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Reflective Practice Issue

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Reflective Practice Edition

Contents:

A word from the CEO...

Greetings all and welcome to this latest edition of the Irish Youth Work Centre's Scene Magazine.

Readers do not need to be reminded of the difficult times we are living through and the increasing challenges with which we are faced on a daily basis to ensure that quality supports and services are available to young people. The on-going deepening cuts to the funding of the sector are compromising our collective vision of youth work provision. That vision is one in which young people, no matter where they live in Ireland, are able to avail of supports and services that assist them to achieve their full potential and better overcome the challenges they face in their lives.

Collectively as a sector we need to continue to work together to ensure that the limited resources we now have are expended efficiently, effectively and appropriately. We must also, however, significantly improve our messaging both to the general public, policy makers and politicians. It is my view that the contribution of youth work and the critical outcomes for young people which our work achieves are not universally understood either by the general public or by decision makers. In general, people value what they understand.

If our work and our role in communities is not communicated and if the transformative outcomes of our work are not made manifest we risk our work not being understood and appreciated. We also place ourselves well down the agenda in terms of work which ought to be supported, protected and promoted. It is time for us to reach out far beyond our sector to ensure that the profession of youth work is understood, its contribution is clearly articulated and evidenced.

Our goal must be to ensure that youth work is seen as an integral part of Irish social infrastructure in every community and not an optional extra. Now more than ever before, as a sector we need to be crystal clear about the rationale and evidence base for our methods and strategies. It is also essential that we are clear about the outcomes of our work and that we are able to point to verifiable evidence to demonstrate that our interventions work. This is a challenge to the sector as a whole and one which organisations in the sector need to address both individually and collectively. Each individual youth worker whether paid or unpaid needs to take personal responsibility for their own practice. We need to further develop our reflective practice, document our work and be able to evidence the transformative outcomes which it achieves. This edition of Scene will I hope be a useful tool to practitioners in this endeavour.

Regular readers will note a certain continuity in terms of content and agenda of Scene. However, over the last while there has been a very considerable discussion and reflection on how best the Scene can be a real resource for youth work practitioners on the ground in the context of the challenging times in which we now operate. We have also consulted readers on their needs and how best the magazine can support them.

This has led us to a refocusing of the publication and to the development of a new strategy to accompany the publication. I would like to thank the Executive Editor Matthew Seebach and his team for responding to the challenge placed before them and congratulate them both on the new strategy and the focus of the Scene.

Happy Reading.

Dr. Patrick J. Burke
CEO
Youth Work Ireland

"Thinking outside the lunch box"
Creating New Partnership
by Joelle Keoghan

This article outlines the positive outcomes that can be achieved throught partnership, innovation and a youth work based approach.

Background

Two years ago, lunchtime was a much different scene than it is today for the students of St. Paul's Community College. Lunchtime was unstructured and this was having a deleterious impact upon the student body. St. Paul's realised they needed a mechanism in order to engage a small number of students who traditionally did not participate in mainstream youth and community activities, as an alternative to the 'hanging around' and the truancy taking place. In 2011, discussions commenced with Manor St John Youth Services (MSJYS) to attempt to resolve this issue resulting in a partnership between MSJYS, the Waterford School Completion Programme (WSCP) and the college. Together, these three entities created a unique youth work programme that has proven to positively engage a targeted group of young people during the lunch hour. The idea was simple: to develop a programme guided by a youth work based approach, delivered by a youth worker but taking place on school grounds.

A Safe Space

The programme conceived out of this partnership provides a safe, supervised and supportive space that belongs to the students, a variety of activities for lunchtime, linkages to extracurricular activities and developmental as well as emotional supports. It is open to all students attending St. Paul's; however, it specifically targets boys between the ages of 12 and 14 who are at risk of early school leaving, as well as students from disadvantaged backgrounds, marginalised communities, challenging living circumstances and those with learning disabilities.

Now, lunchtime at St. Paul's Community College is a much different scene. On Mondays and Wednesdays, boys clamour into their well-lit prefab. They hover around two PlayStations, sit at tables doing homework, and play football. They roar together in laughter, they munch on sandwiches and rolls and they come and go as they please. On Tuesdays, girls crowd around an arts and crafts project, enjoy a chat with a youth worker, eat their lunches and play *Dance Dance* on the Playstation. Sports options are available to students such as basketball for the boys on Tuesdays and fitness courses for the girls on Thursdays.

Partnerships

The partners work together, pooling their resources and expertise, resulting in an extremely efficient and effective programme. A key element has been the sharing of knowledge between the partners that allows each to build upon the work of the other and utilise each other's strengths, expertise and resources. Consequently, the programme is able to provide an alternative structure at a minimal expense that keeps the students engaged, provides the emotional support they may need, as well as opportunities for informal learning to take place. The school now, through MSJYS, impacts upon the social and personal needs of these young people. The support is provided on multiple levels. The

youth workers act as confidantes, role models, guardians and friends. The activities are designed to be confidence building, character building and sandwich in learning experiences.

Positive Impacts

All stakeholders, including parents, teachers, youth workers and participants themselves, have witnessed the positive impacts the lunchtime clubs have had upon the students. Students are staying on campus at lunchtime and the club is an incentive for many to attend school. Students are mixing to a greater extent. Boundaries that previously existed due to age, social group, or learning style are bridged through this common space. The club contributes to the school's anti-bullying efforts. Students, who may be victims of bullying have a safe refuge to go to during the generally unstructured lunchtime and the youth workers in the room serve as a comfortable confidante to whom they can report bullying behaviour. The lunchtime clubs have encouraged students to participant in healthy activities and have introduced them to a host of arts and crafts, sporting and outdoor pursuits. Consequently, students have developed interests in new areas and/or have had opportunities to build upon pre-existing skills.

A Place To Belong

Most importantly, perhaps, is the emotional support and acceptance this space offers. Many students have stated that for a certain part of the day they feel like they have a place where they belong, are safe, and have someone to talk to. The youth workers have placed themselves as people students can confidentially report incidents of bullying, as well as other personal issues. Additionally, the space itself offers students a sense of belonging and acceptance. The youth work activities remain open to the students regardless of whether they attended school, or if they are subject to any type of disciplinary action. Due to the family situations of several of the participants, when they face suspension, they have nowhere to go during the day. The club activities sends them the important message that there is a space that they can come to, where they are accepted, and where they can access crucial emotional supports.

MSJYS has experienced how collaboration has enabled all stakeholders to better achieve their goals and objectives. Engagement between state educational agencies with youth groups in the community has made delivery much easier and cost efficient. To our knowledge, the formalised nature of this partnership is an innovation. While similar informal arrangements may exist, a well laid out governing structure has created a programme that is effective and has resulted in the application and dovetailing of various professional approaches. It is not just a teaching, youth work or targeted intervention approach but a complementary combination. It is this melting pot of approaches that serves to support the whole person thus better empowering each young person to succeed in their educational and personal development.

As practitioners in youth work, MSJYS has internalised two key lessons from this experience. First, we often attempt to reinvent the wheel when creating programmes to meet the needs of our beneficiaries. However, with some creative thinking and collaborative effort, we were able to combine our strengths, and build something far more comprehensive and holistic utilising the resources of various parties without starting from scratch. Secondly, we have discovered how easy it is to work across sectorial boundaries when everybody is able to leave their bag at the door.

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Reflective Practice

by Siobhán McGrory

A self-indulgent pastime or a pathway towards improved youth work practice?

Introduction

Reflective practice is certainly not a new concept in youth work. All youth work training and education highlights the importance of being critically reflective, however, in reality reflective practice is not widely nor consistently implemented and can easily be forgotten in the busy youth worker's everyday work. This short article explores some of the issues and challenges in successfully implementing reflective practice in Irish youth work and highlights some of the structures and supports necessary for the effective use of reflective practice. The views presented here are a collective of issues identified through the author's experience in providing training and support to Irish youth organisations in the area of reflective practice.

Benefits of Reflective Practice:

Reflective practice improves youth work practice in a number of ways including the following:

Reflective practice:

- Opens up options about how youth work practice happens. When we reflect on why and how we carry out our work it enables us to see both 'more' and to 'see things differently'…it 'illuminates our practice' which can lead to more creative practice. This is important in the current climate of ever decreasing resources.

- Helps workers to identify gaps in their skills and knowledge.

- Makes it easier for workers to identify their learning needs and improve their practice.

- Encourages workers to analyse communication (what and how they communicate) and relationships within their work context – this means that relationships can be improved and collaborative working can be improved also.

- Supports workers in examining their decision-making processes which can, in turn, help them to justify and articulate their practice.

- Encourages a healthy questioning approach which contributes to transparency and accountability at organisational level (1).

Issues and challenges in implementing reflective practice effectively in youth work:

A number of challenges have been identified by workers and managers in Irish youth organisations and include the following:

- Lack of clarity about reflective practice, what it is, why it is important and how to do it. In this context the role and practice of 'reflection' is sometimes confused with that of supervision… 'What is the need for reflective practice when we have supervision processes in place?' 'What is the difference between reflective practice and supervision?'

- Lack of 'critical reflection skills' required for reflective practice.

- Organisational culture and constraints – the absence of a culture of reflective practice at various levels within an organisation can mean that it is not prioritised.

- Time constraints – the on-going demands for 'contact time' with young people and ever increasing demands on workers to complete paperwork associated with their day to day work.

- Concerns that taking the time to 'self-reflect', and in particular taking the time to reflect on the workers' feelings and emotional reactions to the work may be perceived as 'self-indulgence'… 'We are too busy getting on with the work to take time out to reflect'.

- Fear of the change that may be required if work is critically questioned as well as a fear to move out of our 'comfort zone' …'I've always done it this way' or 'the young people like this so why change anything?'

What is necessary to support a consistent and comprehensive approach to reflective practice in youth work?

To ensure that reflective practice is a pathway to improved youth work practice rather than a 'self-indulgent pastime' some key requirements include the following:

- An organisational culture of openness and a genuine willingness to critically reflect on the work at all levels within the organisation – this includes individual and team reflection as well as building reflective practice into supervision

processes in order to create more meaningful support and supervision opportunities. Furthermore, reflective practice must extend beyond reflecting on the work and involve critical reflection on the influences and impact the work has on work processes and ultimate outcomes that result from the work.

- An organisational openness to create opportunities for and manage change – change in youth work practice is an essential outcome of reflective practice, otherwise critical reflection will make little difference to the day-to-day work.

- An organisational commitment to allocate appropriate time and space for reflective practice – meaningful reflective practice cannot be seen as 'just another task', it must become part of the youth work process and part of what every youth worker does.

- A willingness to ask and answer the tough questions relating to youth work practice.

- Training and facilitated support for staff and management on reflective practice - training is best delivered to whole organisational teams to ensure a common understanding and reflective practice approach at all levels.

Definitions of Reflective Practice

Peter Jarvis (2) identifies reflective practice as 'Something more than thoughtful practice. It is that form of practice that seeks to problematize many situations of professional performance so that they can become potential learning situations and so the practitioner can contribute to learn, grow and develop in and through practice' .

Lynn Clouder (3) defines reflective practice as follows: 'In its broadest sense, reflective practice involves the critical analysis of everyday working practices to improve competence and promote professional development'.

Models of Reflective Practice – the common elements:

A broad range of models of reflective practice have emerged in the literature since Donald Schön (4) first introduced the concept of 'reflection' as being central to 'what professionals do'. The majority of these models have come from the health and education sectors and have much to offer youth work as the sector continues to develop its professional practice. The better known and used reflective practice models cited in Siobhan Maclean (5) include Johns (2000), Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985), Gibbs (1988), Borton (1970), Fook (2002), Smyth (1989) and Korthagen (2001) .

Each of these models contributes something different to the concept of reflective practice but common themes can be extrapolated across the various models. These common themes include dynamic questioning, self-awareness, consideration of feelings and emotions, accepting uncertainty, use of knowledge, exploring basic assumptions, understanding power and planning for change and action (6).

Training and Support for Youth Organisations on Critical Reflection and Reflective Practice

A 1-day staff development workshop entitled 'Reflective Practice – A self-indulgent pastime or a pathway towards improved youth work practice?' has been designed by Siobhán McGrory which explores all of the issues raised above and explores practical strategies, tools and approaches for reflection practice in youth work.

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6. Ibid

Scene Magazine Readership Survey Analysis

As everyone knows, we live in a time when it is necessary to be clear about the outcomes that result from what we do, what is the rationale and evidence base for the strategies and methods we use in our work and how we evidence what we do. With this in mind an extensive Scene Magazine readership survey was conducted in December 2012 to evaluate Scene Magazine's current effectiveness and determine its future direction. The survey established the requisite baseline data that will serve as the basis for future evaluation and planning. However, for us in the editorial team, our first interest and what we were excited to learn from the returned surveys was which topics and issues youth work practitioners feel they want to learn about and how Scene Magazine can help them to become better practitioners. It is this information that will determine the future direction of Scene Magazine.

The level of response was high and the feedback received was both positive and constructive. The majority of respondents who took the survey were front line youth work practitioners (44%) with over 10 years experience working in the youth work sector (36%). This we feel gives us a strong mandate for effective change as suggestions we implement come directly from well-experienced practitioners in the field.

We were delighted that the majority of respondents (96%) said Scene Magazine has provided them with useful information and perspectives in their work and that Scene Magazine helps them better understand issues around the practice of youth work in Ireland.

Fully 90% of respondents said the topics covered in the 2012 editions were timely and interesting.

This feedback has given the editorial team a sense of being on the right road with what we are trying to achieve and deliver with Scene Magazine. However, there are many areas for improvement that are evident from the comments and data provided in the survey.

In this edition we have begun to implement suggestions from readers such as producing theme based editions with content and commentaries from policy makers, the profiling of youth services approach to their work, featuring best practice programmes and ideas, providing critically reflective commentary on current issues and providing a space in Scene Magazine for young people and volunteers' views and reviews of research evidence relevant to youth workers.

We hope that the new focus on theme based editions followed by a series of practitioners symposia will provide readers with the information and evidence they have asked for, while also continuing to deliver high quality and useful content.

We plan on making Scene Magazine available online, however as the vast majority of readers stated they prefer a print version; we will continue producing hard copies. We will also provide additional content from Scene Magazine articles online, as requested by readers. This additional information will provide another source of information and resources for practitioners.

Another ask from readers that we are implementing immediately is to have a detailed call for contributions for each edition of Scene Magazine. This we hope will give potential contributors more notice of upcoming opportunities to send in articles .

The Tale of Youth Work

Reflective Practice: The re-discovery of youth work practice through story telling

by Eibhlis Bray, Limerick Youth Service

Introduction

In 2007 Conor Rowley, the Assessor of Youth Work, asked, "While the core principles of youth work have immense value and currency, could it be that the difficulty in articulating youth work is leading to a situation where the currency of some of its claims are being devalued?"(YWI Conference, 2007).

Background Story

Conor's question was suggesting to youth workers that quality standards could help to support the articulation of youth work practice. Here in Limerick Youth Service during our involvement in the National Quality and Standards Framework process (NQSF), our implementation team identified the need to clearly identify and articulate the value of our youth work across a large and diverse organisation. We recognised the necessity to re-claim what is unique and distinguishing about our youth work practice for young people who engage with our services. In addition to (and as a result of) the NQSF process, this articulation 'issue' is something that locally we have begun to tackle in a novel, yet arguably equally effective way. We are embarking on a journey of re-discovery with a re-focus on the 'cornerstones' of youth work which defines the distinctiveness of our services.

In this regard old links between Limerick Youth Service and Bernard Davies were reignited. The involvement of Bernard Davies has been welcomed excitedly by our youth work staff, recognising his experience, invaluable insight and how he is described by his peers in the journal Youth & Policy as:

the most significant practitioner and intellectual in the field of youth work in the last fifty years.

Davies more recently has been central to the 'In Defence of Youth Work' (IDYW) Campaign initiated in 2009 in the UK. This campaign provides a platform for the collective voice of youth workers in protecting and advocating for "emancipatory and democratic youth work".

As part of this campaign IDYW has produced a book entitled 'This is Youth Work: Stories From Practice'. This book forms the basis of the journey Limerick Youth Service is now travelling. 'This is Youth Work' (1), emerged as part of a challenge by the IDYW to what they view as the predominant, managerialist approach encroaching on youth work. Managerialism is a perspective focussed on number crunching and inputs vs. outcomes 'evidence' etc. Using stories and placing at the centre the 'experience' of youth work, the authors of 'This is Youth Work' argue that this method of capturing stories is

congruent with and indeed integral to the voluntary engagement that makes youth work so distinctive as a practice with young people.

And that real evidence of the effectiveness and value of youth work

will come about only if decision-makers, youth workers and young people enter into consistent, critical conversations with one another about what makes youth work tick. It will come about only if youth work is democratic through and through.

The Workshop Story

We begun our pilot of 'storytelling' over two days this January facilitated by Bernard Davies and Suzanne Hunter Darsh (also an IDYW activist). A core group of staff were brought through the storytelling workshop, adapted from the initial IDYW programme, prepared by Dr. Sarah Banks of Durham University. The method devised by Dr Banks "is derived from the first stage of a Socratic dialogue approach".

Based on their experiences of using the programme in the UK and tailored to the specifics of our organisation, Bernard and Suzanne prepared a modified programme which aimed:

• To give Limerick Youth Service youth workers an opportunity to explore what youth work practice means for them in their current work settings.

• To describe and analyse examples of their past or current youth work practice.

• To analyse some of these examples and reflect on how and why they are youth work.

• To compare these definitions with the definition of youth work advocated by the In Defence of Youth Work campaign in the UK.

The storytelling method cannot be confused with day to day conversation. Everyday we as youth workers tell each other our stories and in many ways we are experts in 'anecdotes'. However, the storytelling method builds on our conversational strengths, allowing us to capture our practice through a thought-out methodical approach. This involves a combination of strong facilitation, informed probing/questioning, peer interrogation and a thorough documentation of the stories.

My Story

Being involved in the storytelling workshop over the two days has been a unique experience. Following the workshops I wrote two paragraphs on how I was feeling and markedly the words I chose were – energised, enthusiastic and optimistic. My experience of the storytelling process was immensely powerful. This impression of storytelling I feel is due to the ownership I felt during the process, as I use my own words to describe and be supported by my peers to name my youth work practice. The opportunity to tell my story appears simple, but as the web of my story was un-woven through the workshop method, the intricacy and

depth of storytelling as a means of capturing practice emerged.

Our Story

For two days, we participated in a group, critically thinking about, talking about, interrogating, and listening to practice that is happening in Limerick Youth Service and I felt a real sense of being part of a movement that has at its core youth work. The challenge is to now advance on our two day experience and put in place a process of 'cascading' storytelling throughout the organisation, in order to capture the breath of youth work practice and collectively articulate our youth work. The potential of storytelling may be in its infancy for us, however, I am hopeful that this will be integral to asserting the 'currency' of our claims, as we build additional avenues to articulate and capture our practice.

In introducing the idea of storytelling in 2010 in the UK, Davies talked about demonstrating the impact of youth work by re-claiming new managerial language in youth work, by "taking hold of it making it ours and turning it to our ends", maybe this is part of the journey we are on, maybe this is our means of reclaiming the term 'reflective practice', grounding it - Let's be youth workers, let's tell our 'stories'...
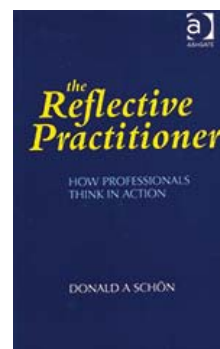
Donald Schön's Reflective Action

The following is a brief outline of some of Donald Schön's concepts of reflective action. It is not possible to cover all the main elements here as reflective action is as complex as practice itself, but it is this complexity that allows for the growth of a creative practice through engagement with reflective inquiry.

by David O'Donovan

School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork

Introduction

Reflective practice and reflection as an activity for youth work practitioners is often misunderstood. 'Reflection' is often thought of as being about simply remembering practice rather than being about an active and creative process that supports practice in a youth work practice 'event' as the youth work activity develops and reveals itself to a worker. In its simplest form reflective practice is an action that is engaged with before, during and after a practice 'event'.

One significant figure responsible for the development of reflective practice was Donald Schön. In 1989 Schön's 'The Reflective Practitioner' was published and to this day is one of the most influential writings in the area of reflective practice.

In 2006, I conducted the first research of its kind with a group of Irish youth workers specifically using Schön's model of reflective action as outlined in this summary. During this research and subsequent work in the area the use of this model and tools that accompany its application have in my opinion, allowed youth workers to understand and validate their practice.

In my experience Schön's concepts of reflective action have been largely ignored by the Irish youth sector, rather youth services have tended to become overly dependent on programmes and youth work is often unclear as to the theoretical perspectives it works from. This in turn has led to a culture of anti-intellectualism within youth work. At the same time, it seems that that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs would like theory and research to have a much stronger place in Irish youth work. If the evolving pillars of Irish youth practice are to become theory, research and practice then Schön's concepts may allow clarity into the uniqueness of Irish youth work practice in its current construction. As Schön outlined a practitioner is a researcher in a situation. If this is true it is now the responsibility of youth workers to meaningfully inquire into the fundamental elements of their practice by engaging in a reflective discourse. The key concepts in Schön's work as described below have been found by practitioners in many fields to be critical to engaging in just this kind of reflective practice.

Tacit Knowledge - 'knowing in action'

Schön highlighted 'reflecting in action', sometimes termed as 'thinking on your feet' in practice situations. Schön saw these practice situations as 'events' where the practitioner has to extensively draw on their own knowledge. Some of the knowledge that practitioners use in practice situations is conscious knowledge - knowledge that practitioners can easily explain and some if it is tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is a key concept for Schön and for those who wish to use his ideas. **Tacit knowledge is knowledge we have difficulty making explicit and communicating to**

others. This tacit knowledge Schön termed as 'knowing in action' is the informed, instinctual reaction arising from a gut feeling triggered by a practice situation. Schön felt that through practice tacit knowledge could be understood and new knowledge could reveal itself to the practitioner in a practice situation. He saw these practice situations as a place where possible answers could be discovered.

Schön highlighted that implicit or tacit knowledge exists within practice, even though we may not be conscious at the time of its acting within a practice situation. Schön, explains,

> When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of everyday life we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate.

Here, Schön is highlighting that even when we make conscious use of theories within practice the practitioner is still dependent on this tacit knowledge. This 'knowing in action' as it is termed is a phenomenon that could not always be put directly into words, Schön felt that practitioners 'know more than they can say.'
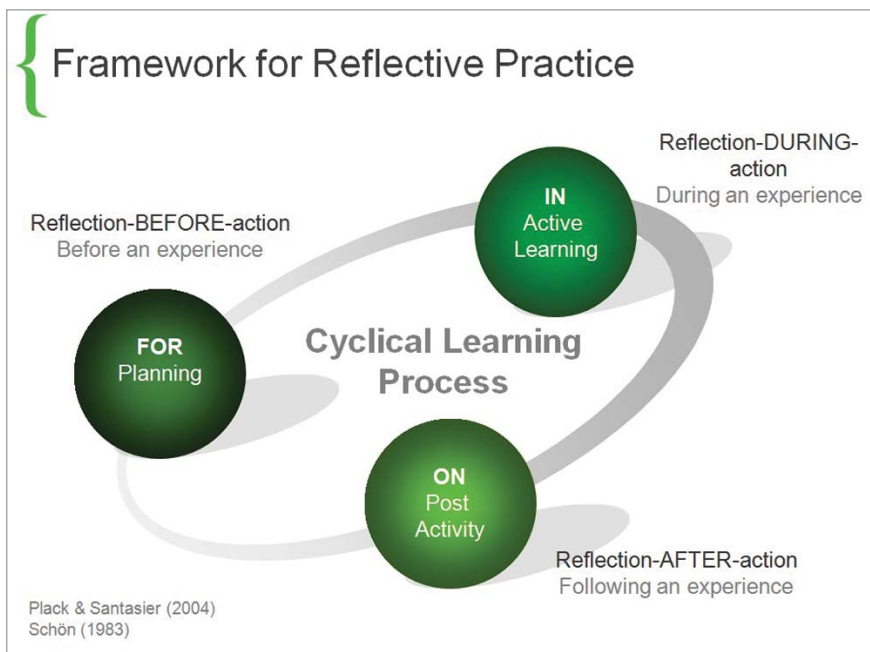
The concept of reflective action helps us to understand the steps that are involved in 'knowing in action'.

Knowing in Action – Tacit Knowlege at Work

First we encounter a situation that we recognise and begin to judge and act spontaneously without prior thought.

Second while engaged in the task we find ourselves doing things, unaware of the processes that lead to acting out in the task.

Third we are unable to describe the underlying knowledge that exists in the action – this is 'knowing in action'.

Framework for Reflective Practice

Reflection-BEFORE-action
Before an experience

Reflection-DURING-action
During an experience

IN
Active Learning

FOR
Planning

Cyclical Learning Process

ON
Post Activity

Reflection-AFTER-action
Following an experience

Plack & Santasier (2004)
Schön (1983)

Surprise

Surprise is another factor that contributes directly to 'reflection in action'. Schön saw the element of surprise within practice as a stimulant that would encourage reflection in action.

Surprise can act as a catalyst to spur the practitioner into a state of alertness that can contribute to active engagement, an engagement that draws from the professional experience, personal experience, and the individuals value base along with an understanding of their limitations. Schön says that stimulated by surprise, practitioners turn thought back on action and on the knowing which is implicit in action. 'Surprise' also allows the practitioner to reflect on and understand the knowledge implicit in their actions leading to further action, further reflection and experimentation with the situation. Usually knowing in action goes together with reflection on the stuff at hand.

Reflective Action as a Strategic Response

Another contributing factor underpinning the quality of 'knowing' is our professional and personal experiences that we bring to bear in our learning. These professional/personal life experiences play an important role in the process of understanding the dynamics of a situation. The activity of reflection can then be used to validate past experience and allow these past events to construct some sense of order from which the professional will be able to experiment with the situation. Reflection as a

concept can be seen as something that can allow the practitioner to value practice and see it as an approach that should respond to each situation in a unique way. It can be looked at in another way, that the practitioner creates their own theories while engaging in processes of action through an appreciation of the unique context of each situation. Schön viewed the practitioner as an integrated unit capable of creating while it performed in virtually every situation.

Thompson (1) highlights this integration when he stated that the most valued contribution that reflective action has made is

> the way in which it unites theory and practice within the same framework, without presenting either as being in any way superior to the other.

Schön's approach to theory was that it could be carefully crafted to fit appropriately into the situation, Thompson states that the application of theory by the reflective practitioner

> is better conceived of as an interactive process through which concepts and frameworks are 'made to measure' by the skilful work of the reflective practitioner.

He goes on to state that the complexities of this attempted union must take into account that

> reflective practice goes beyond a mechanistic view of applying theory to practice and recognises the subtle intricacies involved in the fusion of thought and action.

In brief the adaptation of any theory to practice requires work. The assumption that the theory should 'fit' regardless of the situation does not take into account the reflective steps towards successful integration.

In Conclusion

In youth work practice we are increasingly talking about the use of pre-determined outcomes especially within the area of 'risk assessment' with young people. I think that many youth workers would agree with Schön that these practices seem to serve economic factors and social control rather than the individual needs of the young person. Risk categories are now developing as methods of predicting where young people will end up rather than locating possible methods of allowing them life chances. This technical approach to practice

highlights Schön's view that "technical rationality depends on agreement about ends".

In other words, the real world is much messier and less predictable than pre-determined outcomes allow for. For youth workers who are practicing in this environment, the usefulness of reflection action is even greater as it allows us to be creative in the way we think and acquire possible alternative actions that address the messiness of real life.

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Case Study Reflective Practice Toolkit

This reflective practice toolkit is designed to help workers explore the usefulness and effectiveness of youth work practice in achieving specific agreed outcomes.

Directions for completion:

The reflective questions should be considered on an ongoing basis (weekly) following each session with the group selected.

The focus of the toolkit is to reflect on practice in terms of its usefulness and effectiveness in achieving a specific outcome for a specific group.

This toolkit can be completed individually or in pairs as relevant and workers are asked to consider the reflective questions and write up their reflections on each.

Workers may choose to use this template to write up/type up their reflections or they may choose to keep a reflective practice journal/log using the questions included in this template. Alternatively, workers may choose to present the information in a creative way using multi media, etc.…

Reflective Questions:

Title of Case Study Project/Group:

Youth Work Outcome Selected:

1. What was the focus/purpose of this session

2. What was the rationale for this session? e.g. request from young people? response to a local issue? project requirement? part of a set programme, other?

3. What did I/we do during this session to facilitate the young people towards achieving this specific outcome?

4. What worked well during this session?

5. What were the challenges/difficulties?

6. What factors (external and internal) influenced what happened in the session?

Internal to Project	Positive Factors:	Negative Factors:
External to Project	Positive Factors:	Negative Factors:

7. How do/did my/our practice during this session contribute to the following youth work principles:

Principles	Contribution to this Principle
Voluntary Involvement	
Young-Person Centred	
Participation	
Empowerment	
Equality & Inclusiveness	
Education & Development	

8. What do I /we need to do more or less of or differently in order to further facilitate the young people towards achieving this outcome?

I/we need to do more of	
I/we need to do less of	
I/we need to do differently	

Kildare Youth Services Youth Work Ireland and NUI Maynooth

Action Research Project

Tom Dunne, Regional Director of Kildare Youth Services Youth Work Ireland describes an ongoing reflective practice research project. A reflective practice tool developed for this project is shared on the preceding two pages.

In 2010 Kildare Youth Services (KYS) and NUI Maynooth (NUIM) embarked on a research project whose aim was 'To explore the usefulness and effectiveness of KYS youth work practice in achieving specific agreed outcomes'. This work was commissioned by Youth Work Ireland as a follow on from the Purpose and Outcomes of Youth Work report published in 2009 (1).

The findings of that research generated an interest in exploring youth work practice and processes in order to develop explanatory frameworks for 'how youth work works' i.e. what is it that happens in youth work practice? NUIM worked with KYS and its youth work team through an action research process to facilitate youth workers to reflect on their practice on an ongoing basis using a 'reflective tool' developed specifically for this project. Over time, youth projects in KYS undertook a number of case studies of various different aspects of their practice, this data was supported by transcripts from direct recorded interviews.

The key project objectives included:

To explore how the organisation's mission and approach are arrived at and how practice is set to achieve the stated outcomes i.e.

• What are the stated outcomes of the service?

• What model(s) of youth work inform the practice?

• What factors (internal and external) influence the practice?

• Reflection on what the practice is based on? Is it based on needs or is it based on a set of expected outcomes which in turn determines the practice?

• What is considered to be best practice and how is this agreed and then tracked and monitored?

• How do youth workers strike the balance between demonstrating/documenting outputs and outcomes based on external requirements and their own professional judgement and innovation?

To generate new insights into the integration of youth work theory and practice.

• Reflecting on practice - what processes do youth workers use that evidence practical approaches/ interventions/programmes that are directly linked to theoretical models of youth work?

• New approaches – how do they emerge? Under what conditions are new approaches most likely to emerge? What can be described as new in these approaches?

- How do youth workers and the organisation document and articulate these new approaches?

- How responding to particular needs of young people and to the changing environment can impact on our practice, particularly regarding the evolving youth culture in Ireland?

- What is the impact on practice of youth work engaging/partnering with other related professions?

To communicate to others the distinct purpose, value and benefits of youth work processes.

- This research process will bring us to the point where we can articulate the outcomes of youth work.

- Identify the target groups with whom we want to communicate and the different ways in which the information can be presented.

- Focus on developing tools which may be useful for practitioners in youth work projects to assist in the above communication.

- Identify a definitive overarching approach or model through the research process to underpin this.

Reflectice Practice Toolkit

A reflective practice tool was developed to facilitate the workers to reflect on their work and to assist in gathering data (see previous page). The toolkit outlined a number of reflective questions to be considered on an ongoing basis (i.e. weekly) following each session with the selected group. The intention was for the worker to reflect on their practice in terms of its usefulness and effectiveness in achieving a specific outcome for a specific group. The workers were asked to write up their reflections on each question. They could choose to use the template to record their reflections, to keep a reflective practice journal/log using the questions included in the template, or alternatively to present their reflections in a creative way using multi media tools, etc.

Conclusion

We all agree that youth work is complex, and is challenging to communicate. Nonetheless, in an era of increasing accountability and focus on outcomes, youth work and youth workers must meet the

challenge of articulating and communicating the youth work process in ways that effectively convey its richness and rigour to those who seek to understand it, be they funders, policy makers or professionals in other disciplines.

KYS and NUIM are working together to complete this piece of research by June 2013. We hope that this work will make a contribution to the articulation of the youth work process by capturing how youth workers talk about their practice i.e. what they do, how they do it, and why they do it, in a way that comes out of the practice itself and contributes to shared meanings and understandings across diverse youth work contexts. We look forward to presenting the findings from this work at the earliest opportunity.

See also

Kildare Youth Services
www.kys.

NYCI
www.youth.ie/sites/youth.ie/files/KYS_NYCI _conf_2011.pdf

1. The Purposes & Outcomes of Youth Work, Anne Gunning & Maurice Devlin, 2009 - Available from the Irish Youth Work Centre

Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the EU

by Conor Rowley

National Assessor of Youth Work,
Department of Children and Youth Affairs

From 1 January 2013 to 30 June 2013, Ireland holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This is the seventh time that Ireland has undertaken this important role. On this occasion, it also coincides with the fortieth anniversary of Ireland's membership of the EU.

The Presidency rotates among the 27 Member States of the EU every six months. The presiding Member State is responsible for advancing the EU's work agenda, and has an opportunity to shape and influence EU policy and legislation. The Presidency also represents the Council in its dealings with other EU Institutions, including the European Commission and the European Parliament.

The overall main priorities of the Irish Presidency are:

- Promoting sustainable economic growth and jobs and strengthening Europe's competitive advantage.

- Restoring stability and confidence through effective economic governance for Europe.

- Supporting growth and reform.

Irish Presidency of the Youth Council

Ireland holds the Presidency of the Youth Council which is part of the council configuration of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport.

Ireland's Presidency is the first in the current trio cycle, which is followed by Lithuania (July – December 2013) and Greece (January – June 2014). Each Presidency trio adopts a theme which is informed by the fields of action as outlined in the EU Youth Strategy 2010 - 2018. The theme adopted by the current trio Presidency is 'Social Inclusion'.

Advancing the Agreed Trio Presidency Theme of Social Inclusion

Ireland's Presidency programme will emphasise the concept of social inclusion as a broad unifying theme, involving all young people, in addition to those with fewer opportunities. A socially inclusive approach should emphasise accessibility and stimulate the development of competence and quality in the design and delivery of youth policy and provision.

Social exclusion requires a comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach to address the multi faceted nature of marginalisation and exclusion in society. Youth policy and youth work play a key role in responding to social exclusion through offering developmental opportunities for all young people.

Youth work can be characterised as a non-formal learning practice which is complementary to formal education, focuses on the personal and social development of young people and is predicated on their voluntary engagement. It equips them with skills and experiences for life and contributes to young people's development and well-being.

Ireland will work with the Trio partners, Lithuania and Greece to strengthen connections and enhance coherence between the respective national priorities towards the overall theme of social inclusion.

Ireland's Youth Council Presidency priorities

Overall Aim of the EU Presidency in the Youth Council:

- Build on what has been achieved for and with young people under recent Presidencies (Cyprus, Denmark, Poland).

- Result in a sustainable legacy for youth policy and youth work.

- To promote the potential of youth policy and youth work to ensure a sustainable link and legacy which makes a positive impact on Europe's young people.

Priorities:

- Advance Trio Presidency theme of social inclusion.

- Promote understanding of contribution of quality youth work to young people's development, well-being and social inclusion.

- Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of Europe 2020.

- Complete the first phase of the third cycle of the Structured Dialogue with young people and policy makers.

The Irish Presidency of the Youth Council will focus on the areas of youth policy and on quality youth work. Youth policy is very often expressed and operationalised through youth work. Ireland's first priority will focus on: The contribution of quality youth work (non-formal learning) to young people's development, well-being and social inclusion.

Ireland believes that quality youth work is vital in ensuring that young people derive maximum benefit from their participation in youth work and in ensuring greater civic engagement and social cohesion. Emphasising quality in youth work aims to ensure and enhance effective youth work provision for young people and assists in articulating the practice and impact of youth work. Ireland is well advanced in this domain through the introduction and implementation of the National Quality Standards Framework for youth work and the Standards for Local Volunteer-led Youth Groups in youth work organisations, services and groups.

Ireland's second priority focuses on youth policy. In particular, emphasis will be placed on: Maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of Europe 2020.

Young people are facing challenges such as unemployment; a rise in young people not in education, employment or training which have consequences for the well-being of young people to be adversely affected. At the same time the capacity and ability of young people for creativity, innovation and adaptability are recognised as invaluable in stimulating a renewed and sustainable return to economic well-being in Member States and to bring about a better and more inclusive society in the future.

Ireland will focus on youth policy and how it can maximise its impact in contributing directly and indirectly – via related policy areas such as education, training and specifically employment – in addressing the goals of Europe 2020. Consideration is being given to how greater coordination between the renewed framework for European Cooperation in the Youth Field (2010-2018) and Europe 2020 can be achieved and what initiatives could be taken to strengthen the contribution of youth policy to other youth related policy domains. These priorities are being advanced in the form of Council Conclusions and progressed through the Youth Working Party and will be proposed by the Presidency for adoption by the Council of EU Youth Ministers on 16th May 2013.

Ireland will link the national priority for its Presidency with the Trio Presidency theme so that the deliberations of Member States, processes of work and programme outputs are fully reflective of the important overarching theme of social inclusion.

EU Youth Presidency Events

The Irish Presidency is hosting a number of key events during its tenure. These include:

EU Youth Conference, 11-13 March 2013, Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin

The EU Youth Conference is the flagship event in the Irish Presidency Youth Programme. This Conference was a core element of the European Commission's structured dialogue process with young people which brought together young

people and policy-makers across the EU to jointly discuss and feed into youth policy at national and European level. The Conference was the culmination of the EU wide consultation, in which over 12,000 young people in all 27 Member States participated. Consultation in Member States on the theme of social inclusion of young people took place from the end of November 2012 to mid-February 2013. Findings from these 27 consultation processes was discussed at the EU Youth Conference in Dublin where some 150 youth representatives together with policy makers, engaged in a joint debate on the broad area of social inclusion, its challenges for, and impact on, young people and explored the value of quality youth work (non-formal learning) for young people as a means to their social inclusion and to their development and well-being.

This theme was explored and developed via joint workshops – with the thematic areas being drawn from the results of the reports of national consultation provided by 27 Member States. These thematic areas are as follows:

1. Employment – Employment leading to inclusion.
2. Education – Inclusive education for all young people.
3. Participation – Equal rights and equal opportunities to participate in civic life.
4. Access to welfare – Social Security, Social Protection and Social Welfare.
5. Support – Social and youth services for young people.
6. Youth Organisations – Youth organisations and social inclusion.
7. Quality – Assuring quality in youth work to enhance social inclusion.

The conclusions from the EU Conference will inform Ireland's Council Conclusions on the contribution of quality youth work to the development, well-being and social inclusion of young people. The conclusions will also inform the development of the Council Resolution on Social Inclusion at the end of the 18 month Structured Dialogue cycle under the current trio Presidency (Ireland, Lithuania and Greece).

Informal meeting of Directors' General of Youth, 13 March 2013, Dublin

This event was held directly following the EU Youth Conference and was attended by the Directors' General of Youth from each Member State, the Council Secretariat and Officials of the European Commission. During this event a number of key presentations were made on the personal, social and economic impact of youth work, following which, the theme was debated in detail with a view to identifying key issues in relation to this topic.

Council of Youth Ministers meeting, 16 May 2013, Brussels

The Council of Youth Ministers meeting will involve a full meeting EU Youth Ministers from all Member States. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald, will chair the May EU Youth Council, which brings together Ministers from all EU Member States. In this role, Ireland will bring forward work on a number of issues related to how quality youth work can contribute to young people's development, well-being and social inclusion – this will include advancing the introduction of quality standards in youth work services and also how youth policy and the youth sector can bring about new synergies and elements to achieve the goals of Europe 2020 strategy.

In addition, each Member State will discuss an issue of key significance in the youth policy domain as proposed by the Irish Presidency.

Informal policy debate on structured dialogue, 16 May 2013, Brussels

Ireland will host an informal policy debate on structured dialogue between policy makers, young people, European Commission and the European Youth Forum on the day of the Council of Youth Ministers' meeting.

Expert Roundtable event on youth work and its contribution to Europe 2020 and employment 20 – 21 June 2013, Castletown House, Kildare

In response to the current challenges facing young people in terms of their access to employment, the Presidency will hold an expert round table event that will explore further the role of youth work in advancing employment for young people.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH   eu2013.ie

Youth Work Irelands Children's and Young Peoples Constitutional Convention

by Erin Brightwood (16) and Laragh Geoghan (15)

Members of Voices of Youth

On April 20, 2013 there will be a Constitutional Convention for young people held in the Mansion House, Dublin. This will be a fantastic opportunity for young people to have their voices heard. Young people from across the country will get together to discuss the suggested changes to the constitution. Tom Arnold, the chairperson of the official Constitutional Convention will attend, and he is giving those in attendance an opportunity to give feed-back to the Official Constitutional Convention. The event will be coordinated by Voices of Youth, and this event will be run by young people for young people. This event will be invaluable as it not only gives Ireland's youth a medium through which they can raise their opinions, they will also have a chance to discuss the suggested changes and learn more about politics. Some of the possible changes to the Constitution to be discussed are; lowering the voting age to 17, same-sex marriages and amending the clause regarding the role of women in society.

As young people in Ireland today, we feel that it is important to have a medium through which we can voice our opinions. We welcome the recent discussions about updating the constitution, particularly regarding the change in voting age. The current convention of the constitution is working hard, however when it was set up a significant section of the population was excluded – young people. We are the politicians and the voters of tomorrow, we represent the country's future. As active citizens we would appreciate an opportunity to share our opinions. The changes made now will influence us for the rest of our lives and we want a say.

We would like to encourage young people to apply, and we look forward to seeing you there.

This Constitutional Convention for young people is an event that was conceived of, planned and implemented by Voices of Youth with the support of Youth Work Ireland and the Chair of the Constitutional Convention, Tom Arnold. Technical support and legal advice is being provided by the Children's Rights Alliance.

What: A unique opportunity for those under the Age of 18 to engage in the full agenda of the Constitutional Convention

When: 11am-4pm April 20

Where: The Mansion House, Dawson St., Dublin 2.

Who: Young people under 18, leaders aged 18-23, Tom Arnold, chairperson of the Constitutional Convention

To book your place see
http://ypconstitutionalconvention.eventbrite.ie/

Further Information on the event contact: Michael Mc Loughlin 087 6677499

mmcloughlin@youthworkireland.ie

For further information on Voices of Youth visit their blog at http://voicesofyouth.wordpress.com/

For further information on the official constitutional convention visit: https://www.constitution.ie/

Youth Work Ireland's Desire for Quality Youth Work Services through Reflective Practice

by Mairéad Cluskey
Youth Work Ireland President Elect

Introduction

Reflective practice is a term I have heard from every corner of Youth Work Ireland since I joined the Federation in 2008. I have heard reflective practice formally discussed in meetings and presentations, argued about passionately over lunch and celebrated as a tool to ensure a high level of service provision in various Member Youth Services. This topic seems to be high on the agenda for many throughout the Federation. This was most evident to me in the many discussions and calls for action to progress reflective practice that were heard at our recent Consensus Conference 2012 in Farmleigh House during a day that featured interactions from young people, staff, volunteers, academics and colleagues throughout the youth work sector.

Another example of the focus on reflective practice can be found in the draft Youth Work Ireland 2013-2014 Strategic Plan. It names youth work practice as a key area for development and identifies the use of reflective practice in the implementation of all of our strategic goals. Most importantly for me, however, was Youth Work Ireland's peer led Quality Standards Framework (QSF). My involvement in the QSF was my first introduction to reflective practice in youth work incorporating front line provision, planning, operational standards and review with my peers across the Federation. This article considers the Youth Work Ireland QSF because I feel that this is an ideal time to reflect on what we can learn from the use of this tool considering that it was effective in ensuring quality standards throughout Youth Work Ireland while assisting practitioners to reflect on their practice and articulate youth work.

It is worth then taking a moment to remember what the QSF has been and where it came from. The QSF, through a peer assessment team, worked with Member Youth Services to highlight, establish and monitor best practice framed around four key areas; Policy Standards, Service Standards, Organisational & Administration Standards and Financial Standards. Youth Work Ireland's (QSF) was developed from a desire that initiated within the membership of the Federation for best practice without request or requirement from anyone or anywhere. Youth Work Ireland embarked on this journey as the only youth work provider engaged in an organised, conscious and nationwide approach reflecting on its practices and fine tuning operational standards. Youth Work Ireland pioneered this through a process of 'action upon reflection' and lead the way to developing tools for promoting quality service provision, professional development and peer review in the youth work sector in Ireland.

A Quality Standards Process as Reflective practice

From its inception in 2002, Youth Work Ireland's QSF was designed and implemented as a peer-led, developmental process that aimed to continuously improve the quality, consistency and effectiveness of local youth services by reflecting on past and current practices and deciding on actions to improve them. Not only has reflective practice been an element of the QSF process, but also of the model itself through the development and implementation stages and continuing through the review process in 2009. This all-encompassing approach offered valuable opportunities and space for reflection not only for Member Youth Services but for the Peer Assessors gaining from the experience of the assessment with the opportunity to question and improve their own practice locally through participating in site visits.

Steven Taylor (1) and colleagues explain that reflective practice has been and is currently widely regarded as critical for enhancing personal and professional effectiveness. Reflective practice has also been hailed as an approach to insure a high

standard of service delivery, 'leading ultimately to better outcomes' (2) and lends to easily identify strengths and limitations of programmes and practices. The purpose of the QSF had always been to foster a culture of continuous improvement within local youth services in order to enhance the experience of young people engaging with those services.

> In Clare Youth Service we found the QSF approach to be a win-win opportunity. The service benefitted from the reflective space provided by both the self assessment process and the peer assessment. Equally, the opportunity of our staff to act as Peer Assessors in other services, gave them the chance to reflect and gain from this and bring the experience back to our own service. (Clare Youth Service QSF Participant).

By being peer-led, the QSF began with the assumption that there is no panel of experts out there in the ether who know better than those within the membership of Youth Work Ireland. The young people, the volunteers and paid youth workers and the managers who are engaged in and central to our Member Youth Services are the experts and the QSF process draws from that pool of expertise in developing and implementing the framework. This is an element of the former QSF process that has been cited as extremely valuable and Member Youth Services have been quick to articulate their desire that some type of 'peer review/reflection' would still exist within the Federation.

> Having Peer Assessors meant you knew they already had an understanding of the voluntary youth work sector and the context of your work and there was a great sense of being in it together for the further development of services to young people throughout the Federation (Youth Work Ireland Galway QSF Participant).

The QSF facilitated a safe environment where reflection and learning was facilitated on all levels throughout the Member Youth Service. An emphasis was not only placed on what the outcomes were in each region but also on how services were delivered and how outcomes were achieved. Youth work as a method of engaging young people effectively was identified and acknowledged as a key component to successful outcomes for young people. The QSF

model facilitated reflection that is widely encouraged as best practice in current literature.

> The position of young people within the organisation has been strengthened as a result of the Youth Work Ireland QSF. The process identified opportunities and processes that, in some ways, the serivce had been struggling with. The experience of peers in the sector and the opportunity to learn from that experience has been invaluable (Midlands Regional Youth Service QSF Participant).

For us, the task is now to learn from our experiences in using peer-assessment and apply this knowledge to a new peer supported reflective practice that will not only assist with preparing for engagement with quality standards systems such as the NQSF, QUADS, etc, but also to provide opportunity to capture examples of effective practice, establish improved peer supports, gather much needed data on young people in Ireland and celebrate successes in each local Member Youth Service on a national level. A newly formed Youth Work Practice Sub Group of the Board of Youth Work Ireland are busily preparing for this new and exciting venture. This process will be piloted in 2013 in Youth Work Ireland Member Youth Services with learning and updates to be provided to the broader youth work sector.

> In Youth Work Ireland Galway, we found the QSF to be inclusive of all the stakeholders in the service from young people; their families; volunteers; staff; Board and external agencies and so when we received our award it belonged to everyone (Youth Work Ireland Galway QSF Participant).

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Evidence Informed and Evidence Based

What's the difference?

by Cormac Doran
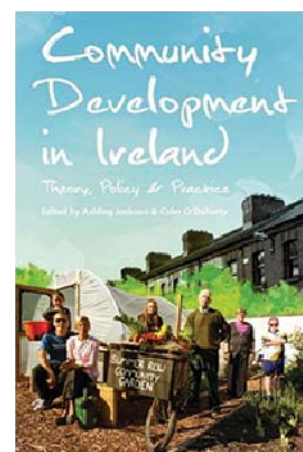
Scene Magazine readers have identified 'reviews of research evidence' as a regular feature that they would like to see in Scene Magazine. As an introduction to future reviews of research evidence to be featured in Scene, Youth worker Cormac Doran tackles the jargon that is often used and clearly explains the key concepts that are used to describe and understand evidence from research with the help of a recent publication by Dr. Cormac Forkan of NUIG.

Recent years have brought many changes to the youth work sector especially regarding the role that evidence now plays in planning and reporting. With the economic downturn projects and the sector as a whole are under pressure to show that what is being done works and is based on sound foundations. The roll out of the NQSF as well as reporting structures relating to projects such as Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDP's) has forced youth workers into what for many is unfamiliar territory littered with confusing jargon that can mean different things to different people.

A chapter written by Dr Cormac Forkan from NUI Galway in a recent book provides an easy to understand introduction to the field of evidence and associated terms for practitioners, policy makers and researchers. Forkan is originally a youth worker and it is from his work in the 1990's that he was able to understand how youth work can be "practice rich but evidence poor". By drawing on authors from other areas within adolescent support, evidence is explained as "replicable procedures that can be reproduced by others". This evidence can be used by practitioners in different ways with projects either being evidence based or evidence informed. Based on Veerman and van Yperen's work (2007) we are introduced to four levels of evidence-:

Descriptive - where overviews of programmes or projects are given, the type of evidence that can easily be captured using a logic model.

Theoretical - such as reviews and academic work that can support the provision and show how outcomes are reached.

Indicative - such as tracking or studies that take place with programmes over time.

Causal - With this high level of evidence coming from methods such as randomised control trials (RCT), it can be shown that a programme or intervention can be linked to an outcome. Indeed, Forkan describes RCT's and similar approaches such as the gold standard as it is only by adapting these methods that clear links can be shown between inputs and outcomes.

RCT's are rare in youth work but may become more popular as direct work carried out by paid youth workers continues to shift more and more towards prescriptive, intervention type approaches such as reducing offending behaviour or lessening substance misuse. A question that is often asked of this type of work is 'how do you know that your work was responsible for specific changes in a young person's behaviour?'. As proven in other practices, the introduction of RCT's initially on a selective basis, may offer the youth work sector a way of clearly proving the quality of its methods to sceptics or policy makers. As youth work methods continue to be applied to issues including mental health, European integration, crime prevention, early school leaving etc., funding agencies may

demand this level of evidence as is becoming the standard in other child centred sectors.

This evidence based approach could be difficult to implement due to the large amount of variables that often present in youth work settings. Forkan, based on the work of Friedrich (2004) mentions some of the barriers such as funding structures not allowing for this level of evidence gathering due to the high cost. More significantly, Forkan highlights the role of the 'resistant practitioner' that may be worried about surrendering traditional elements of practice such as creativity and flexibility.

Perhaps, what youth work has been guilty of over the years when being evidence informed is following 'fads' and adopting new practices too quickly purely because it may be the fashionable approach or where there is funding available. In direct contrast to the above mentioned trials, these approaches and methods are often subjective and can be led by dominant personalities or agencies with little hard data to prove effectiveness.

Forkan's article offers clear and understandable tables from clinical and youth care settings to contrast the two approaches. A case study is provided that could easily be adapted to a variety of youth work settings and provides youth workers with a clear example of how the approaches are applied in a real world setting. However, for the youth work sector to continue the move from "generic, gut based support, rather than needs-led, evidence-based support, based on the individual needs of the adolescent participant", practitioners and projects may need to be open to employing tools such as the Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona and Russell 2002) used by Forkan as an example to show how social support was increased amongst participants in a programme. While his article was not penned specifically for our sector and appears in a community development book, clear lessons can be garnered by youth workers to improve effectiveness as well as developing an improved evidence bank to showcase work to potential investors.

Forkan C. (2012) 'Community-Based Youth and Family Interventions: Moving from Evidence-Informed to Evidence-Based Practice' in Jackson A. and O' Doherty C. eds Community Development in Ireland, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin.

Call for Contributions Content for June 2013 Scene Featuring Social Inclusion

Scene Magazine recently asked its readers about the kind of articles and features that they would find helpful to them in their youth work practice. Based on what Scene readers asked for we are now looking for the following articles for the June 2013 Edition of Scene Magazine.

Featured Projects Every edition features the learning from an innovative project or programme that is un-related to the main theme of the magazine for the quarter. These articles are between 700 and 1100 words in length and should document learning from novel youth work practice. Authors should try to provide information and learning that other youth work practitioners can implement in their own practice.

Features on Social Inclusion In this edition, Scene particularly welcomes contributions from practitioners that document the successful strategies to achieving social inclusion through youth work. These articles will need to describe the rationale for the project, the outcomes of the project and information and learning that other youth work practitioners can implement in their own practice. These articles will need to be approximately 800-1200 words.

Young Peoples' and Volunteers' Views on Social Inclusion and other Issues In this edition, Scene particularly welcomes contributions on social inclusion or any other youth work practice issue that volunteers and young people would like to be heard in relation to. These articles are planned to be approximately 400–600 words.

Research Reviews and Digests for Practitioners Every Scene edition features a contribution from practitioner researchers and researchers that summarise evidence of what works in engaging young people. The article should also suggests to practitioners how they can apply this learning to their work with young people. We welcome reviews of existing research, or digests of original research conducted in Ireland. These articles are planned to be approximately 600 -1000 words.

If you are interested in featuring your work in Scene Magazine please submit a 200 word summary of your proposed contribution by April 19th. Scene Magazine will attempt to use all writing that is submitted. The Scene Magazine editorial team will carefully review all proposed contributions. We will work to select contributions that provide Irish youth work practitioners with a diversity of views, youth work practice experience and ideas. We apologise in advance if we can't accept all proposals. Please email your 200 word proposal only to Gina Halpin, ghalpin@youthworkireland.ie with your full name, the youth service you are associated with, the title of the article that you are proposing and the type of article that you are proposing.

IYWC Library Resources

Some of these resources are featured in articles in this edition

A Short Introduction to Understanding and Supporting Children and Young People who Self-Harm
by Carol Fitzpatrick, 2012
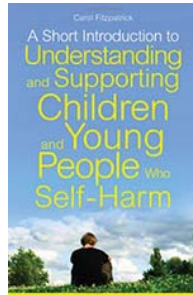
This book is written for those who care for and about young people who self-harm. Self-harm and suicidal behaviours are increasingly common in young people, but are often hidden. It can be hard to know what might be causing a young person to self-harm and how to help and support them. This book guides the reader through what self-harm is, how to recognise it and how best to respond. It combines case studies with professional and practical advice, covering all aspects from warning signs and treatment to communication and how the family is affected. The book also emphasises the importance of parents, youth workers and carers seeking support for themselves.

### By Their Own Young Hand: Deliberate Self-Harm and Suicidal Ideas in Adolescents
by Keith Hawton, Karen Rodham & Emma Evans, 2008

This book is about deliberate self-harm in adolescents, which is one of the most important social and healthcare problems for people at this stage of life. Deliberate self-harm includes any intentional act of self-injury or self-poisoning, irrespective of the apparent motivation or intention. The book provides an overview of the nature and extent of deliberate self-harm in adolescent. It offers advice to teachers and youth work professionals on how to identify young people at risk of self-harming, how to cope with the aftermath of self-harm or attempted suicide and how to develop training programmes in this area.

### Community Development in Ireland Theory, Policy and Practice
Eds. Ashling Jackson & Colm O'Doherty, 2012
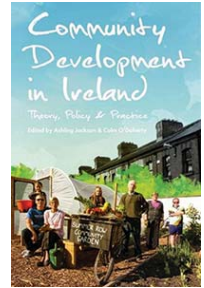
This practical textbook introduces the theories and practices of community development in Ireland, with particular reference to the effects of social and economic polices within this context. This book's exploration of community and social change in Ireland ensures the reader will (i) Understand community development and social change in Ireland (ii) Recognise and value community development as part of a powerful force for social change in Ireland (iii) Critically appraise the policy environment influencing community development and the interrelationships between policy and practice (iv) Utilise the knowledge and skills necessary for effective and sustainable community development (v) Determine current issues and challenges in this area and offer effective solutions to address these issues and challenges.

### Educating the Reflective Practitioner
by Donald. A Schön, 1987
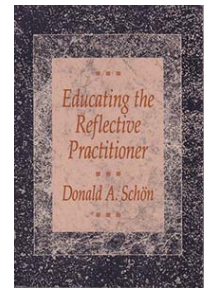
The problems professional practitioners face are rarely straightforward and clear. They are frequently complex and lack right answers. Skilful professional practice often depends less on factual knowledge or rigid decision making models than on the capacity to reflect before taking action in cases where established theories do not apply. This book argues that professional education should be centred on enhancing the practitioners ability for reflection in action – that is learning by doing and developing the ability for continued learning and problem solving throughout the professional's career.

Reflective Practice in Education and Training
by Jodi Roffey-Barentsen & Richard Malthouse, 2013
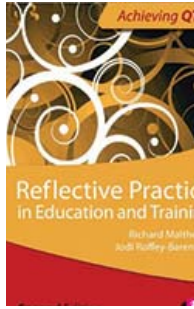
This is a practical guide to reflective practice for teachers and trainee teachers in the FE and skills sector. Reflective practice is a key element of teaching and this comprehensive and accessible guide introduces and explains this area of practice for trainee and new teachers. It asks 'what is reflective practice?' and includes an exclamation of the processes of reflection and tips on reflective writing. Many trainees and new teachers need support in reflective practice. The text gives practical guidance on how to become a reflective practitioner and examines how this relates directly to teaching in the FE and skills sector and how reflection can benefit teaching. This second edition includes new chapters on 'reflective teaching and learning' and 'reflection-re-action', a new theory focus feature.

## The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis
by Harris Cooper, Larry V. Hedges & Jeffrey C. Valentine (eds.) second edition 2012
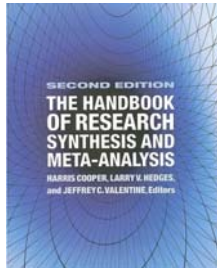
When the first edition of this publication was produced it quickly became the definitive reference for researchers conducting meta-analyses of existing research in both the social and biological sciences. In this fully revised edition the editors present updated versions of the handbook's classic chapters, as well as entirely new sections reporting on the most recent, cutting edge development in the field. Distilling a vast technical literature and many informal sources, the handbook provides a portfolio of the most effective solution to the problems of quantitative date integration. Among the statistical issues addressed by the authors are the synthesis of non-independent data sets, fixed and random effects methods, the performance of sensitivity analyses and model assessments.

The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action
by Donald A. Schön, 1991
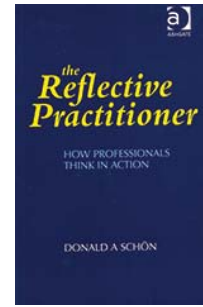
A leading M.I.T. social scientist and consultant examines five professions - engineering, architecture, management, psychotherapy, and town planning - to show how professionals really go about solving problems. The best professionals, Donald Schön maintains, know more than they can put into words. To meet the challenges of their work, they rely less on formulas learned in university than on the kind of improvisation learned in practice. This unarticulated, largely unexamined process is the subject of this provocatively original book, and demonstrates 'reflection-in-action' works and how this vital creativity might be fostered in future professionals.

Youth and Youth Work in Ireland
by Caroline Coyne and Josephine Donohoe, 2013

This book brings together for the first time materials on youth and youth work with a specifically Irish focus aimed primarily at FETAC Level 5. It will also be useful as a basic reference at other levels of education and for youth work services for volunteers and trainees. The book takes a practical rather than theoretical approach in the presentation of materials and activities, tasks, 'think abouts' and scenarios are intersperses at relevant stages throughout the text and are designed to provoke thinking, learning and discussions as appropriate. The book also includes practical approaches and basic guidelines for completing assignments and research projects.

This book can be purchased from Gill and Macmillian at www.gillmacmillian.ie

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These titles are available for loan from the Irish Youth Work Centre, contact ghalpin@youthworkireland.ie for more information.

The **Irish Youth Work Centre** *presents*

Symposium on Reflectice Practice

Wednesday March 27, 2013
Youth Work Ireland National Office

The series of youth work practitioner symposia scheduled for 2013 marks a new venture for the Irish Youth Work Centre. The topics chosen for these events are in direct response to readers of Scene Magazines' requests for further opportunities to both showcase and demonstrate the quality and importance of their work, while also deepening their understanding of what works in supporting the development of young people in Ireland today.

Our inaugural symposium focuses on the topic of **Reflective Practice**, which is a key issue in surfacing practice wisdom and promoting autonomous learning aimed at developing youth work practitioners understanding and critical thinking skills.

Our event will be chaired by **Dr. John Bamber, Centre for Effective Services,** and will feature inputs from contributors of this edition of Scene Magazine which features reflective practice as its theme.

Programme

11:30	Registration Tea/Coffee
12:00	Welcome address
12:15	Brief presentations from contributors
1: 15	Light lunch
2:00	Q & A followed by panel discussion
2:30	Summary and questions to consider from Dr. John Bamber
2:40	Group discussions
3:10	Close

Contributors

Siobhán McGrory, Independent Consultant
Reflective Practice – A self-indulgent pastime or a pathway towards improved youth work practice?

Eibhlis Bray, Limerick Youth Service
A report on a reflective practice workshop with Bernard Davies.

Mairéad Cluskey, Youth Work Ireland President Elect
The Youth Work Ireland Quality Standards Framework and the use of peer-support to encourage reflection on practice.

Dave Donovan, University College Cork
Donald Schön and reflective practice in youth work.

Tom Dunne, R.D. Kildare Youth Services
A report on a reflective practice initiative with the National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Tickets for this event are limited and available on a first come first served basis. To book go to

http://scenesymposium.eventbrite.ie/
Any questions on bookings for this event, please contact Breege Kiernan at:
bkiernan@youthworkireland.ie

Irish Youth Work Centre