue to collaborate with civil society organisations to increase opportunities for children's meaningful participation, including in the media.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

[Article 15] Freedom of peaceful assembly

34. The Committee is concerned at the restriction imposed on the freedom of movement and peaceful assembly of children by the anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) as well as by the use of the so-called "mosquito devices" and the introduction of the concept of "dispersed zones".

35. The Committee recommends that the State party reconsider the ASBOs as well as other measures such as the mosquito devices insofar as they may violate the rights of children to freedom of movement and peaceful assembly, the enjoyment of which is essential for the children's development and may only subject to very limited restrictions as enshrined in article 15 of the Convention. Committee on the Rights of the Child, (2008)

Similar concerns have been raised by Article 12 in Scotland and others with an interest in participation rights: In 'I Witness: The UNCRC In Scotland' (2008) Article 12 in Scotland tell us;

....[E]vidence shows traditional (representative) participatory structures such as youth parliaments, youth fora and pupil councils, remain the preferred Scottish Government method of affording children and young people the opportunity to participate at local and national level. Whilst, without doubt, such structures do play an important role for those young people who choose to participate through this media, some have asserted that they favour dominant individuals or groups and their agendas, represent a form of social control and lack democratic legitimacy.

In *Participation with purpose* Cairns (2006) argues that, from a rights perspective, the most problematic issue concerning representative structures (such as youth parliaments, youth fora and pupil councils) is democratic legitimacy.

59

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

At best, it can be assumed that being a member of a representative body may well present opportunities to participate, and be heard, for those who are members of that structure. However, it is unclear how this process can be described as a means through which the individual rights of the *represented* are acknowledged or promoted.

This is not to deny that the young people who participate in structures such as youth fora are exercising their *individual* rights as citizens but is to suggest that the claim to collective representation is an empty one. Unlike adult representative structures (which are by no means perfect) the infrastructure does not exist to first of all ensure that everyone who is to be represented is enfranchised and to allow for the represented to regularly express their views on their representatives.

[Article 15] On freedom of assembly: at the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Pre Sessional Working Group Meeting on 11th June 2008, a group of young people from Article 12 in Scotland (2008) in giving evidence stated;

Between October 2004 and the end of March 2007 dispersal powers were authorised for use on 14 occasions in 11 separate locations in Scotland, resulting in over 800 incidents where children and young people were moved on by the police. Eleven of the 14 authorisations were made specifically to disperse groups of children and young people present in public spaces, a violation of their right to freedom of movement and freedom of assembly. There were 38 arrests for breaches of dispersal orders including 5 arrests of under 16s.

Further, in the *NGO Alternative Report for Scotland* (2008) SACR notes; "....Para. 238 of the Scottish Executive [State Party] Report states that the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly was enshrined in UK law by the Human Rights Act, and that those rights apply equally to adults and to children. Para. 239 makes the claim that all of the measures in

the Anti Social Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004 Part 3, including dispersal powers, comply with the ECHR.

NGOs disagree, and take the view that the provisions of Part 3 of this Act conflicts with Articles 15 and 31 of the UNCRC. For example as the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights. (2008) state; ' The difficulty is that dispersal orders are indiscriminate, and theoretically could be invoked on the most flimsy of pretexts, however NGOs welcome the fact that to date police forces in Scotland have used these additional powers very sparingly'.

Cleary then, there is general consensus that much more has to be done if we are to ensure that all children and young people enjoy their participation rights. More positively, there is a growing recognition, at all levels of government, of the benefits and potential of children and young people's participation.

In *A Guide to Getting it right for Every Child* (Scottish Government, 2008a), the Scottish Government outline its and it's local government partners' aims and ambitions for Scotland's children and young people. Eight areas of well-being are identified of which participation is a key feature.

Further, in *Preventing Offending by Young People: A Framework for Action* (Scottish Government 2008b) the Scottish Government note the role they, and others, in society must play to make participation rights a reality for children and young people.

> The public should feel that they have a stake in the future of the children and young people who are part of their communities. They should take pride in their role as key influencers and role models and be confident that they are contributing to positive life chances for those who most need them.... [to achieve this we will].... Promote positive messages about young people and support engagement with communities, including opportunities for intergenerational communication.

CONCEPT
THE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION PRACTICE THEORY

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

In considering children and young people's participation, the Council of Europe (2008) states;

> Participation is about having the opportunity to express views, influence decision making and achieve change. Children's participation is an informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalised and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them either directly or indirectly.

This was articulated in Article 12 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. As one of the general principles of the Convention, Article 12 should guide the interpretation of the other articles and be of relevance to all aspects of implementation. On the participation of children and their influence in society, the Council of Europe should,

a. promote awareness raising on, and support child participation in decision making processes and facilitate the exchange of experience and good practices with regard to:
    1. various forms and methods of achieving child participation and of promoting dialogue between decision-makers at all levels on the one hand, and children and young people on the other,
    2. methods for children's participation in individual decisions that concern them, such as in courts, the social services, schools and health and medical care;
b. consider the need for a recommendation from the Committee of Ministers on children's participation and influence in society;
c. develop cooperation between the children's and youth sectors with regard to influence issues in general;
d. promote children's access to information concerning their rights and human rights education of children.

> Children's participation must be strengthened. It is very important for a future Europe characterised by peace and development that children are given a chance at an early age to learn to understand the way democracy works.

CONCEPT
THE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION PRACTICE THEORY

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

(Council of Europe, 2008):

Participation: towards a definition

Participation has become a 'buzz' word in recent times. Yet, despite its common usage no single definition has been widely agreed or accepted. Perhaps this lack of a common definition is reflective of an understanding that participation, and in particular the participation of children and young people, has different meanings for different people and that, whilst participation can lead to collective action for positive change, participation is, essentially, an *individual* experience and action and is therefore difficult to define in generic terms.

Nevertheless, if we are to measure then we must attempt to define:

Children and young people have the same rights and entitlements as adults, including civil and political rights. Age or ability is no exception; there is no glass ceiling that deflects those who have not come up through the ranks of established participatory structures or those who do not 'fit' the cultural norms of mainstream society. There are no conditions attached.

Some use the term 'consultation' to describe participation but, given that consultation generally means asking, or being asked, for information or opinion, the effect is an imbalance of power in that the individual seeking the information has control of both the agenda and the process. Whilst consultation can facilitate the individual's *right to influence* matters that affect them it cannot facilitate the individual's *right to control* their own destiny.

If participation is, essentially, an individual experience, then, equally, the above is true of "representative" permanent participatory structures. As Cairns (2006) points out:

> At best, it can be assumed that being a member of a representative body may well present opportunities to participate, and be heard, for those who are members of that structure.

However, it is unclear how this process can be described as a means through which the individual rights of the *represented* are acknowledged or promoted.... the infrastructure does not exist to first of all ensure that everyone who is to be represented is enfranchised and to allow for the represented to regularly express their views on their representatives.

The Freechild Project (2003) conceptualises participation thus:

ALL COMMUNITY
MEMBERS EQUALLY
MAKE DECISIONS,
TAKE ACTION

YOUNG PEOPLE
INITIATE, SHARE
DECISIONS & ACTION
WITH ADULTS

YOUNG PEOPLE
CONSULTED,
ADULTS ACT

YOUNG PEOPLE
ASSIGNED ACTION
BUT INFORM
DECISION-MAKING

YOUNG PEOPLE
INITIATE,
YOUNG PEOPLE
TAKE ACTION

ADULTS INITIATE
SHARED ACTION
WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Loosely adapted from Roger Hart's Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship
UNICEF Innocenti Essays, No. 4, UNICEF/International Child Development Centre, Florence, Italy, 1992.
This model © 2003 The Freechild Project. All rights reserved.

Figure 1. Measure of young people and social change.

The Freechild spiral is symbolic of the liberatory power of effective participation. At the eye we find oppression: manipulation, tokenism, children and young people as decoration or tools to promote an adult agenda. As the spiral unfolds the level of participation increases to the point that, at the tail, we find liberation: equality, collaboration, shared ownership and responsibility. If we accept Freechild's optima as true then the limitations of what has come

64

to be, generally, accepted as participation are clear. The imbalance of power in consultation processes and the lack of democratic legitimacy of representative models mean that, whilst both have their benefits, neither are fully reflective of the true concept of participation.

Participation facilitates choice, freedom, dignity, respect, cooperation, and the sense of belonging to a wider community. Participation is build on the principle of power sharing. Power is shared, transgenerationally, through inclusion, capacity building and opportunities for individuals to mobilise at all levels of society. Age is no barrier, there are no conditions attached.
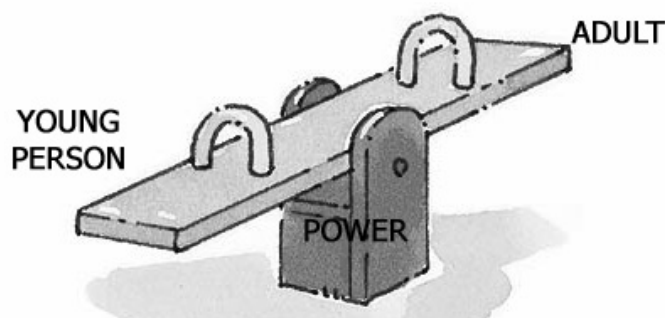
Figure 2. transgenerational power sharing.

We can define (transgenerational) participation as an outcome of three key empowerment processes:

Power with: equilibrium across the gender, race, age, religious, economic and social spectra: equality and respect for the hopes and aspirations of each and every individual.

Power to: individuals have the opportunity to equip themselves with the skills and knowledge necessary to make informed life choices and to find, and assert, their position and role within family, community and society. (Tammi, L., 2008)

Power within: individuals build and mobilise their own capacities, are social actors, rather than passive subjects, and manage and control the activities that affect their lives.

The potential benefits of transgenerational power sharing are many:

65

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Transgenerational power sharing can help mend fractured communities. "When community residents across age groups get to know and care about one another, they learn they have much in common, including a desire to live in a community that is safe, fun, and filled with opportunities to learn, grow and contribute meaningfully to the lives of other residents....When there are open lines of communication, caring, and support between the generations, we are better off as individuals, and better off in our families, communities, and as an overall society.
The Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice. (2008)

Transgenerational power sharing encourages ownership and responsibility. As Robert Brooks' (2003) observes;

...motivation to engage wholeheartedly in [defining and implementing] a task is reinforced when people feel they have had some choice in selecting the task and/or understand its rationale. Children as well as adults are more likely to resist an activity that holds little meaning or relevance for them or they feel was arbitrarily imposed.... The experience of personal control and ownership is nurtured when we have choices and are allowed *[sic]* to make certain decisions.

Transgenerational power sharing helps build resilience in children and young people through increased capacity for personal development and learning and the ability to identify and assert one's position and role at all levels of society.

Transgenerational power sharing facilitates the right of all members of society to participate in decision making processes on a basis reflective of Freechild's optima of participation: equality, collaboration, shared ownership and responsibility.
But what, in actuality, do we mean when applying this concept to children and young people's participation?

Two examples of transgenerational power sharing

66

CONCEPT
THE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION PRACTICE THEORY

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Article 12 in Scotland: Peer Education and Skills Training (PEST) Project

PEST works with some of the most marginalised young people in Scotland: Roma, asylum seekers, homeless young people, young people experiencing mental ill health, LGBT youth, children and young people looked after by the state.

Working with partner organisations at community (of interest or geographical) level PEST works to empower at the root. Its capacity building training, which aims to equip young people with the skills and information necessary to participate, on their own terms, at all levels of society, and its support structure of PEST staff and community based adult mentors is reflective of Freechild's optima of participation: equality, collaboration, shared ownership and responsibility.

PEST's work is underpinned by the principle that children and young people are experts on their own realities and are therefore the best starting point in any problem solving initiative. Consequently, young people with the support of adult mentors are the identifiers, designers, implementers, monitors and evaluators of their personal development and that of their project work.

PEST/The Rock Trust - Underground

The Underground is a healthy living project of the Rock Trust, a charity based in Edinburgh that works with young people who are homeless or have experienced homelessness.

The Underground Peer Volunteers group was set up in the summer of 2007 as an opportunity for those that had been coming to the project for a significant amount of time to take some control of the day-to-day running of the drop-in and some of the programmed activities. The Peer Volunteers had little or no experience of taking part in participatory project work or of involving their peers in decision making processes and most had complex and chaotic lifestyles due to their homelessness; hence skills development training and planning and implementation of the project took place over several months to ensure that everyone was involved as fully as possible. The Peer Volunteers were supported throughout the process by a mentor from the Rock Trust and a worker from the PEST project.

67

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

The key outcome of this project was the production of a DVD, outlining the needs and desires of current users, which has since been used to inform the development plan of the Rock Trust – Underground. The Rock Trust staff and board of management have indicated that they will continue to use participatory methods to ensure that young people are empowered to influence the direction and content of services. (See; Article 12 in Scotland, 2008)

UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award

UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) provides a framework to help schools to use the CRC as the basis for their ethos. In a rights respecting school, children learn about their rights and the responsibilities that are implied. Children learn to associate rights with needs and distinguish between their rights and 'wants'. They learn that if they have rights, they need to respect the rights of others.

The award recognises achievement under the following four aspects of school life:

- Leadership and management for embedding the values of the UNCRC in the life of the school
- Knowledge and understanding of the CRC
- Classroom climate and culture: rights-respecting classrooms
- Pupils actively participate in decision-making throughout the school

Highlights from the University of Sussex's Interim Evaluation Report on RRSA (see; UNICEF, 2008):

- Of those schools that had been involved in the RRSA scheme for at least a year, there was evidence of pupils and staff using a rights- respecting language

- Lunchtime Supervisors and pupils commented on how pupils are now able to manage conflict in the playground through the use of a 'rights and responsibilities' language

- Pupils feel empowered to respect the rights of others locally, nationally and globally

- Pupils actively participate in decision making in the school community

Reflective of Freechild's optima of participation: equality, collaboration, shared ownership and responsibility; the key components for fostering a rights respecting school environment include: high-quality professional development to ensure all staff demonstrate rights respecting behaviour and whole school involvement: children, young people, staff, governors and parents all have a role to play in ensuring that the rights respecting environment is achieved and maintained.

69

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Conclusion: Towards making participation rights a reality for all Scotland's children and young people

Children and young people have a critical role to play in developing strong, active and empowered communities in which they are able to support themselves, define the problems they face and address them in partnership with others. Participation can be a powerful agent of change not only for children and young people but also for those adults working with and for them. Children and young people's participation is a shared responsibility: governments, professionals, the wider community all have a role to play in building an environment that respects, values and validates the contributions of all children and young people.

Success will be dependent on the development of a framework that facilitates the participation of all children and young people in decision making processes on their own terms and according to their own realities. This means a framework that facilitates informed choice, freedom, dignity, respect, cooperation, and the sense of belonging to a wider community; a framework built on the principle of transgenerational power sharing: power with, power to, power within.

Until there is a universal acceptance that children and young people have the same rights entitlements as adults: that age or ability is no exception; that there is no glass ceiling that deflects those who have not come up through the ranks of established participatory structures or those who do not 'fit' the cultural norms of mainstream society, there will always be conditions attached.

Lynne Tammi
Lynne is the National Co-ordinator of Article 12 in Scotland a human rights NGO that works to promote young people's rights as set out in international human rights charters.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

References

Article 12 in Scotland (2008b) *Presentation to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child* Online at: http://www.article12.org

Article 12 in Scotland.(2008a) *I Witness: the UNCRC in Scotland* Online at: http://www.article12.org

Article 12 in Scotland. (2008c) *PEST Annual Report* Online at: http://www.article12.org

Brooks, R. (2003) *Nurturing Student Ownership and Responsibility: A Vital Ingredient of a Positive School Climate* Online at: http://www.drrobertbrooks.com/writings/articles/0312.html

Cairns L (2006), '*Participation with purpose'* in Tisdal K, Davis M, Hill M & Prout A, 'Children, Young people And Social Inclusion: Participation for What? Policy Press Bristol

Committee on the Rights of the Child.(2008) *Concluding Observations: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

Council of Europe. (2008) *Building a Europe for and with Children - Towards a strategy for 2009-2011* Online at: http://www.coe.int/

The Freechild Project. (2003) *Measuring Youth Participation* Online at: http://www.freechild.org/measure.htm#equality

Marcuzzi, S. (2002) *Re-evaluating Cultural Relativism: A case for Universal Human Rights* in Tammi, L.(2006) *Human Rights: the Quest for Consensus*

United Nations General Assembly.(1993) *World Conference on Human Rights: Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,* Article 1.1.

Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights. (2008) *The NGO Alternative Report (Scotland) to The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child* Online at : http://www.sacr.org.uk

The Scottish Centre for Intergenerational Practice. (2008) *A Guide to Mentoring Across Generations* Online at: http://www.scotcip.org.uk/pdfs/guidetomentoring_web.pdf

The Scottish Government. (2008a) *A Guide to Getting it right for every child* Online at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1141/0066015.pdf

The Scottish Government. (2008b) *Preventing Offending by Young People: A framework for Action* Online at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/228013/0061713.pdf

Tammi, L. (2008) *Empower: empowering young ethnic minority women,* Brussels: Salto

UNICEF. (2008) *RRSA Briefing Paper* Online at: http://www.unicef.org.uk/campaigns/publications/pdf/RRSbriefing.pdf

8. The Democracy Challenge: Young people and voter registration.

Stuart Moir

This article first appeared in concept Volume 1, Number 2, 2010

In May 2009, at the height of the MP's expenses row, the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Brown 2009) talked about the need for "major constitutional reform" which included "the case for votes at 16". In March 2009 one of his cabinet colleagues, Ed Miliband, (Scottish Labour 2009) went even further stating;

> We need to do more to hear the voice of young people in society. That is why we need to transform young people's role in our democracy and in my view, introduce votes at 16.

In Scotland the rhetoric of British Parliamentarians has been put into practice by the Scottish Parliament. The passing of the Health Boards (Membership and Elections) Bill and the introduction of a new model scheme for Community Councils in April 2009 will mean that 16 and 17 year olds will be able to stand for and vote in elections to these bodies.

Whilst this extension of the opportunities young people have to engage with the electoral process should be welcomed, it does present a fundamental challenge. However I would suggest that this challenge also presents an exciting opportunity for community educators. The challenge concerns the wider context of young people's apparent disengagement from the political process. Specifically, a key prerequisite for young people's active involvement in this electoral process is their inclusion on the electoral register, yet young people as a group, are amongst the least likely to be on the electoral register or to engage with formal political processes. However this context also presents community educators with increased opportunities and motivation to work with young people so they can fully understand and engage with this extension of the electoral process. Therefore learning for and about democracy should be an increased priority for community educators who work with young people, particularly with 16 and 17 year olds.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

In this article I want to comment on some aspects of young people's political engagement and in doing so I want to do four things. First I'll give an example of how the low registration rate amongst young people can be addressed by using a youth voter registration initiative as a case study. Second, I'll go on to emphasise that in this context of young people's disengagement from the formal political process, educational work aimed at fully developing young people's political literacy must be a core part of any voter registration initiative. Third, I want to make a case for community educators playing a lead role in this educational work. I'll conclude by suggesting that despite the flaws in our system of democracy, opting out by young people is not a realistic alternative. The only real potential for their voices to be heard and to influence change is for them to learn about democracy and be encouraged to actively engage in the formal political process. Therefore, rather than tinkering at the edges of the franchise, I'll argue that the voting age should be reduced to 16 for all elections.

Young people and electoral registration

The scale and detail of young people's lack of engagement in the electoral and formal political process is well known through research. For example analysis of the 2005 UK parliamentary elections by MORI found that:

> … young people were half as likely to vote as older age groups and estimated turnout among young people was lower than in 2001: according to MORI, it was 37% in 2005 compared to 39% four years ago. (Electoral commission, P7 2005)

These findings lead some to suggest that there is a potential crisis for democracy in the UK, for example as Russell et al (2002) state:

> A central worry for those concerned with the state of democracy in Britain is that young voters might be suffering from what Eliasoph (1988) has termed "the shrinking circle of concern": that widespread indifference to and ignorance of politics is causing an evaporation of the concepts of citizenship and participation.

In relation to voter registration, this low level of engagement was confirmed by an investigation conducted by West Lothian Council officers which found that only 49% of attainers (young people turning 18 in any one year) actually registered to vote in West Lothian. The investigation showed that this was one of the lowest rates in Scotland and this low rate of registration therefore provided the stimulus for action and as a result the Democracy Challenge was created, with the principle aim of raising the registration rate for attainers.

The Democracy Challenge is a one hour presentation given to S5 & S6 students in all eleven high schools in West Lothian. The sessions consisted of four elements: (i)how politics affects your life, (ii) the process of registration, (iii) the promotion of further opportunities for engagement in civic activity, (iv) an opportunity, for those eligible, to register at the session. These sessions involved three community educators from West Lothian Council and staff from the Electoral Registration Office (ERO).

The results of this initiative demonstrate clear evidence that the proportion of attainers registering has increased as a direct result of the Democracy Challenge. The ERO publish the number of attainers on the register in December every year: the figure for 2007 was 1082, the figure for 2008 was 1256. From our partnership with the ERO we are able to confirm that the Democracy Challenge was responsible for 182 of these 1256 registrations. Furthermore as a result of follow up work with schools to include those young people who missed the Democracy Challenge session, a further 71 young people registered after the 1st of December and these figures were not included in the ERO return for December 2008. Therefore the total number of young people added to the electoral register as a result of this initiative is 253, some 20% of the total.

Before moving on to consider the educational work needed to support this promotion of registration, I want to make two points about the Democracy Challenge. Firstly, this is an easily replicated and cost effective initiative. Also, in securing a partnership with the ERO we have found willing collaborators with relevant expertise and appropriate responsibilities.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, whilst this initiative has been successful, on reflection we have discovered the limits of the work as it stands and uncovered the true scale of the problem.

Despite getting 253 young people on the register who would not have been otherwise, it only scratches the surface of the problem. The total number of attainers left unregistered for 2008 was 986. The problem we face with the Democracy Challenge therefore is that it is primarily focused on attainers who are in high schools, yet the majority of attainers are not in school. Therefore focusing on schools alone can at best only reach approximately 25% of those attainers who are least to register.

Our response to this is to work towards finding and engaging with the missing 986. As a result, we are now approaching employers, further education colleges and agencies that have contact with these young people and trying to find ways to offer them a similar opportunity to that offered to those in school. Examples of this work so far include sessions with the West Lothian Council's apprentices and information stalls, targeted at marginalised groups, to raise awareness and promote registration in the lead up to the European Parliamentary elections in 2009. The result from this work was a further 111 under 25 year olds entered on the register for the first time.

Learning for democracy

Whilst getting young people registered is a key pre-condition to democratic engagement, it is not enough in itself. Young people also have to develop their political literacy in order to see the need for engagement in the first place and then do so in an informed way. As John Stuart Mill (Ch 8) powerfully argued in the debates concerning the extensions to the franchise in the 19th century, "universal teaching must precede universal enfranchisement". This educational approach is confirmed in some of the current literature on young people's political engagement. As Russell et al (ibid p, 47) states:

> If the youngest generations are not participating in politics because they lack
> sufficient social capital, education ought to be a necessary precondition for

reinvigorating democracy. We would argue, however, that active citizenship comprises more than simply voting at elections: the whole range of participatory democracy needs to be covered by any citizenship programme.

This need for educational opportunities as a pre requisite to and means of sustaining young people's political engagement seems clear to me from my own work with young people. I would argue that in general they lack knowledge and awareness of what I would term the five Ps: Parties, Politicians, Parliaments and Political Processes. For example the following quotations come from young people who took part in a Democracy Challenge session and were eligible to vote in the European elections (on 4.6.09);

> Modern studies has enhanced my understanding, however young people who have not studied this will probably have little or no knowledge of the voting system, how they work or the government and so no interest in voting. This needs to be put across to young people in a way that is accessible to all so that they all understand.

> Need more educational courses in place within schools to help young people understand politics and how parliament works.

> For younger people that are inexperienced at voting give them some sort of pack explaining parties intentions of what they plan to do because if you Google it you're not really sure on what you are looking for and what is correct information.

So to maximise and make meaningful the opportunities presented by this limited extension of the franchise, it needs to be accompanied by the promotion of electoral registration. However this should not just focus on the administrative detail of how to do it. It also has to involve educational intervention which engages young people in a critical dialogue which helps them understand why participation in the political process is important. Furthermore to make this educational intervention sustainable it needs to be both followed up and

prefigured by longer and more in-depth educational opportunities which help young people to learn about democracy and the political processes and encourages their active involvement in it.

I would argue that the curriculum for this learning for and about democracy should certainly contain knowledge about political institutions, politicians and electoral processes. However, I strongly believe that it should also introduce young people to the history of and ongoing struggle for democracy and the social and political rights we take for granted today. In addition, this learning should help young people identify issues in their own lives and how they are affected by politics and what they can do to address these issues and influence changes.

I know from experience that engaging young people in these educational opportunities is difficult as many young people find politics boring and can't see how it affects them. Yet the policy context does provide both the opportunities and the motivation to develop this work as youth empowerment, participation and citizenship are high up the public policy agenda.

When it comes to developing this work with young people, particularly in and with schools, I would argue that, as a result of the nature of our training and the associated core competencies community educators are best placed to play a leading role in this work and can make a unique and decisive contribution. For example one of the five core values of Community Learning & Development is;

> Empowerment - increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities through individual and or collective action. (see Standards Council 2009);

Furthermore, community educators are trained to help participants; "...analyse and understand power dynamics and decision-making processes", "…participate in decision-making structures and processes" and "…campaign for change" (see Standards Council 2009).

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Conclusion

In conclusion I want to turn to what I see as a crucial issue concerning young people's political engagement. Whilst research evidence does show that young people are disengaged from the political process, they are not necessarily apathetic or disengaged absolutely; just from the formal expressions of politics. It seems that they do care about politics and democracy. As Henn and Wienstein (2006: P 528, 529) comment:

> …young people's apparent reluctance to vote in elections does not signal a lack of interest in 'politics', nor does it indicate political apathy; the evidence presented … suggests that young people are concerned about political matters, and that they have a broad agenda of issue concerns. Furthermore, young people are generally predisposed to the democratic process. They have a strong civic orientation and a firm belief in the principles of voting and elections. However, there is an apparent inconsistency here in that this broad commitment to the democratic process is not translated into actual democratic participation.

The causes of this discontinuity between young people's apparent support for democratic values but lack of participation in the formal process are complex and varied and I don't have the space to explore these fully in this article. However I want to highlight what I think are two important features. One is to do with young people's lack of political literacy, whilst the other relates to how the formal political process operates and the behaviour and language of politicians and parties. As community educators we can't do anything about the latter, but I would suggest we have the competence and the moral duty to do something about the former. We have to find ways in which we can connect or reconnect young people with the formal political process.

Whether we or young people like it of not, and despite its flaws, we live in a representative democracy. As Winston Churchill commented in a speech to Parliament in 1947:

> No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said

78

that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

Our current political system is the only one operating and, as such, I would argue that we need to help young people understand it and actively engage with it, ultimately, it is the only real way their voices can be heard and they can seek to influence the decisions which affect their lives.

Young people are living through difficult times, not least as a result of the recession and the impact on youth employment. They are being affected by the decisions made by politicians in the UK and Scotland. Some examples identified by young people that I have been working with recently include: the increase in the legal age to buy cigarettes and the attempted increase in the legal age to buy alcohol at the Scottish Parliament; economic exploitation in the labour market and the operation of the system for allocating council housing.

In all these areas, and more, young people are being affected by the decisions politicians make, but they lack the political power to influence them. I would argue therefore that if the Government are serious about the outcomes of citizenship education and see young people as 'citizens of today, rather than citizens in waiting'' (Learning and teaching Scotland 2002 P2), then a major contribution to achieving this would be to follow the direction of policy through to its logical conclusion and give young people full political power by reducing the voting age to 16 for all elections.

Having the vote and using it is an important right of being an active citizen. However it's not just about expressing a preference periodically at elections. With the use of the vote comes a range of activities which can help develop and sustain political literacy. As Lockyer (2003: P 133) argues:

> It provides the focus for a range of political activities – deliberating, debating, persuading, organizing, lobbying, canvassing, and perhaps declaring partisan allegiance. It therefore supplies the rationale for developing the knowledge,

skills and attributes which constitute political literacy. It is the culmination of civic and political engagement.

Enfranchising 16 year olds may also mean that elected politicians and other decision makers would be more likely to listen to and take seriously the views of young people now. Furthermore enfranchising young people and the experience of being taken seriously, along with developing their political literacy, may also lead to an increased motivation for young people to engage in civic and political activity. By doing so they might begin to change and improve the political processes which they currently shun.

Michael Sandel (2009; P11) has argued that the values and virtues of democratic citizenship are:

> ...rather like muscles that develop and grow stronger with exercise. A politics of moral and civic renewal depends, it seems to me, on a more strenuous exercise of these civic virtues.

Community educators should seize the opportunity the policy context and the recent extension of the franchise offer to play a leading role, in both formal and informal settings, to help young people build up and exercise their 'democratic muscles' so they can learn about and take part in democracy and the political process and take full advantage of the opportunities crated by acquiring these voting rights.

Stuart Moir

Stuart has worked in the field of Community Education in Scotland since 1995 and always in a Local Authority context. He has been both a senior and Community Education Worker, and for a period was an Integration manager with a New Community School. In August 2012 Stuart moved from the field into an academic post at the University of Edinburgh's Moray House School of Education.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

References

Brown G 2009; 'Brown confirms support for votes at 16', Votes at 16 org
http://www.votesat16.org.uk/index.php?section=76#ttc_3

Churchill W. (1947) The Official Report, House of Commons (5th Series), 11 November 1947, vol. 444, cc. 206–07,
http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1947/nov/11/parliament- bill#column_207

Elecroral Commission, 'Election 2005: Turnout, how many, who and why? Electoral Commission 2005

Henn M & Wienstein W, 2006, 'Young people and political (in)activism: why don't young people vote?, Policy & Politics Vol 34 no3.

Learning & Teaching Scotland (LTS) 2002, Education for citizenship in Scotland: a paper for discussion and development, LTS 2002

Lockyer A, 'The political status of children and young people, in Education for Democratic Citizenship, eds Lockyer a, Crick B & Annette J, Ashgate, 2003

Mill J S, Representative Government, eBooks@Adelaide The University of Adelaide Library University of Adelaide South Australia 5005,
http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john_stuart/m645r/complete.html

Miliband E, 2009, 'Speech to Scottish Labour',
http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk/speech-to-scottish-labour-conference-by-secretary- of-state-for-e

Russell, A., Fieldhouse, E., Purdam, K. and Kalra, V. (2002) 'Voter engagement and young people', The Electoral Commission, London.

Sandel M 2009, The Reith lectures: A New Politics of the Common Good' obtained from the transcript at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00lb6bt

Standards Council for community learning and development for Scotland, core values 3
http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/cld/202.html Competence : Facilitate and promote community empowerment: http://www.cldstandardscouncil.org.uk/cld/206.html

9. Are we really moving forward? Evaluating the impact of the national youth work strategy.

Mike Bell

In March 2007, the serving Labour Executive in the Scottish Parliament published a national youth work strategy entitled 'Moving Forward: a strategy for improving young people's chances through youth work'. The strategy outlined the Executives blueprint for youth work provision over a three-year period and was informed by over 3000 responses to a consultation exercise that preceded its publication. The framework received further support in 2007 when the newly elected SNP Government adopted it wholesale.

The strategy's launch came with significant resources, with £11m made available to youth work providers across the country to date. As a practitioner co-ordinating youth work provision in South East Edinburgh, I, like other colleagues, welcomed and benefited from this much needed funding boost. At the time, the youth and community work sector throughout the country was becoming aware of looming budget cuts to our traditional funding streams. Against this backdrop, colleagues were understandably relieved by the cash that came with the national strategy - too many of us faced the prospect of going out of business fast.

In hindsight however, perhaps we should all have been a bit more curious about the detail of the publication and its potential impact upon the youth work sector throughout Scotland: it is to this end, a critical evaluation, that the rest of this paper is devoted. I will argue that there are tensions deriving from the way in which youth work is framed and conceptualised within the strategy document that could have a negative impact upon the sector in future years.

The case is made that the new youth work strategy is used to promote the view that the primary benefit of youth work is as a means of engaging young people with the prevailing policy priorities of national government: youth work is not seen as a profession that is valuable in its own right or on its own terms, but as a model of practice – a means of engagement - that can be of value to other professional groupings i.e. Careers Officers,

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

School Teachers, Health Workers and Social Workers. I will argue that this view of youth work is at odds with the heritage and traditions upon which the sector typically draws, where youth work is seen as a means of promoting the values of association, empowerment and dialogue.

Moving Forward: a national youth work strategy

At 72 pages long, the national youth work strategy is broad-ranging and far reaching. Though it is light on detail in terms of the issues affecting young people, it does have a lot to say about the priorities that the service should address, as well as how the profession should be structured, resourced and regulated.

In terms of priorities, the focus starts off very general and uncontroversial. We are told on page 1 that the long-term vision for youth work is twofold:

1. *all young people in Scotland are able to benefit from youth work opportunities which make a real difference to their lives; and*

2. *a youth work sector equipped and empowered to achieve ongoing positive outcomes for young people now and in the future*

We are also given a taste of how important youth work practice has become to government, when it is noted on page four that …

> *Youth work has a significant role to play in delivering our broad vision for Scotland's young people …*

> *Youth work has a major part to play in providing life-enhancing experiences for children and young people – and the learning and development opportunities it offers must be seen and valued as an integral part of what society provides for young people*

Subsequently, we are informed on page 12 about the purposes that youth work should serve, which is to …

> *… promote achievement by young people through facilitating their personal, social and educational development and enabling them to gain a voice, influence and place in society.*

However, gradually the text is used to assert more of a specific agenda, when it is noted on page 14 that …

> Youth work must be fun but it needs to be more than that. It is also a unique means of engaging young people …

Gathering momentum, it is noted in the next paragraph that …

> *Youth work must take its place alongside other professions in delivering in a joined up way for young people. It must look outward and forward at how it can contribute to young people's development, whether on health policies, careers, or supporting young people to move onto education, employment or training … Youth work can have a major role in growing local communities … It can be particularly important in building intergenerational links … It can also have a role in addressing national skill needs*

Similarly, when noting the first specific outcome for youth work provision, it is explained on page 18 …

> *The Outcome we want:*
> *For the value, unique nature, and contribution of youth work to be recognised and reflected in a broad policy context, contributing to achieving wide-ranging positive outcomes for young people.*
>
> *The Action we propose:*

84

CONCEPT
THE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION PRACTICE THEORY

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

The Scottish Executive will ensure a better understanding of youth work and young people and the potential contribution of youth work across ministerial portfolios and departments and in delivering cross-cutting objectives. We will work with other policy makers and agencies to promote the role and methods of youth work and ensure that representatives of the youth work sector are involved in developing policies affecting young people where youth work has a potential role to play.

We will ask local authorities to take a similar approach, ensuring that decision makers not directly involved in delivering youth work are still aware of its role and benefits, not least in community planning activities and in provision of children's services, school education and wider services to help young people make successful transitions to adulthood and post-school education, training and employment.

Clearly there is an agenda being developed here: there are a number of assumptions and prescriptions within this text that could have quite a significant impact upon youth work provision in years to come, some of which are noted below …

1. Youth work is seen as a *'role'*, a *'method'*

2. The primary benefit of youth work and the primary role that youth work should play is *'as a means of engaging young people'*

3. Youth Work has a role to play in the policy making process *across ministerial portfolios and departments*

The significance of each of these points is addressed in turn.

Youth Work as a role or method

85

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Youth work has a long and nuanced history (Gilchrist, Jeffs & Spence 2003; Gilchrist, Jeffs & Spence 2006), but the work has been informed by distinctive values: as noted in the introduction to this text, this includes ideas such as, association, empowerment and dialogue. Though these concepts cannot be reduced to simple definitions, there are some basic features that characterize all three. In terms of youth work practice, these values are about the creation of safe and constructive social environments, where young people can come together collectively, enter into conversation and dialogue and learn about themselves, their community and society more generally (Batsleer 2008 & Sapin, 2009).

At a broader level, such ideas draw upon philosophical concepts such as, interdependence, equality and democracy. Such values have an obvious political nature to them, with young people viewed as citizens with rights, most notably the right to freedom of thought and expression and the right to live a life free from the shackles of poverty, oppression and discrimination. At this broader level, youth workers spend time supporting young people through educational processes which encourage them to assert their ideas and opinions to adults in positions of power and authority: they also advocate directly on behalf of young people through attendance and participation in relevant networks and forums.

The point to make then is that youth work is more than a role or a method, it is a professional practice which is irrevocably bound up by commitments to a distinctive philosophical value base. At times these kinds of commitments have led the sector to work hand-in-hand with governments and other welfare professions, at other times it has allowed youth workers to stand at a healthy distance, in opposition, to policy development and practice initiatives. The danger in viewing youth work simply as a role or a method is that it is stripped of this kind of history and purpose. Youth work becomes a technical function of government: a method by which to engage young people with policy priorities regardless of their relevance or value. In short, youth work becomes more controllable.

Youth Work as a means of engagement

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

The term 'youth engagement' appears to be used in two ways in the strategy: (1) as a model of service provision (2) as a method of involving young people in the creation of policy. This section is used to discuss and explore the former, with the latter being taken up in the next section.

Beyond the examples noted above, there is not a huge deal of effort put into describing or outlining how youth engagement operates as a model of service provision within the strategy document; however, there is a growing body of literature which has been written to critique these kinds of developments in England & Wales, where 'youth engagement', or 'youth development' as it is termed south of the border, has a longer history. These historical developments are instructive in helping us to understand why this model has become so important.

In England & Wales, youth work has undergone wholesale change: in 1999 the government published the *Learning to Succeed White Paper,* which they used to announce plans to set up a new multi-agency national youth service with the main aim of supporting detached and vulnerable young people to re-engage with learning and employment. The service, which later came to be named Connexions, was, in the main, designed to engage with young people who were seen as at 'risk' and who themselves were 'risky': perusing associated literature, it would appear that there is a number of life style indicators which would likely bring a young person to the attention of the Connexions agency, including, truancy, unemployment, drug and alcohol use/abuse, homelessness, care leavers and teenage pregnancy (Hogarth, L & Smith, D.I 2004).

Connexions has been operational since 2001 and there are three main aspects to its model of service provision, but the most pertinent to the considerations of this paper is the development of a new key worker service designed to support those who have been identified as being at 'risk' from disengaging completely and to help those who already have to re-engage (Hogarth, L & Smith, D.I 2004). Personal advisors operate to a three tier engagement model: (1) the provision of general advice and support to all young people at

87

key life moments (2) the provision of in-depth support for those at risk of not participating in education and employment (3) the provision of integrated and specialist support to those with complex and multiple needs (DfEE, 2000, p37). At the level of practice, Personal Advisor's perform a number of roles, including, mentor, counsellor and advice worker.

Though the Scottish Government's strategy does not come anywhere remotely near to setting up a Scottish version of Connexions, there are significant indicators within the publication that some aspects of the approach are seen as valuable and worth adopting. For example, youth work is to be targeted at the personal development of the most risky individuals, with a view toward returning them to world of employment and learning …

it [youth work] can engage in positive activities young people who might otherwise become involved in anti-social behaviour, alcohol or drug misuse'

(p6)

For some youth work enhances lives that are already full. But for others, youth work can be the main means of personal development in their lives

(p14)

We remain clear that the purposes of youth work are … to promote achievement by young people through facilitating their personal, social and educational development. … The outcomes we seek from youth work are … that young people become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens and that they make a successful transition to life after school, taking advantage of and sustaining opportunities in education, employment or training

(P12)

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Whilst there have been apparent parity of perspective between politician's and policy makers more generally both north and south of the border, not everyone is convinced about this approach. Indeed, there have been a number of strong questions raised and critiques made in regard to the development of the Connexions agency: in the main, these centre upon the view that it is completely at odds with the aspects of traditional youth work practice previously described. For example, there is no commitment to the principle or practice of association and the progressive kinds of learning and enquiry that such environments can foster: the Connexions service is purely about working with individuals and focusing their attention on life style choices and behavoural issues (Smith, 1999; Jeffs & Smith, 2002). Similarly, it is argued that there is very little commitment to empowerment: the Connexions service, it is argued, is primarily and solely about getting young people to re-engage with the world of work and learning and to fit in more generally: in this sense it is focused upon responsibilising young people, about making them explore the life style habits and choices which allegedly exclude them from the world of work - as opposed to supporting them to articulate their rights (ibid).

The particular focus upon young peoples behaviour and motivation as the source of their exclusion from the labour market is similarly at odds with a range of research that questions just how culpable young people really are for their predicament. For example, Furlong & Cartmel (1997) argue that youth unemployment is largely due to the collapse of the industrial labour market during the 1980s and its subsequent restructuring around notions of highly skilled, flexible and specialized employment opportunities, which left many young people struggling to make any kind of healthy or sustainable transition to adulthood. Similarly, Mizen (1999) argues that these issues have been compounded by 30 years of austere welfare policies that have been designed to aggressively restrict young peoples access to welfare provision.

The net effect of these developments, it is argued, is that rather than following the comparatively routine and stable pathways to adulthood that their parents and relatives were able to access (unionized, secure, skilled jobs; access to well resourced public services)

and which supported them to live relatively independently, young people today follow more temporary, flexible and insecure transition pathways (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997): young people either live at home for a much longer period than their parents would have or they experience homelessness. They also experience significant and sustained periods of unemployment; similarly they cannot afford to access recreation and leisure opportunities and they also face significant health risks (ibid).

Clearly then, there are significant issues at stake here: whilst I wouldn't go as far as Tony Jeffs & Mark Smith and argue that youth workers have no business taking forward youth engagement work. I think there are far too many vulnerable and alienated young people whose needs are so immediate that intensive one to one support is entirely appropriate. I do think that the model promoted through the Connexions agency and which may be replicated in Scotland to some degree, starts from the wrong place and is directed toward the wrong ends. Accordingly, I do think we need to think very carefully before we embark upon any form of engagement work: the following observations are my own attempt to gain some clarity on the issue …

- Youth Engagement work needs to start from the recognition that vulnerable and excluded young people are not disengaged because of their own lifestyle choices and behaviours, instead, they are the unwitting victims of thirty years of significant and wholesale economic and welfare restructuring, over which they have no control or influence.

- Where a youth engagement methodology is taken up, it should not be seen from the perspective of pressuring young people to be more responsible, instead it should be seen as about encouraging them to assert their rights. This demands a committed form of practice and one that takes the worker beyond the neutral role of information and advice giver, to a place where the worker is prepared to perform the roles of ally and advocate, supporting young people to know what their rights are and how to access them. This involves taking sides and speaking *with* and, with

their permission, *for* young people as they come up against the more authoritative aspects of state welfare provision.

- Youth Engagement work should never, ever be about shoe horning young people into low skilled, low paid flexible employment opportunities and training programmes; instead, it should be about supporting them to access a range of general and specialist welfare services which will support them to live a more sustainable and independent life of their own choosing and on their own terms.

- Youth work must not be dominated by a youth engagement approach. In keeping with the heritage of the profession, youth workers need the time, space and necessary resources to encourage and foster learning in its broadest possible sense. Similarly, we need the space to support young people to critically enquire about the world they have inherited and how this is being shaped by policy and politics. This is particularly pertinent for young people who are detached and excluded, who have virtually no, if any, foothold in society. Whilst youth engagement work in its proper sense can achieve much in terms of supporting young people to address the symptoms of poverty and deprivation, it can do very little to help them address the causes.

Youth Engagement as Policy Development

As noted in the previous section, the term Youth Engagement is also associated with supporting young people to be involved in the policy making process. There are a number of points to make in this regard.

First, the number of policy areas which youth work professionals are expected to deliver upon has been inflated to the point of absurdity: health, careers, more choices – more chances, growing local communities, building intergenerational links, addressing national skill needs (p14): in all seriousness, there would need to be a ten fold increase in funding opportunities for the sector to engage in this kind of agenda.

91

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Second, assessing the language used, it is hard to escape the feeling that we are being brought in at the tail end of the policy making process, with a responsibility for delivering young people into a pre conceived agenda: we are expected to make a *contribution* across *ministerial portfolios;* we are expected to get involved in *delivering cross cutting objectives.* A more convincing approach, and one that would sit more comfortably with the heritage and traditions of youth work practice, would have been for youth workers to be given the task of engaging young people at the start of the policy making process, to support them to articulate the issues that are important to them and the kinds of services they need access to.

Finally, the main mechanism for involving young people in the policy making process which is mentioned in the strategy document is the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP). With all due respect to the efforts of young people and staff who work very hard to promote the work of the SYP, particularly in promoting the relevancy of the political process to young people, it has always been dogged by questions about how representative it is of the broad youth populace within Scotland: a fact which is confirmed by research published in 2005 by Youth Link Scotland, who surveyed 3178 young people throughout Scotland on a range of issues: their findings noted that 60% of 11-16 year olds felt that the Scottish Youth Parliament makes no difference at all to their lives, and this view was shared by 84% of 17-25 year olds (Machin, 2005).

This issue noted above is even recognized within the strategy document itself, when it is observed that …

> *Consultation responses, particularly from young people, showed a disappointingly low level of awareness of the Scottish Youth Parliament in representing the views of young people in Scotland*
>
> (p59)

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Similarly, the Scottish Youth Parliament has no powers whatsoever to influence policy; whilst politicians can and do consult with young people involved in the organization, they are under no obligation to alter policy in response to such opinion.

Taking all of these issues into account, it is hard to conclude anything other than the vision of youth work that is conceived within the strategy document is about the regulation of the political process as opposed to its extension.

Mike Bell

Mike has been working in the Youth & Community Work sector for 12 years. Mike has extensive experience of working with young people experiencing crisis and vulnerability and has good knowledge of a range of practice based approaches, but in particular educational group work, one to one case work and streetbased outreach.   Mike graduated from Edinburgh University in 2004 with an Honors Degree in Community Education and from the Open University in 2010 with a Masters Degree in Social Policy & Youth Justice.

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

References:

Batsleer J (2008) 'Informal Learning in Youth Work'. Sage: London

Department for Education & Employment (1999)'Learning to Succeed: a new framework for post 16 learning'. London: The Stationery Office.

Department for Education and Employment (2000) 'Connexions. The best start in life for every young person'. London: The Stationery Office .

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (1997) 'Young People and Social Change: Individualisation and Risk in Late Modernity'. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Gilchrist, R, Jeffs T & Spence J (2003) 'Architects of Change: studies in the History of Community & Youth Work'. National Youth Agency: Leicester.

Gilchrist, R, Jeffs T & Spence J (2006) 'Drawing on the Past: Studies in the History of Community & Youth Work'. National Youth Agency: Leicester.

Hogarth, L. & Smith, D.I. (2004) 'Understanding the Impact of Connexions on Young People at Risk' London: Department for Education and Skills.

Jeffs, T. & Smith, M.K. (2002) 'Individualization and youth work', *Youth and Policy* 76 pp. 39-65. Available in *the informal education archives*:http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/individualization_and_youth_work.htm

Machin, D (2005) 'Being Young in Scotland 2005', Youth Link Scotland: Edinburgh.

P. Mizen (1999), 'Ethics in An Age of Austerity: "Work-Welfare" and the Regulation of Youth', S. Banks (ed.), Ethical Issues in Youth Work, London, Routledge.

Sapin, K (2009) 'Essential Skills for Youth Work Practice'. Sage: London.

Scottish Executive (2007) 'Moving Forward: a strategy for improving young people's chances through youth work'. Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.

Smith, M.K. (2000,2007) 'The Connexions Service in England' the encyclopedia of informal education available at http://www.infed.org/personaladvisers/connexions.htm

10. Does youth have a future?

Stuart Waiton

This article first appered in Concept Volume 17, Number 2, 2007

Introduction

There are problems with 'behaviour' today, some old problems, some new, but there is also a preoccupation with behaviour, an exaggerated sense that young people are out of control.

This sense of disorder is not based on nothing, it is not a simple figment of our imagination, but it is often overstated (O'Neill 2004). The media are often blamed for this situation, for pasting 'Neds', 'Yobs' and so on, on their front pages and depicting young people in an overly negative light. But at a time when the behaviour of young people has been so politicised, when politicians talk of a 'yob culture', and when antisocial behaviour initiatives have become political issues at a local and national level, it is hard to blame the media for what has been made into a major social issue and debate over recent years. The behaviour of young people is clearly also an issue that resonates with the wider public, for example, in a recent report by the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) entitled *Freedom's Orphans* it was noted that, in the UK, adults are indeed, 'scared of the kids' (Margo and Dixon 2006).

The obvious and most widely accepted explanation for the public fear of young people, the political focus on 'antisocial youth' and indeed the media headlines, is quite simply that young people are in fact out of control and behaving worse than ever before. However, even if this were true and young people were behaving worse than in the past, this alone would not explain why antisocial behaviour has become the huge problem it is perceived to be. Outside of the behaviour of young people, there are other significant factors that have made youth behaviour the number one issue in Britain today. So why do we get so upset about antisocial behaviour, why are we so *scared of the kids*? Why does the prime minister of Britain use the Queen's Speech to highlight the issues of graffiti and vandalism as the most important problems facing the nation?

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

A loss of belief

To understand the fear of youth today, we need to understand the general nature of the culture in which we live – a culture that has lost any positive sense of the future. Since the enlightenment, progressives, and people on the left have had a positive sense of the future, unlike conservatives, who have often looked to the past for comfort in an ever changing world. Today however, it is hard to find any positive sense of belief in the future, even – indeed especially – amongst 'progressives'. Where only a decade ago, the idea that 'The End is Nigh' could only be found on the sandwich boards of a few old religious men walking up and down the High Street, today this sentiment has become widespread, if not the norm. Take for example a film review of the awful *Children of Men* in the 'liberal' Guardian last year. This film depicts a future where immigrants are in cages in the streets, and where women can no longer become pregnant due to pollution. Based twenty years in the future, reviewer Peter Bradshaw described this apocalyptic film as showing an, 'eerily plausible future vision' (Guardian 4 September 2006). The future today only appears to be 'bright' if you are an ad-man for Orange, otherwise the sense that we are doomed appears to fit far more comfortably into our cynical society. The glass today is nowhere near half empty, it has been drained dry and our sense of humanity has become profoundly negative. Within this climate, the worse case scenario has become the most popular, with this being reflected for example in the continued belief that youth crime is increasing, despite statistical indicators that in fact the opposite is the truth (Scottish Executive 2005).

In the USA Franklin Zimring has noted how since 1996 the only aspect of the growth in the youth population that has been examined in Congress and been influential in developing future policy, has been juvenile arrest and crime rates. In other words, the growth in the youth population is understood by American politicians as a negative thing, something to be considered in terms of the criminal potential of these young people. Rather than young people being seen as the future in any positive sense, it is purely the potential criminality of youth that captures the imagination of the political representatives of the most powerful nation on earth (Zimring 2000: 179).

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Furthermore, the significance in the collapse of politics and the profound levels of cynicism in society cannot be underestimated. Why? *Because politics is about a belief in our capacity to influence and change society for the better. When we lose this we lose any positive sense of the future, we become more pessimistic and conservative.* Why is this important in understanding our attitude to young people? Because how we understand the future determines to some degree how we think about young people. Today, adults both fear young people more than previously, but they also fear for them and for their future (Barnardos 1995).

When society had a more positive sense of the future and a belief in progress, the 'energy of youth' was something that was seen as useful – as something that could be harnessed. This led to a profoundly different way of interpreting the actions of young people. Take for example the case of Lord Baden Powell, the founder of the Scouts, who in the 1920s saw something positive in the rise in shop raids by young people. As the *Times* reported,

> To him it was rather a promising sign, because he saw in those banditry cases, robbery with violence, and smash and grab, little 'adventures'. There was still some spirit of adventure among those juveniles and if that spirit were seized and turned in the right direction they could make them useful men (Pearson 1983: 34).

This was crime, indeed to some extent serious crime, not 'antisocial behaviour', that was being described as little more than adventures of energetic young people – imagine the headlines and political comments today about such 'spirited' youth!

Baden Powell had his belief in Empire, in Great Britain, and ultimately in himself and his capacity to engage with and inspire young people to come on board. Alternatively there were socialists at this time who had an alternative positive vision of the future and of society, and who similarly saw youth within this context.

In the 1960s, the time of the moral panic about Mods and Rockers – when there was an exaggerated reaction to the fighting between young men at various seaside resorts – there

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

was still a more balanced reaction from the then Conservative Home Secretary, who in parliament noted that the reports of fighting had been 'greatly exaggerated' (Cohen 2002: 113). Society at this time still had a positive sense of purpose, a belief in the future and in the 'white heat of technology', and despite significant changes in young people and 'youth culture', young people were still largely seen in a positive light.

Events in the past that were seen in a positive way, or in a more balanced way were seen like this not because of the nature of the events or the nature of young people – but because society and the leaders of society had a more positive sense of themselves and of the future. The same events occurring at different times can be interpreted in a profoundly different way.

The public similarly can see things differently depending on their understanding of society and the future of it. When we had a greater sense of where society was going and what the future would hold for young people, when we knew what to do with the 'energy of youth', then the 'aggressive' behaviour of young people and young working class men in particular was seen in a more relaxed or even positive way. Being tough and aggressive were characteristics that were more likely to be seen as useful for young people who would become the ship builders, miners, fathers and even soldiers of the future. Being able to 'take care of yourself' had a positive ring to it, as did the idea of 'being a man'. Now, the idea of 'being a man' is associated more with 'machismo' and violence, domestic abuse and 'yobs'. Today, when society has a more negative view of the future, when the future is unclear or appears to be 'doomed', then the 'aggressive' behaviour of young working class boys is more often interpreted in a problematic and highly negative way. Are the 10 year olds hanging around our streets really the antisocial yobs of tomorrow and the criminals of the future? Or is this simply our understanding of them, our sense of a negative future projected onto the children of today? Because what we think about the future in reality is about what we think of today – and what we really think of other people in the here and now.

Today, even the language used to describe the actions of children and young people has changed. Terms like 'mischief' and 'boisterous' are now out of date, as we find it difficult to

think of the bad behaviour of young people in a light hearted way. Actions that were interpreted in a less threatening or problematic way are now alternatively described as being 'aggressive' and 'antisocial'.

Rather than see the potential in people, without a positive sense of the future or a belief that we can do much about it, we are more inclined to feel the need to conserve things, rather than develop them, regulate situations rather than free them up, and ultimately make everything *safe*. Safety has becomes today's moral absolute, a framework around which almost everything is organised. Communities are now 'safer communities', within them we have parents and teachers organising their lives and activities around 'child safety', teenagers must be educated about 'safe sex', and even when out enjoying ourselves we must be aware of how to drink, or even take drugs 'safely', while of course we are now all made 'safe' from one another with the smoking ban.

With such a negative view of the future, and such a cynical view of politics, society has become preoccupied with preventing harm rather than creating good And this in part has influenced the way we see young people – as potential problems rather than solvers of them, as dangers or threats in a society that is out of control.

Conclusion

The more cynical and pessimistic sense of the future has arguably transformed the way young people are understood – as without a positive sense of social meaning and developing possibilities, the lives of the future generation come to be seen as more directionless and out of control. In the past, when there was a greater understanding of where young people would fit into society and also what the role of adults was in this process (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 110), a more relaxed attitude was taken to forms of behaviour that are today seen as being antisocial. Without a sense of social progress or a view of the future, the trend in politics and society more generally has been to lose the optimistic belief that young people will 'grow out of crime' (Squires and Stephen 2005:21), or that their energy will be harnessed in socially useful ways – within the workplace, by 'serving their country' or in looking after themselves and their family.

CONCEPT

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

In 1977 George Benson wrote, 'I believe the children are the future'. Perhaps this was always a bit sickly, or have I simply become a cynic like everyone else. Today it is hard to imagine anybody coming up with such a lyric, at least not without a sense of irony, indeed it appears we are more inclined to believe that a 'plausible future' doesn't even have any children. With this level of cynicism coming from liberals and even radicals today it seems likely that whatever young people get up to in the future, their image will remain shrouded in concerns about safety, violence and antisocial behaviour. Hopefully however, young people themselves will be less cynical and pessimistic than their 'grumpy old' parents generation but for this to happen they will need to reclaim a sense of the future for themselves.

Dr Stuart Waiton

Stuart is a sociology and criminology lecturer at The University of Abertay Dundee, a Director of the research group Generation Youth Issues, and writer for a variety of newspapers including the *Scotsman.* Author of *Scared of the Kids,* and *The Politics of Antisocial Behaviour: Amoral Panics*, his forthcoming book is entitled *Snobs' Law: Criminalising Football Fans in an Age of Intolerance.*

References

Barnardos (1995) *The Facts of Life: The Changing Face of Childhood.* London: Barnardos.

Cohen, S. (2002) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. London: Routledge.

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (1997) *Young People and Social Change: Individualization and Risk in Late Modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Margo, J. and Dixon, M. (2006) *Freedom's Orphans: Raising Youth in a Changing World*. London: IPPR

MORI (2001) *Trust in Public Institutions*. London: Audit Commission.

O'Neill, B. (2004) *Knife culture? Cut the crap.* Spiked Online at http://www.spiked-online.com/Printable/0000000CA825.htm [accessed 6 January 2007]

Pearson, G. (1983) *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*. London: Macmillan.

Scottish Executive Publication (2005) *Public Attitudes Towards Young People and Youth Crime in Scotland – Education Research Findings No.7*.
Available online at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/07/1485608/56114 [accessed 12 July 2006].

Squires, P. and Stephen, D. (2005) *Rougher Justice: Anti-social Behaviour and Young People*. Devon: Willan.

Waiton, S. (2001) *Scared of the kids: Curfews crime and the regulation of young people*. Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University Press.

Zimring, F. (2000) *American Youth Violence*. New York: Oxford University Press

11. Ready, Steady, Race to the bottom! The dangers of youth work serving as a sector of the economy.

Lynn Hill

This paper warns of the dangers of youth work serving as a sector of the economy by blindly creating a new generation of workers with the skills and attitudes needed to serve business. The dominant view in policy is that the growth of business and corporate profits is in turn beneficial to the welfare of society and its people. However there is growing evidence that the current business model exacerbates inequality and leads to the accumulation of wealth by a few, whilst deepening the poverty of many. Depression in wages, increases in job insecurity, a rise in short term and part time work, diminishing labour protection and growing unemployment are just some of the issues which characterise the modern job market. This is a situation known as 'the race to the bottom'.

Working with young people to develop literacy, knowledge and skills can most certainly be of benefit if it is learning of the 'liberating' variety. As education can never be neutral, I argue that youth work must be critical of its practice and question its purpose. Otherwise we risk perpetuating the status quo without addressing the structures which fuels issues that young people face.

Edinburgh's Children's and Young People's Plan voices a commitment for young people to be free from the effects of poverty and inequalities. The plan describes that this will be achieved through the improvement of youth literacy and increased numbers of school leavers entering employment, further education or training (City of Edinburgh Council 2008). This view is also reflected by the Scottish Government (2006) who has linked economic productivity and competitiveness with objectives of tackling poverty and disadvantage. According to our government, 'economic growth is the single most powerful way of reducing poverty' (Department for International Development 2005:43). But there is a problem with this situation, namely that there is mounting evidence that the current market structure contributes to rising inequality and poverty rather than diminishes it.

CONCEPT
THE JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION PRACTICE THEORY

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Youth work as a subsector of the economy

The world of economics and the world of youth work may at first seem very distant. But they are more closely entwined that you would expect. Education is a crucial area of attention for business, as in order to maximise their productivity they require a skilled and flexible workforce. Large multinational companies (MNCs) have huge political power. In the top 100 economies worldwide, MNC's outnumber nation states (Institute of Policy Studies 2005). As Held et al (1999) has argued, MNC's have become the most dominant global institutions and the dominant forces driving market conditions in the modern world. There are a number of reasons for this, but at the forefront is that modern technology, such as communications and transport has meant that they can be choosy as to where to locate their business and if they don't get the conditions they desire, they can move (or threaten to move) elsewhere. This has created competition between countries to bring in business, which in turn creates jobs. By using their geographical flexibility to their advantage, they can play governments off against one another in their drive forever increasing profits and in doing so pressure governments to provide labour, social, economic and regulatory conditions which best serves their needs. This makes policy decisions sensitive to 'market sentiment' (Leys 2003:2) and instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations become embedded in the economic system with an effect on every field of public policy, including that of education.

In this way, education then becomes a 'subsector of the economy' (McLaren 1999:20) as a means to entice business and maximise 'national competitive advantage' (Lima 2006:123). We just have to look at the Scottish Government's strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training (NEATs) (Scottish Government 2006) which describes 'the current *stock* [italics added] of young people' not in education, training or employment as standing 'in the way of individuals and society achieving optimum economic productivity'.

This scenario has led to youth work being criticised as acting as an 'instrument of economic policy', where young people are developed to 'learn for a living' and serve the economy

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

(Foley 1999:76). In this sense, poverty and inequality become a problem of 'individual deficit' to be overcome by working on the young people without being critical of the status quo and how the current market structure exacerbates both poverty and inequality. Contrary to the notion that 'a rising tide raises all boats' (which is the dominant view that economic growth is good for everyone), there is mounting evidence that the current business model (of free trade) is exacerbating inequality rather than diminishing it. As the United Nations has found, 'economic growth and income generation as a development strategy is ineffective. It leads to the accumulation of wealth by a few and deepens the poverty of many' (UN 2005a:12). The UN describes the foremost root cause of this trend as being policies of liberalisation, in other words the effects of free and unhindered market practices.

The race to the bottom

The problem with business is that it doesn't take into account concerns of human welfare and as Bakan (2005) argues, it is programmed to exploit all it can in the pursuit of profit. Cost/benefit analysis, which is the weighing of costs against benefits, is at the very heart of the way business operates which compels them to remove obstacles that get in their way. Regulations that limit their freedom to exploit people and the natural environment are such obstacles, and corporations have fought with considerable success over the past few decades to remove them. This is what causes the 'race to the bottom'.

In a competitive market, sales generally go to the competitor who offers the lowest price. This is also true of nation states as they try to sell themselves to business. The relocation of business overseas is now a common occurrence with call centres in India and manufacturing in China just two of the more common examples. The policies of overseas governments and the experience of overseas workers have a direct bearing on conditions in the UK as current law states that shareholder value is a company's main concern: which means that the pursuit of profit is their number one priority (Bakan 2005). Governments of Nations then find themselves competing to attract big business and the promise of jobs and investment. But as is the nature of the relentless drive for ever increasing profits, more is wanted for less. The result is a 'downward levelling' of environmental, labour and social conditions

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

(Brecher & Costello 1998:25). Whilst the wealth of the richest in our society has risen, the majority of people at the lower end have seen a depression in wages, an increase in job insecurity, a rise in short term and part time work, diminishing labour protection and growing unemployment. Other aspects that have been affected by this trend also include diminishing social security protection, health care and the protection of our environment (UN 2005b) (War on Want 2009).

The effects of the race to the bottom have now become so critical and widespread that the European Commission has set up an 'Adjustment Fund' in a bid to mitigate against some of the decline in employment terms and conditions and the large scale redundancies caused by the way business currently operates (European Commission 2009): however this fund is deemed to be wholly inadequate (War on Want 2009). Unemployment is on the rise and is particularly high amongst young people where Europe-wide it stands at more than one in seven of those aged under 25. There is also an increasing pay gap between men and women with statistics showing that women earn 22.6% less than their male counterparts (Sparrow 2009). Couple this with the situation of an above average percentage of minority ethnic children living in poverty (Policy Studies Institute 2003) and we see other factors such as race and gender coming into play.

As Faber and McCarthy (2003) have highlighted, the social and environmental costs of corporate activities are not evenly distributed: communities with few resources and little political power, in other words the poor and the marginalised, are much more likely to experience the negative effects. Structural issues in relation to race, class and gender have a profound impact on the experiences and life chances of young people, and these are well documented and widely known. What is less well known is how an understanding of the race to the bottom warns us of the dangers of blindly serving business without being critical of the nature of the world of work.

I am not suggesting that the problem is business, work or trade in itself, nor that we should return to the dark ages or take to the caves. The root of the problem is the current structure of business, where concepts of 'market value' supersede those of 'social value'. Notions of

105

human rights, social justice, liberty and freedom have come to mean the unrestricted functioning of the free market (Hertz 2001). This is a situation where government intervention, regulation and even the welfare state have been attacked as unjust, unfair and as a barrier to entrepreneurial endeavour. Even the universal right to healthcare has been branded as 'evil' by free market organisations (Clark 2009).

This concept views inequality and poverty as 'just deserts' where people have chosen their place in society or through the result of not being sufficiently productive, as 'social justice is whatever is delivered by the market' (Harvey 1993:100). This view neglects structural constraints, ignores the evidence of the 'race to the bottom' and blames the victims for choosing to be poor, marginalised and unequal (Gray 2003). As Shaw and Martin have argued, poverty is structurally created and sustained as a direct consequence of the operations of international capital and the state's role in securing its interests. By understanding this we can see how what are really 'public issues' have been translated into 'personal troubles' (Shaw & Martin 2000:407).

Education can never be neutral

Top down youth work strategies state that Youth Work "must evolve to reflect the lives and needs of young people" to "promote achievement by young people through facilitating their personal, social and educational development and enabling them to gain a voice, influence and place in society" (Scottish Executive 2007: 12). In order to be relevant to young people in today's society and to truly reflect their lives and needs, we must be critical of being immersed in the image of youth as the problem: otherwise professional practice becomes concerned with dealing with and solving perceived problems that young people present to society rather than making a real attempt to work with young people to create a more socially just and equal world.

Youth Workers must be critical of their practice, of what they are teaching young people and also why they are teaching it. Otherwise they may simply perpetuate the status quo without addressing the structures which fuel issues of poverty and inequality that young people face. Education can never be neutral, as neutrality perpetuates the status quo. Thus education

either works to liberate young people or domesticate then by adapting them to the way things are. The development of literacy, knowledge and other skills can most certainly benefit young people if it is learning of the 'really useful' variety (Martin & Rahman 1999:3).

As Martin (2006) has argued, education is always a key resource in the broader struggle for social change. A liberating approach to youth work assumes that the young people have something to offer society, that they are not merely a problem to be managed. It is critical of the status quo and is committed to progressive social and political change from the grassroots in the struggle for a more just and egalitarian social order: to challenge inequality, exploitation and oppression through the democratic notion of popular participation in the running of our society. At its heart, a liberating approach works with young people to develop their critical awareness of the world they live in. It aims to give them the space and support to identify issues, explore alternatives, build their confidence and stimulate action.

Chains of existence

There is a great deal of feeling that there is no alternative to the modern business model. But the current structure has been created through design. It has been constructed and can thus be changed. The power that young people hold may be limited: in that little can be done at the grassroots level regarding employment issues. However a liberating approach to youth work gives them a voice, shows that their views do count, that alternatives do exist and that some change is possible. Adding in the linking of the micro to the macro also enables them to see how small changes at the local level can impact on the larger picture and that acting collectively strengthens the ability in making their voices heard and ensuring that decision makers take some notice (Mullender & Ward 1995). This gives young people some control over their lives and ensures that they are valued as young people in contrast to merely being prepared for adulthood and to fit into the job market.

But this is easier said than done I hear you cry. This is very true, but it is not impossible. One of the ways to approach this is by exploring how we are all connected through a 'chain of existence' (Harvey 1993:110). Simply put, this means that the act of buying a product connects us to the experiences of the workers who created it. Even something as simple as

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

following the life of a cocoa bean can become a hugely educational experience. Drawing out the experiences of workers from planting and growing to transporting, production and distributing it as chocolate bars brings with it a multitude of issues to explore. Concepts such as the race to the bottom may be new to youth work and it may be difficult to know where to start with it. This can be overcome by drawing from the knowledge and expertise of others, such as the organisations involved with the Trade Justice Movement, who can share their knowledge in a myriad of ways (from facilitating workshops, providing youth resources or simply by having access to information on their websites).

It was the humble cocoa bean that became the starting point for a group of young people in Edinburgh when they created a mural depicting how people across the globe are impacted upon by processes of trade and consumption. This drew out concepts not only of Fair Trade and Environmentalism, but also of children's and employment rights. The youth workers were not alone in this project. There were many avenues of expertise to be drawn from, such as Edinburgh's Peace & Justice Centre, Trade Unions, local artists and the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child posters. What followed is only an example of how a project such as this can be approached.

Each part was carefully planned but the inspiration and direction was organic and directed by the young people. Wanting to know more about the issues, we tapped into the 'Alternative G8' events being held at Moray House in 2005 when the G8 was being held at Gleneagles. A day was spent attending workshops where they had fun whilst exploring how ordinary people do have some power to make change. They also attended a workshop where they met a trade unionist who had left Columbia after receiving death threats whilst being employed at a bottling plant for a very well known brand of fizzy drink. Vowing to never touch this particular brand of cola again, the young people wanted to take things further. Linking together the issues they had explored along with their interests in clothes and fashion, a fashion show was born. They created new clothes from recycled materials that they collected, looked at issues of sweatshops, employment rights and child labour and produced a series of DVD clips to be projected on stage to share information with the

audience. Some of them took to Princes Street with microphones and interviewed the public about what they knew about the products they wore and consumed.

This became part of an interview for a local radio broadcast where the young people shared what they had discovered and explored. One of the young people went on to write an article for a local newsletter and presented it as a speech at the organisations AGM. What had started simply as the creation of a mural had became a much larger project which lasted a full year. The young people chose the level of their involvement and dipped in and out of the various elements that made up the project.

In the end, whether the project was big or small, the aim was to provide tools so that the young people could explore the chains of existence, stimulate their critical awareness, have a safe space to think things through, understand them and consider forms of action. The building of their confidence and ability to take action for themselves were seeds for them to draw on in the future in order to tackle issues at the personal, local, national and global levels. This fits very closely with the aims of 'global youth work' as defined by the Development Education Association (Aubrey 2009) which seeks young people's participation in bringing about change in the strive for equality and justice. Global youth work has been criticised for its tendency to concentrate on the saving of 'poor souls' in the 'developing' world and youth workers have argued that young people living in deprived circumstances have enough to deal with without worrying about the plight of others far away (Aubrey 2009). Buying Fair Trade and environmentally friendly products is the common view of how global inequality can be addressed, but this was not an option for our young people due to the higher cost of such products which they couldn't afford.

In order to be relevant to the young people we work withI argue that youth work must gain an understanding and be critical of how the nature of business exacerbates exploitation, inequality and injustice. The race to the bottom is a consequence of business and economic practices which links the fate of young people and their communities across the globe. Contrary to the dominant view in policy that what is good for business and the economy is good for the welfare of the people, the evidence of the 'race to the bottom' paints a very

109

different picture. Youth work must thus be careful that it does not simply become a sector of the economy which blindly serves the needs of business. The development of young people's skills does have its place if it is used in the development of 'really useful' knowledge: where young people can be provided with a safe space to explore their world, to identify issues, develop their critical awareness, build their confidence, have a voice and move forward together in action.

Lynn Hill

Lynn received a 1st class honours degree in Community Education from the University of Edinburgh in 2007. She began working in the field of Community Education in 1996. During this time she has worked in a variety of settings, but the majority of her work has been in the field of Youth Work and has focused on Equality, Diversity and Social Justice. She enjoys being creative, which has seen the Community Arts featuring heavily throughout her career. Involvement in this sphere has been diverse, ranging from the provision of workshops to full-blown art events and exhibitions.

References

Aubrey, J (2009) 'Globalisation and Global Youth Work' in Wood, J & Hine, J (eds) *Work with Young People.* SAGE

Bakan, J. (2005) *The Corporation.* Constable and Robinson Ltd

Brecher, J. & Costello, T. (1998) *Global Village or Global Pillage* South End Press

City of Edinburgh Council (2008) *Integrated Young People's Plan 2008-2011.*October 2008.

Clark, A. (2009) '"Evil and Orwellian"'– America's right turns its fire on NHS'. *The Guardian*. 11th August 2009. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/aug/11/nhs-united-states-republican-health Accessed 21st August 2009.

Department for International Development (2005) *Eliminating World Poverty: making governance work for the poor.* http://dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/whitepaper2000.pdf Accessed 9th November 2006.

European Commission (2009) Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities – European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=326&langId=en Accessed 18th May 2009.

Faber, D. R. & McCarthy, D. (2003) 'New-liberalism, Globalisation and the Struggle for Ecological Democracy: Linking Sustainability and Environmental Justice', in Agyeman, J., Bullard, R. D. & Evans, B. (eds) *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World.* Earthscan Publications Ltd. Pp38-63.

Foley, G. (1999) *Learning in Social Action.* NIACE

Gray, J. (2002) *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism.* Granta Books.

Harvey, D. (1993) 'Class relations, social justice and the politics of difference', in Squires, J. (ed) *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value.* Lawrence and Wishart Ltd. Pp85-120.

Held, D. McGrew, A., Goldplatt, D. & Perraton, J. (1999) *Global Transformations.* Polity Press

Hertz, N (2001) *The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy.* Arrow Books

Institute of Policy Studies (2005) *Corporate vs Country Economic Clout: The Top 100.* www.ips-dc.org/global_econ/top_100.pdf Accessed 9th December 2006.

Leys, C. (2003) *Market Driven Politics: Neoliberal democracy and Public Interest.* Verso.

111

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Lima, L. C. (2006) 'Popular Education, Democratic Theories, Citizenship and the Competitive Market', in De Castro, R. V., Sancho, A. V. & Guimararaes, P. (eds) *Adult Education: new routes in a new landscape.* University of Minho. Pp113-134.

Martin, I. (2006) 'Where have all the flowers gone?' *Adults Learning.* October 2006. Pp 15-18.

Martin, I. & Rahman, H. (1999) 'Really Useful Literacy: Six Lessons from Bangladesh' in *Concept* Volume 9. Number 3.

McLaren, P. (1999) 'Traumatising capital: oppositional pedagogies in the age of consent', in Castells, M., Flecha, R. Freire, P., Giroux, H., Macedo, D. & Willis, P. (1999) *Critical Education in the New Information Age.* Rowman and Littlefield Publishers. Pp1-35.

Mullender, A. & Ward, D. (1995) *Self-directed Groupwork: Users Take Action For Empowerment.* Whiting Birch.

Policy Studies Institute (2003) *End Child Poverty: Once and for all* News release: 2nd December 2003.

Scottish Government (2006) *More Choices, More Chances: A Strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training in Scotland* http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/06/13100205/1 Accessed 20th April 2009

Scottish Executive (2007) *Moving Forward: A Strategy for Improving Young People's Chances Through Youth Work.* March 2007.

Shaw, M. & Martin, I. (2000) 'Community work, citizenship and democracy: remaking the connections'. *Community Development Journal.* Volume 35 (4). Pp401-413

Sparrow, A. (2009) 'Mind the gap: UK gender pay divide widens'. *The Guardian.* 29th July 2009. http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/jul/29/gender-pay-divide-women-inequality Accessed 26th August 2009.
United Nations (2005a) *World Social Situation.* http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/418/73/PDF/N0541873.pdf?OpenElement Accessed 22nd November 2006.

United Nations (2005b) *Human Development Report.* http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/ Accessed 22nd November 2006.

War on Want (2009) *Taking Away Our Jobs: How free trade threatens employment around the world.* March 2009. Accessed 18th May 2009.

12. Poverty and Youth Transition

Alan Mackie

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed significant changes in the social and economic context of young people's lives. There is increasing evidence of a greater disparity between those with prospects and those without. For some, these changes represent a time of unlimited opportunity – to travel, to seek personal and spiritual fulfilment or to undertake a whole host of self-developing activities – before settling into adult life. For others however, such opportunities are still as distant as they would have appeared a half century ago. France (2008a) argues that since 1997, 'youth policy's primary focus has been on reducing social exclusion rather than being aimed at poverty' (p498). Policy tends to focus on what it depicts as 'inappropriate' or 'problem' behaviour and in doing so, it ignores the structural issues which can marginalise and impoverish young people's lives.

Reconceptualising Youth

The concept of 'youth' attracts many contrasting definitions. Predominantly a social construction, it is understood differently depending on culture and time. Coles (1995) notes that legally, it is often defined in complex and arbitrary ways; for example the age of criminal responsibility begins at 8 in Scotland – so does youth begin then? Or end at 26 when full entitlement to welfare benefits starts? Whereas, Fahmy (2006) suggests that 'rather than pursuing a chronological definition, youth is better viewed as a period of transition, or set of transitions, between the dependency of childhood and the social and economic independence of adulthood' (p349). The idea of youth being a transitory period can be traced back to the work of Olivier Galland (1984, 1991). He posited that in order to negotiate the journey between childhood and adulthood successfully, young people had to make three successful transitions:

- From school to work – The 'professional' transition
- From family home to independent living – the 'residential' transition
- From family of origin to family of destination – the 'domestic' transition

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

By navigating their way through these transitions, it is implied that young people will have successfully bridged the gap to full 'citizenship' and adulthood.

However, evidence suggests that these transitions are becoming protracted. In Western societies young people are achieving the traditional markers of adulthood later, sometimes not until their early thirties or beyond. In positive terms, this period of *emerging adulthood* offers young people the freedom and opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of the transitional journey that typifies contemporary consumerist societies – exploring their own identities , changing jobs, partners, living situations or travelling to exotic locations (Arnett 2006). In contrast, for young people growing up in poverty there is far more 'risk' involved in navigating the pathways to adulthood. As Beck (1992) notes, 'risks adhere to the class pattern, only inversely: wealth accumulates at the top, risks at the bottom…poverty attracts an unfortunate abundance of risks. By contrast, the wealthy (in income, power or education) can purchase safety and freedom from risk' (p35). As a result, young working-class people today can find that their journey to adulthood can be fraught with difficulties, many of which can be directly linked to poverty.

Mizen (2002) argues that contemporary politics regarding youth are managed in what he calls a 'monetarist' framework. He contrasts this with a Keynesian framework which was predominant post-war until the mid-1970s. Wyn and Woodman (2006) suggest that 'under monetarist policies, the state has forged a new relationship with the economy, in which economic goals are primary' (p499). This is particularly apparent in Scotland today where the government declares that its overarching aim is 'to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth' (Scottish Government, 2008a: 1). The SNP have endeared themselves to those on the left with the introduction of terms such as 'equity', 'solidarity' and 'poverty' back into policy lexicon. However, with the overwhelming focus of the administration centring on ensuring that the country is economically competitive, work is posited as the remedy and the catalyst for all these terms. For marginalised young people, such a focus means that the issues which underpin their exclusion are often ignored.

Poverty and the 'professional' transition

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

The resultant policy prioritisation on economic growth has been distinguished by an overwhelming emphasis given to the encouragement – and sometimes enforcement – of participation of young people in education, training or employment. Young people have benefited over the past 20 years from the substantial expansion of post-16 education and subsequently progressing from school to university. Those who do not make this transition however, are likely to find themselves marginalised and facing a labour market that has changed markedly over the past three decades. It has been well documented that the radical macro-economic restructuring of the 1970s hit the young working-class disproportionately hard (MacDonald, 1997; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Bottrell and Armstrong, 2007). Up until this point, the vast majority of young people would find secure and stable employment and through this, social independence and a safe transition to adulthood. Now, the transition from school to work for those leaving school has all but vanished leaving young people in this group vulnerable to poverty. The government response to this 'has been towards engaging them in pre- and post-sixteen training and educational courses, thereby increasing their employability' (MacDonald and March, 2005: 85). Arguably, this is a continuation of the move towards 'vocationalism' which featured as a neo-liberal goal for the UK government of the 1980s (Bynner et al 2002; Mizen, 2004). The current Scottish Government (2008b) state that 'encouraging all young people to stay in learning post-16 is the best way of ensuring their long-term employability and contribution to society' (p4). Unfortunately, this policy imperative ignores poverty as the fundamental reason that many young people from poorer backgrounds fail to make this transition in the first place.

Research has consistently shown that young people growing up in poverty are less likely to gain good educational qualifications (Jones, 2002; Bynner, 2005; Hirsch, 2007). Those young people in Scotland who qualify for free school meals are half as likely to get to level 5 in the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (Scottish Executive, 2006a). Several studies have also uncovered that the level of 'cultural capital' at home is deeply significant – parents' social class, their level of education, experience of unemployment and their housing situation all affect the educational and employment destinations of their children. (Forsyth and Furlong, 2000; Dolton *et al*., 1999; Stafford *et al*., 1999). To date, the Scottish government's approach has failed to tackle these issues effectively. Rather than focusing on

the root cause of the disadvantage that these young people suffer - their poverty - policy merely appears to address the symptoms.

Education alone is not enough to break this cycle. Young people from impoverished backgrounds can find that a period of unemployment upon leaving school can have what Parekh et al (2010) call a scarring effect on future prospects, therefore carrying their childhood disadvantage well into their adult lives. Although the current policy can be seen as a continuity of the vocationalist trend started by the Conservatives in the 1980s, what has changed is the nature of much of the training and education programs. Rather than learning new skills which might offer young people the most minimal of footholds in today's increasingly competitive labour market, educational and training courses offered to today's youth emphasise the work ethic, deference and a containment of deviance. The result is a greater polarisation between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' with a substantial number of young people, primarily from poorer backgrounds, falling behind those young people who go on to further and higher education.

Poverty and the 'residential' transition

For young Scots with ambition to leave their family home, the options can appear very bleak. Lacovou and Assave (2007) established 'there is a strong relationship between independent living and youth poverty' (p47). Following devolution, there has been a policy divergence in Scotland a nation which arguably now 'has some of the most progressive homelessness legislation in Europe' (Ormston, 2008, p2). For example, the *Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003* extended the range of groups to be considered as having priority need and therefore eligible for permanent accommodation. However, social housing remains in short supply. Consequently, homeless young people can spend months in temporary accommodation, hostels and bed and breakfasts 'which are often unsuitable for children and the accommodation can be of poor quality and even dangerous' (Giullari and Shaw, 2005: 413). With the recent economic downturn it is likely that the residential transition will continue to impoverish some young people.

Poverty and the 'domestic' transition

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Furthermore, for those young people leaving school with little in the way of qualifications, many are accelerating their transition to parenthood often without a stable relationship for support. As Cote and Bynner (2008) note, 'for young women, NEET frequently converts into early pregnancy and parenthood, with exceptionally high incidence in the UK and USA' (p255). For young parents compounded problems related to poverty tend to manifest in three ways. The first is escaping the poverty that they are likely to come from. The second is that benefit rates for young people are lower than that of adults and this can place young parents at extreme risk of poverty, particularly single mothers under age 16 (Aasave et al, 2006). The third is that for those parents that do find work, the level of wage is unlikely to ensure an escape from poverty; again a situation heightened for lone mothers (Levitas et al, 2006). Policy discourse in this aspect of the journey to adulthood has changed little over the last twenty years, with work consistently championed as the best route out of poverty for young parents (Scottish Government, 2009). Also, little heed has been paid to the fact that the work available to young people tends to be part-time, poorly paid and with little in the way of prospects. Again, offering no guarantee of escaping the trappings of poverty. Allied to this is the continuation of the moralistic discourse which has surrounded teenage parents since the early 1990s. Teenage parenthood is still acknowledged as a principle cause of social exclusion often constructed as a social problem, one particularly attributed to the poor working-class.

Blame

An obvious continuity in the rhetoric of policy is a discourse that points to the failings of young people themselves in relation to perceived negative transitional destinations. As Davies (1986) noted some 25 years ago, the governments philosophy towards working-class youth was that they 'were characterised as, by their very nature, lacking in appropriate skills, qualities, habits and attitudes' (p54). This analysis has persisted with policy continuing to centre on the deficiencies of young people, evidenced in a whole raft of contemporary policy documents (Scottish Executive, 2006b; Scottish Government, 2007a; 2007b; 2008a). For example, the Scottish government states that its framework for addressing poverty includes:

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Addressing educational disadvantage and underachievement; tackling poor health; providing more choices and more chances for vulnerable young people at risk of disengagement; tackling worklessness – particularly deep-rooted pockets of inter-generational worklessness (Scottish Government, 2008a: 9)

This focus on 'problem' groups masks the underlying structures which serve to marginalise those young people actually living in poverty. Mizen (2004) argues that by putting in place a vocational work preparation course for all young people, the responsibility for unemployment can be shifted squarely onto the shoulders of the 'feckless' youth. Unemployment is highest among young people, particularly those most marginalised and with the recognised least credentials. As a result some young people struggle to make the transition to adulthood and get caught in a cycle of training schemes and poorly paid temporary jobs. And 'when the individual is unable to immediately move into new work, failure may be very differently experienced, as internalised deficiency, uncertainty and sense of *disconnection'* (Bottrell and Armstrong, 2007: 357 – my emphasis). With young unemployed people, teenage parents and homeless youth increasingly disenfranchised from the processes of production and consumption, this disconnection can only serve to deepen their poverty leading to a sense of social dislocation and isolation.

Questioning Transition

The process of transition is under the spotlight. The fragmentation and growing *individualisation* (Beck, 1992) of our society mean that the traditional markers of adulthood have become less relevant (Jeffs and Smith, 2001; Mizen, 2002; 2004, Arnett, 2006). Wyn and Woodman (2006) argue that due to this fragmentation of the youth phase, the transition model has become inadequate. Instead, they offer a 'generational' approach in attempting to understand the nuances which define the youth phase as it exists today. By looking at the social, political and economic milieu which characterise each generation, they argue that we may be better placed to understand the differences which separate young people today, say, from their parents. Wyn and Woodman argue that a generational perspective allows us to locate processes of social change such as individualisation as

relevant to young people growing up today. In contrast, the transition model presupposes that there is a 'normative' process which all young people should be expected to make. As such, they suggest that it is impossible to draw comparisons with previous generations in terms of meeting markers such as the school to work transition – like their parents did due to the changing (and changed) world in which they live; 'the point is that they cannot, they are doomed to 'failed transitions', because the circumstances that enabled and shaped the Baby Boomer generation are no longer in existence' (p511).

What still exists, however, is that factors such as race, gender and class still play a critical role in determining how structures of inequality are generated. Many people would agree that contemporary politics places more responsibility and obligation on the shoulders of society's young citizens; they are increasingly 'accepting responsibility for their actions and making independent decisions' (Cote and Bynner, 2008: 261). As such, they are constructing their own narratives resulting in a linear interpretation of the transition model being questioned. However, the sense of 'agency' that a young person has can still be positioned within their social circumstances. It is difficult to imagine the amount of power a young, single mother living in an area of significant deprivation will have to determine her own pathway to perceived adulthood. For young people living on the margins the individualised outlook cultivated by our modern politics can only serve to heighten the disconnection they may feel from failing to meet the markers of adulthood. What makes this particularly pernicious is that the individualised nature of our modern society means that many impoverished young people growing up in late modernity may suffer from what Furlong & Cartmel (2007) describe as an 'epistemological fallacy':

> Blind to the existence of powerful chains of inter-dependency, young people frequently attempt to resolve collective problems through individual action and hold themselves responsible for their inevitable failure. (p144)

As a result, for young people who fail to make the linear transitions deemed 'normal' in policy terms, they can locate the deficiency in themselves, when in actual fact the problems reside in the radically altered society in which we now live.

119

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Conclusions

The nature of youth transitions has changed markedly over the past thirty years. Inequalities have persisted and arguably worsened, social class origins continue to be hugely influential in shaping young people's life chances. Subsequent governments through a dominant monetarist agenda and focus on social inclusion appear to have sought to tackle the symptoms of poverty not the causes. For the majority of young people growing up today in Scotland, the transition to adulthood has been postponed primarily due to a protracted 'professional' transition; in other words gaining employment is still the primary destination and key marker of independent adulthood. For young people growing up in poverty however, these transitions can be accelerated. In response to the threat posed to the model of youth transition by the growth of individualism it is probably fair to say that 'young people do exercise agency, to varying degrees and under diverse circumstances, but this agency is subject to…their material position and relations in society' (Wyn and White, 1997: 142). Even those young people with a high degree of personal agency may find the road to adulthood difficult should they struggle to find the stable and secure employment which underpins all three transitions. As has been shown, policy tends to focus on the individual failings of young people instead of the structural issues which serve to marginalise them in the first place. With the number of unemployed young people in the UK rising above the one million mark (BBC, 2012) recognition of this would be most welcome.

Alan MacKie

Alan graduated with Honours from the Community Education programme at the University of Edinburgh in 2011. He has worked in the field for 7 years, in a variety of capacities but working mainly with young homeless people. Since graduating he has worked in Fife with the 16+ team, linking with high schools to support 'at-risk' young people onto further education/training/employment.

References

Aasave, A., Iacovou, M. and Mancarini, L. (2006) 'Youth Poverty and transition to adulthood in Europe', *Demographic Research*, Vol 15, (2), pp21-50

Arnett, J. (2006) 'Emerging adulthood in Europe: a response to Bynner', *Journal of youth studies*, Vol 9, (1), pp111-123.

BBC (2012) *BBC Business News – UK Unemployment falls by 51,000*, < http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-18518286> (Date last accessed – 20/06/2012)
Beck, U. (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London: Sage.

Bottrell, D. & Armstrong, D. (2007) 'Changes and exchanges in marginal youth transitions', The Journal of Youth Studies, Vol 10, (3), pp353-371.

Bynner, J., Elias, P., McKnight, A., Pan, H. & Pierre, G. (2002) *Young People's changing routes to independence*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Bynner, J. (2005) 'Rethinking the youth phase: the case for emerging adulthood?' *Journal of youth studies*, Vol 8, (4), pp367-384.

Coles, B. (1995) *Youth, youth transitions and social policy*, London: UCL.

Côté, J. and Bynner, J.M. (2008) 'Changes in the transition to adulthood in the UK and Canada: the role of structure and agency in emerging adulthood', *Journal of Youth Studies,* Vol. 11, (3), pp251-268.

Davies, B. (1986) *Threatening Youth: Towards a national youth policy*. Milton Keynes: OU Press

Dolton, P., Makepeace, G., Sutton, S. and Audas, R. (1999) *Making the Grade: Education, the Labour Market and Young People.* Work and Opportunity Series No. 15. York: YPS for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Fahmy, E. (2006) 'Youth, poverty and social exclusion', In C. Pantazis, D. Gordon and R. Levitas (eds) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

France, A. (2008a) 'From Being to Becoming: The importance of tackling youth poverty in transitions to adulthood', *Social Policy & Society*, Vol 7, (4), pp495-505
Forsyth, A. and Furlong, A. (2000) *Socio-economic disadvantage and Access to Higher Education*. Bristol: Policy Press and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Furlong, A. and Cartmel, F. (2007) *Young People and Social Change - 2nd Ed*, Berkshire: OU Press.

Galland, O. (1984) La Decouverte: Les Jeunes , Paris: La Decouverte Editions .

Standing at the Crossroads – What future for Youth Work?

Galland, O. (1991) Sociologie de la jeunesse, Paris: Armand Colin.

Giullari, S. and Shaw, M. (2005) 'Supporting or controlling? New Labour's housing strategy for teenage parents', *Critical Social Policy*, Vol 25, (3), pp402-417

Hirsch, D. (2007) *Experiences of poverty and educational disadvantage* - Joseph Rowntree Foundation, http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/experiences-poverty-and-educational-disadvantage, <Date last accessed – 07/11/2010.

Lacovou, M and Assave, A. (2007) *Youth Poverty in Europe*, York: JRF

Jeffs, T and Smith, M.K. (2001). 'Social exclusion, joined-up thinking and individualization – new labour's connexions strategy', *Infed*,< http://tinyurl.com/32h29tl> (Date last accessed – 5/12/10)

Jones, G. (2002) *The Youth Divide – Diverging paths to adulthood*, Layerthorpe: JRF

Levitas, R., Head, E. and Finch, N. (2006) 'Lone mothers, poverty and social exclusion', In C. Pantazis, D. Gordon and R. Levitas (eds) *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain*, Bristol: The Policy Press

Macdonald, R. (1997) Dangerous youth and the dangerous class. In R. Macdonald (ed) *Youth, the 'Underclass and Social Exclusion*, London: Routledge

Macdonald, R. & Marsh, J. (2005) *Disconnected Youth? Growing up in Britain's poor neighbourhoods*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Mizen, P. (2002) 'Putting the politics back into youth studies: Keynesianism, monetarism and the changing state, *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol 5, (1), pp5-20

Mizen, P. (2004) *The Changing State of Youth*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
Ormston, R. (2008) *Public attitudes to homelessness: findings from a Scotland-wide survey*. <http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/148472/public_attitudes_to_homel essness.pdf> (Date last accessed – 29/11/10)

Parekh, A., MacInnes, T. and Kenway, P. (2010) *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion – 2010*, York: JRF

Scottish Executive (2006a), 'Statistics Publication Notice: Education Series: SQA Attainment and School Leaver Qualifications in Scotland 2005/06' <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/03/09080409/2> (Date last accessed – 29/11/10)

Scottish Executive (2006b) *More Choices, More Chances – A Strategy to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employmengt or training*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

Scottish Government (2007a) *Skills For Scotland: A Lifelong Learning Skills Strategy For Scotland*, The Scottish Government: Edinburgh

Scottish Government (2008a) *Taking Forward the Government Economic Strategy: A Discussion Paper On Tackling Poverty, Inequality And Deprivation In Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government

Scottish Government (2008b) *16+ Learning Choices: First Step Activity and Financial Support - Consultation Document*, Web Only Publication, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/1046/0073726.pdf> (Date last accessed – 29/11/10)

Scottish Government (2009) *The Early Years Framework*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government

Stafford, B., Heaver, C., Ashworth, K., Bates, C., Walker, R., McKay, S. and Trickey, H. (1999) *Work and Young Men.* Work and Opportunity Series No. 14. York: YPS for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Wyn, J. and White, R. (1997) *Rethinking Youth*, London: Sage

Wyn. J. and Woodman, D. (2006) 'Generation, Youth and Social Change in Australia', *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol 9, (5), pp495-514

13. Notes on contributors

Mike Bell

Mike has been working in the Youth & Community Work sector for 12 years. Mike has extensive experience of working with young people experiencing crisis and vulnerability and has good knowledge of a range of practice based approaches, but in particular educational group work, one to one case work and streetbased outreach. Mike graduated from Edinburgh University in 2004 with an Honors Degree in Community Education and from the Open University in 2010 with a Masters Degree in Social Policy & Youth Justice.

Dod Forrest

Dod is retired from Aberdeen City Council's Community Learning and Development section during 2009 after more than 40 years of uninterrupted work in the form of welfare rights, social work education, community and youth work and small-scale educational research. Now developing an organic smallholding; writing the occasional article and periodically an activist in opposition to Coalition austerity.

Dr Ian Fyfe

Ian is a Lecturer and Programme Director of the BA (Hons) Community Education degree programme based at the Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh. He has a professional background in community education and youth work. His teaching and research interests include youth work, youth studies, education for citizenship and political participation.

Lynn Hill

Lynn received a 1st class honours degree in Community Education from the University of Edinburgh in 2007. She began working in the field of Community Education in 1996. During this time she has worked in a variety of settings, but the majority of her work has been in the field of Youth Work and has focused on Equality, Diversity and Social Justice. She enjoys being creative, which has seen the Community Arts featuring heavily throughout her career. Involvement in this sphere has been diverse, ranging from the provision of workshops to full-blown art events and exhibitions.

Tony Jeffs

Tony teaches at Durham University and is member of the Institute for Social research, Bedfordshire University.

Alan Mackie

Alan graduated with Honours from the Community Education programme at the University of Edinburgh in 2011. He has worked in the field for 7 years, in a variety of capacities but working mainly with young homeless people. Since graduating he has worked in Fife with

124

the 16+ team, linking with high schools to support 'at-risk' young people onto further education/training/employment.

Stuart Moir

Stuart has worked in the field of Community Education in Scotland since 1995 and always in a Local Authority context. He has been both a senior and Community Education Worker, and for a period was an Integration manager with a New Community School. In August 2012 Stuart moved from the field into an academic post at the University of Edinburgh's Moray House School of Education.

Tony Taylor

Tony is a formerly a youth worker, trainer, senior manager and lecturer. Tony acts presently as the Coordinator for the In Defence of Youth Work campaign, which seeks to make the continued case for youth work as informal education, "that is volatile and voluntary, creative and collective – an association and conversation without guarantees".

Lynne Tammi

Lynne is the National Co-ordinator of Article 12 in Scotland a human rights NGO that works to promote young people's rights as set out in international human rights charters.

Dr Stuart Waiton

Stuart is a sociology and criminology lecturer at The University of Abertay Dundee, a Director of the research group Generation Youth Issues, and writer for a variety of newspapers including the *Scotsman.* Author of *Scared of the Kids,* and *The Politics of Antisocial Behaviour: Amoral Panics*, his forthcoming book is entitled *Snobs' Law: Criminalising Football Fans in an Age of Intolerance.*