



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

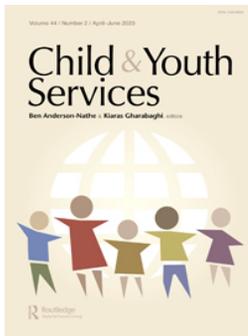
Youth Work as Social Pedagogy: Toward an Understanding of Non-Formal and Informal Education and Learning in Youth Work

This is the Published version of the following publication

Corney, Tim, Marion, John, Baird, Ronald, Welsh, Scott and Gorman, Jamie (2023) Youth Work as Social Pedagogy: Toward an Understanding of Non-Formal and Informal Education and Learning in Youth Work. Child & Youth Services. pp. 1-27. ISSN 0145-935X

The publisher's official version can be found at
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0145935x.2023.2218081>
Note that access to this version may require subscription.

Downloaded from VU Research Repository <https://vuir.vu.edu.au/46251/>



Youth Work as Social Pedagogy: Toward an Understanding of Non-Formal and Informal Education and Learning in Youth Work

T. Corney, J. Marion, R. Baird, S. Welsh & J. Gorman

To cite this article: T. Corney, J. Marion, R. Baird, S. Welsh & J. Gorman (2023): Youth Work as Social Pedagogy: Toward an Understanding of Non-Formal and Informal Education and Learning in Youth Work, *Child & Youth Services*, DOI: [10.1080/0145935X.2023.2218081](https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2023.2218081)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2023.2218081>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC



Published online: 20 Jun 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Youth Work as Social Pedagogy: Toward an Understanding of Non-Formal and Informal Education and Learning in Youth Work

T. Corney^a , J. Marion^a , R. Baird^a , S. Welsh^a , and J. Gorman^b 

^aCollege of Arts and Education, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia; ^bDepartment of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University, Ireland

ABSTRACT

This paper undertakes a select survey of international literature to identify the points of convergence that support common understanding – and debate – amongst youth workers, researchers and policy makers in regards to definitional commonalities in professional youth work. We find that non-formal education, framed by human rights, appears to offer definitional common ground for youth work practice globally. Drawing on the Australian context to ground the discussion, the paper considers how revision of key definitional documents to reflect the pedagogic basis of youth work could inform the tertiary level training and preparation of youth work students and the state-based codes of ethics that inform and regulate professional youth work practice. This is important for professional youth work in Australia as the only nationally agreed statement on youth work currently lacks a pedagogical definition. While precisely categorizing the practices and programs used by youth workers remains a challenge, there is much common ground found amongst the *non-formal and informal education* conceptualisations of youth work internationally. While there are differences in the way professional youth work is delivered across countries and jurisdictions, there appears to be an agreed underpinning pedagogical framework, often referred to as *social pedagogy*, which is commonly applied, and informs the practices and programs delivered to the diverse and complex young people who benefit from them.

KEYWORDS

Youth work; young people; social pedagogy; informal and non-formal education and learning

Introduction

Defining the practice of professional youth work has been described as a ‘perennial problem’ (Kiilakoski & Kauppinen, 2021, p. 86). The practice has

CONTACT T. Corney  tim.corney@vu.edu.au  College of Arts and Education, Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC 8001, Australia.

© 2023 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

evolved in myriad ways across the globe in a variety of institutional and community settings. At first glance approaches such as European social pedagogy and North American psycho-social human development appear incommensurate, offering little common ground for global consensus. This paper undertakes a select survey of prominent international literature and professional body documents to identify the points of convergence that may support common understanding – and debate – amongst youth workers, researchers and policy makers. We find that non-formal education, framed by human rights, appears to offer definitional common ground for youth work practice globally, extending the work of Eichsteller and Holthoff (2011) on the place of non-formal education in work with young people. This appears to suggest that the underlying basis of professional youth work is pedagogical, centered on non-formal and informal learning. Following from this, we consider the implications of a transnational definition of youth work as a pedagogic practice for the occupational identity of youth workers globally. Drawing on the Australian context to ground the discussion, the paper considers how revision of key definitional documents to reflect the pedagogic basis of youth work could inform the tertiary level training and preparation of youth work students and the state-based codes of ethics that inform and regulate professional youth work practice.

International context: common pedagogical conceptualisations of youth work

Finding a universally accepted definition of youth work, and in particular its practices, has previously proved difficult (Sercombe, 2010). As Williamson (2015) aptly states, ‘youth work is routinely defined in terms of what it is not rather than articulating more precisely what it is’ (p. 7). One reason for the previous lack of a consistent definition is the diverse and complex nature of the young people at the center of youth work (Corney, 2021); another is the variety of contexts in which youth work is undertaken, the activities and programs delivered, and the aims and outcomes envisaged.

Cooper (2018) suggests that the heterogeneity of youth work practices and contexts makes the transnational sharing of a practice based ‘operational definition’ (p. 3) difficult and unrealistic, particularly one that crosses national boundaries and cultural differences. She goes on to state that the specific historical circumstances regarding the development and provision of youth work, such as its role in the growth of particular countries’ public sectors and civil society organizations and services (i.e. education, welfare, employment, justice, politics, and religion etc.) are too great

to bridge in practice terms. However, she suggests ‘an alternative is to seek conceptual definitions of youth work processes that encapsulate essential features of practice’ (Cooper, 2018, p. 4). So what are the common conceptualisations of youth work?

The European social pedagogy tradition

Europe has led the way in this regard, finding common conceptualisations of youth work that cross country-specific contexts and practices. These definitions are found in the documents and declarations of European youth work events such as the European Union and Council of Europe, European Youth Work Conventions ([COE], 2010, 2015, 2020) which have sought to find shared understandings in defining the underpinnings of youth work. The most recent convention declaration (COE, 2020) states that while youth work across Europe is diverse, it ‘... possesses significant common ground’ (p. 4). Two areas of common ground are the place of non-formal and informal education in youth work (Morciano, 2015, p. 69), and its underpinning by human rights. Indeed, in the European social pedagogy tradition, non-formal education and human rights are strongly linked. Youth work is understood as a pedagogic practice that supports the ‘young people’s full enjoyment of human rights and human dignity’ (Council of Europe, 2008). Links between non-formal education and human rights have been forged at the level of practice (Council of Europe, 2020) as well as policy, with the EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 stressing that ‘European Youth Policy cooperation should be firmly anchored in the international system of human rights’ (EU, 2018).

The 2nd European Youth Work Convention clearly defined youth work as ‘based on non-formal and informal learning’ and connected to the implementation of ‘... existing and future European agendas on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning’ (COE, 2015, p. 15). Further, the declaration ‘recogni[sed] and validat[ed] the learning and achievement that takes place through youth work in non-formal and informal learning environments’ (COE, 2015, p. 7). The convention declaration elaborated on the diversity of ‘spaces’, contexts and environments that youth work takes place within, such as the digital space, and also acknowledged the growing cultural diversity across Europe and the increasing focus of youth work on ‘bridging’ these ‘spaces’ and, ‘... on the integration of young people and supporting intercultural learning’ (COE, 2015, p. 5).

The 3rd European Youth Work Convention noted that previous convention documents had informed its declaration and one of those recommendations was specifically pedagogical; calling for the ‘recognition and

validation of learning in youth work ...' (COE, 2020, p. 5). The report went on to state that:

[B]uilding bridges from the perspective of education and training also means to go beyond the idea of integrating non-formal education and learning into formal education settings and rather work towards a coordinated system enhancing collaboration and cooperation between distinct sectors working on a common purpose. (COE, 2020, p. 13)

While it is acknowledged that there has been both practical and operational difference across European youth work (Williamson, 2015), efforts have been made over some time in Europe to draw together the common strands of youth work theory and its relationship to practice. The white paper, *A New Impetus for European Youth* (European Commission, 2001), is noted by Cooper (2018) as a common starting point, listing youth work as a part of the provision of education and development to young people. This impetus for documenting commonality was further enhanced by the publication of the *History of Youth Work in Europe* series (COE, 2009–2019) and culminated in a clear definitional statement being issued by the Council of Europe found in the Committee of Ministers recommendation on youth work (2017, p. 3) that declared youth work as a social pedagogic practice:

Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making.

This recommendation from European Committee of Ministers was echoed in 2020 by the EU's European Youth Work Agenda (European Union, 2020). This youth work agenda recognized the breadth of the term youth work, but located it in 'non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation' (European Union, 2020, p. 1). Summarizing the European view that youth work is a pedagogical practice, Lauritzen (in Rothemund & Ohana, 2008, p. 371) stresses that:

Youth work is a summary expression for activities with and for young people of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. ... Youth work belongs to the domain of 'out-of-school' education, most commonly referred to as either non-formal or informal learning.

Professional youth work in Britain and Ireland

These examples of shared conceptualisations from European youth work bodies share common ground with Britain and Ireland, with its tradition of professional and critical youth work that is framed by human rights

(Corney et al., 2022). Ireland defines youth work in law as a ‘planned programme of education’ (Youth Work Act 2001, s. 3), and describes youth workers as educators in non-formal settings (NYWDP, 2003). The United Kingdom (UK)-based youth work advocacy movement, In Defence of Youth Work (n.d.), define youth work ‘as a distinctive educational practice’ and Batsleer (2012, p. 287) argues that youth work in the UK is a social pedagogy that has ‘been recognized as having a significant contribution to make to education’. Moncrieffe (2016) writing from a Scottish perspective compares non-formal education and learning practices found in Scotland with those of the United States of America. She concludes that non-formal education can be seen as a youth work practice that builds social and human capital. Moncrieffe (2016, p. 15) suggests that non-formal education with young people in the community is provided as an alternative to formal education, stating that ‘Educationists (e.g., community educationists and youth workers) have incorporated the alternative role of non-formal education in order to provide learning for individuals where formal schooling is not present or an option’. This view of youth work as a ‘border pedagogy’ operating between formal and informal education is consistent with other Scottish youth work academics such as Coburn (2010) and Tett (2010). Moncrieffe (2016) goes on to suggest that non-formal education is focused on young people’s learning experiences within a community based context. She notes (2016, p. 17) that ‘community education creates learning environments where young people can voluntarily engage in various associational settings. This description of youth engagement is also known as youth work’.

In England, Mark Smith (1980, 1988) was an early advocate for the pedagogic basis of youth work and along with Tony Jeffs and Smith (2005, 2010, 2021) they have together spent much of their careers defining youth work as a pedagogic undertaking and detailing the relationship of youth work to that of informal and non-formal education and learning in both theory and practice. Jon Ord (2016, p. 2) also from the UK builds on Jeffs and Smith to highlight youth work’s ‘unique educational practice’ as a curriculum, ‘which emphasizes the process of education rather than its products’. This is not derived from the outcomes based ‘curriculum of the school’ argues Ord but is an experiential, person centered and relational, oriented curriculum.

North America: Youth work as a human development practice

In the North American context, youth work lies within the broad field of child and youth care, which takes place in an array of institutional and community settings (CYCCB, 2010, p. 28). Child and youth care is

generally defined as an applied human development practice rather than a specifically educative one. Yet the competencies statement of the US Child and Youth Care Certification Board (2010) suggests alignment with a social pedagogic approach, stating that:

‘Professional [child and youth care] practitioners promote the optimal development of children, youth, and their families in a variety of settings. The developmental-ecological perspective emphasizes the interaction between persons and their physical and social environments, including cultural and political settings’.

This should be done through the application of ‘developmentally and culturally sensitive methodologies and techniques’ (CYCCB, 2010, p. 22), again suggesting an implicit use of non-formal education. The lack of a stated emphasis on social pedagogy and non-formal education in the US may be due to the strength of the psycho-social discourse and framing – such as Social and Emotional Learning (Walker, 2023) – of child and youth development practice. That US youth work has pedagogic underpinnings is further suggested by the fact that the US peak-body, the Association for Child and Youth Care Practice, is the national chapter of FICE International. FICE is the International Federation of Educative Communities, a body set up under the patronage of UNESCO to support the out-of-home care and development of young people. FICE endorses and is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, pointing to a commitment to human rights and to community education as another point of convergence with the European social pedagogy tradition.

Beyond the professional body literature, North American youth work scholarship also suggests a non-formal educational basis for the practice. Discussing youth work in Chicago, Illinois, Heathfield (2012, p. 85) suggests a ‘strong English influence over youth work training and professional education’. Heathfield (2012, p. 88) goes on to say that in the United States (US) at the federal level a seminal point in the development of youth work has been the delivery of non-formal after school hours education programs that ‘expand learning opportunities for young people in areas of high poverty’. Heathfield (2012) building on Pittman et al. (2004) warns that a goal for many of these programs is to improve formal education outcomes and that this has the potential to ‘override the community association and informal education concerns’ important to youth workers. However, Heathfield (2012) goes on to state that a contrasting aim of many non-formal education programs delivered by youth workers has been ‘to provide a broad array of enrichment activities’ for young people beyond formal schooling. This is consistent with Nitzberg’s (2012, p. 190) community education approach to youth work that ‘weaves together formal and informal learning services’. Fusco (2012), also writing from a North American perspective and in line with Heathfield (2012) and Huebner et. al. (2003),

equates ‘youth work’ with the practices of ‘positive youth development’ in the US and suggests that American youth work is often delivered in community based non-formal education settings. It is in this context that Fusco (2012, p. xv) suggests that American youth work offers a ‘potency of learning opportunities’ that ‘lead to a range of positive development outcomes for young people’. Similarly, Hansen and Crawford’s (2011) extensive study of 11 youth programmes in the United States revealed the educational practices of youth workers in non-formal structured youth programmes. Such programmes have been described by Baldrige (2020) as ‘community-based youth work’, through which young people are engaged in non-formal community-based educational spaces that are separate to and outside of formal schooling. Baldrige (2020) suggests that this pedagogical form of youth work is ‘celebrated in America for supporting youth academically, socially, culturally, and politically’ and is consistent with the views of Heathfield and Fusco (2016).

In the US context, youth programmes are often developed by private citizens (Hansen and Crawford, 2011) and youth development activities are often linked to political movements (Noguera et al., 2013). In such contexts, processes of non-formal and informal learning also occur, as in the ‘youth centered apprentices’ analyzed by (Kirschner, 2006) where young people were mentored by adult community organizers. Similarly, Pillay and Asadi (2018, p. 2010–11), writing from a Canadian perspective suggest that informal education activities delivered via recreational and outdoor activities with marginalized young people enable social justice and social inclusion outcomes through providing alternative education spaces to formal schooling. Pillay and Asadi (2018, p. 2010–11) provide an example of a ‘summer youth camp’ where refugee young people access educational ‘spaces of belonging’ and learn how to negotiate their identities free of the prejudices found in formal schooling. They suggest that the informal education context of the youth summer camp ‘was a counter-hegemonic space’ that centered the culture and language of young people and enabled them to engage in a process of ‘unlearning and relearning through understanding how they have been positioned in relation to dominant discourses’ of formal schooling. These examples of informal and non-formal education and learning from North American work with young people, while selective and not exhaustive, are consistent with those found in continental Europe and the UK.

Youth work in the Global South

Beyond Europe and the North Atlantic Anglosphere, in countries of the Global South, the pedagogic basis of youth work is confirmed by the

Commonwealth's Nadi declaration of the Conference of Education Ministers from the Commonwealth of Nations. The Nadi declaration recognized '... the contribution of non-formal and informal learning in building the resilience of young people and the role of youth and community workers in delivering non-formal and informal education' (20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers [20CCEM], 2018, p. 4). This builds on the Commonwealth Secretariat's (2018) definition of youth work across the 56 countries of the Commonwealth of Nations, which defines youth work as 'all forms of rights-based youth engagement approaches that build personal awareness and support the social, political and economic empowerment of young people, delivered through non-formal learning within a matrix of care' (p. 1). This statement has been further enhanced by recent agreement at the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting between the Commonwealth Secretariat and many of the world's largest youth organizations (such as Scouts and Guides) to form the Commonwealth Alliance for Quality Youth Leadership with the specific objective of:

'[a]ccelerating youth leadership skills training, using non-formal education and learning approaches...' (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2022). The Commonwealth's youth policy is grounded in human rights and explicitly describes youth workers as:

'advocates, facilitating access to human rights, the democratic participation of young people in all levels of decision-making, and partnering with them in the development and transformation of their societies (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2014, p. 7).

Also global in their reach, the so-called "Big Six" global youth organizations¹ agreed a joint position on non-formal education that stresses the 'universal validity of the non-formal dimensions of education and learning by young people, both through the work of global youth organizations, as well as national and grassroots youth organizations' (Rio Declaration 2019 p. 2). These examples from the Commonwealth and Big Six suggest that youth work as an education practice internationally has been influenced in English speaking countries by British exported ideas. Cooper (2012, p. 100) asserts that British Influenced Youth Work (BIYW) 'occurs in post-colonial countries where English youth work education and training has been exported, either formally or informally'. She suggests that this includes, but is not limited to, the countries of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Malta, and countries of the Commonwealth of Nations 'where the Commonwealth Youth Development Programme operates'. However, as Belton (2014) suggests in his *Global Perspectives on Youth Work*, a primary emphasis of professional youth work is social pedagogy that extends beyond the English-speaking world. Belton (2014) states clearly that 'the focus of youth work is on ... the social

learning of young people' (p. 4). He defines social learning – in line with Freire's (1972) critique of formal 'banking' styles of education – as one that is not focused on narrow, one-way forms of instruction, but as an informal educational approach where youth workers and young people together develop 'learning opportunities out of everyday experience' (Belton, 2014, p. 4). Belton's views are confirmed by Slovenko and Thompson (2016), who state that youth work is underpinned by a 'social pedagogy that fits with the values of informal education' and that this is 'widely accepted and well researched' (p. 20).

The theoretical basis for the pedagogical nature of youth work

While the contexts in which professional youth work takes place may be diverse, our select review of professional body definitions suggests that pedagogy, guided by human rights, provides a theoretical commonality underpinning the conceptualization of youth work. In this section, we consider the literature on social pedagogy in relation to youth work practice in order to elaborate the theoretical foundations for framing a global definition of youth work in pedagogic terms.

Howell (2021) states that 'youth work is a distinct pedagogical practice, a process of informal education located in supported relationships, with the facilitation of participation and social justice at its heart' (p. 762). Batsleer (2012) argues that youth work operates in a critical space as a border pedagogy utilizing counter-hegemonic practices. Howell (2021) goes further to suggest this pedagogy of social justice is based on the 'youth work pedagogical principles [of] ... critical pedagogy' (p. 61). This signals a further nuanced understanding of social pedagogy in youth work literature as critical and transformative, influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (1972).

Hämäläinen (2015) notes that 'there is no unanimity on the nature of social pedagogy' (p. 1028). However, it is a concept commonly used across continental Europe to describe youth work (Slovenko and Thompson, 2016, p. 26), with a large evidence base for the practice (Hatton, 2018; Moss & Petrie, 2019; Sting, 2018). Therefore, while it may be difficult to define, there are commonalities that can be identified. Social pedagogy is about how society and communities think about the communal and social learning and development of people (particularly young people), how people and communities relate to each other, and how society and communities deal with issues of inclusion and exclusion, equality and equity, and of access to resources and power. In essence, it is often conceptualized as a pedagogy of social justice (Mollenhauer, 1964; see also Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Petrie, 2015). The Social Pedagogy Network (n.d.) defines social pedagogy as 'concerned with well-being, learning and growth' and

states that it is ‘dynamic, creative, and process-orientated rather than mechanical, procedural, and automated.’ Eichsteller and Holthoff (2011) identified four overarching aims of social pedagogy:

[T]o enhance wellbeing and happiness, both at an individual and collective level as well as in the short and long term; to provide holistic learning opportunities and positive experiences throughout the life course; to develop strong, caring and authentic relationships so that people experience themselves as interconnected, as supported by and responsible for others; and to enable individuals and communities to empower themselves, taking responsibility for and control over their own lives. (p. 178)

The origins and development of social pedagogy

The origins of social pedagogy can be traced back through thinkers such as Comenius and Rosseau (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011; Hämäläinen, 2015). Moss and Petrie, (2019) suggest the term social pedagogy was first used by German educationalist Karl Mager, as he explored theories of social development in education. The idea emerged in response to social issues of industrialization and mobilization (Mollenhauer, 1964), especially in regard to the so-called ‘youth question’ in Germany, where social pedagogy was integrated into social work with young people in the 1920s (Hämäläinen, 2015, pp. 1023–1024). Following the Second World War, social pedagogy developed a critical stance, ‘deconstructing social policies and institutions in examining the relationship between social pedagogy and the state’ (Petrie, 2015, p. 99). The concept of social pedagogy is relatively new in English speaking contexts (Hämäläinen, 2015), though efforts have been made in the UK to embrace its principles in work with young people in a range of settings (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012).

In practice, rather than a distinct set of methods, social pedagogy has been described as ‘not so much about what is done, but more about how something is done’ (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012, p. 33). Social pedagogy is built on a person-centered approach (Jones & Brady, 2022), and views people as ‘resourceful, active agents who are experts for their own lives and possess inherent strengths that can be drawn on in overcoming challenges’ (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011, p. 178). It engages individuals in a holistic manner (Úcar, 2012), considering the entire context of their lives and community. The person-centered approach of social pedagogy does not only extend to young people, but to those who work with them; as a dynamic and creative approach, it demands ‘social pedagogs to be a whole person’ (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012, p. 33).

Given its emphasis on the “how” and “who” of the work, it is no surprise that social pedagogy is a values-based approach (Jones & Brady, 2022).

Eichsteller & Holthoff (2012) use the German word *Haltung*, which ‘describes how a social pedagog brings [their] own values and beliefs into professional practice’ (p. 34) to explain the importance of the social pedagog’s ethos and mindset to their work. The social pedagog brings their whole self, head, heart, and hands, to the process (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012). As such, it is the application of their values, rather than a method followed, that underscores the work of social pedagogy. Gruber (2009) identified five key values for social pedagogy: human dignity, responsibility, tolerance, social justice, and solidarity.

As social pedagogy is necessarily concerned with the social, its perspective ‘throws light on the way social and political problems are transformed into pedagogical questions’ (Vandenbroeck et al., 2011, p. 53). As such, social pedagogy is concerned with questions of politics and justice; for Hämäläinen (2003), ‘the basic idea of social pedagogy is to promote people’s social functioning, inclusion, participation, social identity and social competence as members of society’ (p. 76). Rather than discipline and control, social pedagogical approaches encourage participation and collective problem solving (Schugurensky, 2014). As a result ‘[t]he value of democracy is also central’ in the practice of social pedagogy, with democracy ‘clearly related to empowerment’ (Slovenko & Thompson, 2016, p. 32). As noted above, critical social pedagogy also considers the entire social context of issues, and challenges unjust power relations and exclusion (Moss & Petrie, 2019). As relationships are the driver for change in social pedagogy (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011), it is necessary for the ‘containment of the hierarchical component in the relationship between the young and the educator in favor of an equal relationship in which each has both the power and responsibility to play their own active role in the design and implementation of the educational project’ (Morciano, 2015, p. 83). It is in these genuine and authentic relationships that support and learning processes can occur (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012).

Social pedagogy is built on learning by doing. It has a ‘life-world orientation’ (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011, p. 183), meaning that it is focused on the lived experience and day-to-day context of the learner, rather than the artifice of classroom or setting. Instead, through engaging in relationship and everyday life, the social pedagog has an opportunity to embrace ‘creation of the conditions that facilitate growth’ (Morciano, 2015, p. 72), using what is naturally occurring to help young people explore their perspectives and responses. As such, social pedagogy is an approach that requires creativity and spontaneity from its proponents (Hatton, 2018); the ability to be present in the moment, open to opportunities, and to understand a young person’s world. Coussée and Williamson (2011, p. 224) describe this as the “social and pedagogical tension” inherent in youth work practice.

Non-formal and informal learning

As noted, the pedagogy of youth work has been defined as non-formal and informal education and learning. Whilst these approaches reflect the tenants of social pedagogy, they each have their own unique expression and historical development. Non-formal education has been described as education taking place outside of formal settings ‘the voluntary, but intentional, planned, and permanently flexible educational process, which is characterized by the diversity of methods, areas, and contents in which it is applied’ (Menchén, 2006, p. 13). Often defined in opposition to formal education, such as in the *Make Learning Visible* report (Bjornavold, 2000), non-formal education recognizes both the learning and education that can happen outside formal settings, and across the life-course (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017).

Conceptual origins of non-formal education can be traced to the Nordic folk schools, based on the ideas of Nikolaj Grundtvig. Their aim was the inclusion of everyday people in non-formal education for the enhancement of social life through knowledge of their history and culture (Lövgren & Nordvall, 2017). A further strand to the origins can be found in various worker and adult education traditions such as the Workers Educational Associations (Friesen & Taksa, 1996). Kelly (1970) documents the important influence of mechanics’ institutes, churches, unions and labor colleges, which contributed to the conceptual development of non-formal education ideas. Norqvist & Leffler (2017) note that global interest in non-formal education was strengthened by the world educational crisis of the 1960s, as described by Coombs (1968), and ‘dominated most educational discussions in the 1970s and early 1980s’ (Rogers, 2005, p. 2). At this time Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed (1973) defined the differences between formal schooling and non-formal and informal education and Simkins (1976) went further – clearly differentiating between informal and non-formal education. Globally, non-formal and informal education were seen as a community response to developmental and literacy needs (Norqvist & Leffler, 2017), and as such were crucial for social and economic development (Rogers, 2005). In this way, non-formal education reflects the notion of social pedagogy as a response to social needs.

Non-formal education in youth work is experience-based learning (Ord, 2016). Although it may be somewhat structured, its objectives are not set by an external or mandated curriculum, but ‘expressed directly by the young on the basis of their interests’ (Morciano, 2015, p. 82; Ord, 2016). In engaging young people at their level and in their contexts, it is flexible, creative, multidisciplinary, and adaptive (Mariona et al., 2022). It is unpredictable, with educator workers often exploring ideas as they emerge from and with young people (Stuart & Maynard, 2015). Rather than information, it has a bias toward what is often called ‘soft skills’ – social and personal

development (Stuart & Maynard, 2015, p. 237). In its focus on empowering young people in their development, it can have an emancipatory effect (Mariona et al., 2022). As young people take action and engage in critical dialogue (Freire, 1972), they can develop confidence, as well as explore the reasons for their current social situation (Stuart & Maynard, 2015). In a practical sense, non-formal education challenges exclusion, as it aims to remove barriers that may come with formal education, and is more accessible to those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Mariona et al., 2022).

While non-formal education is a dominant concept in Europe, in the UK, the practice of youth work has been influenced by pedagogical practices described as ‘informal’ (Jeffs & Smith, 2010; Slovenko & Thompson, 2016, p. 32). Informal learning is experiential in that it is a process that involves transactions between the person(s) and the environment in which the learning occurs (Kolb, 2014). In this way informal learning is first and foremost conceived as a social pedagogy, a process of participation that is embedded within social activity and context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Jeffs and Smith (2021) describe two uses of the term informal education. The first is education that occurs in non-school settings this can also be described as ‘non-formal’ education, while the second use of informal education identifies it as a process of and orientation to learning emerging from experience, reflection and conversation that is profoundly distinguishable from its binary of formal education, which is characterized as being instructional and organized by a curriculum. Whereas the term informal learning can be characterized as relational and ‘acquisition learning that is concrete, immediate and confined to a specific activity’ (Rogers, 2005, p. 18). Jeffs and Smith (2010) see youth work practice as a process of enabling non-formal and informal education and learning to take place. Hatton (2018) demonstrated the synergies between social pedagogy, informal education, and youth work and argues that these concepts draw heavily on the critical and emancipatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1972).

Freirean pedagogy: an emancipatory approach to learning

According to Freire (1972), his emancipatory pedagogy is based on a critical dialogue between participants, portrayed as a *praxis* cycle of proposing provocative questions and reflecting on them critically, enabling the responses to challenge and inform the future actions of the participants. According to Corney et al. (2022), British youth work thinkers (Jeffs & Smith, 2005, 2010; Smith, 1988) have shaped the concept of youth work as an educational practice (non-formal and informal) and its pedagogy as social, critical and emancipatory (Beck & Purcell, 2010; Corney, 2004, 2006, 2019; Freire, 1972; Mayo, 1999). Maunders (1984, 2014) and Smith (1988)

see the notion of Gramscian (1971) hegemony as a counter-hegemonic practice in youth work. This concept has been further developed by Batsleer (2012), Chouhan (2009), Beck and Purcell (2010) and Seal (2019). Corney et al. (2022) suggest that this is a counter hegemonic pedagogy that conceives of the youth worker acting pedagogically as an organic intellectual (Corney, 2006; Corney et al., 2022; Singh & Cowden, 2009; Smith, 1988).

Youth work literature agrees on the importance of Freire's (1972) social pedagogy and in particular his notion of *critical dialogue* as a key part of pedagogical youth work practice with young people (Beck & Purcell, 2010; Coburn, 2010; Cooper, 1999, 2011; Cooper & White, 1994; Corney, 2004, 2006, 2019; Corney et al., 2022; Seal, 2019). Corney et al. (2022) suggest that dialogical conversations concurrently take the views of young people seriously while also challenging young people to critically analyze and engage with the worlds in which they live, to critique the socio-political structures that shape these environments and to act on issues of injustice to bring change (Chouhan, 2009). This is what Freire (1972) describes as the *conscientisation* process inherent in his emancipatory pedagogy.

The influence of Freire's critical pedagogy on the practice of youth work is well documented (Seal, 2019) and commitment to Freire's (1972) pedagogy, as an underpinning theoretical framework for much youth work practice, is most strongly represented in the English context (Clyne, 2020). However, there are critiques of Freire's pedagogy of liberation generally (Biesta, 2017) and its use in youth work is not without criticism (Kirkwood, 2012; Clyne, 2020). The ongoing influence of critical pedagogy on youth work is not unchallenged (Ord, 2016). Clyne (2020) while acknowledging the dominance of Freire has outlined a divergence in pedagogic philosophy in English youth work between that of Freire and to a lesser extent Kolb (1984) with that of Knowles (1970) and Rogers (1969).

However, as Corney et al. (2022) conclude, youth work is generally regarded as a critical social pedagogy and 'therefore, it is important that youth work methods have a dialogical component' (p. 679). As they make plain, alternative pedagogical approaches may lead to individualized and simplistic youth work practices that are educationally 'unreflective and lack consciousness raising' (Cooper, 2012; Cooper & White, 1994; Corney et al., 2022, p. 679). Hatton (2018, p. 164) concurs, stating clearly, that social pedagogy serves as a reminder to youth workers that 'youth work has a radical history' that is not just connected to individual development of young people but to broader movements of social justice and social change.

Youth workers and social pedagogy

For youth workers, understanding youth work as social pedagogy has the opportunity to improve practice. Cameron (2016) analyzed evaluations

from residential care settings that engaged explicitly in social pedagogy practices, and found that staff reported positive experiences, for both themselves and young people. A report from the Regional Youth Work Unit North East and the University of Sunderland (2010) noted similar findings, including hearing directly from young people, who thought that it would be beneficial for services to engage in social pedagogy training of youth workers. In these studies and others, youth workers noted that the practices of social pedagogy were not new to them, 'but the difference which social pedagogy seemed to make was that it provided a framework to conceptualize and reflect upon' their work (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012, p. 43). Youth workers found the principles to be empowering, giving them permission to do what they believed in and bring their whole selves to the work (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2012). In addition, understanding social pedagogy as an ethical orientation (Eichsteller & Holthoff, 2011) encourages workers to critically reflect on their practice, including how they are acting inclusively and empowering young people. In this way, social pedagogical approaches can enhance ethical practice, and aligns with existing commitments to human rights in UK, US and Australian codes of ethics.

This section has traced the historic origins and development of non-formal educational practice, including the role of Freirean approaches in youth work, to demonstrate the rich theoretical conceptualisations for youth work as a pedagogic practice. We suggest that enhancing and supporting recognition of youth work as a pedagogic practice would enable practitioners, policy maker and researchers to draw on these rich theoretical foundations to conceptualize the practice. This could strengthen the occupational identity of youth workers globally, supporting international exchange and comparative analysis. In order to examine how such an alignment might be achieved, we turn now to examine the case of Australia.

A definitional gap? Evidence of non-formal and informal education and learning in Australian youth work practice

In this final section, we draw on the Australian context, one most familiar to the authors, to ground our discussion and note the practical challenges for and implications of defining youth work as a pedagogic practice. We identify gaps between national and state-level definitions of youth work and empirical evidence of pedagogic practice of youth workers (Baird, 2018) and argue that addressing this definitional gap is important for youth workers, youth organizations and the outcomes for young people.

The Australian context

Professional youth work in Australia and those things that define it, such as pre-service tertiary education, codes of ethics and professional associations, have existed at various times and in various forms since the 1940s (Corney, 2021; Irving et al., 1995; Maunders, 1984). However, a commonly accepted national statement on what constitutes youth work in Australia is relatively recent, with the current definition being enacted by the only federal government funded, and nationally recognized peak body, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition ('AYAC') in 2014. This national statement was worked out by delegates representing state and territory youth affairs councils and subsequently ratified by those state councils. The impact and import of the statement has been substantial, informing the tertiary level training and preparation of youth work students nationally and the codes of ethics that regulate professional youth work practice in Australian states. Despite the prominence of the AYAC national statement, a recent report regarding youth work in the state of Victoria noted a lack of clarity regarding the definition of youth work, and suggested that agreement in this area would assist in outcomes for the sector (Deloitte Access Economics, 2022, p. 36).

In relation to defining youth work in Australia, Maunders (2014) has argued historically that youth work has been motivated by the values of its practitioners in tension with the values of the agencies that fund and employ them; whether it be the state or faith-based movements seeking the reform of "delinquents" in the late 19th century, political youth movements in the 1930s, or the focus on youth rights and empowerment by an emerging professional class of youth workers from the 1960s and 1970s onwards (Maunders, 2014). Corney (2004), building on Maunders (1984), identified that what motivates some youth workers to work with young people and what underpins that work, is often informed and shaped by the values and mission of those that educate and train youth workers and prepare them for practice. Hence the importance of definitional statements that inform the preservice training curriculums for youth workers.

Australia has well developed traditions of non-formal and informal education found in the allied practices of adult, popular and radical education (Flowers, 2016; Foley, 2020; Newman, 1993). Yet despite the emerging international consensus, discussed above, on youth work being a pedagogic practice, contemporary Australian youth work practice is located in a variety of mostly government funded welfare services, including housing, health, and justice. This appears to mirror the US context, where youth workers are employed in a large variety of institutional and community settings and are 'known by almost every other name than what they do, unlike social workers or teachers' (Brooker, 2015). Similarly, in Australia

Cooper and Baxter (2019, p. 113) found youth workers ‘more likely to be involved in youth welfare services’ than is found in other countries such as Britain. Recognizing an ‘absence of a shared identity for youth workers’ (AYAC, 2013, p. 1) and amid the competing voices of state-based professional associations and various state-based codes of ethics, the national youth sector peak body, AYAC, sought to create a nationally agreed definitional statement of youth work that could be recognized across Australia, and be used to advocate for youth work across state borders. Corney et al. (2022) note that as a result this national statement is the only existing nationally accepted definition of youth work in Australia:

Youth work is a practice that places young people and their interests first. Youth work is a relational practice, where the youth worker operates alongside the young person in their context. Youth work is an empowering practice that advocates for and facilitates a young person’s independence, participation in society, connectedness, and realisation of their rights. (AYAC, 2013, p. 3)

This national description of youth work is admirable and no doubt useful for informing and guiding practice, and while it does emphasize a rights basis to practice consistent with international definitions, it lacks any acknowledgement of the pedagogical basis of youth work and, in particular, a basis in non-formal and informal education and learning. This is also true of the various codes of ethics produced by state youth affairs councils and state-based professional associations for youth workers. Codes of ethics have been important documents in the youth work professionalization process in Australia; acting as quasi-definitional statements shaping the identity and professional practice of youth workers and informing preservice training (Corney, 2021). In the state of Victoria, the current version of the Code of Ethical Practice (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2007) provides a series of principles and practice responsibilities that are founded in human rights as a framework for youth work practice. While this code is comprehensive and instructively informs practice, it does not mention pedagogic underpinnings as being important to youth work. The same is true of the other state-based codes of ethics derived from the Western Australian code (Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia & Western Australian Association of Youth Workers, 2014; Corney, 2021), which is also silent on the role of pedagogy in youth work.

Evidence of non-formal education in Australian youth work

Yet the silence within professional body statements does not mean that Australian youth work is not pedagogic in practice, as Baird (2018), in concert with the earlier work of Eichsteller and Holthoff (2011) demonstrates. Baird (2018) found that the practices of youth workers engaging with

marginalized young people in the western suburbs of Melbourne align with the approaches of social pedagogy. He found that local municipal council funded youth workers, who were working with young aerosol graffiti writers, used non-formal and informal education practices that elicited non-formal and informal learning responses for the young aerosol writers who participated in the youth work programs. Baird's (2018) case study drew on vignettes that describe informal social learning practices amongst a group of young people involved in an aerosol art program for at risk young people run by youth workers through Local Government Authority youth services.

Baird (2018) described the pedagogical interactions between the youth workers and young people as consistent with a mutual learning and teaching that was in concert with the critical social pedagogy of Freire (1972):

'Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students' (p. 72).

Baird (2018) witnessed a clear example of pedagogical practice talk or 'dialogue' (p. 156) that demonstrated the occurrence of non-formal and informal social learning via young people and youth workers talking about aerosol graffiti writing practice and relating it to stories of aerosol writing community lore (Orr, 1990). Baird's (2018) case study analysis demonstrates how youth workers employ informal education and learning outcomes in their professional practice. While the field of formal education studies has largely dismissed young people's informal learning practices and the mutual benefit to education professionals, and caricatured research in this space as legitimizing young people's anti-social behavior (Mills & Kraftl, 2014), Baird's (2018) study confirms a key conceptual principle that education as non-formal and informal learning takes place through pedagogically defined youth work practice in Australia. Baird's (2018) study not only evidences the presence of non-formal and informal education and learning in Australian youth work practice, but also provides a useful example for practitioners as they conceptualize the pedagogic nature of their work.

Recognizing pedagogy: implications for Australian youth work

Greater acknowledgement of the pedagogic nature of practice by youth work professional bodies could address the definitional gap in Australian youth work practice, ensuring that professional bodies are reflecting the reality of the work for their members. It would support greater understanding of what youth workers do by cognate disciplines such as teaching and social work. Furthermore, addressing the definitional gap in Australian

youth work would align Australian practice with the emerging global consensus and support greater international mobility and exchange between practitioners. Baird (2018) argues that there are a number of implications of a greater reflection of the pedagogic nature of practice for the tertiary level preparation and professional regulation of youth work education and training as well as for youth work professional body codes of ethics.

With regard to the training of youth workers, strengthening the emphasis on the pedagogic nature of youth work would require the revision of national training packages to include reference to underpinning pedagogical theories in certificate and diploma level training. Similarly it would require revision of unit content and curriculum in university degree level programs. As social pedagogy is as much a process-driven *how* as a content-driven *what*, emphasis should be placed on critically reflective practice, as social pedagogues are 'encouraged constantly to examine their practice and to apply both theoretical knowledge and self-knowledge to the sometimes-challenging demands that confront them' (Moss & Petrie, 2019, p. 399). Finally, educators might place a particular focus on developing the practices of critical dialogue and other Freirean approaches as necessary (Petrie, 2015).

A second implication of a greater emphasis on social pedagogy is the need to amend national definitions, codes and guidance documents. This is arduous and requires diplomacy, but may be supported by recent political developments in the sector. The Australian federal government has re-funded the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition as the national peak sector body, and appointed the national youth work professional association, Youth Workers Australia as the body responsible for the accreditation of youth work degrees nationally. These timely developments provides the youth sector with formally recognized regulatory bodies able to facilitate and lead this work.

Conclusions and implications

Embracing social pedagogy as an internationally accepted underpinning conceptualization of youth work has implications for national and state-based definitions that inform pre-service youth work training. Understanding youth work as a social pedagogy would enhance the youth work sector's contribution to public policy development and debate through its emancipatory practices and conceptualization of society (Moss & Petrie, 2019). This is a positive contribution that Hans Thiersch has argued has not been promoted strongly enough by workers themselves (Schugurensky, 2014). In regard to conceptualisations of youth work, despite theoretical knowledge being foundational to good practice (Petrie,

2015), too often youth work has been devoid of educational theory (Williamson, 2015). Social pedagogy offers youth work a ‘theoretical framework around which to position itself’ (Williamson & Conroy, 2020, p. 179). This paper has sought to establish non-formal education and learning as definitional common ground that can support greater dialogue, debate and potential for consensus between the youth work traditions of European social pedagogy and North American psycho-social human development. Additionally, it would enhance the sector’s ability to explain what it does beyond its own disciplinary borders, thus promoting and advocating for the value of youth work (Cooper, 2018). This is especially important in light of efforts by neo-liberal governments to question the outcomes of youth work and seek to defund and dismantle youth work services (Hatton, 2018). In this environment, the conceptualization of youth work as a social pedagogy provides youth workers with ‘tools to defend themselves against accusations of superficiality, improvisation, lack of professionalism and an inability to demonstrate the effects of their actions’ (Morciano, 2015, p. 90). It also provides concepts and practices for the evaluation and critique of outcomes that are prescriptive, or not in the interests of young people, and narrowly defined by the state or other actors (Morciano, 2015; Plath, 2006; Stuart & Maynard, 2015).

Conceptualizing youth work as a practice of social pedagogy, in international, national and sub-national definitions of youth work would also benefit young people. Social pedagogy enables grassroots youth work to create counter-discourses around young people, as opposed to narratives of dysfunction and delinquency (de St Croix, 2016; see also Batsleer, 2012). Rather than a focus on young people as a problem to be fixed, or to limit their access to services unless they experience a defined deficit, a social pedagogy approach instead takes a strengths-based approach, empowering young people holistically as positive youth development (Fusco, 2012; Hatton, 2018; Petrie, 2015; Williamson & Conroy, 2020). The emancipatory nature of social pedagogy enhances youth participation, supporting policy that listens to young people’s voices and enables their agency in decision making (Slovenko & Thompson, 2016). In addition, Jones and Brady (2022) have described the potential for social pedagogy to be an innovative response to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, as relationships and practices are reimagined in communities. Making youth work’s social pedagogic underpinnings more explicit has the potential to benefit both the youth work sector and young people directly. However, an ongoing lack of recognition of the pedagogic underpinnings in national and state-based definitions of youth work, as in the case of Australia, is a problematic definitional gap which requires revision through national and state-based consultation processes.

Note

1. Scouting and Guiding, YMCA, YWCA, the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

- T. Corney  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1980-6835>
 J. Marion  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5259-4045>
 R. Baird  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8628-2939>
 S. Welsh  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9707-8557>
 J. Gorman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5153-2045>

References

- Australian Youth Affairs Coalition. (2013). *The AYAC definition of Youth Work in Australia*. Australian Youth Affairs Coalition. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60948b9e3847ee0caf0e2dd4/t/60ced174beb02125730e6fdf/1624166774392/National+Definition+of+Youth+Work+2013+-+AYAC.pdf>
- Baird, R. (2018). *Reframing graffiti writing as a community of practice: Sites of youth learning and social engagement* [Doctoral Dissertation]. University of Melbourne. https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/bitstream/handle/11343/221882/BAIRD_RON_324789_FULL_THESIS_Exam_Revisions_Final.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Baldrige, B. J. (2020). The youthwork paradox: A case for studying the complexity of community-based youth work in education research. *Educational Researcher*, 49(8), 618–625. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20937300>
- Batsleer, J. (2012). Dangerous spaces, dangerous memories, dangerous emotions: Informal education and heteronormativity – A Manchester UK Youth Work vignette. *Discourse*, 33(3), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2012.681896>
- Beck, D., & Purcell, R. (2010). *Popular education practice for youth and community development work*. SAGE.
- Belton, B. (2014). *Cadjan – Kiduhu': Global Perspectives on Youth Work*. Sense Publishers.
- Biesta, G. (2017). Don't be fooled by ignorant schoolmasters: On the role of the teacher in emancipatory education. *Policy Futures in Education*, 15(1), 52–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210316681202>
- Bjornavold, J. (2000). *Making learning visible: Identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal learning in Europe*. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.
- Brooker, J. (2015). 'Youth Work in the U.S.: A Survey of In-house Professional Knowledge'. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from <https://www.acycp.org/youth-work-in-the-u-s>
- Cameron, C. (2016). Social Pedagogy in the UK today: Findings from evaluations of training and development initiatives. *Pedagogía Social*, 27, 199–223.
- Chouhan, J. (2009). Anti-oppressive practice work with young people. In J. Wood & J. Hine (Eds.), *Work with young people: Theory and policy for practice* (pp. 60–74). SAGE.

- Clyne, A. R. (2020). Freire's Christian Pedagogy in the professional narrative of UK Youth Work. *Journal of Youth and Theology*, 19(2), 139–185. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24055093-bja10010>
- Coburn, A. (2010). Youth work as border pedagogy. In J. Batsleer, B. Davies, & K. Pople (Eds.), *What is Youth Work?* (pp. 33–46). SAGE.
- Commonwealth Secretariat. (2014). *Draft code of ethical practice for youth workers*. Commonwealth Youth Programme, Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Commonwealth Secretariat. (2018). *Pan Commonwealth Nadi Declaration of the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers*. Retrieved from <https://production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/migrated/inline/20CCEMNadiDeclaration.pdf>.
- Secretariat, Commonwealth. (2022). *Historic youth agreement to bring increased skills to over 250 million young people*. Retrieved from <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-forms-alliance-global-youth-organisations-skills-building-young>.
- Coombs, P. H. (1968). *World Educational Crisis: A systems approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Coombs, P., Prosser, R., & Ahmed, M. (1973). *New paths to learning*. International Council for Educational Development.
- Cooper, C. (2011). Youth participation and emancipation. In A. Fitzsimons, M. Hope, C. Cooper, & K. Russell (Eds.), *Empowerment and participation in youth work* (pp. 41–66). Learning Matters.
- Cooper, T. (1999). Youth worker education: An approach to the development of skills in consciousness raising through group work practice. In R. Flowers (Ed.), *Youth work, community work and popular education*, vol. 2. Sydney University of Technology.
- Cooper, T. (2012). Models of youth work: A framework for positive sceptical reflection. *Youth & Policy*, 1(109), 98–117.
- Cooper, T. (2018). Defining youth work: Exploring the boundaries, continuity and diversity of youth work practice. In P. Alldred, F. Cullen, K. Edwards, & D. Fusco (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of youth work practice* (pp. 3–17). SAGE.
- Cooper, T., & Baxter, R. (2019). Future prospects for Australasian Youth Work. In G. Bright & C. Pugh (Eds.), *Youth work: Global futures* (pp. 109–127). Brill.
- Cooper, T., & White, R. (1994). Models of youth work practice. *Youth Studies Australia*, 13(4), 30–35.
- Corney, T. (2004). Values versus competencies: Implications for the future of professional youth work education. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 7(4), 513–527. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1367626042000315257>
- Corney, T. (2006). Youth work in schools: Should youth workers also be teachers? *Youth Studies Australia*, 25(3), 17–25.
- Corney, T. (2019). Teaching Youth Work in Australia: Values based education and the threat of neoliberalism? In M. Seal (Ed.) *Teaching youth work in higher education: Tensions, connections, continuities and contradictions* (2nd ed., pp. 164–180). University of Tartu.
- Corney, T. (2021). *Professional youth work: An Australian perspective* (2nd ed.). Youth Network of Tasmania.
- Corney, T., Cooper, T., Shier, H., & Williamson, H. (2022). Youth participation: Adulthood, human rights and professional youth work. *Children & Society*, 36(4), 677–690. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12526>

- Council of Europe. (2008). The future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020. *Declaration of the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth*, Kyiv, Ukraine, 10–11 October 2008.
- Council of Europe. (2017). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work*. Council of Europe.
- Council of Europe. (2009–2019). *A History of Youth Work in Europe*. Vols 1–7. Council of Europe Publishing.
- Council of Europe. (2010). *Declaration of the 1st European Youth Work Convention*. 1st European Youth Work Convention.
- Council of Europe. (2015). *Declaration of the 2nd European Youth Work Convention*. 2nd European Youth Work Convention.
- Council of Europe. (2020). *Final Declaration of the 3rd European Youth Work Convention: Signposts for the future*. 3rd European Youth Work Convention.
- Coussée, F., & Williamson, H. (2011). Youth worker, probably the most difficult job in the world. *Children Australia*, 36(4), 224–228. <https://doi.org/10.1375/jcas.36.4.224>
- de St Croix, T. (2016). *Grassroots youth work: Policy, passion and resistance in practice*. Policy Press.
- Deloitte Access Economics. (2022). *Youth Work Matters social return on investment study*. Youth Affairs Council Victoria.
- Eichsteller, G., & Holthoff, S. (2011). Social Pedagogy as an ethical orientation towards working with people—Historical perspectives. *Children Australia*, 36(4), 176–186. <https://doi.org/10.1375/jcas.36.4.176>
- Eichsteller, G., & Holthoff, S. (2012). The art of being a social pedagogue: Developing cultural change in children’s homes in Essex. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 1(1), 30–45. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2012.v1.1.004>
- European Commission. (2018). *The European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027 (2018/C 456/01)*. European Commission.
- European Commission. (2001). *A new impetus for European youth*. European Commission.
- European Union. (2020). Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Framework for establishing a European Youth Work Agenda. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C, 415(1), 1–8.
- Flowers, R. (2016). A university’s relationship to activist and academic research in adult and popular education. *Magazin erwachsenenbildung*. at: Das Fachmedium für Forschung, Praxis und Diskurs.
- Foley, G. (Ed.). (2020). *Understanding adult education and training*. Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). Penguin.
- Friesen, G., & Taksa, L. (1996). Workers’ education in Australia and Canada: A comparative approach to labour’s cultural history. *Labour History*, 71(71), 170–197. <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516453>
- Fusco, D. (2012). *Advancing youth work, current trends, critical questions*. Routledge.
- Gramscian, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. Lawrence & Wishart.
- Gruber, H.-G. (2009). *Ethisch denken und handelnd. Grundzüge einer ethik der sozialen arbeit* (2nd ed.). Lucius & Lucius.
- Hämäläinen, J. (2003). The concept of social pedagogy in the field of social work. *Journal of Social Work*, 3(1), 69–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017303003001005>
- Hämäläinen, J. (2015). Defining social pedagogy: Historical, theoretical and practical considerations. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 45(3), 1022–1038.

- Hansen, D. M., & Crawford, M. J. (2011). On measuring youth work in the United States: The Role of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. *Youth and Policy*, 107, 71–81.
- Hatton, K. (2018). Youth work and social pedagogy: Reflections from the UK and Europe. In P. Alldred, F. Cullen, K. Edwards, & D. Fusco (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of youth work practice*. SAGE.
- Heathfield, M. (2012). A Chicago story, challenge and change. In D. Fusco (ed.) *Advancing youth work, current trends, critical questions*. Routledge.
- Heathfield, M., & Fusco, D. (2016). Honoring and supporting youth work intellectuals. In K. Pozzoboni & B. Kirshner (Eds.), *The changing landscape of youth work: Theory and practice for an evolving field*. Information Age Publishing.
- Howell, T. (2021). Student collaboration in action: A case study exploring the role of youth work pedagogy transforming interprofessional education in higher education. *Education Sciences*, 11(12), 761. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci1120761>
- Huebner, A. J., Walker, J. A., & McFarland, M. (2003). 'Staff development for the youth development professional: A critical framework for understanding the work', in. *Youth & Society*, 35(2), 204–225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X03255024>
- In Defence of Youth Work. (n.d). *About youth work*. In Defence of Youth Work. <https://indefenceofyouthwork.com/about/>
- Irving, T., Maunders, D., & Sherington, G. (1995). *Youth in Australia: Policy, administration and politics: A history since world War II*. Macmillan Education Australia.
- Jeffs, T., & Smith, M. (2005). *Informal education: Conversation, democracy and learning* (3rd ed.). YMCA.
- Jeffs, T., & Smith, M. (2010). *Youth work*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jeffs, T., & Smith, M. (2021). The education of informal educators. *Education Sciences*, 11(9), 488–503. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11090488>
- Jones, I. D., & Brady, G. (2022). Informal education pedagogy transcendence from the 'Academy' to Society in the Current and Post COVID Environment. *Education Sciences*, 12(1), 37. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12010037>
- Kelly, T. (1970). *A history of adult education in Great Britain*. Liverpool University Press.
- Kiilakoski, T., & Kauppinen, E. (2021). Oppiminen nuorisotyössä. Kiistanalainen käsite käytännössä [Learning in youth work: Contested concept in practice]. *Sosiaalipedagoginen Aikakauskirja*, 22, 85–111. <https://doi.org/10.30675/sa.102979>
- Kirkwood, C. (2012). Challenging Education, Creating Alliances: The Legacy of Paulo Freire in the 21st Century. The Persons in Relation Perspective: In *Counselling, Psychotherapy and Community Adult Learning*, pp. 149–164.
- Kirshner, B. (2006). Apprenticeship learning in youth activism. In P. Noguera, J. Cammarota, and S. Ginwright (Eds.) *Beyond resistance! Youth activism and community change: New democratic possibilities for practice and policy for America's youth*. Routledge.
- Knowles, M. S. (1970). *The modern practice of adult education: Andragogy versus pedagogy*. The Association Press.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. FT Press.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lövgren, J., & Nordvall, H. (2017). A short introduction to research on the Nordic folk high schools. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 37(02), 61–66. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-5949-2017-02-01>

- Mariona, F. F., Marta, R. M., & Roger, S. I. M. (2022). Youth empowerment through arts education: A case study of a non-formal education arts centre in Barcelona. *Social Inclusion, 10*(2), 85–94.
- Maunder, D. (1984). *Keeping them off the streets: A history of voluntary youth organisations in Australia, 1850–1980*. Centre for Youth and Community Studies, Phillip Institute of Technology.
- Maunder, D. (2014). Youth work as a response to social values. In T. Corney (Ed.), *Professional youth work: An Australian perspective* (pp. 61–75). Incolink.
- Mayo, P. (1999). *Gramsci, Freire and adult education: Possibilities for transformative action*. Zed Books.
- Menchén, M. d M. H. (2006). La educación no formal en España [Non-formal education in Spain]. *Revista de estudios de juventud, 74*, 11–26.
- Mills, S., & Kraftl, P. (2014). *Informal education, childhood and youth; geographies, histories, practices*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mollenhauer, K. (1964). *Einführung in die sozialpädagogik*. Beltz Verlag.
- Moncrieffe, M. L. (2016). *Analyzing a model of non-formal education for young people: A comparative case study of national programs in the United States and Scotland*. University of Edinburgh.
- Morciano, D. (2015). Evaluating outcomes and mechanisms of non-formal education in youth centres. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education, 7*(1), 67–96.
- Moss, P., & Petrie, P. (2019). Education and social pedagogy: What relationship? *London Review of Education, 17*(3), 393–405. <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.17.3.13>
- Newman, M. (1993). *The third contract: Theory and Practice in Trade Union Training*. Stewart Victor Publishing.
- Nitzberg, J. (2012). A community education approach to youth work education. In D Fusco (Ed.), *Advancing youth work, current trends, critical questions*. Routledge.
- Noguera, P., Cammarota, J., & Ginwright, S. (2013). *Beyond resistance! Youth activism and community change: New democratic possibilities for practice and policy for America's youth*. Routledge.
- Norqvist, L., & Leffler, E. (2017). Learning in non-formal education: Is it “youthful” for youth in action? *International Review of Education, 63*(2), 235–256. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-017-9631-8>
- NYWDP. (2003). *National youth work development plan*. Government Publications.
- Ord, J. (2016). *Youth work process, product and practice* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Orr, J. E. (1990). Sharing knowledge, celebrating identity: Community memory in a service culture. In D. Middleton & D. Edwards (Eds.), *Collective remembering* (pp. 169–189). SAGE.
- Petrie, P. (2015). Social justice and social pedagogy. In C. Cooper, S. Gormally, & G. Hughes (Eds.), *Socially just, radical alternatives for education and youth work practice* (pp. 85–106). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Pillay, T., & Asadi, N. (2018). Creating educative spaces for second-generation Somali-Canadian youth through informal education. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education, 12*(4), 201–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2018.1506437>
- Pittman, K. J., Irby, M., Yohalem, N., & Wilson-Ahlstrom, A. (2004). Blurring the lines for learning: The role of out-of-school programs as complements to formal learning. *New Directions for Youth Development, 2004*(101), 19–41. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.71>
- Plath, D. (2006). Evidence-based practice: Current issues and future directions. *Australian Social Work, 59*(1), 56–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03124070500449788>

- Regional Youth Work Unit North East, & University of Sunderland. (2010). *A study on the understanding of social pedagogy and its potential implications for youth work practice and training*. University of Sunderland.
- Rio Declaration. (2019). Rio Declaration on non-formal education. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from <https://worldnfeforum.com/declaration/>.
- Rogers, A. (2005). *Non-formal education: Flexible schooling or participatory education? Comparative Education Research Centre*. University of Hong Kong.
- Rogers, C. R. (1969). *Freedom to learn: A view of what education might become*. Merrill.
- Rothemund, A., & Ohana, Y. (2008). *Eggs in a pan: Speeches, writings and reflections by Peter Lauritzen*. Council of Europe.
- Schugurensky, D. (2014). Social pedagogy and critical theory: A conversation with Hans Thiersch. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 3(1), 4–14. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ijsp.2014.v3.1.002>
- Seal, M. (Ed.). (2019). *Teaching youth work in higher education. Tensions, connections, continuities and contradictions*. University of Tartu.
- Sercombe, H. (2010). *Youth work ethics*. SAGE.
- Simkins, T. (1976). *Non-formal education and development*. Department of Adult & Higher Education, University of Manchester.
- Singh, G., & Cowden, S. (2009). The social worker as intellectual. *European Journal of Social Work*, 12(4), 479–493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691450902840689>
- Slovenko, K., & Thompson, N. (2016). Social pedagogy, informal education and ethical youth work practice. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 10(1), 19–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2015.1106005>
- Smith, M. (1988). *Developing youth work: Informal education, mutual aid, and popular practice*. Open University Press.
- Smith, M. K. (1980). *Creators not consumers: Rediscovering social education*. National Association of Youth Clubs.
- Smith, M. K. (1988). *Developing youth work*. OUP.
- Social Pedagogy Network. (n.d.). *Social pedagogy*. <http://www.thempra.org.uk/social-pedagogy>
- Sting, S. (2018). Developments within social pedagogy in Austria: Perspectives for work with children and young people. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 9(1), 108–120. <https://doi.org/10.18357/ijcyfs91201818122>
- Stuart, K., & Maynard, L. (2015). Non-formal youth development and its impact on young people's lives: Case study—Brathay Trust, UK. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 7(1), 231–262.
- Tett, L. (2010). *Community education, learning and development*. Dunedin Academic.
- Úcar, X. (2012). Social pedagogy in Latin America and Europe: Looking for new answers to old questions. *Social Pedagogy for the Entire Lifespan*, 2, 164–198.
- Vandenbroeck, M., Coussée, F., Bradt, L., & Roose, R. (2011). Diversity in early childhood education: A matter of social pedagogical embarrassment. In C. Cameron & P. Moss (Eds.), *Social pedagogy and working with children and young people: Engaging with Children in Care* (pp. 53–68). Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Walker, K. (2023). Equipping staff with strategies to intentionally support social emotional learning. *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*, 29, 9. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jycw.2023.9>
- Williamson, H. (2015). *Finding common ground: Mapping and scanning the horizons for European youth work in the 21st century. Towards the 2nd European Youth Work Convention*. Council of Europe. <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262187/>

[FINDING+COMMON+GROUND_Final+with+poster.pdf/91d8f10d-7568-46f3-a36e-96bf716419be](#)

- Williamson, H., & Conroy, M. (2020). Youth work and social pedagogy: Toward consideration of a hybrid model. In X. Úcar, P Soler-Masó and A. Planas-Lladó (Eds.), *Working with young people* (pp. 149–167). Oxford University Press.
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. (2007). *Code of ethical practice: A first step for the Victorian youth sector*. Youth Affairs Council of Victoria.
- Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, & Western Australian Association of Youth Workers. (2014). *Code of ethics for youth workers in WA*. Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia.