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Youth work strategies

A manual for reflection and development

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Youth work
Context and Concept

Emergence of 'youth work' at European and (sometimes) national levels (though huge diversity across Europe)

Three European Youth Work Conventions

Three political documents

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Youth work

Youth work governance

- Legal framework
- Actors (young people, youth workers, youth organisations)
- Funding

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Strategy

A word with many meanings

Goals – means – environment

Success-oriented
Guidance for action
Outcome-driven?

Goal setting
Analysis of (internal and external) context
Strategy formulation
Strategy implementation
Strategy evaluation

Expressed, enacted, experienced
Implementation leakage
Street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky)

The case for strategy

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Denstad's Youth Policy Manual: six reasons

- Improves youth work
- Strengthens quality
- Ensures youth participation
- Makes youth work more flexible (and more fixed)
- Supports stakeholder ownership
- Prospect of better cross-sectoral co-operation

Really?

Where youth work is established v. where youth work is relatively new

Different rationales for 'strategy'

Let's see

Our survey

Online Q Feb 2023
(to EKCYP, PEYR, Youth Wiki) – for some insight

30 responses from 23 countries

Professional, institutional and academic perspectives

Concept – principles, goals, action
Independent or Integrated
National, regional, local

Country examples – six countries, two regions, two local

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Indicative themes

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'NEET' re-engagement

Distinctive role

Priority focus – homelessness, mental health

Cross-sectoral partnerships

Enhance life-chances

Recognise value of youth work

Build workforce capacity

Measure impact of youth work

Social inclusion of young people

Digital youth work

Youth work in other settings (cf schools)

Build quality

Strengthen understand of youth work pedagogy

Quality standards for youth centres

Youth information and counselling

Child and youth protection

Youth cultures and creativity

Social and political education / participation

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Building a strategy

Consultation – who took part

Agreeing the guiding framework

Ensuring sustainable funding commensurate with aspirations

Establishing KPIs and an evaluation plan

Deployment of human and financial resources

Conversations with the community of practice

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Purposive choice of countries and seeking a triangular perspective

Strategic visions – like the indicative themes above

- Youth work development
- Young people's circumstances
- Young people's aspirations
- The strategic process
- Bridging young people and society

A résumé of the European Youth Work Agenda

- inc.:
  'There should be a strategic framework for youth work development'

Advocates and Adversaries

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ADVOCATES

- Falling in line with legislation
- Recognition
- Cultivating hearts and minds
- Responsiveness to social change
- Building block
- Guiding framework
- Continuous improvement / quality assurance
- Holding politicians to account
- European influence – a 'trojan horse'

ADVERSARIES

- Age range – too elastic
- 'All-singing, all-dancing
- Premature / failing to keep up
- Misunderstood
- Straight-jacket
- Exclusion
- Process, not product
- Exclusivity
- Parallel universe
- Measurement
- In the service of…. whom?

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Getting a strategy done

Process?

Getting started
Duration for development – and for how long?
Time for consultation

Key elements:

Funding and resources
Training and qualifications
Spaces for practice
Inclusion

Devolution
Focus
Distinction
Integration/collaboration

Moving forward
How to develop a youth work strategy

1. Essential conditions
   a. youth participation
   b. consultation with stakeholders
   c. ownership by public authorities and stakeholders

2. Essential content
   a. Vision and mission
   b. Funding base
   c. Concrete objectives and goals

3. Essential steps
   a. Rationale for goal setting (why the strategy is needed)
   b. Analysis of need and context
   c. Formulation
   d. Implementation
   e. Evaluation

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Consensus and conflict

NGO sector and municipalities

Scouts and Young Farmers/4H

Youth Clubs and Boys and Girls Clubs

Open v targeted youth work

Academic knowledge v 'Vocational' skills

Selling the youth work soul to the devil (collaborative working with schools or police)

Too many compromises

Losing distinction

Be ready for criticism and conflict!

STARTING POINT:

Accident, Intent, Academic, Practice (youth work community), Politics/Policy
CONSOLIDATION OF A CORE GROUP (invited / appointed?)
DESIGNATION / FRAMING OF THE 'CONSTITUENCY' (in focus or to be involved: ie.
The youth work community tightly or loosely framed)
PRIORITY FOCUS OR STRATEGIC GOALS:
- Provision, Training, Funding, Partnerships, Other
  - What is wanted/needed?
    - Open-access, Outreach / detached, School-based, Projects
    - Advice, guidance
    - Targeted groups (cf 'NEET')
    - Exchanges
    - Information
    - Other (cf. language/Wales)
  - Who should deliver it?
    - Municipalities, NGOs, Private sector, other

PROCESS
- consultation mechanisms and methods
- time frame
- Task and finish working groups

MOVING FROM PROFESSIONALISM TO REALPOLITIK
- The art of the possible
- Core goals and those more peripheral - Battles and sacrifices to win the war
- Where is likely support / alliances (faith groups, police)?
- What is, or might be, the opposition (faith groups, police)?

ENGAGING WITH THE POLITICS
- Presenting the arguments
- Preparing the documentation
- Piloting the practice
- Implementing the strategy
  - Actions plans
  - communications
  - Evaluation

Enlist **political support** as soon as possible (non-partisan if possible) and try to sustain it for as long as possible.