

Abstracts

THE YOUTH PRECARIAT, “GENERATIONISM” AND THE AUSTERITY CITY

Fred Powell and Margaret Scanlon

This article explores the position of young people within the austerity city, which is used as a metaphor for postmodern society. The article addresses the rise of a youth precariat in the 21st century and its impact on changing society and politics. At the core of the article are the questions “How do youth policy and youth work need to change?” and “What measures and practices are required to adapt youth strategies and services to the needs and aspirations of young people in postmodern society?” We suggest that a radical strategy of transformative change in both youth policy and youth work is needed to promote young people’s health and well-being.

FROM HOLISTIC NEEDS TO CROSS-SECTORAL MEASURES – AN ANALYSIS OF CROSS-SECTORAL YOUTH POLICY BASED ON RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

Magda Nico

Feeling safe, sound and happy does not magically happen and is not irreversible. It takes certain conditions of existence and minimum levels of well-being, self-esteem and a sense of fulfilment. These conditions, necessary but not necessarily sufficient to reach happiness or self-realisation, are spread throughout numerous spheres of life and, most of them at least, find relative correspondence with dimensions of youth policy or with administrative divisions such as education, employment, health, housing and culture, among others.

Young people themselves confirm this layered and holistic definition of well-being. They tend to provide holistic views of well-being that combine mental/philological, physical and, most of all, emotional and social well-being (Nico and Alves 2015: 15). But they also understand well-being as layered, thus distinguishing well-being from happiness. Well-being in this sense corresponds to the achievement of basic objective and subjective conditions of life, while happiness is at a higher level, and is usually merely momentary or gradual, or cumulative. Well-being would then be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for happiness (Nico and Alves 2015: 16).

But is this holistic approach to life supported by the usage, spread, reach and operationalisation of the concept of cross-sectoral youth policy? “Success” is not – contrary to what Oscar Wilde stated – a science. If you have the conditions, you don’t necessarily get the results. But you must start somewhere. Youth policy’s aim would then be to guarantee that this starting point is approximately the same for all, that the minimum conditions to achieve happiness are guaranteed.

This article intends to contribute to this topic by providing an overview of existing information on cross-sectoral policy-making co-operation based on materials produced in the context of work within in the EU, the Council of Europe and specific countries with concrete experiences in cross-sectoral co-operation. To achieve this purpose, a certain number and type of policy-related documents collected were subject to thematic content analysis supported by the software Maxqda®. This provided the means to analyse, on one hand, the formal or official importance and political recognition given by some of the major European institutions to the cross-sectoral features of youth policy and, on the other, the implementation of cross-sectoral youth policy at national level.

ENVISIONING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Beata Sochacka

Youth commitment to creation of a sustainable future has been a recurring theme in the discussions on sustainable development, drawing attention to the complicated interrelations between youth and sustainable development. Perceived as a key stakeholder in a sustainable future, youth is expected to take the lead in bringing the transition towards a more sustainable development paradigm. The article argues that although the youth role in envisioning the future and leading social change is certainly a crucial one, there are important questions that need to be asked to make sure youth’s role in leading the change is not yet another element of a simplified vision of a sustainable future in which the importance of one social actor is overestimated.

YOUTH TRANSITIONS: CHANCES AND CHOICES – GLOBAL DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Dragana Avramov

Youth transitions concern crucial changes in the human life course – the transition from one level of education to another, the transition from education to work, the transition from parental care to independent life or own family life.

In this contribution, I first address societal developments, mainly in the domain of demographics that help to understand some key challenges and opportunities with which young people are likely to be confronted. Next I look at individual-level life-course events related to transitions regarding sexuality, education, work and family life.

In their transition to adult life, today’s European youth will constitute a decreasing part of the population, whereas Asia and Africa will be facing strong increases in this age group. Today’s young people in Europe will in adult life also be confronted

with an increasingly ageing population. The later stages of life and the working conditions of today's European youth will partly be influenced by demographic trends and differentials in the educational competition, labour supply, migration pressures and old-age-dependency ratios.

Young people in Europe today require heavy individual and societal investments in education, are confronted with labour-integration difficulties produced by a maladapted world economic system and face incompatibilities in the domain of work- and family-building relations.

The life-course distribution of time for the main activities that relate to studies, paid work, domestic activity, partnership, parenthood, care provision and active and passive leisure need to be reshuffled over the entire life course in order to better adapt life chances to the changed socio-economic and demographic framework conditions.

CORRELATES OF MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF THE EUROPEAN YOUTH: EVIDENCE FROM THE EQLS

Haridhan Goswami and Gary Pollock

Youth well-being is becoming more central to European social policies both in the European Union and at a national level. The study of well-being has come far in recent years such that the focus has shifted from interpretations with a focus on objective measures towards a nuanced analysis including a variety of social and psychological dimensions. At the same time, there have been significant advances in the development of common research instruments and cross-national surveys, both of which facilitate a comparative analysis of well-being. This paper uses evidence from the European Quality of Life Survey 2011 to highlight national differences in mental health and psychological well-being (PWB) and begins the process of establishing which factors appear to predict positive experiences.

"ILLEGAL BODIES" ON THE MOVE – A CRITICAL LOOK AT FORCED MIGRATION TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR YOUNG ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Maria Pisani

This paper seeks to look at human mobility and, more specifically, the experiences of young refugees who cross the Mediterranean in an effort to find peace and security in Europe. This is a contemporary issue that has recently witnessed a surge in political, academic and media interest. The majority of asylum-seekers reaching the coast of Malta are young people. In 2014 one quarter of the asylum-seekers claimed to be unaccompanied minors, reflecting a global phenomenon (UNHCR 2014).

Forced migration does not happen in a vacuum, but must be positioned within neo-liberal globalisation and social change. The securitisation of borders has made it increasingly difficult for refugees from the global South to seek asylum in the EU. Such

policies have contributed to the proliferation of unscrupulous smuggling networks: in 2014 an estimated 3 000 people lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean. Inhumane policies adopted by the EU and the violation of human rights are justified through hegemonic discursive practices that define and represent the “illegal” body, fuelling fear and heightened nationalism.

In this paper I look at the Maltese context and the broader EU policy on forced migration and the securitisation of borders. I also draw on my experiences as a practitioner and activist to make the case for a more critical understanding of forced migration that, in the search for social justice and respect for human rights, must challenge the statist hegemony that is ubiquitous within youth studies. The paper argues that the “right to rights” cannot be assumed and that the prevalent, uncritical stance towards notions of the nation state and democracy is problematic, exclusionary, and out of touch with the lived reality experienced by millions of young people around the world.

SELF-EFFECTIVE, ACTIVE AND HEALTHY – HEALTH PROMOTION IN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH WORK

Ansgar Drücker

The German Federal Government’s 13th Report on Children and Young People focused on the health of children and young people in Germany. The report pays little attention to (voluntary) youth work and none at all to international youth work and has not therefore been properly taken on board in these areas; however, it does include findings which can be applied to these two areas of child and youth welfare and which are described in greater detail in the article.

The report describes many aspects of successful health promotion in child and youth welfare work which have not been conducted intentionally to date and can at best be described as implicit health promotion. The report attaches great importance to positive experiences of self-effectiveness by children and young people, which it states have a favourable impact on mental health. International youth work activities also make precisely such experiences possible.

The drafting committee warns against taking a cultural or ethnic approach to health problems and instead places the emphasis on social disadvantages, while describing young people’s belonging to multiple different cultures as a key resource. Leading on from this positive and appreciative approach to young people from migrant backgrounds, they are nevertheless clearly presented as being disadvantaged in health terms and suffering disproportionate levels of health problems – an oft-neglected aspect of the structural discrimination they face. Intercultural aspects of health promotion are therefore of particular significance in child and youth welfare activities geared towards exchanges. They are frequently part of the conceptual approach of international youth work.

The relationship established in the report between social status and standing on the one hand and young people’s state of health and well-being on the other is not taken properly into account in either child and youth welfare or health policy. It represents a further justification for anti-discrimination policy and makes it clear that personal

responsibility for health is a necessary but in no way sufficient means of ensuring maximum well-being. For educational practice, this also means that because of the intertwining of individual and social factors in the health of young people, health promotion must take account of these two levels; in other words, it can assume neither that well-being will automatically be achieved among all participating young people even with the best health promotion approaches, nor that an improvement in the individual state of health of individual participants can be brought about automatically merely through a stance based on diversity and anti-discrimination.

The self-effectiveness of young people can be significantly undermined by experiences of discrimination and hate speech. Health promotion therefore also includes measures to curb discrimination and combat hate speech effectively. The origin, sexual orientation or identity, or physical disabilities of young people can play a major part here. Reference is therefore made at the end of the article to the current buzzwords of diversity and inclusion.

LGBT YOUNG PEOPLE AND HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC BULLYING – THE EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONTEXT

Michael Barron

In recent years we have seen increased attention paid to LGBT young people across Europe and globally, and in particular their experiences of homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools. In 2012 UNESCO initiated the first ever international consultation on addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools and released two related publications: “Review of Homophobic Bullying in Educational Institutions” and *Education Sector Responses to Homophobic Bullying*. In 2011 UN General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon described homophobic bullying of young people as a “grave violation of human rights”. This paper draws on European and international human rights law and interpretations to clarify how and why homophobic bullying violates young people’s human rights, making the case that a great deal of international law aims to protect LGBT young people against such harassment and as such states have legal obligations in this area. This paper is of particular significance as we are witnessing a rise in anti-LGBT legislation and sentiment in some countries including Russia and Nigeria, a situation which has particularly devastating effects on LGBT young people. The following analysis introduces a hate crimes/incidents frame to homophobic and transphobic discrimination and bullying and addresses the issue of the often-cited friction between cultural/religious rights and LGBT people’s human rights.

REFLECTIONS ON A LIFETIME OF ENGAGEMENT IN THE YOUTH FIELD – PERSISTING QUESTIONS

Gordon Blakely

This article looks, over a period of some 40 years, at how we have created and, more importantly, managed, meaningful international, indeed intercultural, co-operation

between young people. By asking a series of questions related to our learning through experience; about the structures we develop to deliver such a public policy; and the values we choose to emphasise along the way, we can reflect on what results have some permanence. This is focused on the interventions at a European level, but the analysis easily spreads to the wider connected world.

In an ever changing environment, on political, social and personal levels, much is lost and some lessons never fully learned. One thread which remains is that in all its stimulating, and often chaotic, forms the values, practice and reach of imaginative non-formal learning have survived many tests of time and systems. Whatever label we use to describe this form of engagement – youth work, focused on and led by young people – it is a major instrument in securing positive intercultural security.

YOUTH, PEER EDUCATION AND HEALTH: A QUESTIONABLE SOLUTION TO REDUCE SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN HEALTH (SIH)

Yaëlle Amsellem-Mainguy

This article seeks to summarise that health education for young people requires a multiple intervention strategy, at the initiative of adults in a defined programme or on the initiative of young people from a shared observation. For 20 years, the target has been to involve young people in their learning in a process of empowerment, through education peer programmes.

BODY, HEALTH AND THE UNIVERSE – A POLEMIC AND CRITICAL REVIEW OF YOUTH HEALTH BEHAVIOUR

Manfred Zentner

In times of individualisation and in an era when appearance gains ever more importance, even health becomes a symbol for personal success. It seems that staying healthy is everyone's task; threats to health are induced rather by the (wrong) individual lifestyle than environmental circumstances, and thus healthy lifestyles have gained a higher reputation. Therefore the body – as a main expression of health – became more important as a symbol for health and thus for personal success and motivation. Healthy lifestyles are still not the most popular among young people; nevertheless cultural codes try to communicate health and sustainability as important factors of a personal lifestyle. And personal lifestyles are part of identity building, and thus part of the investment in the self for the product “me” in various markets. This paper deals with the relationship between healthy lifestyles and body image and how it is designed and performed in youth cultural scenes. Youth cultural scenes are arenas for finding the own self, for identity creation and definition. Body, looks and health are closely interlinked, but in youth scenes the performative, expressive act is of highest importance, and therefore a closer look behind the appearance is needed to understand the needs and wishes of young people in these scenes. The symbols and codes of body images and health behaviour are described in this article.