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Gavan Titley

Abstract

Intercultural education has been central to the field of European youth work since at least the 1960s, and arguably it has been one of its most formative influences and projects. Currently the field of intercultural education is subject to intense debate concerning its relevance to young people in diverse, multicultural environments. This article examines some of the ways in which intercultural learning has become inflated and over-burdened, and relates this to a general culturalisation of political education and the problematics of 'culture' as an over-determining concept. The argument is developed theoretically and through a discussion of research stemming from intercultural education training courses. In conclusion the article suggests some ways in which intercultural education can be re-politicised and reinvented.

Keywords

Intercultural learning; cultural politics; youth in Europe; anti-racism

Introduction

Europe frequently expresses its politics in cultural terms. The legitimation of the political-economic integration of the European Union is accompanied by an elite longing for collective attachment and identification with 'Europe'. The intensification of global labour movements into the post-industrial economies of Western Europe is met with pleas and threats for people who migrate to integrate themselves into widely referenced, if infrequently elaborated, sets of national values and ways of life. People experiencing the *anomie* of liquid life and hyper-individualisation are instructed to rebuild 'community' as an idealised and pre-political response to social fragmentation (Outhwaite, 2005: 32). Contemporary political life, and its frameworks and categories, are characterised by the 'unassailed centrality of culture as an all-embracing category' (Orchard, 2002: 424).

This ubiquity and force of cultural expression is ambivalent for practices of intercultural education, and this ambivalence has given rise to an interesting debate on the relevance of intercultural learning in contemporary European youth work and training. Put simply, if the force of intercultural learning was its critical ability to cultivate reflexivity concerning the cultural shaping of realities and our responses to them, what happens to this critical impetus when culture is, as Ulf Hannerz puts it,

everywhere? (1995: 30–43). Hannerz has been a key figure in debates in the 1990s concerning anthropology's responsibilities for the circulation of over-determined and over-determining visions and rhetorics of culture in political life. Responding to the affinities between classical anthropological constructions of cultures as bounded, coherent systems of meaning and value and the development of culture as an 'essentialised rhetorical object in contemporary political talk' (Cowan, 2001: 9), and to calls from such thinkers as Abu-Lughod (1991) to 'write against culture' as a way of undermining its more problematic connotations, Hannerz has argued for ways of keeping the concept useful. The current debate concerning intercultural learning has some parallels with this earlier academic discussion, as there is some anxiety among practitioners about the reductive and often naïve and dangerous premium intercultural learning has placed on 'culture talk'. A move to 'educate against culture', however, presents a far more diffuse challenge than that faced by academic discourse.

Intercultural education has not only been central to the field of European youth work, arguably it has been one of its most formative influences and projects. Since at least the establishment of the Franco-German youth office in the early 1960s and the gradual increase in youth exchanges and structured international educational activities, forms of intercultural education have been developed as ways of 'managing encounters' and learning to work and live with – primarily national-cultural – differences. This focus on working with cultural difference has developed from understanding and solidarity building initiatives in the decades following the Second World War through forms of international education, and multicultural and anti-racism education. According to Hendrik Otten, a seminal influence on the development of European youth work since the 1970s, intercultural learning is the 'collective term for the conscious pedagogical planning and realization of European youth encounters', where intercultural encounters are conceptualized as providing an experience of ethno-cultural relativisation and reflection which can be translated into everyday life practice in multicultural societies (Otten, 1997:4).

The foundation of the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in 1972 saw the confirmation of intercultural learning as a central tenet of the institution's youth policy. A key dimension of this policy was a gradual shift towards training in intercultural education and the development of widely circulated educational resources, the most well-known of which probably remains the *All Different All Equal Education Pack* (Council of Europe, 1995). Over this period of training development, intercultural education shifted from primarily emphasizing the pedagogical planning of activities to becoming a subject in and of itself; conceived of as a key commitment of youth work and youth workers, and as a process of developing tolerance of ambiguity, reflexiveness and critical solidarity. It has also been integrated as a key dimension of other areas of youth policy such as European citizenship, anti-racism and anti-discrimination, conflict transformation, and more recently, 'inter-religious' dialogue.

There is no doubt that intercultural learning has made an enormous contribution to nonformal education, both in the programmes of the Council of Europe and European Commission, and in the training networks and participatory associations and initiatives which interact with them. Nevertheless it is at this juncture, marked by the almost universal recognition of the importance of intercultural learning in youth work and, paradoxically, at a time when the Council of Europe has just launched a

White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue[1], that intercultural education within these European networks finds itself in a period of intense reflection, if not crisis. The reasons for this are multiple. Intercultural learning has been over-extended and over-idealised, leading, as Cunha and Gomes have put it, to a palpable if inchoate 'discrediting' of intercultural learning '… because it did not produce that decisive cultural change needed to create the balanced and peaceful Europe that the majority of Europeans dreamed of' (2008: 4). This reaction is only possible because of arguably a far more profound problem – the noticeable depoliticisation of intercultural learning. The complexity of this depoliticisation is beyond the scope of this article, but two central aspects of it are worth noting.

Intercultural learning in European youth work has often been confidently reduced to the acronym ICL, whereas in practice there is simply no such stable educational philosophy or forms of practice that answer to such branding. Instead, contemporary intercultural education is a child of *googlisation*; formed by the circulation of theories, practices, models, modules and resources developed and shaped through networks of critical pedagogy, classroom based multicultural education, corporate 'cultural awareness training' and the multiple training and educational foci of non-governmental actors. These, in turn, deploy theories of culture and educational philosophy not easily abstracted from their conceptual and contextual histories, nor from their development within often highly diverse applications of intercultural education. Intercultural learning, then, despite its frequently stated role in education opposing all forms of discrimination, is a patchwork of approaches that contains different and sometime conflicting assessments of discrimination, and how to oppose it.

Yet this depoliticisation is more than a product of the 'lego-brick' syndrome of knowledge production in information societies (Hylland-Eriksen, 2001), as this eclecticism is made possible by a central dependence on 'culture' – as a discrete and transferable concept – as the defining aspect of subjectivity. Raymond Williams' now commonplace observation on the difficulties of the *idea* of culture in social practices (1976) is only beginning to impact on current European debates, as is the attendant realization that prescriptions of culture in education, however latent, are deeply political acts and commitments. As Chris Barker puts it:

> The concept of culture does not represent a fixed entity in an independent object world but is best thought of as a mobile signifier that denotes different ways of talking about human activity with divergent uses and purposes … the concept of culture is plastic, political and contingent (2002: 84).

In contra-distinction, the dominant 'model' of culture immanent in European intercultural learning is fixed, apolitical and regarded as universally valid and transferable. On this basis, the ability of static intercultural learning practices to engage young people on their experience of the lived politics of race, ethnicity, identity, belonging, allegiance and legitimacy in European contexts currently gripped by such issues has been brought into question.

The over-extension of intercultural learning

Intercultural learning, in Peter Lauritzen's rich phrase, 'interferes with your own making'.[2] The verb 'making' not only draws attention to the ongoing, reflexive

commitment of non-formal education, but to a key tension in understandings of culture in intercultural learning. In educational practice, culture is taken both to mean a description of background and/or ethnicity and nationality, as well as a field of meaning into which people are inducted and in which they participate. Culture, as Terry Eagleton has pointed out, has historically involved friction between senses of 'making and being made' (2000:36). Similarly, Tim Ingold captures this as the tension between 'living culturally and living in cultures' (2000). In other words, the importance of intercultural education has been the ways in which it (potentially) encompasses both culture as a way of approaching the formation of discursive and interpretative frameworks within which people create, circulate and extend meaning, and culture as a defining vector of identity which sits in involved and uneasy relationships with collectivities of nation, ethnicity and race. Intercultural learning, in facilitating reflection on living in diverse societies, encompasses both a consideration of how we learn to perceive, interpret and evaluate our realities, and what it means to live within the powerful collective identities which so shape and influence those realities.

The problem is that much intercultural learning practice favours an essentialist emphasis on 'being made' at the expense of 'making'. This imbalance is no theoretical nicety; as Wolfgang Welsch (1999) points out, the concept of culture is prescriptive not descriptive, and hence it has profound consequences for the interpretation and evaluation of cultural reality, not to mention educational responses to those realities. This, I would contend, has two prime consequences for the credibility of much intercultural learning. The first consequence is that many approaches have become conceptually and educationally inadequate in contexts of cultural diffusion and mixedness. The centrality of a modular and essentialist concept of culture which simplifies human understanding, social subjectivity, affectivity and agency has lead to theories and methodologies which are far too reductive to engage young people on their experiences and possible pathways of action in diverse societies. A second consequence of political inadequacy stems from this. Despite intercultural learning's centrality to anti-racism and anti-discrimination education, it classifies and constructs people in precisely the *racial* terms it is overtly opposed to. As a form of political education intercultural learning has become complicit in naturalizing the terms of reference of populist and integralist politics – the clash of civilizations, the new drive towards integration into 'our national values' – that have a powerful currency in western Europe.

These criticisms require some detail and elaboration before turning to examine them in a youth work context. If, as contended in the introduction, intercultural learning is a diffuse and messy field, can it simultaneously be said to be dominated by a set of central, problematic ideas? In an era where the movement of people, money, risks, information and images characterises social life, it should come as no surprise that ideas and discourses are also constantly on the move, flowing across boundaries and being transformed through translation and implementation. In particular, discourses associated with the socio-political work and educational activity of international institutions, globally networked NGOs and of transnational corporations are diffused through institutional cooperation, funding programmes, and through the increased articulation of ideas and practices of interculturalism in an internationally networked public sphere. To use an idea suggested by the sociologist John Urry,

intercultural education can be thought of as a *fluid*, flowing through interlocking networks of institutions, funding and educational collaboration (2000).

Fluidity is not anarchy, however, and it is possible to discern how dominant approaches to intercultural education prosper in this networked movement. In the absence of any empirical examination of this, a complementary analysis is provided by Alastair Bonnett in his discussion of 'the Americanisation of anti-racism' (2006). By Americanisation, Bonnett does not have in mind a simple formula that can be linked to any specific US political administration. Instead, he examines the ways in which influential global agencies such as the World Bank replicate US-derived perspectives on socio-cultural life. In particular this involves models of 'race relations' and 'minority inclusion' produced by experiences of US social politics, welded with neo-liberal orthodoxies of market economy, the role of transnational capital, and the subjectivity and possibilities of the 'modern' individual. Bonnett is not suggesting that translations do not take place at the interface between World Bank projects and national/local agencies and agents. Instead, he argues that:

> The World Bank disseminates a model of social change that does not require US consent or involvement – it may, indeed, be at variance with US government priorities at any one time – yet it reflects a vision that melds US-Americanisation and neo-liberalisation. To a degree that has not yet become explicit in other world regions, the World Bank's vision for Latin America has recently been marked by a concern for the 'social inclusion' of ethnic minorities within the market economy. To this end the Bank interprets and categorises a number of Latin American societies through the lens of 'race relations', whilst approaching racial and ethnic identities as forms of capital which racist 'traditions' conspire to waste (Bonnett, 2006:1085).

Bonnett is not accusing the World Bank of not listening, or a lack of local consultation. His point is more fundamental; that the listening is to a large extent pre-determined by the framework for hearing, which interprets the ways in which local anti-racist groups represent themselves and their social analysis through fundamental assumptions ('that ethnic and racial identities are usefully thought of as forms of social capital; that multi and inter-cultural social inclusion enables "deeper" participation in the free market; that the development of racial self-identification, racial categories, and, more broadly, "race relations" provides an appropriate model for the development of anti-racism': pp.1093–4). Thus given that the World Bank operates according to a particular vision of the relationship between economic development and social emancipation, the operationalisation of this vision employs categories (of ethno-racial classification, for example) and assumptions (that minorities want to see themselves as forms of potential 'capital') that may not only be alien to the 'target reality', but which may shape that reality materially and ideologically, by interpreting differences in classification and political agency as 'resistance', or 'tradition', and by withholding funding accordingly.

Bonnett's analysis provides a way of understanding how models of intercultural learning, despite their diffusion through different networks and institutions, often end up promoting a coherent set of ideological assumptions. In my experience of the models and resources used in European youth work, intercultural learning is inhabited

by resources developed by agencies as diverse as the US Peace Corp, transnational organizational management consultants and religious-based peace activists. What they share, in their 'iceberg' and 'Lilly pad' models of culture and varieties on simulation exercises where discrete, separate cultures come into contact and collision, is a dependence on a vision of culture and cultural relativisation developed within UNESCO and disseminated within the networks which surround it. As Alana Lentin (2004) has documented, 'culture' became elevated as an explanatory framework for subjectivity and collective difference following the concerted rejection of 'race' in the aftermath of the Shoah. In a series of conferences and publications in the 1950s – most notably Claude Levi Strauss' *Race et Histoire* (1952) – UNESCO sought to delegitimise race, and by extension racism. Race, particularly following the eugenicist projects of Nazism, was predominantly understood as a pseudo-scientific paradigm discredited both by its epistemological deficiencies and its role in legitimating hierarchies of dominance.

In its place, the problem of difference was re-worked through the idea of culture – a way of seeing human groups as different and having systems of meaning that require processes of translation. Crucially, this difference cannot be hierarchically organized, but instead must be regarded as making different contributions to humanity and as relating relatively to each other. Differences in 'progress' were explained by historical-geographical chance rather than innate racial characteristics. It follows from this that if race can be undermined as a spurious category, then racism can be countered by disproving the existence of race. Prejudice and ethnocentrism, as subjective conditions, can be overcome through education, reflection and an attempt to reach out to 'the other'. At one level this fundamental shift illustrates the drive of intercultural learning to 'interfere with one's making', yet something else happens in this paradigmatic reformulation.

As Lentin argues, disproving racial science and thus 'pulling the rug' from under racism succeeds in relabeling race, as opposed to *unthinking* it. In other words, race is not reducible to its articulation through scientific theories focused on human bodies, but instead involves a more fundamental modern desire to classify and know, and a political heritage of enshrining classifications of insider/outsiders and their legitimacies in the modern nation-state system. Thus UNESCO's 'culture' is still in a fundamental sense 'race', as it proposes a mode of perception based on 'the problem of difference' which sees people organized into bounded, essential groups that define them. What gets elided in this shift towards cultural understandings is the experience of racism, reformulated as suffering forms of prejudice, and most commonly attributed to 'ignorant' individuals or obviously extreme political movements. Defined out, racism becomes part of Europe's past, and as Sara Ahmed points out, in a contemporary context where commitments to cultural diversity and interculturalism are widespread and uncontroversial, the ubiquity of these pronouncements could be seen as a '… fantasy which conceals forms of racism, violence and inequality as if the organisation/nation can now say: how can you experience racism when we are committed to diversity?' (2008: 2).

Undoubtedly much intercultural education in practice is capable of going beyond the limitations imposed by this latent vision of race/culture, and it is still widely practiced in conjunction with meaningful commitments to anti-discrimination and

anti-racism. However, much of the debate about the limitations of intercultural education stems from a realization that thinking through culture produces a key weakness – the centrality of culture to contemporary European politics has undermined the field's critical import. Interfering with one's making depended on building on the discomfort of cultural realization and relativisation and on compelling people to think of themselves as cultural. However the contemporary political moment witnesses few other modes of self-actualisation as powerful. Culture, remember, is everywhere.

This can be illustrated by looking at the current politics of identity and belonging in Europe in the post 9/11 period. Current public debates on migration in western Europe, for example, cohere not around the rejection of culture but around the rejection of a supposed excess of culture and its consequences. In such countries as the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, minorities are regarded as having been allowed to self-segregate in culturally inward-looking 'communities', and this threat to social cohesion must be countered with a cultural response; the integration of problematic minorities into 'our national values' and 'our ways of life' (see Kundnani, 2007; Titley, 2009 forthcoming). A basic social justice perspective would look to shift the focus away from fantasies of cultural integration, and point instead to the range of socio-economic factors which lead to migrants and minorities once again being held responsible, as the 'needed but unwelcome' (Appadurai 2006), for a range of macro-developments far beyond their agency. The problem for intercultural learning is that its dominant approaches cannot easily interfere in this picture, despite the clear absence of an account of power and history in most accounts of problematic minorities and cultural anxiety. Intercultural education has demanded tolerance, understanding and awareness in the face of cultural difference, contemporary actors from across the political spectrum are lining up to assert that tolerance and understanding have gone too far, and implicitly and explicitly apportioning some of the blame to intercultural education and related approaches. Hence the toothlessness of intercultural orthodoxy in contemporary European societies; appreciate other cultures? We did and look where that got us. Question your own 'making'? We have and we have found a lot that we like, thanks very much. Intercultural education has lost not only the debate, but the chance to shift the terms on which it is conducted.

The problem of orthodoxies

This theoretical criticism of intercultural learning stems from this author's personal experience of working with intercultural education in the European field. It was the questions raised by the adequacy of intercultural learning during a long term training course on intercultural youth work at the Council of Europe in 2004, which led to a subsequent study of that course and prevailing practices of intercultural learning. The course brought thirty-five participants from the wider Europe of the Council together to develop and implement local 'intercultural 'projects book-ended by intensive preparation and evaluation residential seminars. To simplify somewhat, a critical evaluation of the course was stimulated by a curious observation; rather than participants speaking about their intercultural learning, intercultural learning was speaking them. That is, it was providing a prescriptive set of frameworks and vocabulary for reflecting on their experiences that obscured their meaning, imposed

programmatic conclusions and solutions through recourse to orthodox models, and often hampered located, rooted needs analysis.

A more structured reflection on the course was able to tease out the different dimensions of this tendency to over-determination. The central focus of intercultural education on limited ideas of culture means that it easily becomes an *a priori* framework which shapes and imposes responses in a number of ways.

a. Orthodoxy of expression: even allowing for translation in action, a shared, over-burdened language of intercultural learning provided accepted formulations through which participants distilled their experiences, probably at the expense of more emic possibilities. In other words, participants, in one way or another, felt compelled to work through the received shapes of 'culture talk'. This tendency to the formulaic has been recently described by Cunha and Gomes as the 'waste of experiences in intercultural learning' (2008).
b. Deterministic formula: the importance accorded intercultural learning in the rhetoric, programmes and priorities of many influential bodies had a debilitating effect on some participants' ability to critically shape their own priorities and opinions. It seemed as if participants, initially at least, felt little freedom to question what they considered to be received wisdom about what intercultural learning can achieve, even if this ran contrary to their own experiences. Thus if the YOUTH programme insists that youth exchanges promote intercultural understanding, the functionalist assumptions of this approach were not questioned despite the far more complex experiences participants had with youth exchanges. A problematic consequence of this was an assumption that a project was a failure if it did not deliver the ideological assumptions of the funding body and the wider milieu of intercultural education.
c. Mobile panacea: a key dimension of the over-extension of intercultural learning is the way in which a huge range of social and political issues can be analysed as cultural and prescribed cultural solutions. This was especially pronounced in relation to questions of conflict and social exclusion which clearly require far more multi-dimensional approaches. Intercultural learning can all too easily frame the question and provide the answer, and becomes a microcosm of the noted trend whereby social and political questions are treated to a cultural response (Yúdice 2003);
d. Political reductionism: paradoxically, the over-extension of intercultural learning seems to reinforce individualistic diagnoses and solutions of social problems. In other words, when intercultural learning promotes end-state notions of 'understanding' and 'tolerance', action can become overwhelmingly individual action, despite the collectivist assumptions of culture and the organizational context of participants. A good example of this is the reduction of racism to a question of individual aberrant prejudice which can be ameliorated through individual responses.

The conclusion of the educators working with this course verged on the outright rejection of conventional intercultural learning approaches, as they provide an over-arching story of culture and its consequences that, underpinned by the force of institutional credibility, compelled participants into understanding and responding to their contexts in limited and limiting ways. Rather than interfering in their making, it

was merely confirming the shape of things. This is but one among many recent experiences within European training networks which has started to question why intercultural learning can contribute so little in a context where an awareness of culture would appear to be in the ascendant. These debates are already engaged with thinking about how to reconstruct intercultural learning in these conditions.

An examination of current practices of intercultural learning can be understood as a theme within a wider discussion of the adequacy of nonformal education and training to changing social conditions. Hendrik Otten (2002: 11) has summarized the debate as follows: '… it can be said that in view of the increasing complexity of European societies, the requirements for education and training are growing, and the knowledge and skill needs demanded of those who are responsible for education and training are accordingly complex'. Otten proposes an abstract yet clear relationship between the complexity of societies, and the concomitant complexity of training skills. He highlights two inter-related aspects of training competence: *personal aspects*, including cognitive-intellectual, moral-ethical, emotional, and action-oriented dimensions; and *activity-related aspects*, including the didactic structure of training, methodologies, specific contents, and its political aims and objectives. Otten summarises the implications of this for training and trainers thus:

> Training (should be) more subject, object and situation-adequate – a kind of paradigm shift, in order to get an intellectual hold on a changed youth sociology setting and the complex requirements of training and education as elements of life-long learning … Trainers … are also knowledge managers – they have to know many things; mainly however in view of the complexity of European societies … they have to be knowledge brokers (Otten, 2002: 12–13).

Otten's idea of knowledge-brokering is useful in teasing out how the success of intercultural learning has led to anxieties concerning its subject, object and situation inadequacy. In a field of nonformal education characterized by freelance work, short-term and modular training and elite mobility, the sureties of conventional intercultural learning and the transposable nature of cookie-cutter theoretical inputs and simulation exercises is hard to displace, and these forms of knowledge production and circulation are quite obviously part of a far bigger problem. However, they are, in Otten's terms, thoroughly inadequate to a 'changed youth sociology' and thus increasingly irrelevant to the experiences of many young people, particularly in the diverse environments of European cities and in postcolonial and multicultural contexts where questions of cultural belonging and allegiance are sharply felt while never corresponding to intercultural education's comforting algebra of 'difference'. What this implies, of course, and this author has witnessed it several times, is that activities that may be included in intercultural policy agendas now proceed by ignoring the 'classics' of intercultural learning approaches.

Conclusion

In discussions of training in the Council of Europe and related networks, recent contributions by trainers have indicated some routes for reshaping intercultural learning, and they cohere around re-emphasising intercultural education as a form of political education that needs to be disentangled from the managerial logics and

practices of what Hannerz (1995) calls 'the culture-shock prevention industry'. Teresa Cunha and Rui Gomes (2008), for example, have looked at the ways in which intercultural learning must engage with legacies of historical injustice, and the consequences of history for social inequality and discrimination in postcolonial and post-conflict European sites. Furthermore, they advocate an open questioning of the assumptions behind intercultural learning and dialogue as part of the process of its constitution, questions which return intercultural learning to its relationship with critical pedagogy; who is in dialogue and who is not, and why? Who defines something as a subject of intercultural dialogue or education, and on what grounds? Where is the power in dialogue and exchange?

In an input to a recent consultative meeting of the trainers working with the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe, I argued that intercultural education can borrow from anthropology's debates on the status of culture, and shift from approaching people – and particularly over-culturalised minority young people – as subjects of culture towards treating them instead as what Ingold (1994: 330) calls 'real, living experiencing, thinking, affectively engaged human beings who follow particular lifeways'. This is, after all, what nonformal education is about; engaging people who are not only always being made but always making, and who can work to extend the basic assumption of the same dynamism and complexity to those they don't know. However this is not to tip the imbalance to 'living culturally' over 'living in cultures', as there is nothing worse than simplistic, cosmopolitan cultural education that urges people to overcome the false consciousness of national, ethnic and cultural group affiliation and identities as a step on the road to harmony. The contemporary politics of culture in Europe, among other things, ensures that people continue to have meaningful and charged affective and ascribed identities, and these allegiances and pressures can neither be dismissed nor flattened into the formulas of culture under discussion in this article.

It is also in this context that anti-racism education needs to be reclaimed from its general incorporation into intercultural learning. Anti-racism is not merely the opposition to racism, it is a complicated and controversial political terrain (Lentin, 2004). However racism in contemporary Europe, despite its polite expression through ideas of 'too much diversity' and cultural incompatibility, cannot be combated through forms of intercultural learning that do not realize their complicity in the fundamental shape of these new forms of exclusion.

Postscript: In memory of Peter Lauritzen

The debates in European youth work discussed here, and perhaps even the field of European youth work itself, are unimaginable without the presence and contribution of Peter Lauritzen, who died in May 2007. Peter was the first educational tutor in the European Youth Centre (EYCS) in Strasbourg when it was established in 1972. He became Deputy-Director of the EYCS in 1985, and then Director of the European Youth Centre in Budapest from its foundation in 1995 until 1999. Since then until his retirement in early 2007 he was Head of the Youth Department and Deputy Director of Youth and Sport in Strasbourg. This impressive institutional biography, of course, says little of the esteem, love and respect in which he was widely held. Peter was an unusual blend of intellectual, civil servant and activist, and he succeeded in harnessing

the often difficult tensions these different inclinations and roles bring into collision. He was, to say the least, scathing of the 'toolbox training' approaches he saw colonizing intercultural education and training in general, and the ideas discussed here and in countless areas of youth work, policy and research would not exist but for the force of his critical intellect, constantly assessing the adequacy of received wisdom and approaches. Peter was committed in his work to what he saw as the magic triangle of policy, research and training, and his gift was never to under- or over-estimate the contribution or importance of one domain in relation to another. In advocating and shaping these relationships, he oversaw a period of creative and sustained dialogue between the points in the triangle of European youth work. More than that, he was the human geometry that gave it shape, and continuing inspiration.

Notes

1 See http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/Source/White%20Paper%20final%20EN%20020508.pdf (accessed 23 June 2008)

2 From an unpublished speech 'ICL and ambiguity' presented in the European Youth Centre Strasbourg, 28 October 2001.

3 The discussion document Plastic Political and Contigent: Intercultural Learning in DYS Activities' is available for download from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Training/Training_courses/2005_LTTC_intercultural_lng_en.pdf

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Youth Homelessness in Ireland

The Emergence of a Social Problem

Eoin O'Sullivan and Paula Mayock

Abstract

This paper presents a historical account of youth homelessness in Dublin from the mid-1960s and documents how homeless young people (variously defined) were constructed as a distinct group within the broader homeless population. Rather than viewing homelessness as comprising an undifferentiated mass, various agencies successfully attempted to distinguish particular sub-groups within the homeless population that required specific interventions. Young people were identified from the early 1970s as one such sub-group. However, official recognition by the Irish government of youth homelessness did not emerge until the mid-1980s and the boundaries of 'youth' were to remain fluid until the *Child Care Act, 1991* established by statute that homeless youth were those under the age of 18 years. The analysis presented in this paper broadly argues that homelessness is a fluid concept rather than a constant reality with a shared understanding. Thus, what is understood in contemporary society as a social problem deserving of specific policy and service responses, is historically rooted in decades of social, legal and political debate about the existence, nature, consequences and responses to homelessness amongst young people.

Keywords

Youth homelessness; homeless children; social construction; Ireland; history

Introduction

This paper documents the emergence of youth homelessness in Ireland as a social problem, identifying the factors that have shaped and re-shaped how we understand it today, and arguing that what is commonly understood as 'youth homelessness' is historically variable rather than an immutable fact. From the second half of the twentieth century, young people without stable family accommodation, like other categories of disadvantaged youth, were gradually viewed as 'deprived', replacing the earlier portrayal and understanding of such young people as 'depraved' (O'Sullivan, 1979). However, this process was both emergent and socially contingent, involving a complex range of interpretations, including legal debate, which centred in latter years on the question of who was responsible for the provision of services to those children and young people deemed to be 'homeless'. Thus, what is understood in contemporary society as a social problem deserving of specific policy and service responses, is historically rooted in decades of social, legal and political debate about the existence, nature, consequences and responses to homelessness amongst young people.

Homelessness as a 'Social Problem'

A key strand of research into homelessness has focused on highlighting the 'social construction' of the issue. Research in this tradition has aimed to understand how certain matters are defined as social problems, thereby influencing the strategies devised to manage them (Hutson and Liddiard, 1994). In particular, research has illuminated the manner in which different vested interest groups have attempted to construct both the issue and the desired response. According to Jacobs and Manzi (2000: 37), rather than viewing homelessness as simply the outcome of a deficit of accommodation for certain households, a constructionist approach highlights the 'dynamic aspects of homelessness', stressing 'how definitions change over time depending on the relative power of interest groups to impose their agenda on the policy community'. From this perspective, homelessness is 'unstable, capable of being redefined and moved up and down policy agendas as different interests succeed in gaining the upper hand in the ongoing struggle to define priorities' (Jacobs et al, 1999:13). This analysis is applicable both temporally and spatially. For example, homelessness or vagrancy has been viewed as matter of deviancy needing punitive regulation by the State (Chambliss, 1964), a consequence of structural inequalities requiring social and economic intervention (Elliot and Krivo, 1991), and as personal inadequacies necessitating individualised management and professional intervention (Gerstal et al, 1996). Similarly, at any point in time, individual agencies can construct homelessness differently for different audiences and this may vary considerably by jurisdiction (see for example, the analysis of the regulation of public space by Doherty *et al*. 2008). In the case of youth homelessness in the UK in the 1980s, Liddiard and Hutson (1991) observe that many agencies providing services oscillate between a pathological and a normalising model of youth homelessness in their public presentation of the situation, that is, portraying homelessness as something unique and extreme or, alternatively, as something that can happen to any young person. In a similar vein, Jacobs *et al*. (1999: 24) observe that voluntary agencies often depict the homeless as victims to ensure financial donations, which would be less likely if they were presented as addicted or in any other less than deserving fashion. Thus, from a social constructionist perspective, homelessness is a fluid concept rather than a constant reality with a shared understanding.

Varying degrees of constructionism exist[1]. The analysis here leans towards a 'weak' constructionist approach, taking the 'strong' position to signify the belief that 'social reality is produced entirely by human discourse and interaction' (Somerville and Bengtsson, 2002: 121). Following the schema devised by Hacking (1999), in which he argues that there are six grades of constructionism (historical, ironic, reformist, unmasking, rebellious and revolutionary), with the least demanding grade being historical, we are decidedly on that least demanding grade. By historical constructionism, Hacking (1999: 19) means 'someone presents a history of x and argues that x has been constructed in the course of social processes. Far from being inevitable, x is the contingent upshot of historical events'. In this paper, we present a preliminary history of the emergence of homelessness among young people in Ireland and argue that what we understand today as 'youth homelessness' has been constructed in the course of social processes. In particular, we demonstrate that the manner in which the State and other agencies respond to homelessness amongst the young is neither fixed nor static. While the current dominant portrayal of the homeless young person is constructed around

themes of social exclusion, marginalisation, and deprivation, administered within a legal framework that requires strategic direction to give coherence to the responses of various actors, we need to be cognisant of the fragile nature of this construct. By drawing attention to the actors and agencies that have contributed to constructions of homelessness amongst the young, past and present, we hope to 'undercut powerful ideas, policies and practices' (Fopp, 2008: 166) and contribute to a more historically informed understanding of the way in which youth homelessness is currently understood. The paper therefore aims to provide the building blocks for future theorising on the social construction of youth homelessness in Ireland.

In the beginning …

It was only from the mid-1960s that youth homelessness was gradually articulated as a form of homelessness different from that experienced by adults. The official 'birth' of youth homelessness can be traced to 1966, when a category 'homeless' appeared in the annual reports of the Department of Education as a reason for committal to an Industrial School. This situation is not reflective of an absence of children who were without accommodation prior to this period; rather, the Industrial[2], alongside Reformatory, Schools effectively absorbed such children, but labelled them as 'wandering abroad' from the mid-19th century, and maintained this role until the system gradually reshaped itself as small-scale residential care units some 100 years later in the 1970s.

With the gradual demise of the industrial schools from the early 1960s, a number of voluntary agencies began providing various services for those children leaving the schools. For example, in 1966 the Los Angeles Society was established following a survey conducted by a number of voluntary agencies which estimated that as many as 150 boys were sleeping rough in Dublin. After spending a year on various fundraising projects, the Society set up its first hostel for homeless boys at 26 Arran Quay with the aim of providing accommodation for 12 homeless boys between the ages of 15 and 19 years. Two years later, a group of people with a common belief in the need for the provision of hostel accommodation for homeless girls in Dublin formed the Homeless Girls Society. Sherrard House in the North Inner City opened in 1970.[3]

Youth Homelessness in the 1970s: Constructing the Deprived Child

In 1970, the *Report on Industrial Schools and Reformatories* (better known as the Kennedy Report) acknowledged the large number of children being released due to the closure of Industrial Schools (between 1964 and 1969, 14 Industrial Schools closed). Describing the situation as particularly 'difficult', it went on to note that there were 'few hostels in the State and those that are there do not receive the support they need' (Reformatory and Industrial Schools Systems Report, 1970: 58). Within official discourse, however, youth homelessness remained a relatively marginal issue, as evidenced by the CARE Memorandum[4] (CARE, 1972: 68) when it highlighted the plight of 'unattached' youth and the poor service provision for deprived children in general:

> Adolescents who are unattached either because they have been in care since childhood or because they have lately become estranged from their families are another special group requiring residential care. Because of their

> increasing independence and because of the fact that they are likely to be more involved in work or education and less in need of family care, they can best be catered for in hostels. There are at present three or four hostels and small residential establishments for adolescents in Dublin.

Two further reports highlighted the dearth of suitable accommodation for young people at this time. In September 1973, the newly established Simon Ireland[5] produced a report on 'unattached youth' in Dublin, noting that, while a number of general hostels accommodated young people under the age of 25, only seven existed specifically for what were termed unattached youths (generally aged 14 to 20). This report also observed that many of the nominally adult hostels recorded considerable numbers of young people using their services (Whelan, 1973). One year later, the Dublin Diocesan Welfare Committee, under the Chairmanship of Bishop James Kavanagh, reported on aspects of homelessness in Dublin, noting that five hostels provided emergency accommodation for adolescent girls, except for those 'in need of psychiatric treatment, or obviously members of the "drug scene" ' (Dublin Diocesan Welfare Committee, 1974: 7). In relation to adolescent boys, the committee noted that only two hostels offered accommodation and neither had emergency provision. In general, teenage boys seeking emergency accommodation were referred to the Iveagh Hostel or, if very young, were provided with Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation. The majority of those adolescent males seeking emergency or, in the vernacular of the time, 'casual' accommodation, were sleeping rough from time to time and the committee estimated that they numbered approximately 30 (Dublin Diocesan Welfare Committee, 1974).

In 1974, the Minister for Health at that time, Brendan Corish, established a Task Force on Child Care Services.[6] Within a year of its establishment, the Task Force issued an interim report stating that they had been able to isolate a number of major gaps in the existing range of services requiring attention as a matter of great urgency. In relation to homeless children, the Interim Report argued that additional accommodation was needed for 'older boys who have no fixed abode', noting that (Task Force on Child Care Services, 1975: 25):

> Most of these boys stay periodically in their family homes, combining this with periods of sleeping in adult hostels or, as is often the case, sleeping rough. Some of them, however, retain no contact with their families, even on a periodic basis. Many of them have undergone great personal stress and deprivation. Some have been in trouble with the law. Because of their age, the best form of residential provision for them would be of the hostel type, in which the staff would aim to provide guidance, therapeutic relationships, education or employment suited to their age.

The committee estimated that, in addition to those boys residing in the available hostels, a further 30 had no fixed abode and, on this basis, concluded that additional hostel accommodation was required.

Homeless Children and Traveller Children

While homeless children were increasingly visible (both on the streets and on the agendas of various voluntary agencies) by the mid-1970s, a distinction was made

between settled children and Traveller children sleeping rough. For example, a report on children who were begging or sleeping rough, requested by An Coisde Cuspóirí Coiteann (the General Purposes Standing Committee of Dublin City Council), drew a distinction between Traveller and non-Traveller children who were sleeping rough and further observed that, while there were a range of possible 'causes' for children sleeping rough in Dublin, it was difficult to provide a consensus on the issue. The following reasons for rough sleeping among children were proposed (Clare & Byrne, 1976: 8):

> … those whose families have been moved from the city centre and who are not settling in come back into the city; homeless families who are accommodated temporarily but for whom no place can be found for the boys, who then have to sleep rough; children rejected by their families; young people without homes in the city who cannot find accommodation; children leaving home permanently or temporarily because of bad home conditions e.g. drink, problem families, broken homes etc., – an increasing number it is said – who take drugs; ex-residents of institutions; the difficult disruptive child for whom no suitable accommodation can be found; those who are sent to some institution and who abscond; those who do it for adventure; those who sleep rough occasionally when they find themselves left behind in the city centre when the last bus has gone.

This analysis locates the problem of children sleeping rough with the individual young person whilst also acknowledging the role of home-based problems. The authors later suggested that the problem of rough sleeping among Traveller children was largely attributed to the alcoholism of their parents and went on to assert that 'the children of travelling people who are sleeping rough must be treated separately because of their different background' (Clare & Byrne, 1976: 10).

Hope Hostel and the Eastern Health Board

In the same year as An Coisde Cuspóirí Coiteann requested a report on children sleeping rough, a new lay voluntary organisation was established to provide accommodation for young people, particularly boys, who were sleeping rough. HOPE was founded in October 1975 by a German social worker who, when visiting Dublin, was struck by the number of children sleeping rough (Harvey and Menton, 1989). The founders of HOPE estimated that there were at least 60 under-18s sleeping rough in Dublin every night based on a relatively crude assessment of the extent of youth homelessness. The report (Coghlan et al, 1976: 11) also noted that the majority of these young people were 'non-itinerant':

> Most of these young people are in the 13–15 age group but there are cases of children of seven or less sleeping out. There are indications that the problem is growing. The majority of these young people are non-itinerant and boys outnumber girls.

It was not until March 1977 that HOPE was in a position to open a hostel at 42 Harcourt Street.[7] In its first full year of operation, 59 children (58 boys and 1 girl) stayed in the hostel, with the average length of stay being four weeks. Of those who

stayed in the hostel, 53 per cent were aged between 16 and 18 years and a further 39 per cent were aged between 12 and 15. The majority were from Dublin, with 20 per cent recorded as from other parts of Ireland and 12 per cent classified as Travellers. In addition to the provision of the hostel, HOPE provided an outreach service which commenced formally in June 1977 with the appointment of three full-time street workers. However, for various reasons, this service terminated in December 1977 but it was recommended that a comprehensive research project be undertaken to explore the issue of 'unattached youth' in Dublin. What followed was the first comprehensive study of homeless children in Dublin.

'Out in the Cold'

Published in March 1979 (the International Year of the Child), *Out in the Cold: A Report of Unattached Youth in Dublin in the Winter of 1978–79* was based on research conducted in both Dublin city-centre and in the deprived suburban area of Fairfields (Finglas). For the purposes of the research, the authors defined 'unattached youth' as young people 'who hang around in public places during the day or night unaccompanied by responsible adults and who appear to have nothing to do' (HOPE, 1979: 5). They also suggested that there were 'degrees' of alienation amongst unattached youth: (1) those who slept rough with no hope of a place to return to; and (2) those 'on the gur' (i.e. sleeping rough) for periods of time, but retaining attachment to family/friends/community. In what was possibly the first attempt to highlight the heterogeneity of the youth homeless population, the HOPE research team (Hope, 1979: 10–11) identified five sub-categories of unattached young people, each with differing reasons for leaving or staying away from home:

1. Children alienated from families of origin, generally in earlier years of adolescence, who exhibit varying degrees of unattachment. This was generally as a consequence of a row/ill treatment/fear of parental reaction to delinquent behaviour on child's part; or failure to produce the required 'entrance money' after a day's trading; or those who have been neglected and uncared for by their families for a some time, in many cases the families overwhelmed by other problems.
2. Older children who had been sleeping rough or 'on gur' for longer periods, who may have no home ties in the State because: they may have been discharged from institutions with no families to return to, or who do not wish them to return; or may have returned from abroad after families emigrated and are therefore alone in Ireland.
3. Young itinerants who tend to be more mobile than other young unattached and mainly mix only with other young itinerants.
4. Street Gangs, remaining out late and sometimes all night.
5. Young people on streets at weekends and occasional 'nights out'.

Despite HOPE's nuanced approach, youth homelessness was most commonly assumed to be a manifestation of very specific unmet need among a very small number of children and/or portrayed as an 'itinerant' issue. For example, the efforts of HOPE to articulate a new category of needy children – those who were homeless – was not readily accepted by either the Department of Health or the regional health boards. Instead, the standard response was to assume that the number of homeless youth was not large and consisted primarily of Travellers. For example, in 1983 Barry Desmond,

the Minister for Health at the time, argued that it was not possible to give a precise estimate of the number of children and suggested that '[t]he figure is quite small and is made up almost exclusively of children drawn from the travelling community' (Dáil Debates, Vol. 339, Vol. 1189, 1983)[8]. As Helleiner (1998a: 310) argues in relation to the official understanding of Traveller children (and indeed settled children sleeping rough) during this period, 'the labelling of Traveller children focused upon individual and family-related deficits rather than any structural (or cultural) causes of Traveller children's divergence from the model of "proper children"'. However, from the early 1980s onwards, the distinction between Traveller children and homeless children virtually disappears and reference is made only to the generic category "homeless children". Thus, during the 1970s, various labels were used to describe a category of young people who were without adequate accommodation: those with no fixed abode, those who were 'unattached', Traveller children, and so on. The term 'youth homelessness' had yet to fully emerge as various actors struggled to describe these young people. The most common response was to state that most were Travellers, a claim which in some way appeared to absolve state agencies, in particular, from the provision of appropriate services. However, this understanding and interpretation was to change radically by the mid-1980s.

Youth Homelessness in the 1980s: Constructing Visibility

The first clear articulation of the emergence of 'homeless' young people came with the publication of the report of the National Youth Policy Committee. Established in September 1983 and reporting almost exactly a year later, this government-appointed committee noted an apparent change in the composition of the homeless population and identified a specific problem in relation to homelessness among the young:

> We have received very compelling evidence of the need to deal specifically with the problem of homelessness among young people. The homeless class of people were earlier seen as consisting mainly of men over 40, but there is now a new class of young homeless person – boys and girls. We are anxious that this disturbing fact should be borne in mind by the Government (National Youth Policy Committee, 1984: 156).

This report also highlighted the absence of clear statutory responsibility for the provision of services for homeless children and young people. Acknowledging that legislation alone would not resolve the problem, it recommended that the Government appoint a committee 'to provide resources to alleviate the very real suffering which exists at present' (National Youth Policy Committee, 1984: 160). In December of the same year, an *Ad-hoc Committee on the Homeless* (1984: 29), established under the aegis of the Department of Health, proposed that health boards take responsibility for the provision of accommodation for homeless children:

> The committee considers that the accommodation and other needs of homeless children can best be met by health boards either directly or through the subvention of voluntary bodies. As a guideline and for the purposes of this report the Committee considers persons under 18 years of age as children. However, in practice this age limit should not be rigidly

> applied in a manner which would result in individuals becoming homeless on reaching or shortly after becoming 18 years of age.

Echoing the recommendations of the statutory reports above, a national survey of youth homelessness conducted by the National Campaign for the Homeless[9] (1985) identified over 800 young people between 10 and 30 years and likewise proposed that 'the Health Board take the leading role in providing accommodation for all homeless people aged 16 to 40' (National Campaign for the Homeless, 1985: 15).

Explicit recognition by the government of the problem of youth homelessness, and an apparent willingness to tackle the situation, came in 1985 in the form of a National Youth Policy entitled, *In Partnership with Youth* (Government of Ireland, 1985). This document contained the clearest articulation to date that youth homelessness was viewed by the State as an area distinct from adult homelessness requiring specific attention, when it stated that:

> The Government accept that it is the responsibility of the Health Boards to provide for long-term and short-stay accommodation for homeless young people incapable of independent living and in need of special care (Government of Ireland, 1985: 34–35).

The document further noted that new legislation was in preparation that would address many of the unmet needs of homeless children (The Children (Care and Protection) Bill, 1985 which eventually emerged as the Child Care Act, 1991), that homelessness should not in itself constitute an offence[10], and that small-scale residential provision was inherently more appropriate than large-scale institutional care in meeting the needs of homeless children.

In March 1987, to mark the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, a conference entitled 'Streetwise', was organised by Focus Point[11] and UNICEF to highlight the plight of young homeless people both in Ireland and internationally. Kennedy (1987) summarised the nature of the problem noting that no accurate assessment of the extent of homelessness amongst the young existed. Fragmentary evidence was available, suggesting that it was a growing problem attributable in part to changes in the nature and provision of residential care. Residential places for older children had decreased since the 1970s and, according to Kennedy (1987: 67), '[p]reventative services have not been developed to provide support for families in their local communities'.

The 1990s: The Legal Construction of Youth Homelessness

By the early 1990s, the existence of youth homelessness was recognised in official discourse, alongside evidence of the absence of suitable accommodation for children and young people once they became homeless, particularly, but not exclusively, in Dublin (Carlson, 1990; Daly, 1990; O'Donnell, 1990, 1992). The problem became particularly acute in the early 1990s, ironically perhaps, partly as a consequence of the passing of the *Child Care Act, 1991*, which gave health boards responsibility for children up to the age of 18.

The Child Care Act, 1991

With the passing of the *Child Care Act, 1991*, specific statutory provision for homeless children in Ireland was legislated for. Prior to the enactment of this legislation, health boards had responsibility for children only up to the age of 16 (under the provisions of the

Children Act, 1908), a situation which created a gap in services for 16- and 17-year-olds. The Act remedied this situation by defining a child as someone up to the age of 18 and placed a clear obligation on the health boards, under Section 5 of the Act, to provide accommodation for homeless children (see O'Sullivan, 1995a and b for further details). However, considerable differences quickly emerged between the health boards, in particular the Eastern Health Board (EHB) and voluntary agencies, over the interpretation and implementation of the section, culminating in a series of High Court actions designed to obtain clarification. Section 5 of the *Child Care Act, 1991*, read as follows:

> Where it appears to a Health Board that a child in its area is homeless, the Board shall enquire into the child's circumstances, and if the Board is satisfied that there is no accommodation available to him which he can reasonably occupy, then, unless the child is received into the care of the Board under the provisions of this Act, the Board shall take such steps as are reasonable to make available suitable accommodation for him.

Section 5 of the *Child Care Act, 1991* came into operation in November 1992, but within a short period of time considerable difficulties emerged in relation to the interpretation of the Section by the health boards, particularly the EHB, with the absence of a range of suitable accommodation generating considerable dilemmas for the newly formed Crisis Intervention (Out of Hours) Service.

The Development of a Statutory Response (Out of Hours Service) to Youth Homelessness

As noted, until the late 1980s the EHB's direct involvement with homeless young people was limited and no specific powers or responsibilities fell to the State with regard to homeless children until the introduction of Section 5 of the Child Care Act, 1991. However, from the mid-1980s, a number of social workers were deployed by the EHB to work specifically with homeless children. Statutory involvement in the provision of services for homeless children was further extended when, in March 1992, the EHB established a Crisis Intervention (Out of Hours) Service for homeless children and young people. The Out of Hours Service was set up to provide children and young people (under the age of 18) *in crisis* with the necessary services when all other options were closed. It is a social work, rather than a specific accommodation, service but much of its remit relates to 'out of home' young people (Kelleher et al., 2000). By the mid-1990s, there were 50 emergency beds available to homeless children.

Despite the development of these services, considerable difficulties remained in relation to the implementation of Section 5 of the Act. Many of the challenges were related to the alleged inadequacy of provision and the consequent reliance on the part of health boards on B&B accommodation in attempting to meet the needs of homeless young people. In the EHB region, the number of homeless children placed in B&Bs doubled from 39 in 1991 to 76 in 1993. Critiques of the operationalisation of Section 5 argued that it excluded homeless children from mainstream child welfare services and effectively positioned them within a secondary child welfare system that provided minimal levels of support and accommodation and not care and protection (O'Sullivan, 1996a, 1998). The debate about the adequacy of the provision of B&B accommodation to homeless children ultimately ended up in the High Court.

Homeless Children and the Courts

Controversy over the use of B&B accommodation, particularly for unaccompanied children under 18, prompted the use of the High Court to explore the operationalisation of Section 5. At the centre of this debate were arguments about how the stipulation that health boards 'take such steps as are reasonable' might be appropriately evaluated, alongside questions about what constituted 'suitable accommodation' for homeless children (see Whyte, 2002 for further details).

In a series of High Court actions, the Courts clearly identified a gap in Irish child care legislation in that, unlike many other EU states, health boards were adjudged not to have powers of civil detainment. The judgments resulting from these actions led to the establishment of a small number of (euphemistically entitled) High Support and Special Care Units for children by the Department of Health, in conjunction with the health boards. However, the number of children before the High Court continued to grow and, in July 1998, the High Court issued an order to force the Minister for Health to provide sufficient accommodation for the children appearing before it in order to vindicate their constitutional rights. By 2005, three special care units were established with an approved bed capacity of 30, in addition to 13 high support units with an approved bed capacity of 93.

A New Millennium: Constructing a Strategic Response

The turbulence of the 1990s, which centred largely on the EHB gradually coming to terms with their new legislative obligations towards homeless children, gradually eased and by the beginning of the 21st century a new set of concerns emerged. These concerns focused on efforts to prevent homelessness from occurring rather than reacting to it; the achievement of greater inter-agency collaboration; and the recognition that homelessness was symptomatic, not simply of the absence of accommodation, but of deficits in other services and supports as well.

A Forum on Youth Homelessness was established in 1999 with the objective of strategically addressing deficits in service provision and ensuring that 'the services on offer are effective and responsive to the needs of young homeless people' (Forum on Youth Homelessness, 2000: 5). Reporting in 2000, the Forum identified several fundamental weaknesses in the system of services targeting homeless children. Its recommendations focused on the co-ordination of services, access to services, care and accommodation issues, substance abuse, medical care, education/training and the needs of special groups (including Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers). It also recommended the establishment of a new administrative structure to deliver services to homeless young people. In October 2001, a national *Youth Homelessness Strategy* (Department of Health and Children, 2001) was published and for the first time, a national framework for tackling youth homelessness was established, with the Health Service Executive (HSE)[12] having lead responsibility for its implementation. The stated goal of the Strategy is:

> To reduce and if possible eliminate youth homelessness through preventative strategies and where a child becomes homeless to ensure that he/she benefits from a comprehensive range of services aimed at re-integrating him/her into his/her community as quickly as possible (Department of Health and Children, 2001: 9).

The Strategy was extremely ambitious and set out twelve specific objectives underpinned by an emphasis on the prevention of youth homelessness, the need for a responsive child-focussed service and the importance of co-ordinated inter-agency work. The Strategy acknowledged that homeless young people are not a homogeneous group and that there was consequently, 'a need to ensure that services can match individual needs more appropriately' (Department of Health and Children, 2001: 19). All of this signified a dramatic shift from a position a decade earlier when statutory responsibility for the provision of services to homeless youth had not yet been legislated for. Nonetheless, progress in implementing this Strategy has been relatively slow (Mayock and O'Sullivan, 2007) and, to date, no review of progress on its implementation has been published despite the commitment contained in the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, 2007–2016* that such a review, coupled with the development of a new programme of action, would take place in 2007. Within this strategic approach, the homeless young person is constructed as a client or customer requiring a range of support services and the key priority is to orientate the various services to provide the required package. Earlier discourses on deprivation or depravity are therefore decentred as a more anodyne managerialist discourse assumes ascendancy in the governance of youth homelessness. This construction reflects more a general reinterpretation of responses to marginal populations, influenced by the strictures of new public management.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a historical account of youth homelessness in Dublin from the mid-1960s and has documented how homeless young people (variously defined) were constructed as a distinct group within the broader homeless population. The range of young people, from teens to those in their early or mid-20s, described as homeless and the absence of reliable data sources makes it difficult to assess the extent of the phenomenon over time. What is clear, however, is that a discourse on 'youth homelessness' – discernible from various statutory and non-statutory reports and statements on homeless children and young people – emerged from the 1970s. The cacophony of labels utilised in the 1970s, from 'traveller' to 'vagrant' to 'unattached', to give substance to policy actions and inactions, gradually settled and the term 'youth homelessness' began to appear in the early 1980s. Rather than viewing homelessness as comprising an undifferentiated mass, various agencies, in particular non-governmental organisations (NGOs), successfully attempted to distinguish particular sub-groups within the homeless population that required specific interventions. Young people were identified from the early 1970s as one such sub-group. However, official recognition by the Irish government of the problem of youth homelessness did not emerge until the mid-1980s and the boundaries of 'youth' were to remain fluid until the *Child Care Act, 1991* established by statute that homeless youth were those under the age of 18 years.

Youth homelessness became a problematic legal construct in the early 1990s with the implementation of Section 5 of the *Child Care Act, 1991*. The various High Court judgments on the responsibility of the State towards homeless children and young people, and the latter's ambiguous status within health boards, account in part for the high profile accorded to these children during the 1990s. A crucial outcome of these

debates during the late 1980s and 1990s was the pushing centre stage of the health boards in terms of the provision of services for homeless children. While NGOs remain involved in the provision of services, statutory bodies are identified as having primary responsibility for homeless children and young people. This is a significant shift from the position identified at the outset of this paper. It also partly explains the managerial approach to the homeless problem, which is increasingly evident, and which ambitiously aims to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate homelessness.

The analysis presented in this paper broadly supports the contention by Jacobs et al (1999: 25) that 'conceptions of homelessness change over time and are subject to ideological influences, availability of resources and expectations bestowed on government and policy makers'. Homeless young people are currently understood as comprising a distinct group within the overall homeless population, with particular needs, deserving of public sympathy and whose needs can be addressed by greater inter-agency collaboration. Nonetheless, contradictions remain, particular with respect to how 'youth' is (legally) defined, thereby affecting service provision, and the manner in which young homeless people's lives are officially conceptualised. The relatively benign policy environment that currently exists, particularly in relation to funding of services for homeless young people, may well shift in the future as increased pressure is placed on public expenditure. This in turn is likely to lead to a further reconceptualisation of youth homelessness, which may generate a more punitive response than is currently the case.

Notes

1. Social constructionism is a term applied to theories or approaches that emphasise the idea that social phenomenon are actively and creatively produced by human beings and highly contingent on historical and social processes. It therefore involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalised, and made into tradition by individuals and/or society. Socially constructed reality is seen as an ongoing, dynamic process; reality is reproduced by people acting on their interpretations and their knowledge of it. Constructionism became prominent in the U.S. with the publication of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, in which they argue that all knowledge, including the most basic, taken-for-granted common sense knowledge of everyday reality, is derived from and maintained by social interactions.
2. Industrial Schools were legislated for in Ireland in 1868, based on the models already in operation in England and Scotland. The objective of Industrial Schools was to inculcate children into habits of "industry, regularity, self-denial, self reliance and self-control". Although the schools contained a small number of children who had committed minor acts of delinquency, the majority were placed in the schools due to the poverty of their parents. The first Industrial school was established in 1869 and, by 1900, there were 70 industrial schools certified with a capacity for nearly 8,000 children. By the 1950s, nearly 6,000 children were contained in Industrial Schools, but the numbers steadily declined from this period (see O'Sullivan and O'Donnell, 2007, for further details).
3. Both societies continue to operate and to provide accommodation for homeless young people.
4. CARE, the Campaign for the Care of Deprived Children, was founded in December 1970. Its key aims were: to promote the welfare of deprived children in Ireland and, for that purpose, to stress the importance of the physical and emotional environment of the developing child; to look for improvements in children's services and in legislation to remedy the deficiencies that have long been identified; and to emphasise that children should be maintained in their own family where at all possible and that services should be based on that principle. CARE was eventually dissolved in the mid-1990s.
5. The Simon Community was founded in London in 1963 by a former probation officer Anton Wallich-Clifford. The Dublin Simon Community was established in 1969.

6. The purpose of this Task Force was to 'make recommendations on the extension of services for deprived children and children at risk, to prepare a Bill up-dating the law in relation to children and to make recommendations on whatever administrative reforms it considered necessary in the child care services' (Task Force on Child Care Services, 1980: 1).
7. A number of children were provided with assistance in a flat in Frankfort Avenue before the opening of the hostel in Harcourt Street. In February 1983, the Hostel in Harcourt Street closed and the a new hostel opened at No. 2, Nelson Street, Dublin 7.
8. According to Helleiner (2003: 24),'In the late 1970s, the issue of begging children was linked by politicians to the issue of child homelessness – a linkage strengthened by discussion of the need for the state to take responsibility for the well-being of Traveller children whose parents were imprisoned or hospitalized'.
9. The National Campaign for the Homeless was established in March 1984 on the basis that 'only by working together could the many voluntary organisations be effective in making the statutory bodies face up to their responsibilities to the homeless. The National Campaign for the Homeless ceased operations in 1995.
10. Under Section 28 of the *Vagrancy Act, 1824*, it was an offence to be 'wandering abroad … not having any visible means of subsistence, and not giving a good account of himself or herself'. *The Housing Act, 1988* in effect decriminalized homelessness by deleting this section of the Vagrancy Act.
11. Focus Point was established in 1985 in order to provide a range of innovative services to homeless households and operates today under the rubric of Focus Ireland.
12. In January 2005, the Health Service Executive replaced a complex structure of ten regional Health Boards, the Eastern Regional Health Authority and a number of other different agencies and organisations.

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'It sort of widens the health word …'

Evaluation of a Health Promotion Intervention in the Youth Work Setting

Margaret Hodgins and Lynn Swinburne

Abstract

This study presents the results of an evaluation of the Health Quality Mark (HQM), a settings-based health promotion intervention in youth organisations currently facilitated by the National Youth Health Programme (NYHP). The study employed qualitative data, and focused on impacts as perceived by stakeholders and on process factors, including the strengths and weaknesses of the process operated by the NYHP in implementing the HQM, perceived benefits and/or disadvantages of participating in the HQM, and the appropriateness of the criteria in the award. The perceptions of health promoters, team members and members of management with regard to the impact of the HQM were very positive, including both individual behaviour changes and organisational level changes. The HQM was perceived to raise awareness of health, validate and extend good practice generally in youth organisations and in health promotion in particular, and to engender a sense of pride in the youth organisation. Positive factors identified by participants include the structure and award-based nature of the initiative, management buy-in, the embedded training element, the process it engenders and support from the NYHP. Implications are discussed in the context of settings-based work and the correspondence between youth work practice and health promotion practice.

Keywords

Health promotion; young people's health; youth work; settings-based approaches

Introduction: Youth Organisations as Settings for Health Promotion

The World Health Organisation defines a setting for health as a 'place or social context in which people engage in daily activities in which environmental, organisational and personal factors interact to effect health and well-being', and where people can create or solve problems relating to health. Settings are further defined as 'having physical boundaries, a range of people with defined roles, and an organisational structure' (WHO, 1998a: 19). The impetus for settings-based work in health promotion comes, in part, from the realisation that the health sector alone cannot respond to the health needs of a population, and that health promotion needs to be far reaching and practiced by those involved in a wide range of contexts In order to be successful.

The settings approach goes to the heart of health promotion, focusing on communities and organisations and in particular on how to develop environments that support health. It acknowledges the complexities of systems and requires that not only the integration of the different parts of the whole be explored (the behaviours and the people within the setting and the wider environment) but also the 'spaces in between' (Dooris, 2006).

It is important that we capitalise on the variety of settings available to carry out health promotion. Research has been conducted on a range of settings, such as hospitals and primary care settings (Johnson et al., 2006), schools (Lynagh et al., 1997; St. Ledger, 2001) universities (Tsouros et al., 1998) workplaces (Chu et al., 2000; Noblet, 2003) and prisons (Department of Health, 2002; WHO 2003; Møller et al., 2007). Youth organisations clearly qualify as appropriate settings for health promotion, according to the WHO definition, a fact that is recognised in the *National Health Promotion Strategy* (Department of Health and Children, 2000). The importance of the Strategy for young people and those who work with them was acknowledged in the *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003–2007* (Department of Education and Science, 2003: 20), which called for support and investment to be committed to 'relevant partnerships to promote the health and well-being of young people, volunteers and youth workers'. Health promotion forms a key strand in the work of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), which is recognised under the Youth Work Act 2001 as the representative body for youth work organisations and which hosts the National Youth Health Programme (see below).

There is a strong complementarity between the principles of youth work and those of health promotion. Youth work provides informal and non-formal educational programmes and activities for young people, helping them to develop their skills and aptitudes; it aims to provide a supportive environment in which young people have a say and are valued and listened to. Youth organisations develop local partnerships with the wider community; they develop internal health related policies, while influencing national policy. They also are well placed to advocate for quality youth health service provision for all young people. Health promotion is defined as the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health (WHO, 1986; 1998a: 1) and is underpinned by principles of empowerment, person-centredness, participation, equity and sustainability – all of which are very much in keeping with the vision and principles of youth work (Department of Education and Science, 2003: 13–17). Although often perceived to consist of specific isolated behaviour-change interventions, health promotion is essentially about working in an empowering, participative and culturally sensitive way with individuals, communities and populations to improve both physical and mental health. This complementarity between youth work and health promotion, and its potential benefits for young people, deserves greater recognition.

The Health Quality Mark

For over 15 years the National Youth Health Programme (NYHP) a partnership between the National Youth Council of Ireland, the Health Service Executive and the Youth Affairs Section of the Department of Education and Science, has provided health promotion training, services, advice and support to youth work organisations throughout Ireland. This paper focuses on a particular initiative, the 'Health Quality

Mark' (HQM) which takes a settings-based approach in youth work, aiming to create health promoting youth organisations. The HQM takes the form of an award conferred on organisations that satisfy agreed quality criteria. The criteria, eighteen in total, have been drawn up nationally and are based on best practice in health promotion: many have been adapted from the World Health Organisation criteria developed for the Health Promoting Schools Initiative[1]. The HQM, given its flexibility, attracts a variety of organisations to undertake the quality process. Organsiations who are predominantly volunteer based, regional youth services and those working with young people no longer in formal education have all undertaken the HQM.

The award is given at three levels; bronze, silver and gold, and youth organisations are re-assessed every three years as a quality control measure. Participation in the award includes setting up a health promotion team which undertakes the following tasks:

- strategically planning which criteria to work on and when;
- conducting an audit of current work to help decide where to begin working on the criteria;
- reviewing of work to meet the standards;
- ongoing linking with young people, management, staff and volunteers in relation to health promotion in the organisation;
- ongoing meetings between the team members to monitor progress of work completed on the criteria.

Each criterion also requires a specific response; for example, the youth health promotion plan requires a needs assessment with young people in the organsiation, and from this a strategy is developed to respond to the needs.

Similar health promotion award schemes exist elsewhere, but primarily in workplace settings, for example Scotland's Health at Work (SHAW) and the Working for Health Award In County Durham (County Durham Primary Care Trust, 2008). An application form and a portfolio providing evidence of fulfilment of the criteria are developed by participating youth organisations and submitted to assessors. The assessment body is comprised of representatives from the NYHP and regional health promotion personnel. An educational programme for personnel in the organisation is embedded into the initiative, as a number of the criteria are met through participation in the programme. One or more individuals in the organisation undertake a 'Specialist Certificate in Youth Health Promotion', run by the NYHP in collaboration with the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Evaluation in settings-based work

Although settings-based work generally has been described as having evolved and matured (Whitelaw et al., 2001) specific challenges remain, in particular the need for comprehensive evaluations to generate evidence of effectiveness (Dooris, 2006). Dooris argues that there are a number of specific challenges faced in evaluating settings-based work. For example, if, as is intended, health promotion is integrated into the everyday work of the organisations, it becomes difficult to identify and therefore to measure. Traditional positivist approaches to evaluation are not well suited to the evaluation of setting work, as the 'variables' cannot be separated out and manipulated as experimental design, for example, demands. Evaluating settings-based work requires

measuring patterns of change, interrelationships, interactions and synergies in the setting 'system' (ibid.), which may best be captured using qualitative data.

It is generally agreed that evaluation in health promotion should be comprehensive, including a balance of process, impact, and outcome measures (e.g. Naidoo and Wills, 2000; Dugdill and Springett, 2001; Toronto Health Communication Unit, 2005; WHO, 1998b). Impact evaluation addresses the immediate effects of an intervention while outcome evaluation confines itself to longer-term effects. Process evaluation explores the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention and addresses critical aspects of programme implementation. Of particular interest is an exploration of the processes underlying the relationship between the intervention and its effects (Barry et al., 2006). This paper presents the results of an evaluation of the Health Quality Mark, which, employing qualitative data, focused on impacts as perceived by stakeholders and on process factors, including the strengths and weaknesses of the process operated by the NYHP in implementing the HQM, perceived benefits and/or disadvantages of participating in the HQM, and the appropriateness of the criteria in the award.

Methods

In order to evaluate the intervention it was deemed necessary to obtain feedback from all stakeholders who were involved. With the assistance of the NYHP[2], all youth organisations that had completed the HQM either fully (all three levels) or partially (going forward for consideration for either bronze, silver or gold) were identified. Groups of stakeholders were agreed as follows:

- Young people in attendance at the youth organisation
- The health promoter(s) and members of the team (i.e. persons in the organisation with a designated health promotion role)
- Members of management
- Strategic personnel (senior health promotion personnel within the Health Service Executive at regional and national level) involved in the set up and delivery of the HQ Mark

Young people were interviewed in a focus group setting in one organisation (timing of data collection in the summer made it difficult to reach groups of young people in most youth organisations). Nine young people took part in the focus group. For all other groups semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted, over a three month data collection period. The interview protocol was devised based on programme objectives and piloted prior to data collection.

Sixteen youth organisations had been awarded the HQM on one or more occasions. Eleven of these organisations participated. Nine organisations were in the process of applying for and being assessed for the HQM for the first time (i.e. were being considered for the bronze level award). Eight of these organisations took part. In each participating organisation, researchers requested interviews with all available health promotion staff and a member of management team. Thirty seven individuals were available for interview across all organisations. HSE health promotion managers and individuals who had a strategic input into the HQ Mark and its future development, as recognised by the NYHP, were also targeted for interview. Nine such individuals were identified and eight were available for interview.

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The basis of the process of data analysis in this study follows a general template analysis style (Miller and Crabtree, 1992), involving the generation of themes, patterns and interrelationships in an interpretive process.

Results

The first level of analysis arranged and described the data based on interview headings. Second level analysis sought to identify general themes within the data and as such was driven by the data itself rather than the interview framework. A range of interacting impacts emerged in the analysis. Regarding process, factors critical to the success of the HQM in youth organisations were discussed, and specific difficulties inherent in the process were also highlighted.

Impacts

The perceptions of health promoters, team members and members of management with regard to impact was overwhelmingly positive. The absence of negative impacts in any of the interviews was striking. Positive impacts included individual behavioural changes and organisational level changes. Those interviewed commented in more depth and to a much greater extent on the way in which the HQM impacted on the whole organisation, and the place of health within it. The HQM was perceived to raise awareness of health, validate and extend good practice generally in youth organisations and in health promotion in particular, and to engender a sense of pride, which was motivating for young people and staff. The HQM also led to recognition and 'kudos' in the wider community, with possible positive outcomes for funding.

The place of health in the youth organisation

It was evident from the data that the HQM had the effect of increasing a general awareness of health throughout the youth organisation. This was identified in all groups interviewed and seen as broadening the concept of health and allowing staff to embrace a holistic concept of health. Health was seen to have expanded to include mental health and well-being;

> *Well the younger people just got a wider programme … it sort of widened the health word … more holistic … like stress for kids and relaxation and all that … which wouldn't have been there before like, getting kids to talk about their feelings and all that stuff which would be a fairly new thing.* (HP6)[3]

> *I think that was another area that's important about the quality mark that it's a holistic approach its not just about being healthy and encouraging the kids not to play play station five days a week but that it encourages all aspects of their lives particularly around stress and areas that young people often aren't really spoken to about or helped with I suppose.* (gfTM2)

> *It will open up their eyes to the whole the bigger scheme of things about health.* (gfTM5)

In the focus group, it is interesting to note that young people also mentioned outcomes such as 'meeting new people' and getting to 'go places', implying a broad understanding of health. Further, health was seen to have become more integral to the work of the organisation. One manager described it as ' kind of nearly knitted into the project at this stage, for the young people in the project as well' (M3).

It was widely perceived that the HQM has the effect of validating and documenting health promotion activities already taking place within youth organisations. In this way it gives health and well-being issues a 'home' and a structure, and goes beyond other health promotion initiatives. It can blend various strands of bottom-up and top-down work, binding together work undertaken in response to particular local needs and work undertaken in response to national youth work priorities such as those set out In the Youth Work Act or the *National Youth Work Development Plan* (Department of Education and Science, 2003).

The facilitation of good practice

The HQM was seen to provide a framework for improvement in youth work practice and giving youth organisations an opportunity to upgrade their standards. As this team member commented:

> *It was important for the organisation to be providing the best quality service to young people and to the families that we work with, just from looking at specific criteria for the Q mark it was definitely a way of structuring that, ensuring that we had something to work off.* (gfTM4)

Improvement of practice included involving staff in policy development, increased opportunities for staff training, better team working, and improving working relationships between management and staff:

> *The HQ mark actually gave us an opportunity for people to come together and work together on something common.* (M1)

Improved team working was not only seen as an impact of the intervention but as part of the process:

> *There's also team building and the kind of broader development of a team approach and cohesion. So it brings people together in a way that they might not if they didn't have the opportunity of working through the Health Quality Mark … The Health Quality Mark builds the team but the team builds the Health Quality Mark.* (SP7)

The HQM gave organisations the opportunity not only to validate ongoing work but to identify was missing and act on this. All of this contributed to the raising of standards, and provided evidence to management of the quality of work undertaken. Organisations referred to their centre being healthier and better places to work in.

> *I thought it was a very good idea, I mean it upgraded the centre definitely … we got to look at areas we would never have looked at before.* (HP1)

> *Keeping the standards up, getting the staff involved and also maintaining a good service, providing a good service to the young people and you know also a way of making management aware of what we do here as well.* (TM3)

Participation and communication

Health promoters, team members and strategic personnel each identified increased participation with young people following involvement in the HQM. Young people were described as being more involved in planning and more included. The initiative helped create a young people's forum, for example, to give young people a voice and a greater sense of ownership of health issues.

> *We had increased consultation with trainees around different things even to do with strategic planning and programme development in the centre, there was a lot more consultation with trainees …* (HP5)

The HQM also was seen to be more inclusive of staff, involving them in decision making and organisational changes. It was seen to encourage youth organisations to go beyond the needs of service users and include staff needs, for example for training and support, as part of good practice.

> *The best part of that it involved all the staff team there was no one person responsible for achieving the quality mark it was a team effort and the consultation process and everything I think that was what brought everybody into it.* (HP3)

The HQM had a positive effect on communication. Interviewees referred to increased opportunities for networking within the youth sector and to increased interaction with the NYHP.

Pride and external recognition

Finally, in relation to impacts, all stakeholders considered the achievement of the award to lead to a number of benefits both internally and in the wider community and the youth sector. Securing the award brings pride to the organisation and a sense of achievement, felt by both young people and staff. It led to a renewed focus on health promotion and acted as a morale-booster.

> *Getting the awards was something to be proud of and the trainees were proud of, that were involved at the time so overall it was excellent.* (TM4)

It was thought to raise awareness of the organisation and the work it does within the community; *'it betters it as a place, like'*, something which is sometimes particularly valuable when working with marginalized groups.

> *Sometimes there would be plenty of negative things associated with being a training centre … where as the fact that this was an achievement to be proud of and positive publicity for us was good.* (HP5)

> *And the other thing too was the promotional value was excellent in terms of when you get the gold award, we were presented with it by two ministers then it was nice for the centre to be awarded that you know.* (M4)

One specific perceived advantage of external recognition is the possibility of increasing opportunities for securing funding, vitally important for voluntary organisations.

Cutting across these impacts were perceived positives in respect of young people. The HQM was seen to be of benefit to young people in a number of ways, ranging from

specific behaviour changes, to less tangible but no less important impacts such as increased ownership and inclusion.

> *We've to do P.E every Wednesday.*
>
> *Use the gym across the road.*
>
> *We do health related fitness class.* (FG)

> *In the short period that I'm doing it is it's benefiting them … they're eating healthier and they are you know being more aware of their health and what they put into their bodies and that and about the surroundings of like their own health at home as well as in here so like for us to for what we have achieved at the moment with this its really good and for them to bring it outside and I think it will it will benefit their lives in the future definitely.* (gfHP5)

> *… for them as well a sense of achievement … when we got the award we would have brought a group with us and … it was something for them to be proud of for young people who may not get the opportunity to succeed in other things like mainstream education … I think its good for even promoting their own self-esteem and their sense that this is a valued valuable value centered organisation that they're part of here would be very positive as well.* (HP5)

> *We will also hopefully have raised their awareness and increased their knowledge sort of around health issues you know and I hope the changes that we make in terms of the staff, the management, the building, you know policy all like that that make them take more ownership and feel more secure and more valued and more you know as well more that we'd be becoming a more young peoples service centered service.* (M1)

Critical Success Factors

In relation to process aspects of the evaluation, interview data also revealed a number of factors which seemed to contribute to the success of the HQM as a health promotion initiative. These included the structure and award-based nature of the initiative, management buy-in, the embedded training element, the process it engenders and support from the NYHP.

Health promoters, managers and strategic personnel, all recognised that the formal recognition inherent in receiving the award acted as an important incentive for organisations, providing a challenge, a goal that could be reached, and vehicle for motivating staff. Having a challenge to rise to is important, as one interviewee commented

> *A challenge for the centre rather than something that's easily attainable. I think it devalues it if … anybody can get it willy nilly.* (HP5)

The criteria create a structure which was seen to be motivating, as fulfilling each criterion and reaching each level of the award provides a boost to move on up to higher levels, although it was noted that that the health promotion team are still part of that structure, and need to be there to drive it along. This interaction between the

actual structure of the HQM and the leadership qualities of the health promotion worker was critical:

> *I think the leadership that they're able to get everybody onboard to support them. ….. Although the criteria is great for kind of forcing them to achieve the criteria as well in order to get some award from it. So it's a two way track.* (SP8)

All four stakeholder groups identified management buy-in as critical to the success of the initiative. Management buy-in included management having a strong link with the health promotion team or person, and being 'fully committed'. It has to go beyond 'signing a piece of paper' or generally approving of the goal of helping young people to be healthier. It requires support also for staff health initiatives, and an appreciation that all have to be included to create a health promoting youth organisation.

> *… there would have been great buy in for looking after trainees and promoting their health but as I said that my issue is around staff and the support or lack of that I got around promoting staff health … I just don't think feel that management understood that that was part of the deal in order to get the quality mark that you equally have to be looking out for staff welfare and staff health.* (HP5)

The process can turn management around but this was acknowledged to be difficult and less than ideal.

> *… now I have seen it where it has been driven from the bottom up that's a much more difficult process and it shouldn't have to happen like that. But I have actually seen where people have gone back and after a period of time they've actually converted management but it is much easier if top management are fully behind it and fully committed.* (SP5)

The training that is built into the initiative in particular the Specialist Certificate in Youth Health Promotion (SCYHP) facilitated the success of the initiative, by facilitating networking with others in the process. The SCYHP was described as 'absolutely vital' to the securing of the HQM, playing a 'key role' and bring focus and structure to the initiative.

> *… sometimes you go to training and its so lack lustre and repetitive, you don't feel challenged and its not very rewarding to have achieved it … whereas I found this … challenging enough to feel like a real piece of training and the certificate didn't feel like a token thing … felt like something that I had earned.* (gfHP3)

The supportive role of the NYHP in general and in facilitating the training was also noted, as was the way in which the NYHP support included assisting with resources and difficulties: *'… when I was stuck on certain criteria or I was kind of thinking am I going down the wrong road here or am I on key, they were very helpful'* (HP1).

The nature of the initiative – which requires regular team meetings, reviews of progress, and staff support to meet the different criteria – was seen to be a process in and of itself that was critical to the success of the HQM.

> *An award is, it's nice to have stuff acknowledged but really it's the process is the valuable thing.* (M2)

Difficulties encountered

Despite the obvious success of the programme, interviewees did acknowledge some difficulties in the initiative, and two in particular. The first of these related to operational aspects of the initiative and the second to the underpinning principles. In relation to the operation of the HQM, all stakeholders referred to the amount of time required to complete paperwork for a portfolio of evidence for each of 18 criteria. This posed difficulties in the context of juggling commitments to face-to-face youth work and the work of the HQM. Some queried the need for the process to be so time consuming, while other acknowledged its necessity in the light of the achievement.

> *A lot of work, pressure and stress. And what I would call unnecessary extra work because its work that we done anyway so it was having to prove that we'd done the work and I would query if the process needs to be so time consuming.* (M5)

> *… you need to put in the time for planning … and to develop the areas of health related work … just have to say look something's got to give if we're to put all our energies into this and maybe it is a matter of kind of cutting back on the youth work despite the directive do you know what I mean and I think it is justifiable.* (gfHP2)

The issue of tension between the ideological underpinnings of health promotion – its commitment to principles such as empowerment, participation and inclusion – and the highly structured nature of the HQM initiative was a second difficulty emerging in the course of the interviews. For example there was a concern within the strategic personnel group that the real ethos of a health promoting organisation was compromised by the enforced structure of the criteria. It was pointed out that the criteria were expert-led, rather than emerging from the service-users and the staff in a way that was responsive to their own situation.

> *That they get so ingrained in ticking those six boxes to get their bronze that they don't really see the full picture … You can't pigeon-hole health promotion I suppose and that's what this tries to do.* (SP1)

In a similar vein, one manager made it clear that his primary concern was with the young people and their behaviour rather than the rather prescriptive structure of the HQM initiative:

> *… achieving it became kind of secondary to … I'd turn around and say that I've got some kid In the centre who doesn't smoke rather than getting another mark you know.* (M4)

Discussion

The settings approach involves more than just delivering health education in a convenient setting. Health promotion interventions in organisations not only have to address change in individuals but aim to include re-shaping environments and bringing about sustainable change. The results of this evaluative study of a settings-based intervention confirm the importance of the youth organisation as a setting for health promotion work, and the success of the Health Quality Mark (HQM) as a settings-based intervention.

The HQM was received very positively by all stakeholders and perceived to lead to a range of beneficial impacts. The HQM was believed to raise awareness of health, validate and extend good practice, and to engender a sense of pride and achievement, which was motivating for young people and staff. The HQM also led to recognition in the wider community, with possible positive outcomes for funding. Aspects of the intervention which were perceived to contribute to its success included the structure and award-based nature of the initiative, management buy-in, the embedded training element, the actual process the initiative engenders and support from the National Youth Council of Ireland/National Youth Health Programme. Some difficulties with implementation were encountered, principally around the time consuming nature of the portfolio requirement.

Settings-based work provides a challenge to evaluators (Green et al., 2001; Dooris, 2006). In its true form, a settings approach aims to 'stay with the big picture' (St Leger, 1997: 101) creating conditions and supportive environments for health gain by improving policies and practices. It is expected to have an 'added-value' to specific project-based work, to be integrative, and to focus not only on the different parts of the whole, but on the 'spaces in-between' (Dooris, 2006, citing Baric and Baric, 1995). However, this can paradoxically make evaluation difficult, and explains why setting work is 'legitimized' more through an act of faith than through rigorous research and evaluation studies' (St Leger, 1997: 101).

While traditional experimental methods with control or comparison groups are clearly inappropriate to capture this bigger picture, even the use of survey methodologies tends to force evaluators into measuring settings-based work in terms of tangible, countable outputs, such as check lists of topics addressed, or changes in usage of posters and other communication methods as seen, for example, in the evaluation of SHAW (Graveling et al. 2002). The results here however reveal that the initiative was a success in terms of the whole organisation and the way in which health promotion became embedded in the organisation. Health was described as being 'kind of knitted in', and 'absorbed' into the work of the staff. The HQM 'focused us on the whole organisation, not just those in receipt of the service', thereby providing evidence of the 'spaces in-between aspect of the settings approach.

Dooris argues that settings-based approaches 'allow the language of "health" to recede … . "health promotion" as an entity becomes more remote' (Dooris, 2006: 61). However, this study suggests the opposite. The HQM initiative made health more visible and acted as a vehicle or framework for good practice. In this way health promotion took centre stage, facilitating a wider, more holistic interpretation of health and providing a 'renewed focus' for the work of the youth organisation. Whether this is unique to this particular initiative, or to the youth organisation setting, requires further exploration.

The concerns regarding the structured nature of the initiative being at odds with the ethos of health promotion are of interest since they were raised principally by those people who are external to work on the ground in youth organisations. It is the case that health promotion advocates that health should not be imposed on people by 'experts', yet the health promoters and team members spoke repeatedly of how the initiative led to greater participation with young people, and increased teamwork within the organisation. Participation is widely agreed to be an underpinning principle

of health promotion (WHO, 1998), and Is critical to empowerment, which is a primary criterion for determining whether a particular initiative should be considered health promoting (Rootman et al., 2001). The WHO definition of health promotion refers most particularly to process[4], identified in this study as critical to the success of the initiative. Another underpinning principle, holism in health, was also reported as impact of the HQM, leading us to conclude that despite reservations, the initiative did in fact reflect the ethos of health promotion well.

Whether the structure of the HQM would transfer easily into other settings is unclear, given the paucity of research both in Ireland and at an international level evaluating settings-based health promotion initiatives. However it is argued here that the success of the initiative may be due to the ideological consistency between the principles of youth work and health promotion. In both disciplines, the principles of empowerment, active partnership between all parties and stakeholders are paramount. Youth work is expected to involve young people on a voluntary basis and to engage them through issues and themes of interest and concern to them (Department of Education and Science, 2003; Spence and Devanney, 2007; Young, 2006); while health promotion approaches its work from the point of view that health cannot be imposed on people but has to be won in partnership them (Abel-Smith, 1994). Both health promotion and youth work advocate active learning and collaborative decision-making, planning, organising and evaluation, as well as the importance of building on existing opportunities – 'starting where people are at'. The flexibility of the HQM initiative may contribute to its success. It is recognised that different youth groups and organisations in Ireland are in different circumstances or at different stages of development and the availability of the award at three levels provides a staged approach to developing health promotion structures.

However, it must be acknowledged that despite the consistency in approach between youth work and health promotion, it was unfortunate that the yoices of young people themselves were not heard with more force within this evaluation. As already noted, the timing of data collection (summer) made it difficult to access many of the groups that had participated in the initiative. Further research should explore in greater depth the experiences and perceptions of young people in respect of the HQM and their engagement with it.

Finally, the findings of the study may provide reassurance for Irish youth work practitioners regarding the advent of the 'Quality Standards Framework' (QSF) for youth work. A quality-based structure can be integrated into youth work and provide real opportunities for the enhancement of good practice, and a motivating impetus for staff. In the words of one health promoter in the evaluation of the HQM: 'Once we have it, we're keeping it !'.

Notes

1. WHO's Global School Health Initiative aims to mobilise and strengthen health promotion and education activities at the local, national, regional and global levels, in order to improve the health of students, school personnel, families and other members of the community through schools.
2. One of the authors (Margaret Hodgins) conducted the independent evaluation on which this paper is based; the other (Lynn Swinburne), as a staff member of the NYHP, supported and facilitated the evaluation but was not directly involved in conducting it. See the biographical notes.
3. Key to attributions: FG = focus group; HP = Health Promoter; M= Manager; TM = Team member; SP = strategic personnel; prefix gf = organisation going forward for award.
4. 'Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health' (WHO, 1998a).

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Research Digest

Coming of Age in the 21st Century: The New and Longer Road to Adulthood

Liz Kerrins

In the Children's Research Centre at Trinity College Dublin, the Annual Lecture 2007 was delivered on November 14th by US Psychologist Professor Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, Clark University, Massachusetts. The subject was Professor Arnett's theory of emerging adulthood. Dr. Maureen Gaffney, Chair of the National Economic and Social Forum, responded to Professor Arnett's lecture. An invited roundtable was convened following the lecture to discuss the policy implications of emerging adulthood for young people's career and work patterns.

This Research Digest[1] summarises messages from both events.

Key Messages

- Professor Arnett (2004; 2007) suggests that 'emerging adulthood' is a distinct developmental period in the life course for young people in industrialised countries, lasting from age eighteen to the mid or late twenties.
- In this period of instability and self-focus, the transition to adulthood is postponed and identity and possible life directions are explored. In previous theories of development adolescence was positioned as the period of independence and identity formation and people used their twenties to make the transition into adult roles and responsibilities.
- The advent of emerging adulthood is the result of social change - delayed marriage and parenthood and increasing numbers of young people entering higher education and staying for longer.
- It is a phenomenon of affluence, and cultural and economic factors mean that young people in low-income families, lone parents, young homeless people and those leaving care may not be able to benefit from the opportunity to postpone adult roles and responsibilities.

Key Policy Implications

- A tension exists between education and employment systems and norms, formed in an era when people were considered adults in their early twenties, and the attitudes and expectations of emerging adults.
- The design and delivery of higher education in Ireland may require re-evaluation. It seems incongruous, and may be a cause of poor retention rates, that we ask young people to make fixed education and employment choices when they are entering emerging adulthood, and then penalise them when they change course.

- Emerging adults are not looking for a job or career but an endless series of opportunities. Policy remains overly focused on developing skills and competencies and has given insufficient thought to the importance of new attitudes to work and new patterns of behaviour.
- Non-traditional higher level students (mature and access students) become non-traditional graduates when seeking employment. They come to the workforce with responsibilities related to their background, and tend to not have the same levels of confidence when job seeking as traditional students. The challenge is to develop strategies to increase the employability of the non-traditional graduate. National policy needs to increase support for childcare and undertaking post-graduate qualifications.

Emerging adulthood – a distinct developmental period

- Professor Arnett (2004; 2007) suggests 'emerging adulthood' as a distinct developmental period in the life course for many young people in industrialised countries, lasting from age eighteen to the mid or even late twenties.
- In human development theory, the development of independence and identity – gaining independence from family and figuring out who you are and what you could do with your life – has been considered the task of adolescence. By age 21, young people were believed to have 'come of age', using their twenties to make the transition into adult roles and responsibilities: moving from education into employment, from the family to their own home, from financial dependence to independence, and marriage and parenthood.
- But with recent social changes – delayed marriage and parenthood and increasing numbers of young people entering higher education and staying for longer – people now use their late teens and twenties to explore possible life directions and identities and postpone the transition to adulthood, with parents often continuing to financially support their adult children during this period of exploration. This is considered by Arnett to be the period of emerging adulthood.

> *I think a person of my age should not yet be considered an adult as I feel that life is a huge learning curve and I don't know the half of it. I also feel that I am not looked upon by elders as an adult yet. But at the same time I am expected to have huge responsibilities. Being an adult means that your wild days are over and you have been fitted with a sensible head, ready for settling down for what's ahead. In my opinion there are many years ahead to be an adult and you have to explore what suits you best in order to be the person you want to eventually be, as you will be stuck like that forever!*[2]
>
> 23 year old female, working full-time, Ireland

- In emerging adulthood young people wonder which life partners and work possibilities will satisfy them in the long-term and they question the worldviews they have learned in adolescence and childhood. These explorations are not just about preparation for adult roles, but exploration for its own sake before taking on enduring adult roles and responsibilities (Arnett, 2000).
- As yet, emerging adulthood as a life period is little studied and understood, despite its economic and social ramifications. Scholars have not clearly developed

ways of conceptualising development in the late teens and twenties and so may not think about young people of these ages as a focus for developmental research (Arnett, 2000).

Characteristics of emerging adulthood

- Emerging Adulthood is characterised by transitions. It is an age of instability, of feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood, of possibilities, and it is a self-focused age (Arnett, 2004; 2007).
- In Arnett's research in the US and Denmark (2004; 2007), young people in their late teens and early to mid twenties themselves disagreed that they had reached adulthood. They saw themselves as gradually making their way towards adulthood.

> *No I don't think I'm an adult, and no I wouldn't call myself an adult yet. In my opinion an adult is a person who works and fends for themselves and is no longer dependent on their parents. An adult has more responsibilities than a student like myself, such as taxes, work and in some cases children and a mortgage.*
>
> 19 year old male, third level student, Ireland

- Young people take on semi-autonomy; they take some of the responsibilities of independent living but have high residential mobility, often moving in and out of their parents' home in their twenties. They pursue education in a non-linear way (Arnett, 2004).
- They have high levels of optimism and confidence about finding the career and future that best suits them, and value work–life balance often saying that they do not want to devote their lives to their jobs in the way that they perceive their parents have.
- It is not the demographic transitions – finishing education, marriage, parenthood, career – that emerging adults consider important criteria for attaining adulthood, but qualities of character that indicate self-sufficiency: accepting responsibility for one's self; making independent decisions; and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2000; 2007).

> *I would consider that I was an adult at 18. I've been financially independent since I moved out of home at 17, however I think that financial independence is only part of being an adult. I think that once you are making your own decisions and accepting responsibility for the consequences of these decisions, then you are an adult … I don't think you need to have children or a mortgage to be an adult, but you do have to accept responsibility for yourself, your beliefs, your decisions and any consequences arising from these.*
>
> 24 year old Irish female, working full time

Emerging Adulthood in Ireland

- Although the term 'emerging adulthood' is not currently used outside academia, the phenomenon is certainly evident and recognised in Ireland (Greene and Mayock, 2007).
- As more young people enter third level education, undertake post-graduate studies and postpone marriage and other commitments, parents are faced with

supporting their children far beyond the age of eighteen. The majority of university students in Ireland still live at home, in contrast with the UK and the US (Flynn, 2007).

- Even when working, some young people in their twenties continue to live with their parents (Greene and Mayock, 2007), moving in and out of the family home, with some parents supporting their adult children financially. Twenty per cent of first-time house buyers borrowing from one of Ireland's largest lending institutions relied on a gift from their parents to help with buying, with an average gift size of €15,000 (Duffy and Quail, 2005).
- The Graduate Careers Survey 2008 (Faller, 2007) with final year students (n=2,681) in the Irish universities tells us that optimism is also a feature of Irish graduates. On average, graduates expect starting salaries of about €27,000, with 20% expecting to earn €100,000 per year by age 30. Marriage and children are not major priorities, with 40% expecting to be married and 30% expecting to have children by age 30. A 'job for life' was not their aim – almost a quarter expect to have worked for three or more organisations over the next decade.
- Emerging Adulthood is a phenomenon of affluence, and cultural and socio-economic factors can structure and limit exploration and result in quicker transitions to adulthood. Children growing up in poverty are more likely to leave school early to enter the world of work (Greene and Mayock, 2007), young lone parents have the responsibility of parenthood and being the family 'breadwinner', while young people leaving care at age 18 are considered adults and make a rapid transition to adulthood and self-sufficiency. Unstable and impoverished childhoods can lead to youth homelessness, resulting in transitions to adult responsibilities as young as 14 years (Mayock and O' Sullivan, 2007).

> *I only see myself as an adult when the bills need paying and even then I feel out of my depth. I've had to be a 'grown up' for a long time and I wonder when I will feel like an adult and what it feels like. I don't feel like I belong, I grew up in a home and I still feel like a young person in care and that I am not worthy of adulthood, I've yet to prove myself. Being an adult means being in your own home with a steady job and a steady mind. Life no longer scares you, I'd imagine. It's hard work being an adult, you haven't the security of family or being young to fall back on. You are responsible only for yourself.*
>
> 23 year old female, in training, Ireland

Policy consequences of emerging adulthood: The implications for educationalists and employers

- The policy seminar debated the implications of emerging adulthood for education and employment policy, exploring such questions as: Has our educational system caught up with the changes in attitudes and expectations in emerging adulthood? What are the implications of emerging adulthood for employers and policy when work becomes about self-fulfillment and identity exploration? Do 'non-traditional' students in higher education not buffered by well-off parents have the opportunity to accumulate qualifications and new life experiences?

- These questions have direct relevance to the implementation of Ireland's *National Development Plan 2007–2013, Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006–2013 and Tomorrow's Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy (2007)*, and for national policy and practice in third level educational institutions in their careers advisory provision and access programmes.
- Overall, it seems that there is a tension between education and employment systems and norms, formed in an era when people were considered to have reached adulthood by the late teens and early twenties and, it was assumed, understood what they wanted from life, and the attitudes and expectations of emerging adults.

Flexibility on higher education decisions in emerging adulthood

- Given the features of the emerging adulthood life period that they are about to enter it seems incongruous that we ask young people to make fixed choices in secondary school about their educational and employment path. The choices they make at 18 years of age can be immutable in the Irish higher education system. We penalise young people when they change course in third level rather than allow them to explore different options to see if they fit with their emerging identities. The result can be poor retention rates.
- The challenge for educational policymakers in recognising emerging adulthood as a new period in the life course is in reconsidering how higher level education in Ireland is designed and delivered in order to take account of this new life course. It may be that more flexibility and choice could reverse the national trend in retention rates.

Emerging adulthood entering employment

- In Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' economy, emerging adults expect more from their jobs than their parent's generation. They are not looking for a job or career 'for life' but an endless series of opportunities (Gannon, 2007). They seek self-fulfillment and opportunities for growth, a job that fits with their sense of self-identify and self-worth, and they spend their twenties searching for that role. Understanding and negotiating this change is a challenge for employers in Ireland.
- In this period of exploration and self-focus some young people are taking 'time-out' after third-level education and so are not available for work. In Ireland's booming economy, just over half (54%) of 2005 graduates (n=23,496) entered employment, with 33% in further study/training, 5% in employment overseas, 3% seeking employment and 5% unavailable for work/study (HEA, 2006). Similarly Trinity College's Careers Advisory Service (2006) annual survey of recent graduates found that 4.5% were taking time out. We do not know the longer-term outcomes for graduates as we require longitudinal research on the issue.
- Overall, Irish skills policy remains overly focused on developing skills and competencies and has given insufficient thought to the importance of new attitudes to work and new patterns of behaviour (Gannon, 2007). Policymaking is hampered by the incomplete understanding of the influences on work attitudes and behaviour.

Non-traditional students become non-traditional graduates

- A different situation pertains for non-traditional students not buffered by well-off parents. While Trinity's Access Programmes are successful, challenges remain when the non-traditional student becomes a non-traditional graduate (Carroll, 2007).
- The non-traditional student comes to college with economic and family responsibilities related to their backgrounds, and these responsibilities remain when they enter the workforce. Given their backgrounds, they also tend to have different expectations of the education-employment relationship than the 'traditional' student, with more of an emphasis on getting a 'good job' that is better than the job their parents had.
- The increasing participation rate amongst the general population is making a degree a threshold qualification for job seeking. Non-traditional students are then disadvantaged in job seeking as, research indicates, they often lack the confidence of the traditional student to proceed in the labour market.
- The challenge remains to develop workable strategies to increase the employability of the non-traditional graduate. National policy has a role in supporting the non-traditional student and increasing their employability by offering increased support with childcare and with undertaking post-graduate qualifications.

Notes

1. This research digest is based on the Children's Research Centre's *Research Briefing* Number 3, May 2008 (ISSN: 1649–8887). The views expressed are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Professor Arnett or any other lecture participants.
2. All quotations are from interviews conducted by Síle Murphy, Children's Research Centre, with Irish people aged from 18 years to late twenties in response to the questions: Are you an adult? What is it like to be an adult and what does it mean? The quotations were displayed at Professor Arnett's lecture.

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Biographical Note

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Children's Research Centre

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Notes on Practice

Going Global!

Good Practice Guidelines for Development Education in Youth Work

Niamh McCrea and Johnny Sheehan

Introduction

The National Youth Development Education Programme was set up in 2004 as a partnership between the National Youth Council of Ireland and Development Cooperation Ireland. The programme was established to implement the *Development Education Strategy for the Voluntary Youth Sector 2004–2007* (NYCI/Irish Aid, 2004). The strategic plan aims to incorporate quality development education into the programmes of youth organisations. One of its primary objectives is to define and promote good practice in development education in youth work. The development of a set of practical guidelines for youth workers was identified as a key step towards achieving this.

The following guidelines[1] are intended to provide youth workers with a set of steps to delivering quality development education programmes. Each section includes case studies which share the experiences and insights of youth workers and young people involved in development education in Ireland and the United Kingdom. These case studies highlight the value of development education to young people in Ireland and globally. They also show why youth work settings are ideal for doing development education and how development education can complement and enhance existing youth work practice. *Going Global!* also gives suggestions on how to make development education a core part of youth organisations' ongoing work.

A note on language and terminology

The term 'development education' is used consistently throughout these guidelines. Development education in youth work is sometimes referred to as 'global youth work'.

Readers may be familiar with the terms 'Third World' or 'the South' to describe the economically poor countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Unless another word is used in a direct quote, these guidelines use 'Majority World'. This term reflects the fact that the people of these countries represent two-thirds of the world's population but do not have an equal share of the world's resources.

'Youth workers' is used to describe youth leaders, youth workers and peer educators working in the non-formal youth sector in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

'Minority group' is a group of people whose ethnicity or identity is different to that of the majority of people in a State, for example Travellers or people with disabilities.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of goals developed by the United Nations in 2000 which aim to combat hunger and poverty, improve access to education and healthcare and protect the environment by 2015.

What is Development Education in Youth Work?

Development education in youth work is about:

- Global development
- Starting from young people's experiences
- Human rights
- Global citizenship
- Listening to young people
- Exploring the connections between young people in Ireland and the Majority World
- Understanding the causes and consequences of global poverty and inequality
- Learning from and sharing with people in the Majority World
- Understanding how our actions affect people in the Majority World
- Justice rather than charity
- Learning through participation and action
- Challenging stereotypes and prejudice
- Having fun
- Learning how countries depend on each other
- Solidarity with people who are poor, marginalised or discriminated against
- Concern for the environment
- Celebrating the diversity of people in our world
- Enabling young people to imagine a better world
- Taking action for a more just world

What is the value of development education to young people?

Development education places young people at the heart of the learning process. It starts with their experiences, perspectives and ideas and provides them with an opportunity to explore and take action on issues which are important to them.

Development education contributes to young people's personal development and increases confidence in their own identity.

'New Young Europeans' was a project in which six young people from Cork and eleven young immigrants came together to explore their hopes and dreams for the future. Each young person was photographed and recorded an interview. This took place in a setting of their choice that has a special meaning for them. One of the participants was a 16 year old called Shane. Shane was very intelligent but given to bouts of anger and self-harm and had been expelled from two schools. The 'New Young Europeans' project began a process of transformation for him. He chose to be photographed on the River Lee in the curragh that he had built himself. The photographs expressed a vulnerability quite out of keeping with his hard-man image.

For six months the young people met almost weekly to plan the civic launch of the project. These meetings provided a space for Shane and other members of the group to further explore and share their feelings about their prospects and hopes for the future. The group took total responsibility for every aspect of the launch. They planned the format, delivered speeches and performed dramas and a rap which they had written themselves. The launch was stunning. The speeches by the two young Angolans were particularly moving. Shane and everyone in the audience responded to their powerful presentation of their situation and to their call for justice and support. Shane

concluded the proceedings by acknowledging and taking ownership of his own problems and negative behaviour and by thanking those who were helping him. Shane has just completed his Leaving Certificate and is determined to go to University College Cork to become a youth worker so he can help others like him.

Development education enables young people to look outside their own personal experiences and sheds new light on issues affecting them.

'What Matters to Me' used a simple arts based exercise to help young people in a detached youth work setting in rural England to explore their values and attitudes, to reflect on their own place in the world and to develop empathy with people with different lifestyles and cultures. The young people involved in this project were from an area of socio-economic disadvantage and had a negative reputation within the community. They were shown photographs that had been taken by young people in Peru. Having discussed these, they were then given disposable cameras and invited to take photos of five things that were important to them. The young people were surprised and pleased to be trusted with the cameras. After two weeks, youth leaders met up with the young people again to discuss what they had produced. The photos were then compared with photos which had been taken by the group in Peru. Discussion ranged from *'He's very good looking, do you think he has a girlfriend?'* to the similarities and differences between the two countries. One youth worker highlighted the value of using the Peru photos: *'One unemployed young man who had been involved in crime was able to explore some of the more sensitive issues that were important to him after looking at the Peruvian pictures. He took pictures of his boiler at home to represent warmth because it made him feel good and safe. [He was] a lot more open and showed his vulnerability. Seeing the Peru pictures stretched that out of him'.*

Source: White, 2002

Development education is an empowering tool for working with young people from marginalised minority groups.

Development education promotes respect for other young people's rights, values and cultures.

A group of young people spent a day engaged in activities exploring the lives of nomadic people throughout the world. The way of life of nomadic peoples such as the Kazakhs, Masai, Roma and Tuaregs were examined through art, cooking, mapping games and other fun activities. During the discussions, the young people were asked about Ireland's own nomadic people. Stereotypes about Travellers were aired. One of the participants in this group was himself a Traveller. Through his participation in the session, he came to

understand that his traditional way of life was mirrored and respected in other parts of the world. As a result of this process, he gained the confidence to challenge the other young people's negative attitudes towards Irish Travellers. One of the significant features of the day was that rather than exploring a local issue *first*, the young people looked at the experiences of nomadic tribes at a global level. This helped young people to shed new light on the local situation of Irish Travellers, to validate the experiences of one young Traveller and to increase their knowledge and respect for cultural diversity.

Development education encourages young people to look at issues in a different way and helps them to understand complex issues.

'You can explain quite complicated concepts in ways that are simple but not simplistic. During the World Cup, we created a money ladder to represent the unequal distribution of wealth in the world. Each young person focused on a particular country that had qualified for the World Cup. They cut out coins to represent the wealth of that country and stuck their country's earnings on the ladder. The wealthier countries were at the top of the ladder and the poorer ones at the bottom. The young people could clearly see those countries who were up there with €26,000 a year and those who were down there with €300 or less. They could see that in front of them. It's those kinds of practical concepts that work well. It's about finding ways to make it real.

Then we stuck 100 one-cent coins onto a sheet of card and laminated it. We explained to the young people that the money represented Ireland's wealth. We asked them to guess how much [overseas development aid] we were giving and they guessed figures like 30% [of our national wealth]. When we explained that we give less than half a cent in every Euro, they were horrified. Then when we told them that countries are being asked to give a little less than three quarters of a cent in every Euro, they all felt it was the least we could give. I can't think of a more immediate and practical way of getting that across'.

Why is youth work an ideal setting for development education?

Quality development education in youth work shares many of the same principles as good youth work. These include starting with and valuing young people's own views, learning through participation and promoting equality, responsibility and mutual respect. As people involved have said:

Development education involves a negotiated [learning] agenda as opposed to an imposed agenda. You might introduce new ideas but it's got to be based upon what young people see as their own needs.

We started in 1966 with a policy to develop responsible citizens and leaders in the community. We all saw development education and global citizenship as an extension [of that].

Development education methodologies are ideal for the informal environment in which youth work takes place. Sport, art, drama, photos, cartoons, maps, games, brainstorms, quizzes, story-telling and role plays are all used to explore justice and development issues. These approaches are fun, flexible, participative and learner-centred. They do not require significant resources or rely on high levels of literacy, numeracy or English language competency.

> *We have loads of games, you just adapt the games that they know to something that they don't know, put them all in together, and there's a new game for you. It's a game that every child would know but we'd just put something different into it that changes the whole thing.*

The issue of conflict arose for one youth group. They explored how to resolve conflict using a role play game. The young people divided into four groups representing four countries who had been at war for many years. Each country had different traditions and experiences. As part of a peace process the former enemies agreed to work together to construct a monument to peace. Various art materials were distributed and the young people got to work. Each country had a different idea of what the monument should look like. However following discussions and negotiation, the young people produced a colourful, pyramid-like monument. Although there were four different groups involved, the monument itself had three sides symbolising the degree of compromise which had been reached. This activity stimulated the young people's creativity and imagination, while also promoting team-work within the group and highlighting the importance of co-operation between countries at a global level.

For further details on this activity see Sheehan, 2003.

Development education can be easily incorporated into existing youth work activities and programmes.

'One of the things we do each year is we issue activity packs for summer schemes. We do it for clubs as well. The activity packs are mainly art, crafts or cooking based but they are always based on a global theme. With the summer schemes pack there is a four or five week training session which leaders attend, and with the club pack there's a one night training session. There's a Halloween pack, there's a Christmas pack, there's a St Patrick's Day and an Easter pack. So you are focusing on things you know the leaders will respond to and want to do something about. You are offering them activities that are very do-able but which are based on very sound development education principles. Things like, when we made dreamcatchers, every leader was able to talk about how these came from the American Indians and …how we could learn from them'.

Ten steps to quality development education in youth work

Youth workers are encouraged to be flexible in how they apply the steps. They should respond to their organisation's size, resource capacity and level of experience. For example it may be appropriate for some groups to start at step two or six or to omit or adapt certain steps.

Step 1: Explore your own values and attitudes

Development education promotes the values of justice and equality in personal, local and global relationships. Youth workers engaging young people in education for global change should:

- Be aware and self-critical of their own values and attitudes.
- Be open to new ideas, perspectives and ways of working.
- Respect young people as equals partners within their organisation.
- Acknowledge young people's ability to contribute to positive social change.
- Challenge the unequal relationship between rich and poorer countries.
- Respect the dignity, diversity and positive contributions of people from the Majority World.
- Be open to learning from people in the Majority World.
- Be aware of the different forms of discrimination and how they affect people.
- Recognise the relationship between our environment and the well-being of people all over the world.
- Understand that people from different cultures and societies may see the world in a different way.
- Recognise barriers to the inclusion of minority groups in youth work and work to overcome these barriers.
- Respect and respond to the knowledge within their group.
- Recognise that agreement on issues cannot always be reached.
- Be prepared to challenge discriminatory behaviour within their organisation and among the young people with whom they work.

Step 2: Identify the interests and concerns of the young people in your group

Consult with the young people in your group and find out the issues of importance to them. These should form the basis of your development education activities and programmes. Discussions, surveys, games or an examination of current activities are all useful ways of identifying young people's interests and concerns.

> 'The first development education event we ran was a total failure. Some members of staff decided they knew what young people were interested in so we ran a conference for the young people and we didn't get a single taker! The topics were ones you would assume would interest young people but either we didn't quite hit the mark or it wasn't the way to go about involving young people. That's when we started doing the surveys. In 1992 we surveyed our young people to find out what they were interested in. The starting point has to be where the young people are at. If you don't capture them in the beginning it's very, very difficult after that and we realised we'd made a mistake. It's [now] a keystone of what we do …'

Step 3: Choose appropriate methodologies

Use methodologies which suit your group's interests, needs and abilities. If necessary adapt the language, information and activities in development education materials and resources.

> '90% of the young people we work with are from areas of social exclusion. We have very few academic high achievers, so it has to be different. It can't be school-based, it can't be talk-based because they have such a short attention span. We find that by using the right methodologies to engage them, they learn anything'.
>
> 'I do a sports group on Saturday morning but we do development education through sports, we combine both of them. We do games about the different countries through football and basketball. [During One World Week] we did the Millennium Development Goals through penalty shoot outs. Every time the young person scored a goal, they got a millennium goal'.

Step 4: Support young people to explore their own place in the world

Encourage young people to explore who they are and how they fit into their local, national and global communities.

> 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World – a development education organisation - have worked with groups of young people to explore their own identity and how they relate to the world around them. In doing this, they use a method called the 'Identity Box'.
>
> The process of creating an Identity Box involves a number of stages. Young people gather together materials such as old cereal boxes, paints and used magazines and constructed a three-dimensional portrait of themselves in the shape of a box. They then decorated the outside of the box with images, pictures or words, which described the everyday aspects of their lives such as hobbies, food or shopping. Decorating the inside of the box provoked a deeper reflection on their lives. In it they described the things that were most important to them, such as family or friends. They did this in a variety of ways such as using photos, tape recordings, art and writing. One young blind man printed out his life story in Braille and wrapped this around his box.
>
> Making an Identity Box enabled the young people to identify the many different influences on their lives such as family experiences, education, gender, religion or cultural practices. It also helped them to see how these influences affect how they think and how they interact with other people locally and globally.

Step 5: Make global connections

Link the issues and concerns of young people in your group with people in the Majority World.

> Every two or three years young people in Ógra Chorcaí, a Cork based youth organisation, take part in a survey designed to establish the most important issues facing them at that time. The outcomes of these surveys form the basis of the organisation's annual work plan. One year, stress was identified as the key issue affecting young people. Ciara recalled that *'stresses for young people, that was big with us last year because me and Michael were doing the Leaving Cert. It was really relevant because there were [many] people in the same boat as us. It just shows that as young people we do know what other young people want. We'd be more inclined to know than [older] people sitting around a table saying we'll do this just for the sake of it.'* The young people also recognised that young people throughout the world suffer from stress. As Joanne noted, *'Stress is on a global level, everybody gets stressed at some stage'*. They proposed it as a theme for One World Week, a week of youth-led education and action on global justice issues held annually in November. Other youth groups around the country agreed with their proposal and in response to this, 'Stress for Young People around the World' was adopted as the theme for One World Week 2004.

Explore how we are connected to the wider world. Invite young people to explore the global connections and influences in their lives such as music, food, family or friends who are from or who have visited the Majority World. If working with a mixed youth group of young people from Ireland and the Majority World, encourage young people to share stories and experiences. However, pressure should not be placed on young people to make disclosures regarding their background or reasons for leaving their home country.

- Explore how different countries depend on one another e.g. for workers, tourists, food, clothes and other traded goods.
- Explore the global connections within your group.
- Make contact with youth, community or other groups in the Majority World. See section five for organisations that can help you to establish links.
- If possible, involve people from the Majority World in the delivery of development education.

Step 6: Explore justice issues locally and globally

Highlight the global justice dimensions to your young people's issues and concerns. Issues as diverse as stress, eating habits, war, access to facilities, fashion, sport, refugees, employment, education, travel or bullying all have a global justice dimension. Development education can have either a local or a global issue as its starting point.

> A group from the Irish Girl Guides wished to explore the issue of drugs which affects the lives of so many young people in Ireland. Using maps and case studies the young people examined the global drugs trade. They discovered that many people in countries such as Burma, Colombia and

Afghanistan are forced to grow drugs such as heroin because of poverty or intimidation. By looking at the issue of drugs in a worldwide context, the Girl Guides learned that this was both a health and a justice issue which impacts on the human rights of people living in both Ireland and the Majority World.

Jackie, a youth worker with the Centre for Global Education in Northern Ireland used a 'global auction' game which introduces the idea that globally we spend much more on financing conflict and the military than on basic needs such as education or healthcare. She feels that this approach works particularly well with older young people. She comments: '*As well as being a fun activity … its impact is strong when it becomes clear that a great deal of money is spent on conflict in comparison to eradicating poverty. This generally leads to some discussion on the need for cooperation to avoid conflict between groups whether locally or globally, and has led to discussion on the situation in Northern Ireland, as well as in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. I find it useful as a different approach to conflict, to the usual focus on the very local [Northern Ireland] experience, which is normally quite emotive for most people*'.

Highlight how young people's actions and lifestyles affect people in the Majority World. There are global dimensions in young people's lives and what development education offers is the chance for those young people to air those issues, which they might not always get.

For One World Week 2002, youth groups looked at how people all around the world are linked by trade. They looked specifically at the trade in bananas. This was seen as a relevant issue because bananas are the most popular fruit eaten in Ireland and because the largest importer of bananas into Ireland and Europe is an Irish company called Fyffes.

The young people learnt that bananas mainly come to Ireland from Latin America and the Caribbean. They examined the different stages in bringing the banana from the plant to the fruit bowl and who has the most to gain from producing bananas. Many young people were surprised that supermarkets make the biggest profits from bananas. They learned about issues such as workers rights and how working in the banana trade affects people's health, environment and access to education. They also explored alternatives to the current banana trade such as fair trade.

The youth groups then participated in a postcard campaign coordinated by the National Youth Council of Ireland. The campaign, 'Could Do Fyffe Times Better', focused on Fyffes operations in Belize, a small country in Central America. It looked at the working conditions of banana workers in plantations where Fyffes source their bananas. The young people learned

that some workers who joined trade unions were sacked and that information about workers rights was not widely available to the workers. A group of young people presented the postcards to Fyffes and met with a company representative who agreed to improve their practice in Belize.

Explore inequalities between rich and poor countries and within different countries.

As part of One World Week 2004, groups examined the issue of stress for young people. They focused on the stress caused to young people in Ireland and around the world who do not have access to a quality education. They compared the different experiences of education among young people globally and explored why 105 million children, mainly in the Majority World, do not go to school. Young people also learnt why girls in Africa, Asia and Latin America are more likely to miss out on an education.

Youth groups then took part in the 'Send a Friend to School' campaign, organised by the Global Campaign for Education. Young people were invited to join with other young people all over the world in creating life size cut-out 'friends' symbolising out-of-school children. One young participant noted that *'The good thing with 'Send a Friend to School' is that the [young people] want other kids to go to school too'*. The 'friends' were displayed at local exhibitions and at the One World Week central event in Dublin, where they were presented to the Minister for Human Rights and Overseas Development, Conor Lenihan. The Minister was asked to honour Ireland's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in relation t the education targets.

In April 2005 during Global Action Week for Education, members of the Global Campaign for Education confronted politicians, celebrities and the general public with the 'friends' and asked them to sign a pledge to achieve primary education for all children by 2015.

Step 7: Imagine a Better World

Encourage young people to identify what kind of world they would like to live in.

Support young people to identify the changes needed for a better world.

Step 8: Take action for a more just world

Taking action for a more just world is a key part of development education in youth work. Youth workers supporting young people to take action should:

- give young people the opportunity to choose actions which are appropriate to them.
- link action to learning and reflection on the issues involved.
- emphasise that young people in the Majority World are themselves agents for change and encourage action in solidarity with them.
- ensure that young people are clear about the likely impact of any action.
- ensure that actions are well planned so as to respect the safety and dignity of young people both locally and globally.

There are many ways in which young people can take action. These include:

1. Action at a personal level

This involves a personal commitment to changing one's own attitudes or behaviour. Examples include young people recycling their waste, purchasing fair trade products or making friends with young people from different countries and cultures living in their communities.

'The simplest action is telling someone else about the issues.'

2. Action at a community level

A number of youth groups wanted to explore how they are linked to the rest of the world through the trade of different products. They looked at the products sold in supermarkets and where they come from. They considered questions like: how do you know if the people who produce the things we buy are getting a fair deal? Who is making the profit? Who is paying the price? The young people recognised that they are very important customers to supermarkets and as such, they had the power to bring about change.

Youth groups throughout the country then took part in the 'Off Your Trolley' campaign. Each group organised collections of supermarket till receipts from a supermarket in their area. After a set period of time, e.g. one week or one month, they added up the receipts and presented the total to their local supermarket manager. They highlighted the fact that they were worth a lot of money to the supermarket and wanted the supermarket to ensure that the people who produced the goods were not exploited or badly treated. The combined efforts of youth groups at community level all around the country led to three of the main supermarket chains agreeing to stock fair trade products.

3. Action at a national level

A Dublin City youth group decided to raise awareness locally about the danger of landmines and to try to get them banned. They researched the issue and were struck by the fact that the victims of landmines are mostly children in the Majority World. Lindsay from the group said *'this is our way of standing up and showing our support for young people all over the world who are dying because of landmines'*. They laid out a grid of squares on the footpath and asked passers-by to cross their imaginary minefield. The squares were unmarked but using a map, the young people were able to tell if they stood on a mine. People crossing the minefield were given a sticker indicating whether they survived, didn't survive, lost a leg or lost both legs. The group asked members of the public to sign their petition calling on EU countries to adopt a total ban on landmines. The petition stated: 'We want the Government to keep on trying to get other European countries to totally ban landmines and to decide that children's lives are more important than making money selling these landmines.' The group presented their petitions, along with those of other youth groups around the country, to the

Minister for Overseas Aid. Lindsay said, *'I come from a small group of young people in [Dublin] and you are a minister of a small country. Meeting you makes me feel I can make a difference so I hope today makes you feel the same way with bigger countries'.*

4. Action with young people around the world

In August 2004, Trócaire organised the Pamoja Human Rights School with young people in Ireland and Kenya. The aim of the project was to provide a forum for young people to discuss and debate topics such as peace, justice, human rights and the Millennium Development Goals and to find imaginative ways of taking action. Each Pamoja group launched a local campaign with actions such as schools visits and workshops, local press and radio interviews, library displays and public meetings. Groups from Ireland and Kenya collaborated in the development of the Pamoja Kwa Haki Youth Declaration which set out their commitment to human rights and called on world leaders to implement the Millennium Development Goals. The Pamoja Kwa Haki is displayed on www.pamoja.ie.

Other ways of engaging young people in action on global justice and development issues include:

- Young people participate in local festivals, carnivals or religious celebrations such as St. Patrick's Day parades. Youth workers can support young people to incorporate a global justice perspective to these events.
- Particular days, weeks, years or even decades such as One World Week, International Day against Racism, World Children's Day, World Refugee Day or World AIDS Day have a development significance and can provide a focus for highlighting particular development and justice issues.
- A number of youth organisations, such as the Scouts, Guides and YMCA, have membership in countries all over the world. Youth workers should explore ways of building links with partner youth organisations in the Majority World and of developing action in solidarity with them.
- Local, national and European elections, the European and World Social Forums, meetings of international agencies such as the World Trade Organisation or summits of world leaders such as the G8 summit all provide a focus for action to challenge global poverty and inequality.

Step 9: Evaluate your development education activities and programmes

Evaluations are a way of assessing the success of your development education activities and programmes. Why should you evaluate?

- To identify which aspects of your development education activity or programme were successful and where changes are needed.
- To inform and improve future work.

Who should participate in evaluations?

- Young people
- Volunteers
- Staff
- Management, if appropriate
- Funders, if appropriate

What should be evaluated?

- The educational process, e.g. young people's engagement with the particular methodologies and approaches used.
- The educational outcomes, e.g. young people's knowledge and understanding of global justice issues; attitudinal change among young people and other stakeholders within the organisation.

How should you evaluate?

Evaluations can be done at the end of each activity and at the completion of a programme. There is a range of formal and informal ways of evaluating. Development education methodologies can be easily adapted to get feedback from young people and other key stakeholders. Evaluation methods include:

- Surveys
- Written evaluation forms
- Written or 'moving' ranking exercises
- Quizzes
- Poems, stories or dramas which describe participants' responses
- Informal discussions
- On-going leader observations

How can you measure the success of development education programmes and activities? There are a variety of indicators to assess the impact. These include:

- The numbers of young people participating in your organisation's development education activities on an on-going basis.
- Evidence of increased awareness among young people of their own rights.
- Evidence of more positive attitudes towards people from the Majority World among young people and other stakeholders within the organisation.
- Young people bringing a global perspective to their involvement in other programmes of the organisation, e.g. a global theme for a St Patrick's Day parade.
- Changes in organisational policies or practices, e.g. increased use of fair trade products, increased commitment to recycling waste.
- A desire among young people to take action in solidarity with people in the Majority World, e.g. to stop child labour.
- Young people criticising negative media images of people from the Majority World.

Step 10: Mainstream development education into your youth organisation's work

Get everyone on board. Ensure that all stakeholders in your organisation – young people, volunteers, management and staff – have an understanding of what development education is and support its inclusion in your organisation's work.

> 'A number of staff with an interest in development education formed a committee. We already had a group of young people who were looking at their own issues, so the two groups came together to form what was initially called the One World Works Committee. This committee decided that if development education was going to be part of the integrated structure of the organisation, we had to take a four pronged approach. The management had to be on board, the volunteer leaders had to be on board, the staff had to be on board and the young people themselves had to be on board. Otherwise somebody leaves and there's nothing left. It's just one person or a couple of people beavering away. Almost the very first thing we did was run a seminar for staff and volunteers on what development education was. This was around 1992. It was very early days. What was really important was that a member of the [management] executive of the organisation attended that seminar. So development education [became] a part of the structures [of the organisation]'.

An important part of mainstreaming is to develop a development education policy. Such a policy should be drawn up with all stakeholders in your organisation. A policy is a written statement which sets out your organisation's commitment to development education and the rationale for doing it. . It provides a basis for your activities and programmes and informs new members, volunteers and staff as to why development education is central to the work of the organisation. One youth worker suggests that:

> *A policy makes development education part and parcel of your organisation, so that it's not just something you do every so often, it's part of who you are and what you do.*

Prioritise development education in your organisation's work plans. Take a long term view of what you would like to achieve with your development education activities and programmes. As one youth worker said:

> *We would say you have got to take a long term view. So this year we focused on the second millennium goal. What we intend doing over the next eight years is focusing on one of those goals each year.*

Bring a development education perspective to all aspects of your organisation's work. Development education principles can be integrated into your organisation in a variety of ways. These include promoting the inclusion of young people from minority groups in your youth work, using fair trade products, developing environmentally friendly practices; ensuring that racism is explicitly mentioned in anti-bullying policies or staff codes of behaviour or promoting the recruitment of people from the Majority World as staff or volunteers. Global justice themes can also be incorporated into on-going organisational events, as is clear from the comments of this youth worker:

> *I'll give you a practical example of how [development education] affects the wider work of the organisation. At our table quiz event that we have every year, there's a*

> *round of questions on development education. The influence is permeating into our various events. Last year we had Tops of the Clubs. It's a variety show and the young people decided they'd vote on what charities the proceeds should go to. Those who have been involved in development education pointed out that we should have a policy that some of the money goes to tackling poverty locally and some globally … [development education] has permeated right down.*

Mainstreaming also means that you should provide on-going support for youth workers engaged in development education:

> *We had a team of people in the scouts who were into development education. That was very important because it wasn't just one person in the organisation, it was a group. We used to run weekends for youth leaders around the country. It was based on One World Week. We had leaders and groups from all over the country coming along and we sold One World issues to them. We had different speakers in, we had everything there. People came back to us year after year. If they said 'we tried this and it didn't work' we said, 'well maybe try it this way or try it that way or introduce this or that'. They had a support network. I think this is very important because there are a lot of groups out there [who] haven't tried development education before.*

Finally, build up links with other youth organisations doing development education, and document your organisation's development education activities or programmes. Reports, photos and evaluations of development education activities provide a useful source of information for future staff, volunteers and young people in your organisation and for other youth organisations interested in doing development education.

For more information, including useful addresses and links to websites organisations involved in development education and global youth work, go to www.youthdeved.ie or contact:

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The views expressed herein are those of the National Youth Council of Ireland and can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of Irish Aid.

Note

1. Based on the guidelines first published in booklet form by the National Youth Development Education Programme in 2005

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Past Perspectives

The Blind Alley

Some Aspects of Juvenile Employment in Ireland (1915)

Introduction

Past Perspectives is an occasional section in *Youth Studies Ireland* which will reprint little-known and/or inaccessible historical texts in Irish youth studies. What follows is an edited version of *The Blind Alley: Some Aspects of Juvenile Employment in Ireland with Proposals for the Betterment of the Conditions of the Same*, issued by the Committee of the Catholic Working Boys' Technical Aid Association and published by the Educational Company of Ireland Ltd in 1915. This was during the First World War, the outbreak of which had led to the postponement of the implementation of the Government of Ireland Act 1914 (the 'Third Home Rule Act'). In his foreword the President of the Association, Sir Henry Bellingham, suggested that 'the pending change … makes it our duty to put forward every effort to secure that the New Regime shall start in an atmosphere of enlightenment and progressive ideals, and in this respect the present condition of thousands of working boys – responsible citizens of the Irish State of tomorrow – calls for immediate betterment if they are to be raised to the standard in which they can with effect take their part in the work and duty of self-government'. The Act was never to be implemented, and the 'pending change' was more turbulent and far-reaching than many had envisaged, but there were also to be strong elements of continuity in the years ahead, among them an abiding concern with the 'urban youth problem'. *The Blind Alley* contributed to the debates which shaped policy and legislation on school attendance, vocational education and training, youth employment and unemployment and indeed youth work in Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century.

I. Blind Alley Employment

There exist in Ireland certain forms of unprogressive employment engaging large numbers of Juvenile Workers, principally boys, but in certain cases girls, between the ages of 14 and 18 years, conducted under conditions which have no regard for the future of these youthful workers and are in many cases positively injurious to their material and moral well being. These employments offer in themselves no opportunity for the workers of earning a living wage on reaching manhood or womanhood, and in consequence the employment is recruited by an ever changing personnel, who, save in rare cases, do not obtain any industrial training to fit them for either higher grades of the businesses or trades with which they are, as unskilled workers, connected, or for any other form of skilled industry at which they might earn a living wage.

This form of Juvenile Labour exists on a scale so extended and general that it gives serious alarm to those who have realised its extent, for it is often recruited, from the nature of the case, from the best blood of the people.

A rough estimate may be made of the extent of the evil by the consideration of the following figures. In a recent year, 44,048 boys were entered upon National School Rolls in the Third Standard, 36,596 boys were entered in the Fourth Standard; the difference between the two being in round numbers 7,500 at about which figure the difference has stood in preceding years. This means that on an average over 7,000 working boys leave the National Schools annually without any assurance that they will be adequately educated for their work in life; for there is no reason to believe that the majority of these pursue their education any further elsewhere. On the contrary, we are forced to conclude from our own observation and from evidence which has reached us from various sources that most of these boys are withdrawn from school and sent to work by their parents or guardians without any provision for their future advancement, especially in regard to continuing their education in any way. The condition of these boys, as future citizens, can only be described as deplorable.

The comparison between the next two Standards, the Fourth and Fifth, show also, in the numbers of boys attending, an annual falling off of over 3,500 boys in the Fourth who do not continue into the Fifth. These boys, having regard to the subjects in the Fourth Standard, are not fit for most forms of Technical Instruction.

Similar figures slightly in their favour are found in the case of girls entered in the various Standards as above. Great national wastage resulting in positive loss to the industrial life and development of the country comes from this unchecked creation of young citizens who in, the words of an Irish minister "grow up in every class of life to be and to do nothing".

[.....]

II. Obstacles to Industrial Training of Workers

Many factors prevent, positively and negatively, this desirable development.

Long Hours of Work

First: The length of the daily hours of work in these particular forms of employment often preclude the worker, if he wished to, from attending Technical Evening Classes. In some cases the length of the working week – with no half-day and sometimes work upon even the Sunday – makes it difficult or distasteful for the worker to attend Evening Classes, even if he be free to do so.

[.....]

Low General Education

Second: the Elementary Education not only of juvenile workers of the particular type under review, but even in various trades and skilled occupations, will be found in many cases to be so low that they can profit little by any Technical Instruction. This is confirmed by our experience in entering Working boys from the Catholic Technical Club into various Technical Classes in the City Schools. Thus, in specific instances, working-boys actually apprenticed to the Painting Cabinet-making, and Motor Trades respectively, of the average intelligence we believe of other boys in these occupations – were forced to abandon the Technical Classes in which they had been entered, because their general education was so deficient that they could not follow the

instruction given. This was especially the case in Mathematics. Their deficiency was instanced in the case of English by their inability to take notes of the lectures.

[…..]

Attitude of Some Employers

Third: Another serious obstacle is that many small employers are sometimes tempted to resist or in cases to be indifferent to education which increases the efficiency of boys in their employment whose ignorance does not affect their immediate usefulness and whose improvement would raise them above the menial occupations they fill, and increase their wage earning capacity.

Difficulties of Entrance to Technical Schools

Fourth: the relatively difficult entrance examination required by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction to be held by local Technical Committees proves a formidable bar to many working-boys of the type under consideration who have from social or economic causes left school at a low Standard for the various employments under review yet who may wish to enter the local Technical Schools.

III. National Schools in Relation to Technical Institutes

In general, no co-ordination seems established between the National Schools and local Technical Institutions. This could be established by:

1. the formation in each National School of a special class chosen from boys suitable to be put forward at the end of the school year for the Entrance Examination to the local Technical Institute to be called a Trades' Class ;
2. the formation in connection with every Day National School of an Evening or Continuation School for such boys as may leave to go to work at such a low standard that they would be unable, without further study, to pass the entrance examination into the Technical Schools.

Such boys, in Third or Fourth Standard, would be thus encouraged to attend a Night School, as it would "lead somewhere." There is no reason why in this way every National School should not be by night an Evening School for its past pupils where, as in all urban centres, and many rural districts the circumstances allow. Thus the National School would become – what it now is not – a definite centre of supply on an organised plan for the Technical Schools. To meet the situation a comprehensive plan of Continuation Classes for Juvenile Workers with facilities to attend them is needed to rectify the deficient general education with which so many thousands of working boys have entered the working world of today. For it must be remembered that even if either the school-leaving age or the school-leaving standard were raised today this would not affect the present juvenile workers; nor would the industrial efficiency of all future workers be appreciably improved for some years to come. We must presume from the depressed social and physical conditions of sections of the Irish working classes that it would prove difficult in the immediate future to bring many of the children of poorer parents very far beyond the Fourth Standard before they had entered the world of work. … The solution of the raising of age to 16 years presents many immediate difficulties, and so does compulsory attendance for an indefinite period at a Day School until the Sixth Standard is reached.

IV. Lines of Reform

As a *via media* to suit Irish conditions it is suggested that the school-leaving age may be left as at present at 14 years as regards the Day School, but that as regards the Standard ultimately to be attained by the worker the Sixth shall be set. To reach this, attendance should by law be required at Continuation Classes by all Juvenile Workers, who may now have left or in the future will leave the Day School without having reached their Sixth Standard, until they shall have reached this standard or their eighteenth year. This principle is already established in the Education (Scotland) Act, 1908, Section 9.

Some such drastic proposals as these will be necessary to allow the type of workers under review to profit by Technical Instruction either now, or under future conditions.

[…..]

The present low standard of general education in the cases under notice, may be partly attributed to the weakness of the school attendance required by the Irish Education Act, 1892; which calls for amendment on lines suggested elsewhere. The last Report of the School Attendance Committees for the City of Dublin shows in detail the deficiencies of the present Act, though the imperfections of it have engaged the attention of various social reform organizations and individuals interested for the past fifteen years to no avail.

[…..]

On the question of the educational gap Mr T. P. Gill in his address at the Technical Instruction Congress in Cork in 1912 said:

> "You have the formidable figure of 620,000 (pupils – boys and girls – of primary schools in Ireland) who never get any further educational help once the primary school is done with them. Of course, of that number the vast proportion, if not the whole, are young people who have had to begin to try to get employment, and to begin probably before the age of 14. Day school education in the ordinary sense can say no more to them, and theirs is a case for the extension of evening technical teaching, or apprentice classes, or trade preparatory classes for a few hours in the week, or of winter agricultural classes and the like; in a word, theirs is a case for vocational training."

The bad attendance is also due, in a measure, to the absence of a healthy interest in their work and play in the ordinary National School children of working-class parents. This would be evoked in the school curriculum if there were included manual work which would include the making with real tools of useful things to take home and if there were properly organised games for both fine and wet weather in the play hour or after school hours for the pupils.

By this means the pupils might be encouraged to attend even beyond the legally required age.

V. Legislation Needed

To return to the Juvenile Workers of today, in the particular forms of employment under review, voluntary limitation by employers of the hours of work, so as to afford attendance by the employees at suitable classes, and undertakings by employees to attend such, have been so rare that the needed adjustment cannot be hoped for under

the voluntary system. Social legislation will therefore be needed to meet the situation if the large and unknown number of Juvenile Workers in "Blind Alley" occupations are to have any time or opportunity for self-advancement, even with the extension of the principle of compulsory school attendance on the lines suggested above.

To meet therefore both the present situation, and the future conditions contemplated, an extension of the protection of the Shops Act to the type of juvenile workers under discussion is called for. The only protection for such young persons under 18 years under the Shop Hours Act is that given by the provision that they shall not work more than 74 hours in the week. The Second Schedule of the Act specifically excludes from the provision requiring a weekly half-holiday for the employees the very trades or businesses in which "blind-alley" occupations arise, such as we have described, namely, those concerned with the sale of staple articles of food, tobacco, newspapers, and such things as are found in the ordinary small shop. Thus, boys working in public-houses may be quite legally, as they are frequently in fact, employed on every day in the week, including Sunday, without the enjoyment of a half-holiday. This particular form of employment calls for immediate remedy in a self-respecting community. The limitation of hours of work is, however, only a step towards the solution of the problem.

VI. Present Powers of Local Authorities

In certain defined cases of Juvenile labour much might be at once effected for the social betterment of the boy or girl by various authorities or individuals, under the powers of the Employment of Children Act, by requiring Juvenile Workers within the scope of the Act to attend at suitable Continuation or Technical Classes up to their sixteenth year. Existing grants under the Board of National Education are available for the asking, by any public body or group of persons who have the energy to organise these classes and apply for official recognition. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction has power to sanction the institution, under local Technical Committees or directly under any other body, of special classes, as for instance in manual work, for such juvenile workers as might be sent for instruction under the above Act. Suitable schemes of instruction for the various types of juvenile workers, e.g., children working in theatres and picture-houses, juvenile street traders, etc. might be at once framed.

To cover, however, all cases of Juvenile Employment it would seem necessary to consolidate the powers and the duties of the various public authorities, private bodies or others interested, in a drastic amendment of the Employment of Children Act, 1903, which should be enlarged into a Juvenile Workers' Act on lines suggested in the Appendix.[1]

VII. Extent of the "Blind Alley" Evil

The extent of these deteriorating forms of employment is little realised. Most noticeable to the casual observer is the Newsboy or the Flower Girl or the boy or girl hawking laces and matches — often but a cloak for begging — or on certain days race-cards.

Instances of Boy Labour not so obviously connected with unprogressive employment, yet which lead the worker nowhere, have actually come to our notice in the following cases:

- boys working in chemists' shops, on book stalls, in barbers' shops, in public-houses;
- errand or messenger boys in businesses large and small alike;
- boys working on delivery vans, boys riding cycle-carriers, dairy boys, boys working on farms, boys distributing handbills, or "minding" a shop front;

- boys working in a small shop, helping in the fish, cattle, vegetable or fruit markets, working a hand-cart for hire, driving an ass or pony and cart;
- boys employed in: picture-houses, theatres, billiard saloons or clubs, page-boys in the smaller hotels, boot-blacks, golf-caddies.

This list is given to indicate the diversity of the forms of unprogressive employment. Of course, particular cases will always be found in each class where individual clever boys succeed in advancing themselves.

[.....]

VIII. Conditions in the City of Dublin

The numbers of children, often of the poorest parents, who leave school barely reaching the Fourth Standard in the National Schools in the City of Dublin, indicate the seriousness of the problem, as the latest Official Returns available disclose.

1. The number of boys enrolled in National Schools in the city of Dublin on 31st December, 1914, was 17,281 of whom:

1,747	were enrolled in	Third	Standard
1,270	"	Fourth	"
849	"	Fifth	"
448	"	Sixth	"
161	"	Seventh	"
35	"	Eighth	"

Boys were enrolled in 120 of the city schools on 31st December, 1914, but only 49 of these schools were attended by boys only — the remainder being attended by both sexes.

2. Statistics are not available as .to the number of boys in the city of Dublin struck off the rolls after twenty consecutive days absence but, of the 17,281 boys on the rolls on 31st December, 1914,

1,910	had made	under	50	attendances	within the year.
1,859	"	50	but under	75	"
2,252	"	75	"	100	"
1,767	"	100	"	125	"
2,489	"	125	"	150	"
3,404	"	150	"	175	"
3,331	"	175	"	200	"
269	"	200	attendances	or	over.

Thus presumably over 450 boys passed out in the previous year without having reached the Fourth Standard, and nearly 900 left school before reaching the Fifth Standard.

[.....]

An analysis of a return of Applicants for Employment in the Labour Exchanges confirms our deductions. Thus, of a total of 288 boys placed in occupations in three winter months of a recent year, only 61 were placed in permanent occupations as

apprentices, etc. Two hundred and twenty seven were placed in positions of such uncertain tenure as we have described above.

The last report of the Dublin Advisory Committee for Juvenile Workers confirms our conclusions upon the education question in the following words:

> "During the year circulars have been issued to the visitors urging them to impress upon the children the necessity for attending Evening Classes. In a number of cases the advice has been taken by the children, but the reports show that many children are prevented from attending Evening Classes owing to their long hours of work, and that, while the children who have attended [sic] a rather high standard at school are willing to continue their education, those who leave in the Third and Fourth Class have a decided objection to any form of study.
>
> Social clubs at which recreation and education are combined should appeal to these children. One of the difficulties with which Visitors under the Juvenile Advisory Committee have to contend in advising the children is the inadequacy of provision of Evening Classes and Clubs."

[…..]

IX. Present Night Schools System

Similarly the recent reports presented to the Commissioners of National Education by their own Inspectors indicate the absence of any effective system of Night Schools commensurate with the needs of the nation as a whole. Thus the report of the Inspector for the Enniskillen Circuit states: " There were eight Evening Schools during the session 1913–14. The majority were unable to qualify for more than the lowest fee."

[…..]

[The] observations of the Inspectors of the Board of Nation Education … amply support our contention for the need of special and immediate treatment of the problem of evening schools.

X. Street Trading Bye-Laws

No local authority has availed of the powers of the Employment of Children's Act to secure the further education of Newsboys and others within the dominion of the Act, such as might be done on the lines of a scheme submitted in 1913 to the Dublin Corporation, the principle of which is actually in operation in Scotland under Section 8 of the Scotland (Education) Act, 1908.

It is true that the Dublin Corporation has recently, by their amended bye-laws, prohibited girls under 16 years from selling newspapers at all, and has prohibited Street Trading for boys under 14 years, seemingly abolishing the right to a Certificate of Exemption from School Attendance for the purpose of Street Trading in the case of a boy of thirteen years; and this is a step in the right direction ; but only of a negative nature, for it will not, by deferring the time of freedom by a year, prevent many from finding their way to the streets, and for these no provision is made for their advancement by any future educational training. In general, Juvenile Street Trading seems entirely unfettered and unregulated in countless Irish towns, for few local authorities, outside Dublin and Belfast, seem to have made any bye-laws whatever.

Existing local benevolent effort seems inadequate to better the boy or girl labour as is here described, when the actual results are considered in relation to the large number of such boys and girls untouched by any form of social service. On the other hand no scheme should be put forward which would not utilise to the full the existing Social and Charitable organisations, nor is it fair to expect that any scheme for an educational policy for the people will succeed if left alone to the officers of the local authorities to carry out. All and every individual brought into touch with such Juvenile Workers should co-operate actively in developing it.

XI. The Need for Manual Instruction

It seems imperative to give a more practical direction to the curriculum of National Schools or others attended by the children of the worker, so that the best brains may not go, as they now seem to do in many cases, into relatively unproductive employments.

It is the experience of those in touch with Irish Elementary Education that most children of the working classes, especially in the National Schools, who are able reach the Sixth and higher Standards, have a disposition to seek commercial or office careers, aiming at Government or Municipal clerkships and the like, leaving the residue, those who do not pass beyond the Fifth Standard, to recruit mainly the ranks of industrial workers. As all forms of "unproductive" or "distributing" employment in a degree depend for their remuneration upon the increase or at least the adequate supply of the tangible wealth derived from rural or urban industries, it seems that an undesirable and uneven distribution of part of the trained intelligence of the country is taking place, adding another cause to many that prevent the industrial development and prosperity of the country.

It should be noted that for many years past in most urban districts in England and Scotland the schoolboy in the Board School is set to a course of Manual Instruction from the age of 11 to 14 years and in this way, as a worker when he starts in the working-world, with a three years course in the real handling of tools to his credit, he starts with an initial advantage over his untrained trade competitor in Ireland. For this reason alone it may be imagined that the English and Scottish artisan is able to compete on very favourable, if not better terms, with the Irish worker. In London, for instance, in connection with the Board Schools there are 45 handicraft centres of instruction.

The lower residue of these less educated boys fall naturally into casual or unskilled occupations, with their resulting evils.

A contributing cause, if not a prime cause, of this predisposition of the more clever pupils to seek office work rather than trades, lies in the rather bookish tendencies of the curriculum of the National Schools. Manual instruction of a practical kind in wood or metal work, such as is given from the age of about 11 years in most English Board Schools is absent. The Irish Kindergarten System taught from 5 to 11 years, is not, as was originally intended, carried on to the use of real tools, such as would make easier the transition of the schoolboy into the young worker and stimulate an interest in trades and industries rather than in clerical work.

To give a more practical and industrial direction to Elementary Education in the National Schools for boys, some scheme of Manual Instruction, and in country parts, of practical farming, is needed.

[.....]

XII. Practical Facilities Needed

In our contact with Working Boys in Dublin, and from reports from others in touch elsewhere in Ireland, there seems a need to attend to certain sides of their lives not to be measured by school-attendance, book-learning, or even the handling of tools.

Health

We can see, in particular cases, the evil effects of the complete absence of medical inspection in Day Schools, and, to any appreciable extent in Dublin, of dental treatment. The position of Working Boys under 16 years outside the National Health Insurance Act has already been alluded to.

Any extension of the National Health Insurance Act to Boy Labour under 16 years of age, would raise the question of adequate provision of clothing and boots to keep out the wet in the cases of messengers or others working out of doors, as on farms. It is difficult to come to any decision as to the apportionment of the responsibility to supply these between the parents, the employers, the public, or the State. In the meantime, through neglect, many boys suffer. Certain difficulties preclude working boys easily obtaining medical treatment in certain cases. Despite many Hospitals and Dispensaries, few are open at hours convenient for the attendance of the workers. Working-boys, in consequence, who have to ask permission of their employers to leave their work to attend, often prefer to remain without medical treatment rather than ask for leave. In this way, untold injury may result to health from inattention or belated attention to an ill which seemed at first transient.

More Games

Again, the type of Juvenile Worker we are concerned with has no opportunity, and sometimes little aptitude or capacity, for any healthy organised games or athletics. This can be traced in a degree to the absence of any organisation of outdoor games or sports in the National Schools in the city of Dublin. With the facilities of the Phoenix Park at hand it ought to be quite possible to organise inter-National School sports or matches suitable to the various seasons. With the sea on the north and south side of the city, swimming should be also encouraged on some definite plan.

Opportunities for gymnastics of a more recreative kind should be afforded either in the schools themselves, or in suitable local halls.

Generally, Cricket, Association or Gaelic Football, and Hurling as played by the Dublin Working Boy in the Phoenix Park or elsewhere, is of a very desultory and unorganised nature notwithstanding the number of new clubs that spring up at the beginning of each season in every working-class locality. Many of them fall, despite their patriotic appellations, into inactivity often owing to internal dissension, before their natural term is half over through lack of any organisation to help them. We mention this because in any scheme of Continuation Classes, this side of the problem might be attended to.

In relation with the Day Schools the recent reports of the Inspectors of the Board of National. Education reveal a deplorable condition. Of the Omagh Circuit we read:—"Very many schools are without playgrounds, and in a considerable number the yards are so small or so unsuitable that the children prefer to play on the public road."

[…..]

A Report of the Castlebar Circuit reads: "The playgrounds, as a rule, present a neglected appearance. The growth of flowers and shrubs is generally impracticable in view of the fact that the surrounding walls are not high enough to keep out the athletic mountain sheep and goats."

Contrast this state of affairs with the fact that in London, for instance, local representatives are appointed to co-operate in promoting both indoor and outdoor games, to arrange inter-school matches, etc., and to encourage sports generally among the school children. In the Board Schools, outside school hours, the Children's Happy Evenings Association is recognised by the School Authorities, and is allowed to arrange for the winter evenings, suitable entertainments and amusements for the pupils who are attending the local school in the school premises itself. In this way the Day School becomes the centre of recreation as well as of learning; and the scholars, especially those from necessitous homes, come to have associations connected with their school life and the very walls of the school itself, which must react most beneficially upon the tone and spirit of their more serious work of learning. All this is absent in the case of many Irish National School boys.

Thrift

Thrift, too, more necessary now than ever should be promoted by School Banks, possibly in conjunction with the Post Office Savings Bank. Cases have come to our notice of boys who have been unable to continue at a higher standard in school because they had no money to buy the needed books. So, too, in the Technical Schools, the purchase of necessary textbooks or instruments involve for juvenile Workers the outlay of relatively large sums, in many cases prohibitive to them. Some machinery should be devised to meet this problem.

Libraries

More juvenile literature, especially of an educative and technical nature, is badly needed in the public libraries of the city.

An Inspector under the National Board writes: "The almost complete absence of school libraries is to be sincerely regretted, much more, indeed, might be done in this direction, and with little expense and trouble. The example set by our English neighbours might be followed with considerable advantage."

It should be noted that one of the obstacles to attendance at Evening Schools is found in the fact that the pupil may be a member of a Boys' Brigade, Boy Scouts' Organization, or some Volunteer Corps. This may require his attendance at drill or the like, on the evening of his classes. It is regrettable that some working arrangement should not be made at once between the schools and all such organizations connected with boys, especially the working-boys we are concerned with, as the very boys who have the energy to attend any of the above, would undoubtedly likewise attend with benefit at Evening Classes

[…..]

Cheaper Tram and Train Fares.

As technical instruction in the city of Dublin is geographically highly centralized and as existing Elementary Evening Schools are, in the strict sense of the words, "few and far between", it is desirable that a cheap students' ticket, allowing change of trams over the various lines, should be issued.

A note prepared originally at the request of the Inspector of the National Board concerning the effect of wet weather upon attendance at our Night School during the past winter and the cost of tram fares brought to our notice in particular cases confirm the need of some reduction.

XIII. What Might Now Be Done

The disabilities of these particular boys are, therefore (1) the length of the working week, (2) the length of the working day, (3) they are not under the National Health Insurance Act until they reach their seventeenth year, when the evils it is designed to combat, especially Consumption, have frequently occurred, (4) they are not adequately protected in relation to their employment by either the Children Act, 1903, the Factory and Workshops Acts or the Shops Act, 1912.

The "tradition of ignorance" in very poor parents, and the necessity of the case, preclude the parents from exercising any care for, or supervision of, the further education of children whom they have to set early at work to help the home.

To meet the case of the present Juvenile Workers in "blind alley" employments or those who will leave school in the course of a year or two before any radical change in the school attendance or any change in the curriculum of the National Schools can have any marked effect in their favour, some definite schemes of "After Education" might at once be organised under the various Authorities for certain classes of these workers on lines in which the parties affected can co-operate.

Irrespective of new legislation much might be done to quicken the educational efficiency of the nation by co-operation between various Government Departments, public and private bodies, employers and individuals to encourage "After Education" amongst all Juvenile Workers with whom they may be in touch, either as employers of the boys themselves or their parents. This would result in raising the general efficiency of the future workers, including the sources of casual unskilled labour, the whole industrial army being thereby rendered more mobile and adaptable to the needs and opportunities alike of either the increasing output of existing industries, or rendering profitable the new industries which may be established.

In this way would the stability of the nation be increased, and any large measure of industrial development — such as the development of the land or the mineral resources of the country — which may be undertaken by the State to meet any period of industrial depression could in consequence be more easily undertaken.

[.....]

XIV. Example of Some Employers

The example of some English employers in relation to the education of their work-people should be noticed. Some firms as, for instance, the Queen's Engineering Works in Bedfordshire arrange a course of lectures in their works themselves during the winter months. This firm is of opinion that it is impossible for apprentices to do any serious study in the evening after 10 hours in the workshop and, in consequence, excuse attendance at the works without loss of wages, for the first quarter of two days in the week on the evenings of which technical classes are held.

Many firms likewise excuse part of the day work in order that their employees may attend Technical Classes either in the afternoon or in the evenings.

Day classes, for instance, are arranged by the London and South Western Railway Company in connection with the famous London Polytechnic.

[…..]

XV. Action by the Dublin Corporation

The Dublin Corporation has already given facilities to the Committee of the Clarendon Evening School in the following way. The Estates and Finance Committee have provided spacious premises for the holding of a Night School, with the services of an attendant and provision for heating and lighting and cleaning. The Technical Committee of the Corporation has arranged a special Summer Manual Class in the past two years in the summer months for boys sent by the Committee of this school. … There is no reason why every other local authority in Ireland should not make some such arrangement in the summer months, when the Technical Schools are not being used by the ordinary pupils. … We are convinced, however, that such isolated action is inadequate to cope with the evil. Legislation, producing an "Educational Ladder" for the humblest worker to climb if he will, must be forthcoming.

XVI. Conclusion

The stability of the nation may not be very visibly affected by the present deplorable condition of the particular class of Juvenile Workers here under review, but intangible, yet real evils flow from the want of outlook and outlet in the present occupations of these future citizens quite apart from the special circumstances of the present War.

These juvenile workers cannot, if allowed to remain relatively uneducated, adequately exercise in the future with prudence or good effect their rights or functions as citizens in the control of their local affairs or private interests. They reach adult age in many cases broken in health, discontented, often to join the ranks of the unemployed, to rear in penury a family as, or more, thriftless and uneconomic than themselves, to contribute to the calendar of crime, the numbers in the poor-house, the hospitals, or the sanatoria, or in receipt of charity. Thus many of these boys grow to citizenship more a burden than a benefit to themselves or the State.

Note

1. The appendices to *The Blind Alley* as originally published included proposed Heads of a Juvenile Workers' Act and an amendment to the Irish Education Act 1892 (relating to school attendance), as well as recommendations for local authority street trading bye-laws under the Employment of Children Act 1903. Copies may be received by contacting: Maurice Devlin, Department of Applied Social Studies, National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Tel.: +353-1-7083781. Email: maurice.devlin@nuim.ie

Reviews

Helena Helve and John Bynner (editors)
Youth and Social Capital
London: Tufnell Press, 2007. 225pp. £24.95stg (hbk.) £12.95stg (pbk.)

Maurice Devlin
National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Social capital has played an important part in sociological theorizing for a number of decades, and indeed the concept of social capital – although not the term itself – has been close to the heart of the sociological 'enterprise' (!) since the very start. In recent years however it has gained even greater momentum, not least because it has found favour among politicians and policy makers, for whom it might seem to provide a rather neat cure all kinds of social ills. Some readers may remember that in 2005 the writer with whom social capital is most popularly associated – the American sociologist Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone* (2000) – was invited by the then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, to address the annual Fianna Fáil think-in. Certainly from the layperson's point of view social capital may seem like a simple and persuasive idea, 'ringing true' in a commonsense kind of way. Unfortunately this may be because in many of its common applications it really is simple: far too simple, with a very limited explanatory or even analytical value, being used purely to *describe* certain social trends (relating to membership of churches and voluntary organizations, community service, voting patterns and so on), without actually helping to *explain* anything of significance.

It is in this latter sense – pertaining to 'community', civil society and 'citizenship', broadly speaking – that Putnam uses the term social capital. It is a primarily a characteristic of *societies*, which can have more or less of it, and since it is a good thing to have, the more the better. For Putnam social capital refers to the 'features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives'. This is the dominant sense in which the term is understood in current non-academic public discourse: 'active citizenship' for example, is very closely related to social capital (Task Force on Active Citizenship, 2007). For the other two main theorists associated with the term social capital, despite the fact that they have very different ideological orientations from each other, the emphasis is primarily on the 'assets' available to *individuals* (although of course these assets are drawn from social structures and processes). For the French conflict theorist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1997) it relates to the social advantages or disadvantages, the social *resources* (whether great or small) in terms of contacts, networks, formal and informal 'memberships' which people have by virtue (largely) of their class position. For the American functionalist James Coleman, social capital refers to those aspects of social structure which actors can use as 'resources to achieve their interests' (1988: S101) and he focused particularly on how social capital in the form of

parental presence and interest (in two parent households) and membership of small families (because 'children in large families have less *adult* attention' – 1988: S112) contributes to *human capital*, or educational success, resulting in skills and credentials.

The point about small and large families is a significant one, and highlights one of the crucial weaknesses of most thinking and theorizing about social capital – from whatever perspective – until now. The capital in Coleman's view is an adult attribute, to be passed on to, or shared with (or *divided among*, even in terms of time), children and young people. What children and young people bring to relationships and social systems, what they give to each other (as siblings, as friends) and to their parents, communities and to society as a whole, has received scant attention. For this reason alone the publication of *Youth and Social Capital* is very welcome. It is edited by two of Europe's leading youth researchers, Helena Helve and John Bynner, who state at the outset that 'young people's social capital is not just a product of the social capital of their parents – the means of hoisting them up the ladder of achievement, as the founding fathers of the subject tended to believe, but as a vital means of renewal and development for society as a whole'.

The volume includes the results of empirical and theoretical work conducted in (mostly) Finland and the UK, where the editors are respectively based (it draws on a conference held at the Finnish Institute in London). After an editors' introduction, it consists of four themed sections – on 'youth and capital'; 'social capital and identity'; 'social networks in education'; and 'transitions and potentials' – within each of which several individual contributions are followed by a short response and synthesis. Two of the synthesizing chapters are written by the editors, the other two by Jaris-Erik Nurmi and by James Côté of the University of Western Ontario in Canada (one of only two contributors not based in Finland or the UK).

The collection is eclectic in terms of the approaches adopted to social capital and the relative influence of theorists such as those mentioned above. It also includes a good range of qualitative and quantitative work and, as already indicated, theoretical and empirical material. There are useful explorations and applications of concepts such as Putnam's 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (referring respectively to intra-group solidarity, which can have a negative and/or disempowering effect; and inter-group contacts and mobility) and the ways in which the relative prevalence of these may relate to young people's class position (explored in a paper by Janet Holland) or to different age groups (Katariina Salmela-Aro). There are chapters on the relationship between social capital and ethnic identity (Tracey Reynolds, on young Caribbean people in Britain) and religious identity (Arniika Kuusisto, on Adventist families in Finland), with Coleman's notion of 'intergenerational closure' being used to good effect in the latter case (referring to the ways in which within close religious communities it is very often the case that 'the parents' friends are the parents of their children's friends' – Coleman, 1988: S106).

In the section on education, Susie Weller's chapter on 'managing the move to secondary school' gives a very good account of how children and young people play an active role 'as generators of social capital at the neighbourhood level', and in terms of family size she notes that 'older siblings, cousins and other relatives attending the same secondary school provided valuable cognitive, emotional and social resources', far from depleting the stock of social capital that would otherwise be available to the individual young person (as Coleman might be interpreted to suggest).

Ricardo Sabates presents tentative statistical evidence of the positive impact, in terms of crime reduction, of a local authority education maintenance allowance scheme, at least in the case of certain types of crime, particularly burglaries. He suggests that the differential effect of education by type of offence may indicate that educational effects are linked to the skills necessary to commit crime; but also notes that it is hard to disentangle the 'confounding effect of several crime and anti-poverty government interventions targeted in disadvantaged areas simultaneously'.

Young workers' socialization in the workplace is the subject of a chapter by Markku Jokisaari and, also in relation to young adults, Ingrid Schoon presents findings from an analysis of data collected for two British birth cohorts born in 1958 and 1970 and compares their experiences of the transition to adulthood, focusing on a number of measures of 'human capital' (qualifications), 'bonding social capital' (e.g. partnership status) and 'bridging social capital' (e.g. employment status, voting in elections). While the evidence might at first appear to confirm the 'decline of social capital thesis', the author also draws attention to 'complex cohort and gender differences' and stresses the relevance of theories of social change.

Overall, this is a collection with much to offer the student, the teacher and the researcher of youth and/or social capital (if I have one quibble it is that the publisher should have provided a proper proofreading service). It should certainly help to give impetus to studies which utilize and apply the concept(s) of social capital in a youth studies context; but it will also contribute to the debate about the very usefulness and relevance of 'social capital' itself . Some criticisms of social capital are raised or at least referred to by contributors to the volume, including the charge that it is an unduly economistic metaphor (mentioned by Tarja Tolonen) and that it has a strongly conservative orientation (both Tolonen and Schoon). But perhaps there is a bigger problem. James Côté cogently argues for the need to focus on 'the challenge of developing an agreed upon theory that allows us to employ a taxonomy for understanding how young people are affected by the resources that are available to them, and/or unattainable because of social structural and psychological factors'. He adds: 'This challenge takes us beyond the concept of social capital itself, to an examination of various forms of resources and their inter-relationships'.

And perhaps that is the key point: that the really interesting debate and enquiry may be 'beyond' social capital, or that the concept brings nothing indispensable or distinctively new to any area of investigation. In a short but very interesting and insightful essay Tom Schuller (of the OECD but writing personally, and the only contributor apart from Côté outside Finland and the UK) says: 'In one sense, it does not matter whether or not the term 'social capital' is actually used, as long as the phenomena it refers to are adequately specified'. He goes on to give good reasons why it might be worth holding onto (including that 'using social capital compels analysts and policy-makers to look at issues more in the round, and therefore, arguably, more realistically') but the validity of his first point seems reinforced by the fact that in several of the contributions to this volume – which are entirely complementary with the overall content – the authors actually make somewhat limited use of, or reference to, the term 'social capital' itself.

But this is not to dismiss social capital entirely, or deny that the concept has generated an enormous amount of worthwhile research. Nor does it in any way detract from the interest and relevance of this book for a youth studies readership. As already

suggested, it should contribute to further fruitful discussion, debate and investigation. Above all it locates young people at the heart of key contemporary social structures and processes in a way that is predominantly positive and proactive, in keeping with the lives most young people live, and that in itself is to be highly commended.

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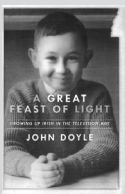

John Doyle
A Great Feast of Light: Growing Up Irish in the Television Age
London: Aurum Press, 2006. 336 pp. £14.99stg (hbk) £7.99stg (sbk)

Ray Kavanagh,
Teacher, author and former General Secretary
of the Labour Party (1986–99)

Once upon a time there was a poor, beautiful, green country and the people in that far distant country were green too, very green indeed and very Catholic. Sex as we know it didn't happen, it was then a furtive, fumbling in the dark affair carried out almost exclusively by married couples who never saw each other's naked bodies. Then along came television and in a relatively short period of time everything changed: prosperity arrived and the influence of the Catholic Church evaporated. As for sex, the people of that country are now practically doing it in the streets.

That's a summary of the recent book by Tipperary man John Doyle, who abandoned what he considered to be this poor and sexually repressed open air monastery and fled to Canada where he is now a television critic with the Toronto *Globe and Mail*. The amazing thing is that much of his basic thesis is dead on. The country, of course is Ireland, and the timescale covered is 1961 to 1980.If anybody out there doesn't believe how much the country has changed since, then this book is a compulsory read.

For somebody of my vintage, as an almost exact contemporary of the author, it's a fascinating read as I can relate to the stories of small town snobbery, the arrogant professional classes and the general tedium of life that was deliberately cut off from foreign influence. But it's a joyless story too, devoid of the laughs and security that were also part of life in Ireland in those days. He came from a loving and progressive family background, which provided him with a good education up to university level which was not available to most boys in those days. This relatively privileged background is not reflected in the book, although it does not descend into self pity as many books of this genre do.

The book is full of highly evocative stories of the TV programmes we watched in an age of innocence: Bat Masterson, The Man from U.N.C.L.E. (I too was a Special Agent with my badge and I.D. card), Tolka Row, The Riordans and of course the influential Late Late Show when it was hosted by the mould breaking Gay Byrne. The visit of the Pope to Ireland in 1979 is very well covered and in particular the amount of hypocrisy it supported. When he addressed the youth of Ireland in Galway he was introduced by Bishop Eamonn Casey and Fr Michael Cleary. Both of these gentlemen, it later emerged, though they ranted and raved about chastity and sexual morality had fathered children while masquerading as celibate priests.

John left Ireland before the horror of the sexual and physical abuse that was part of Irish society in that period became public knowledge. It seems that there was sex in Ireland before the Late Late Show but much of it was of a dark and abusive nature. Like myself, he was unaware of the extent of this hidden Ireland. It is still a shock to think that all this was happening then while we were preached at by those in authority who told us we were in a land of frugal living, athletic youths and comely maidens.

The problem with John I think was that his father, an insurance salesman, was in one of those jobs, so common then, that necessitated his moving around the country and never staying long enough for his family to put down roots. They moved from Nenagh to Carrick-on-Shannon to Raheny to South Dublin. In the end, one gets the impression that John didn't really like the country he lived in and didn't see any prospect of change for the better. Some of us did and worked to make Ireland the liberal, prosperous and open society that it now is.

Availability of contraceptives, divorce and gay rights did not come to this country by accident or solely because of television. They came about because a few people decided that they wanted to live in a liberal, modern country and then went and did something about it. If we had emigrated to San Francisco in 1980 we could have had that lifestyle for the cost of an airfare, but we chose not to; we chose to stay here and change our country. It's a pity John, we could have done with you when we were fighting the God Squad in the 1983 Abortion Referendum or canvassing for Mary Robinson in 1990 or pushing for divorce. It's a tragedy for this country that during most of its years since independence our two major exports were live people and live cattle. We have exported too many of our bright young things like John Doyle; maybe that era has gone forever. Let's hope so.

Kevin Lalor, Áine de Róiste, Maurice Devlin
Young People in Contemporary Ireland
Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 2007. 398 pp. €36.25

Dr. John Canavan
Associate Director
Child and Family Research Centre/
Lecturer, School of Political Science and Sociology
NUI, Galway.

The starting position of the authors of this volume is that the body of knowledge on adolescent and youth issues is substantial and, by implication, sufficient for the production of a comprehensive overview statement about young people in Ireland. This reviewer agrees. In producing the book, the authors have performed an excellent service for the many students engaged in various youth related training and education courses at certificate, diploma, degree and post-graduate level throughout the Republic of Ireland. Those who teach on these courses and researchers of various hues are similarly well served. At a wider public policy level the book makes a serious contribution to the goal of the National Children's Strategy that children's lives will be better understood.

Following an introductory overview, the book proceeds across 10 chapters spanning theoretical perspectives; young people and families; peers, relationships and sexuality; health and well-being; education and employment; values and attitudes; recreation and leisure; juvenile justice, services and policy; and marginalised and excluded young people. It ends with a chapter which seeks to identify emerging trends and issues. Overall, the organisational logic underpinning the book works, with a coherence across and between the chapters. What is striking about all chapters is the wealth of content – theoretical, policy related and empirical (generally including quantitative and qualitative sources) – and the benefit of its interdisciplinary orientation. In general, there is a consistent reference to Irish material, although in certain areas, there is clearly less published work than others, limiting the authors' scope.

Writing a book such as this presents a particular challenge – what to include, what level of analysis to undertake and so on. Given the primary student audience, it is clear that the authors have privileged describing various frameworks of analysis and presenting extensive information on youth in Ireland. While many of the chapters present competing claims on the meaning and explanation of phenomena relevant to young people, the book is not framed around an overarching set of questions. Neither does it adopt a single particular theoretical perspective from which to understand young people in Ireland. The strength of the authors' strategy is that it allows for a breadth of knowledge to be made available to students, academics and researchers. The price to be paid is that it isn't possible to address the many interesting 'why' questions in any real depth.

While the content is comprehensive, there are some limitations. The area of new information and communication technologies (texting, social networking sites) and their place in everyday interaction among young people – for example, in developing and maintaining friendships and more negatively as a mechanism for bullying – receives limited attention. While this most likely reflects limited empirical research in Ireland, some discussion of implications using international research might have been useful. A more general point relates to the inclusion of the voice of young people in the text. While successful in some chapters, with reference to and sometimes direct quotes from qualitative research, in others, the voices of young people are not heard. An example of this is the chapter on education where there is little on young people's experiences of school as a social process, either of the general student body, or more specifically of those that struggle in school or leave at or before the statutory age (see Boldt, 1997). However, any perception of limitations in content must be balanced with an acknowledgement of the authors' success in achieving a breadth of coverage.

In conclusion, this is a very useful text and a very welcome addition to our teaching and research resource base on children and young people in Ireland. Given that the text aims to be contemporary, I presume the authors intend to produce further editions, something I would welcome. In the meantime, this book stands as an encouragement to fellow researchers and academics to undertake research and publish in more depth on the many topics covered.

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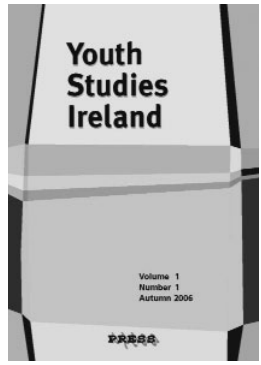

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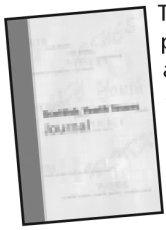

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