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Contexts

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Preface

Contexts is our annual publication of students' writing. This is our third edition, and includes seven pieces of work from across our programme levels. In bringing together this collection we seek to capture a snapshot of the opportunities and dilemmas that our diverse student population engages with, in their journey as student practitioners. Their articles reveal the different circumstances and surroundings in which their learning and the learning of the people they work alongside occurs. These offer the students fresh perspectives on the theory and ideas they learn in the classroom and in texts and it is these experiences that they enthusiastically engage with and explore within their writing here.

This volume consists of students' work put forward by tutors and by students themselves, and although work was not chosen to adhere to any themes, there are three overlapping topics that seem to bind these individual articles together and which we have used to structure this volume, the first being 'learning relationships', the second 'change' and the final being 'professional values'.

Mark Roberts' opening piece introduces us to the theme of learning relationships and also introduces us to Genty Lee, a Romany Gypsy who lives on a council owned travellers site in Epsom. Mark's article describes the relationship that he has built with Genty over the past 16 years and the learning about influence and authority, prejudice and injustice that he has gained from this relationship. His research narrative explores the struggles with authority and

bureaucracy that Genty experiences whilst trying to get the council to remove the barriers/bunds surrounding the 'Travellers' site which effectively segregate it and its surrounds. In contrast, Ben Craig's learning relationship takes the form of a supervisory relationship. Within this relationship Ben was able to explore his own learning from becoming a supervisor for the first time as well as the supervisees' learning from being supervised. Ben shares with us how he came to form a working understanding of supervision, how he established his professional frame of reference and he explores the theories and ideas that informed his practice.

Lucy Sam's piece is the final one under the theme 'learning relationships' but also introduces us to the next theme of 'change'. The setting of Lucy's piece is a quiet corner of a cafe where, as a support worker, she meets young people on neutral ground in order to help them identify and look at changes they would like to make in their lives. Lucy explores the methods she uses within her work and the difficulty she experiences when feeling that she is not achieving enough in her meetings with individuals. She leads us through the process of exploring and reflecting upon her work and her increasing awareness of what both she and the young people are gaining and learning from their interaction. Nicholas Estephane, in his article, explores the notion of change from a different angle asking why we feel the need to change the young people we work with. He questions whether this idea is based on assumptions of young people's ignorance and incompetence and explores if this merely feeds into the problematising or deficit perspective of young people. Helen Perry looks at change in terms of children and young people's development. Using the main character Bruno in John Boyne's book 'The boy in the striped pyjamas' she looks at how children come to understand the

world around them and how they develop social relationships and form attachments.

The closing theme 'Developing professional values' leads us onto Andi Kewley's article. Andi uses five examples from her practice to demonstrate the difficulties she has faced in her work when negotiating individual's rights and the day to day realities of working in a front line youth project. Through these five stories we accompany Andi on a self reflexive journey as she develops her professional judgement, values and practice. Phil Watson's article completes our collection and looks at professional values from quite a different perspective: that of the organisation. In this final chapter Phil compares and contrasts the organisational culture of a local authority Youth Service and a faith-based voluntary sector Youth Project. He looks at the impact that the organisations' aims, values and structure have upon the employees.

We hope that the articles that our students share in this collection will encourage those working in youth and community settings to think about and examine their own practices in light of the insights, opportunities and dilemmas offered in these writings. My thanks go to the authors, the editing team and to Colin Williams whose generosity has allowed us to continue publishing our annual publication of students' work.

The Contributors

Ben Craig

Ben is currently in his final year on the Distance Learning, Informal and Community Education BA Hons programme at the YMCA George Williams College. He is living and working in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Nicholas Estephane

Nicholas was born and raised in Hackney East London. After doing well in school he went through a phase of rebellion but was supported by his Youth Worker to follow his potential rather than the negative influences in his life and was encouraged to enrol at college to study Information Technology. After completing three years of study his tutor suggested he should pursue his area of interest at University level. However after two years of study he withdrew from the course as the passion for it had faded.

Overcoming a second period of rebellion he decided to volunteer his time for a youth group based in Hackney. From there he started volunteering for various other organisations and youth provisions within the area. As he grew to enjoy the youth work challenge he decided to further his development within the field and began his studies at the YMCA George Williams College. Three years down the line he holds a Foundation Degree in Informal and Community Education with Distinction, and is now near completion of his BA Honours Degree.

Nicholas believes that ‘if we limit ourselves in our thinking, we limit ourselves in life. Anything is possible, possibilities are endless..... You just never know!’

Helen Perry

Helen has been working with young people since she was 18. Initially as a church based volunteer and then as a part time youth worker for the London Borough of Waltham Forest; for whom she has now been working for 10 years. In this time she has been involved in a range of provision for young people particularly enjoying working with the Teenage Pregnancy Team and in mentoring work. She combines working and studying with looking after her two daughters, Sarah and Jessica. She likes walking, going on holiday to Italy and baking.

Andi Kewley

Andi grew up in St Helens, Merseyside. She moved to London to do a degree in Biology. Whilst in London she volunteered and worked part-time in a number of youth and community settings including working on sexual health programmes, in community mediation, on summer schemes and in a centre based youth project before moving to the North East to work as a full time youth worker. She is currently working in a small neighbourhood based youth project in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Her workplace has supported the growth and change she has experienced whilst studying at the YMCA George Williams College.

Mark Roberts

Mark grew up around the rural villages of Somerset, early influences included observing his parents caring and listening to the young people that came through their home. At 18 years old Mark abandoned village life, deferred university and moved to Epsom, taking a job in a sports shop. Realising that retail wasn't his future he began working as a volunteer youth worker for Generation Church and Surrey Youth Service in 1991, and this began his youth work career. In 2009, nearly 20 years later Mark qualified as a professional youth worker at the YMCA George Williams College.

Mark is an experienced informal and formal community educator; he has managed a Youth Justice Board project in Wandsworth, managed a council youth centre on a housing estate in Epsom and has worked with young people in Sri Lanka, Denmark and Switzerland. Along with his wife Hayley they home educate their three children; they do this collectively with Gypsy families. Mark loves camping, supports the mighty West Ham and enjoys travelling.

Lucy Sam

Lucy started working as an administrator with Catch22 (formerly Rainer) in Essex 5 years ago. After a few months she also began volunteering at the organisation as a mentor. She had a desire to develop her work with young people through studying, so with the support of her area manager she identified and enrolled on the distance learning programme at the YMCA George Williams College. Over the course of her studies in order to widen her experience Lucy took on a variety of roles within Catch 22 as a group worker, housing support worker, Youth Volunteering Co-ordinator and Mentoring Co-ordinator.

She also wanted to gain some statutory experience and so spent 6 months combining two part time jobs working at Catch 22 as a support worker and as a Youth Action Worker with Essex County Council Youth Service. After completing her Diploma of Higher Education through distance learning she decided that she would like to complete the final level of her studies (BA Hons) as a full time student. Making the move to London in order to study full time Lucy has also moved to the London branch of Catch22 taking on the role of Teenage Parent Housing Support Worker. As a result of undertaking her studies at the YMCA George Williams College Lucy feels she has been set on a professional and personal journey. She is a keen yoga practitioner which she says gives her the energy to do all that she does.

Phil Watson

Phil started work as a part time youth worker with Essex County Council in 1991. After 33 years of employment as a toolmaker he gave up this trade to become a full time youth worker 7 years ago. He is currently employed as a Prince's Trust Team Leader during the day but also runs three evening youth work sessions each week. He has recently completed his Diploma of Higher Education through distance learning and is looking forward to coming back to the YMCA next year to complete his BA [Hons]. He believes that his studies have been useful as he has been able to relate his learning to practical situations, which has enhanced the service that he is able to provide to young people.

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Nicholas Estephane would like to acknowledge his partner, Nina for putting up with him and his two children Brianna and Kymani and he would like to give a special thanks to Mary Wolfe and Brian Belton for all their help, support and encouragement.

Andi Kewley would like to acknowledge Michael Bell who has at various times been her supervisor, line manager, confidant and proof reader. She would like to thank her supervisors, tutors and Emma Neighbour at the YMCA George Williams College. She would also like to acknowledge the management committee, her co-workers, and the young people at the project she is currently working at.

Helen Perry would like to acknowledge and thank her husband Matt for his support and encouragement and to thank her editor Richard Larkins.

Mark Roberts would like to acknowledge the four most important people in his world, Hayley his wife, and their three beautiful girls, Kaela-J, Yasmin and Asia. He would also like to acknowledge and thank Genty and Dainchy,

Dainchy and Shannon, who have shown him how to see the world differently.

Lucy Sam would like to acknowledge and thank Serena Todd the Area Manager for Catch22 in Essex as without her support and belief she would never have begun her journey as a student practitioner which has opened up so many opportunities. She would like to thank the two young people who provided her with the stories and experiences which she explores in her article and whom it was a privilege to work with. In addition Lucy would like to acknowledge all tutors that have supported her but in particular Tina Salter for her continued support.

Phil Watson would like to acknowledge the support of his wife Margret Watson, tutors Linda Richardson and Tina Salter and colleagues Dave Petrie, Pete Johnston, Annie Twigg, Hannah Powney, Melissa Brooker and Alan Pike.

‘Life is an unending contest’ – stories from Genty Lee’s life

Mark Roberts

This case study is a reflection on my research with a Romany-Gypsy woman, Genty Lee. I have taken this extract from a longer dissertation. In this study I examine the themes of influence and authority, prejudice and injustice. All of these issues were also recognised by Genty as she addressed reactions to a physical barrier formed by the banks (or bunds) which segregated the site on which she lives from its surrounds, and the impact of this on family and friends lives. The action she took demonstrated the influence someone can have, but also how this becomes limited by her status as an excluded person in society, therefore relying on government officials and the authority of those who understand law.

Genty Lee grew up in a council house in Dartford and attended a state school. When she was 19 she married and moved to a council-owned Travellers’ site in Epsom. She recalls the influence her mother and grandfather had on her life. For Genty it was her Mother who showed her how to accept people. *‘My Mum has a natural ability to love and accept all children... All children no matter what their colour, creed, religion, race, ethnicity, no matter what their differences were compared to ours, our doors were always open.’* It was her Grandfather that introduced her to a way of giving advice and criticism, but maintaining respect for his contemporaries, *‘Farvie would argue that the Bible had been a well written book by intelligent men to help keep order for the “rulers” to rule, the type of “order” that Farvie hated with a passion. “The system” as I now call it’.* Their influence can perhaps be seen in Genty’s life expressed in her acceptance of Gorgios (non-Gypsy people) outside of the apparent ‘safety’ of her

own family (Gypsy) and in her opinions about injustice in the education system seen in her retelling of her school experience.

In introducing this research, I want to start by exploring how my life has also been influenced: in my case, as someone from a family that owned property. I was acutely aware that my family were, in the main, Christians who demonstrated their beliefs through care and help to those outside our family. For example, my parents invited a young man for Christmas dinner that had no immediate family to go to, they also gave him a room in their house when he became homeless. I became aware of ‘difference’ and how our village society ostracised people of ‘difference’. These are traditions and beliefs that I continue to respect, interpret and respond to. Having grown up and been educated in a quintessential country village, I began to feel claustrophobic in the ‘smallness’ of village life! I was ready to move on. Migrating from village to town represented a transition time and ‘Church’ became the locale of my social and work life. My professional life followed a similar path to that of my parents but one that I began to make my own. This begins to illuminate a further point about ‘community’: I am part of a council estate community (where I live), I am also part of a community of West Ham fans in South London, of home educators, of church, of people who ‘love’ camping, and parents whose kids go to guides, gymnastics, dancing; I am ethnically ‘white’, I have settled in village and town and I have also travelled. This shows that the notion of community is problematic: if I categorise myself by one homogeneous group e.g. ‘British White’, such a generalisation could engender ignorance towards others and is perhaps a seedbed for exclusion.

I also want to acknowledge from the start that my usage of the label ‘Gypsy’ needs clarification since there are

problems in categorising Travellers as a homogeneous group. Indeed, *'there is no agreement about the boundary between these labels'* (Belton, 2005:7). Taking this into consideration and my own wariness as a Gorgio (non-Gypsy) about imposing labels on Genty and her family, I will use the term Romany-Gypsy when referring to Genty, as this is her self-description. I will use Gypsy and Traveller interchangeably for general use, taking this to mean a heterogeneous group of people whose lives are historically and socially associated with a nomadic lifestyle and caravan dwelling. Traditionally property interests separate Gypsies and Gorgios: as Parkin (1979:47) argues, property is an exclusionary distinction of modern capitalism. Equally, I recognise that when I say 'I am working in a Community of Gypsies' this reinforces a discourse of homogeneity.

So, how did our apparently distant life-stories come together? I have known Genty for 16 years, we became acquainted through a social action project (free car washing) that my work organised as an activity to meet people in the 'community'. The council-owned Travellers' site was hidden from view by banks or 'bunds' and – not knowing anyone who lived on the site or indeed what the site looked like – it was the place we chose to start, albeit with some anxiety and fear. Genty was the first to invite us into her home for a cup of tea: she saw this as 'building bridges'. Genty accepted the work and had a positive view of those who came choosing the traveller site and not a private housing estate and took the opportunity to appreciate this. I discovered the hospitality Genty showed towards strangers showed up my own latent prejudices.

This was an education for me, I learnt and observed a fragment about their lives in limited context (by visiting the site once a week, for a couple of hours, to wash cars) in this regard I remain an 'outsider'. However, other experiences subsequently brought these seemingly

disparate groups together through home education. With their children not being in school we came together through Lighthouse (collective home educators). In this way the Gypsy and Gorgio are moving 'inside and outside' of experiencing each other's worlds and becoming friends.

The widespread protectionism that surrounds property may be seen in the following example: Gypsies initially weren't invited to the Local Authority's Traveller Liaison Group (which represented the landlord for Traveller sites) and as a Romany-Gypsy (or a site tenant) Genty didn't think that people took her seriously in council meetings.

I have adopted a new self made title and introduce myself as Genny a colleague/friend of Michael (a Local Authority Gypsy Liaison Officer).

Of course there is the exception when attending a meeting lead by Michael I am comfortable to be me.

How I carried out the research

As I believe that research can be somewhat intrusive I endeavoured to capture the story with least interference. The narrative inquiry I undertook took place over two in-depth and unstructured interviews. Recognising the sensitivities around the cultural nuances of gender, I invited my wife to scribe the interview as she also has an understanding of research and a relationship with Genty. We transcribed the interviews immediately afterwards and then checked with Genty if there were any mistakes.

Weaknesses in this approach include potential inaccuracy in the scribing, however the approach benefits from allowing me, as a researcher, to be fully attentive to the person. I have also acknowledged how my own position

could bias my approach to the research subject and aimed to counter bias in my research process by drawing on other primary and secondary sources gathered over the course of the full study. They included other narrative pieces as well as examples from fiction and from social theory.

The story revolves around one predominant issue, the removal of the bunds which surrounded the 'Travellers' site. The Greenlands Traveller site in Epsom was created 30 years ago when a duty was placed on Local Authorities to provide a minimum number of pitches for Gypsy families. The site was positioned at the end of the road on the furthest edge of the borough. Being next to the river this was an area susceptible to flooding and had no adequate sewage works. The site was flattened and the debris and waste collected in the clearance was bulldozed into bunds that hemmed in the site. In Michael's words, this was '*to create a pit for the Gypsy to set up home*'.

Genty became conscious of the impact of people not being able to view the site from the outside.

I made a conscious decision to get involved in getting the bunds removed around 10 years ago. I walked to our local shop and noticed a group of ladies out chatting on the housing estate. On the way back I made small talk that soon turned into an eye opening conversation. I found their questions and comments regarding where I live to be truly ignorant. I didn't get defensive and instead asked why they had no knowledge of what the site looks like, what type of people live on there, or what would happen to them if they came on the site.

In a council meeting; 'BWG reported that he had visited the site and was very impressed and felt warmly welcomed by the residents'. The apparent surprise at the welcome offered to those who

visit the site on their first visit underlines the ignorance that humans have of each other. Ignorance is a word that Genty uses for a state of not knowing about something (consciously or unconsciously) as opposed to belittling someone.

It was revealed they each held a fear about “those people” who lived behind that great big bank. One woman, in reply to defend her fear of Gypsies, told me the bank make you wonder what type of people live behind it. I personally did not see an issue with the banks visually (my personal concerns had always been that they are a perfect habitat for rats) but the conversation had got me thinking. I walked back home and took in, for the first time, what an eye-sore the bunds were. It was a disheartening feeling that day as I tried to understand what it would feel like to walk our access road with its piled high mound of dirt that also had more than its fair share of rubbish imbedded into it if I were a non-Gypsy who knew no one that lived on the site.

Genty decided to use the situation to enlighten herself rather than becoming defensive and to consider how someone else would see the situation by looking at a problem from more than one direction. Her friend, Lisa, commented that Genty would always keep looking to find a different way.

When I talk to Genty she helps me see things from a different point of view, I will always go and see her if I have a problem, she is the first person I will go to because I know she will think of a way to see the problem in a positive way. She is like a person who is known for their wisdom and everyone goes to see them for advice, I know her family look to her like this.

Genty began to act by attending a council meeting that was started without Travellers' knowledge or consent. The Traveller Liaison Group is a 'multi-agency' meeting that takes place at the Town Hall. The meetings are, in the main, professional gatherings whose services are targeted at the perceived needs of those who are the minority group. Professionals are represented by solicitors, a Gypsy liaison officer, housing services, environmental health, health visitors, district nurses, primary care agencies, community dental services, social workers, inter-cultural and language services, the curriculum manager for family literature and adult reading, and police community safety officers.

The meetings are structured so that the Gypsies are asked to leave the meeting if confidential issues are to be discussed. Genty seems to see this underlying attitude as latent prejudice – in other words, the Travellers couldn't be trusted to listen and act 'in confidence'. In contrast, there is no recognition that the professionals might be breaking confidence when, for example, health issues are being discussed with the housing officer.

One meeting in particular, where I was told I would be permitted to "sit in on" providing I leave half way through, where persons in authority were discussing Gypsy matters that could not be discussed in the presence of a Gypsy. I was allowed 45 minutes where I voiced the need to have the rat infested banks removed and also blamed the council for segregating us and being responsible for others' bad attitudes against us. I also challenged the flooding issues of the site. I got my 45 minutes and that did me fine.

Decisions made in 'confidence' and discussions 'behind closed doors', appear to contradict the aims of the meeting. The aim is to improve communication between agencies and Gypsies and to improve the way professionals deliver

their service. Genty spoke about her experience of these meetings:

One of these meetings had been gathered to discuss “Gypsy dental hygiene” to which I made my point with intended sarcasm. I asked all the people at the meeting who were free of fillings to raise their hands. Thus informing them, I am a Romany Gypsy who has never had a filling. I got my point across that there is an opportunity here to be voiced on important issues. I gave a few suggestions on how to spend this funded monies that they believed would be wisely spent teaching dental hygiene i.e. to spend the money on bringing the library to the site for the good of the children to give them an early introduction to books, to help them read and learn, to use this funded money’s on books and pens and give an insight to Romany Gypsy children to the importance of receiving a good education. From then on I attended meetings (when I could) almost as a new hobby with the deliberate intention of intercepting their agenda to become mine.

Government officials

Michael noticed that Genty, along with others from the site, were perceived as louder than the other members when they spoke in their gypsy dialect. Michael thought that they may be nervous of being in a different environment. The council chambers can be intimidating, but he commented that Genty was not afraid to speak her mind. *‘Indeed, Genty went to the council meetings to find that using her voice as a Gypsy became ineffectual and so began to understand and see how the system worked’*. Genty found this was different from her own experiences and traditions. She explained to me that among Gypsies there was no tradition of a written will, rather one’s life’s possessions would be split up on someone’s word. This shows the value placed on the oral traditions which, in the main, was not treated in

the same way as the written word in a Local Authority setting.

With lots of meetings attended, I was still moaning about the same issues, it was suggested to me to write a letter, I did, I sent it to council officials, the head of the council was one of them, I wrote about the health and safety issues around having these rat infested bunds, challenged why there was a need/purpose to still have them surround us and also asked who would be held responsible if my son caught a germ/virus/disease from the stagnant water due to the flooding issue. I never received a reply to my letter but Michael informed me the works would go ahead but at a huge work load to him.

Reducing the bunds

The decision was made to partially remove the bunds. The basis on which this decision was taken was outlined by the surveyor: *'there was no chance of planning permission being obtained for their removal but they could be reduced on health and safety grounds'*. The work was carried out with a lack of regard to the residents. They complained of omission of plots from specifications, debris left by workman, collapse of banks because of rain, and no project manager. This seemed in contravention of the human rights act and planning legislation which represents the relationship between the law and rights. The work was considered under planning and health and safety law but not as a question of human rights. Genty recognised the issue when she recalled:

I asked Michael who was taking responsibility for getting the bunds completely removed. Michael informed that this was unlikely more probable to have them reduced. I unfortunately felt like one person in battle with many (the system, health & safety, planning, cost etc.) I can remember feeling, at the time,

we were “lucky” to be able to get them reduced and accepted reduction without further fight... The access road was blocked and the mess and mayhem would have made a good carry on film had it been taped. It took too long to complete and hand on heart, still to this day I feel the company made a mountain from a mole hill in reducing the bunds.

Genty in this situation did not appear to be given a voice by anyone, she discovered it. She recalls how this happened as a young person:

I stood up to one of my teachers one day, I felt comfortable that I wouldn't have to fight with her due to making it known I didn't like the way I was being treated. After being singled out by her one too many times when I was 14 after hearing time and time again that I was using cockney slang when I speak and she didn't like it, enough was enough when she scolded me in front of my whole form because I was reapplying my brace elastic. I didn't have a voice in school till then and my second lesson? You become even more popular with your peers if you stand up to a teacher.

Genty found her voice and went on to use it within the struggle to get the bunds removed. In the process of this struggle she also became politicised about her situation:

I realise now it was my writing the letter that set the wheel in motion! I have regret because I should have demanded a reply to my letter from the officials and conversed in writing with them – opposed to chatting things over with Michael as the buck had been passed onto him and landed heavily on his lap. I wonder now how much truth was told to me regarding such matters as Pemberley Chase getting the ultimate say, the bunds behind us being something to do with a nature area. Hayley says quite often she wants to learn the game in order

to play it well, I wish I'd have pushed on a bit harder and challenged for the evidence that was given to me back then in writing, but unfortunately I did not know the rules to the game I was playing. Poor Michael, at times would be exasperated when relaying what issues he was facing and who was telling him what could get done and what he couldn't. All of my talking, discussing and debating that went on at those meetings resulted in no action whatsoever. Do these people at meetings really care? I get devastated with my growing knowledge of these systems be they schools, councils or governments.

From completing this research, I have learned a great deal from Genty's approach to external authority and the struggle of influencing to gain authority in life. This reveals to me the nature of the struggle, for instance the limited influence excluded groups have particularly in statutory settings and therefore the lack of authority and control they have. This isn't about 'fixing' the problem, but echoing Fanon, Genty and others represent a view that we can learn from, that '*The struggle they say goes on. The people realise that life is an unending contest*' (Fanon, 1965: 74). I have learnt from her that there is a way of being able to give advice and criticism but keep relationships. I have learnt that the influence that I have can fuse with the influence of others for betterment through understanding social realities.

When discussing my own youth and community work with Genty, she was adamant that I could change the institution (youth service) from the 'inside'. Genty's view is that you can change things if you have a gift and you understand the system. My view is you can't change the institution of the youth service – I think it is more likely that the institution will change me.

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An exploration of my first experience of becoming a supervisor

Ben Craig

Introduction

This article is about my first experience of becoming a supervisor, so let me first introduce myself, the ‘Supervisor’, my colleague, the ‘Supervisee’ and the context, the type of organisation for whom my colleague and I work. We are employed by a small youthwork charity, of 5 staff that utilises the medium of the outdoors to work on an informal education basis with young people from all backgrounds to develop their life skills, teamwork, health and well being and respect for and connection to the natural environment. I am now a manager but first began working for the organisation as an apprentice. My colleague is one of the programme staff, but began his involvement as a volunteer.

When I began my apprenticeship I also became a student at the YMCA George Williams College, and had a supervisor for three and a half years. During my time as a supervisee, I had not consciously tried to define the process of supervision to really understand the role the supervisor played. As a way of beginning, Supervision can be described as:

A quintessential interpersonal interaction with the general goal that one person, the supervisor, meet

with another, the supervisee, in an effort to make the latter more effective in helping people.

(Hess 1980)

Supervision is a process that I have struggled with, enjoyed and learned much from. The positive transformational aspects of my experiences have led me to a point where I would like to provide that positive experience for others. This article seeks to examine my 1st experience as a supervisor and the process involved.

In beginning this new area of work, there were some key questions for me to consider. In a tight staff team of four, struggling to keep an organisation from going under, what new dynamics does internal supervision foster? Will this be a positive thing for our team or will it arouse suspicion and mistrust? Since the supervisee has not previously had the opportunity to engage in a supervision process outside of line management, what will be his agenda? What will my agenda be in the role of a supervisor, balancing my role as a manager, practitioner, student and team member?

Methodology

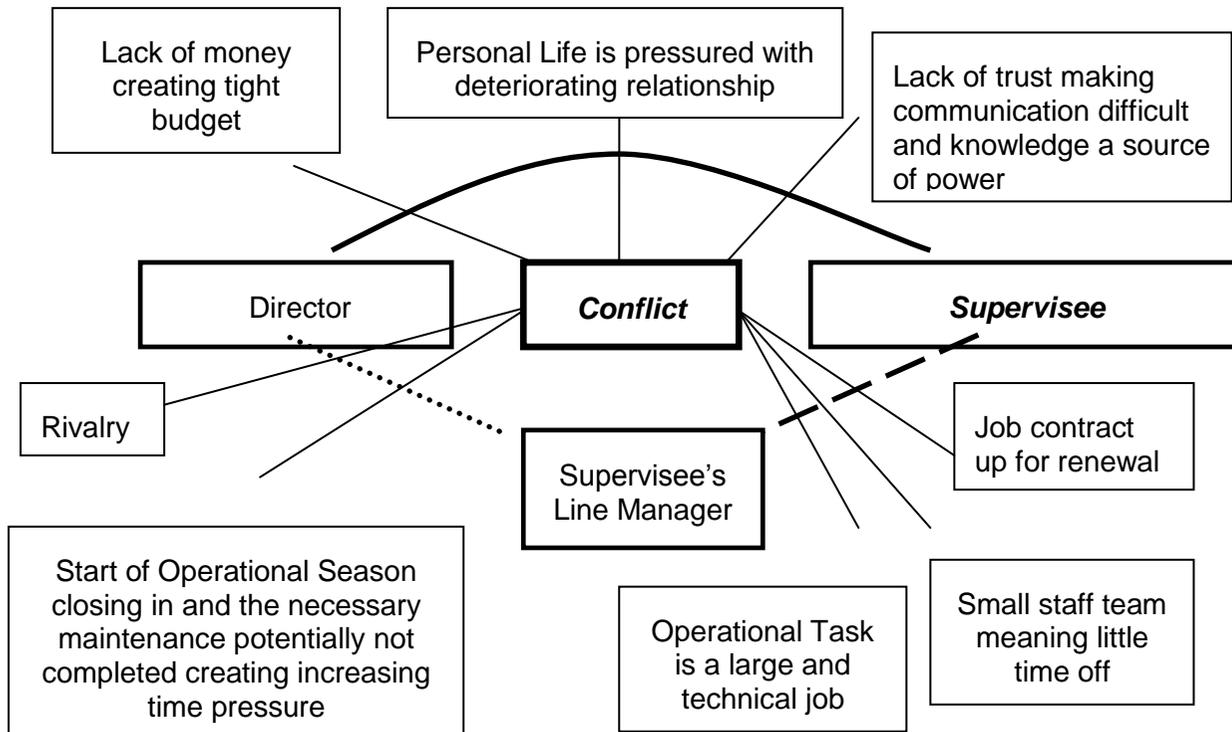
As well as reading relevant literature I undertook three, monthly, supervision sessions as supervisor with a colleague as supervisee. I recorded the agendas and minutes for these sessions in a dedicated notebook which I transcribed, and will include my analysis from, in this article. I began the analysis of these sessions by reflecting on my notes and extracting the predominant themes into a summary that I presented to my regional study group. They helped me refine my analysis and identify two predominant themes to explore further. They also provided feedback on my rationale for supervision and the results that this approach generated.

Summary of supervision sessions and themes

My approach and rationale to conducting supervision was based on my reading of the subject coupled with what I identified as the positives of my own college supervision experiences.

The format of supervision which I adopted was discussed with the supervisee in supervision session 1. We explored the nature of our job roles and how they interrelated, what types of supervision there are and what would be appropriate for us. We settled on an approach which was non-managerial and drew upon the college supervision model I had experienced. In doing so, responsibility to take ownership of the supervision process lay with the supervisee and provided a framework with clear boundaries about the nature of the points that could be raised and how these would be addressed. We made it clear that I was a supervisor not a line manager or counsellor.

Supervision session 1 was initially concerned with exploring our frames of reference and forming a contract based on our understanding. Once we had reached agreement on this we were able to begin exploring an agenda point that my colleague raised, 'conflict in the workplace'. To help maintain objectivity in any action planning, I helped the supervisee to gain a clearer picture of what the conflict was about, who was involved and why, by using a mapping technique to organise his observations and analysis which was presented to me verbally. This map is included below:

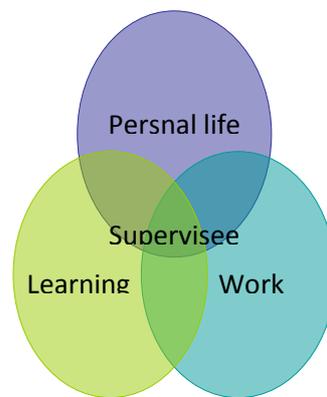


In the discussion which followed the mapping exercise, the supervisee was able to track the conflict and his role within it, summarising that a dispute between the Director and the Line Manager led to a broken relationship which led to a lack of trust, rivalry and uncertainty in management. This pressure took its toll on the Line Manager and his work and attitude to the supervisee. This summary allowed the supervisee to consider how his experiences and feelings at work had changed as a result of the conflict, summarising that he was in a difficult position because of his friendship with both the Line Manager and the Director. Whilst he had maintained a good working relationship with the Director the relationship with the Line Manager was deteriorating and so he was feeling as though he was being forced to take sides.

The map allowed the supervisee to identify the action he felt he should take to avoid being drawn into the conflict. By staying aware of the issues and keeping clear boundaries, the supervisee would then be able to maintain their professional frame of reference more effectively with all colleagues.

The agenda for supervision session 2 began with a check on the status of the dispute at work. Finding that it had been resolved soon after supervision session 1 and that its resolution had given the supervisee the opportunity to take an internal promotion and develop his professional experience. This set of events and circumstance provided the supervisee with a new job role and new issues to explore, the most salient of these formed the next two agenda points, *time management* and *career development*.

The diagram included below shows how this discussion was framed.



To help the supervisee find a way to prioritise how to manage his time, we looked at the relationship between personal time, work time and study/development time. The supervisee identified that how he was spending his time was out of balance and that he needed to take more time off to be sustainable in the workplace. This discussion led naturally into the next agenda point, career development. We explored the supervisee's past career experience, helping to identify what he had learned and what skills he had developed along the way to give a more accurate description of where he was now. This foundation gave a base from which to explore where he wanted to develop further. The supervisee expressed that ultimately he would like to become the senior member of the programme staff and identified a clear strategy for this.

The final supervision session focused initially around a general check-in on how the supervisee had been re-organising his time. The supervisee had made some progress and was feeling as though he was regaining a sustainable work/life balance. The bulk of the content for this session was focused around developing his practice and examining how he was adjusting to his new role.

The supervisee clearly evidenced learning he had identified from his previous experiences of working alongside other members of sea staff and was wary of conflict arising. He outlined his strategy for developing and maintaining a productive and healthy professional frame of reference in his new role. He was then able to identify the positive areas of development in practice that he was experiencing at work, why he thought these areas had improved and what impact the improvements had. This helped the supervisee to form a strategy for promoting and developing further the areas of good practice.

I have identified two predominant themes I would like to highlight, emerging from these supervision sessions. My choices are based on my own reflections but also the feedback and questions asked by my student colleagues at Regional Study. The first theme is establishing a clear, relevant and productive supervisory relationship, which will include choosing the appropriate form of supervision, agreeing a contract and developing a clear professional frame of reference. The second theme is exploring the supervisor's approach; this will include the underpinning theories which will direct the supervisor's practice and the practical techniques used in supervision.

Analysis of themes

The first theme that I wish to explore and analyse in depth, according to the relevant literature and feedback from my regional study group, is concerned with the establishment of a clear, relevant and productive supervisory relationship.

This theme was something I considered in depth before conducting my first supervision session and it led me to find that there are four broad forms of supervision to choose from.

Tutorial – focusing on exploring the education the supervisee is engaging in.

Training – similar to tutorial but the supervisor carries some managerial responsibility for the supervisee.

Managerial – The supervisor is the line manager of the supervisee and is concerned with ensuring work is being carried out effectively.

Consultancy – The supervisor is not the line manager or trainer of the supervisee, they provide the supervisee with the opportunity to explore the issues they choose.
(Hawkins & Shohet 2000)

I carry no managerial responsibility for the supervisee and he is not engaging in an education programme of which I am the tutor so it is clear that the type of supervision that would have been relevant for us to engage in was *consultancy*. However the supervisee and I are colleagues at work and the term consultancy infers a sense that the supervisor would be a third party probably from another organisation. I did not feel that this accurately described the context within which this supervision would take place, I preferred the term *non-managerial* which I found being used as an alternative. (Allinson 2008)

This difficulty in identifying the form of supervision highlighted to me the importance of context in forming a working understanding of supervision. The supervisee and I spent some time exploring the context that our supervision was taking place in. Noting that whilst the supervisee worked for a youth organisation, the period of time through which they were working when our supervision sessions fell was the winter season when refit was due to the sail training vessel ready for the spring season and not a time when he would be working directly with young people. So, in the initial session the development of the supervisee's practice as an informal

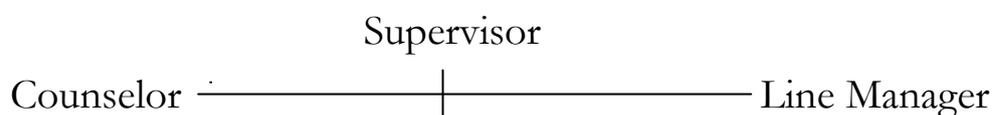
educator was a wider context but not their primary work focus at that time of the year. This meant that there was a team dynamic to consider because from the perspective of others in the organisation it was likely that our sessions would focus around issues that the supervisee may be having with colleagues or the organisation.

In most supervisory situations there are other critical stakeholders in the supervisory contract besides the direct parties.

(Hawkins & Shohet 2000)

It is clear that there should be a contract in place to protect all of the stakeholders in the process. To carry out an effective contracting session I felt that it was important to clarify the roles that we would be playing in this new relationship. The supervisee had never experienced non-managerial supervision and my experience had been that of the college supervision which was in a different context.

To help illustrate the role of the supervisor I examined supervision as a process and found that it can be explained as a continuum (Ellis 2008). I adapted this idea and presented to the supervisee a continuum showing where the role of my supervision lay, this is illustrated below:



The values that underpin our understanding of supervision are also essential in understanding why to engage in supervision and what its purpose is. Given that the wider context of my supervision was within a youth organisation, and that the supervisee would at some point be engaging in

direct contact with young people, I found that youthwork values were more applicable than those of a business. Four values in particular have been highlighted in the context of supervision.

Autonomy – to have self motivation and self direction is crucial as we often have to make complex decisions, in the moment, that affect young people.

Relatedness – as youthworkers we build and maintain relationships, to be effective, we must take into account the effect our actions have on others.

Confidentiality – respecting others and handling information confidentially and professionally.

Adulthood – empowering and supporting the supervisee to take responsibility for the pursuit of their own development and learning. (Woods 2008)

These values applied to a *non-managerial* form of supervision helped me to come to an understanding of what the supervisee and I would be trying to carry out in supervision. On this basis the supervisee and I were able to form a contract.

Supervision Contract

1. Confidentiality

- Supervision must be held in a non-work, non-personal venue like a coffee shop away from people who might interrupt or listen in.
- What is said in supervision will be recorded and kept in a designated book which may be drawn upon for the purpose of university assignments and will be made available to others on a need to know basis e.g. if there was an allegation made there would be a duty to share this information with the appropriate authority. In normal circumstances, the only people

who will have access to this book will be the supervisee and the supervisor.

2. *Content*

- The supervisee will set the agenda for each supervision session
- Content should be centered around exploring practice, identifying learning, dealing with work issues or problems and action planning.
- Supervision is not a forum to gossip.

3. *Timing*

- Supervision should take place monthly and should last 1 hour.

It is suggested that there are five key areas to be covered in contracting for supervision, *practicalities, boundaries, working alliance, the session format, the organisational and professional context* (Hawkins & Shohet 2000). In supervision session 1, the supervisee and I covered these key areas in three sections, *confidentiality, content* and *timings*.

In drawing out what was meant by *confidentiality* we discussed where the supervision should take place, how it should be recorded and that what was discussed in supervision could only be made accessible to others on a need to know basis. This linked to three of the key areas highlighted above, *boundaries, working alliance* and the *organisational/professional context*. In exploring what *content* we should include in the agendas for supervision we covered other key areas, *boundaries, working alliance* and *the session format*. In *timings* we covered *practicalities, the session format* and had to consider the *organisational/professional context*.

I discussed my approach to this formation stage of my supervision sessions with my regional study group. The benefit of this is in *how we may transcend individualised responses through building 'critical communities of enquirers'* (Smith 1995). I sought to gain practical insight into the positives or negatives of my rationale by seeking the opinions of my fellow student practitioners.

Some expressed that they had engaged in supervision as a supervisor and that they found the first session crucial in setting the right tone of professionalism and to the success of the supervision relationship. Others suggested that the content I covered in my first session was relevant and fitted with the associated literature on best practice for conducting supervision. It was highlighted that some had had negative experiences of supervision in the past and that this was when there was no agenda; advice was given that was not asked for; there was a lack of clarity over process; it was forced not chosen by both parties; you are close friends and a professional issue arises; it happens too informally. They pointed out that my notes and account of my session indicated that the supervisee should not have experienced any of these negative points during our first session and they were confident in approving my efforts to develop a clear, relevant and productive supervisory relationship.

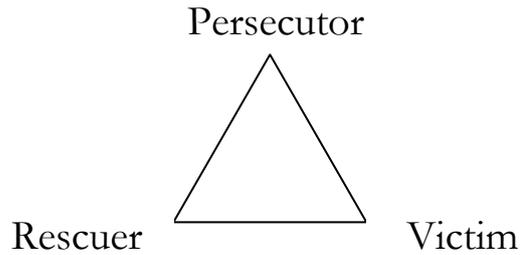
The second theme is analysing the supervisor's approach, including the underpinning theories which direct the supervisor's practice and the practical techniques used in supervision. Having established the baseline for the supervision relationship, I explored how to facilitate the supervision process in practice as we began addressing the issues the supervisee brought to the agenda.

In preparation for this, I spoke with my college supervisor and tutor about what techniques they used with me and why. They suggested that there were some theories modelling how to respond in different circumstances and that the key to this was being able to identify the nature of a question being asked by the supervisee.

The functions of supervision are how you adapt your supervisory approach to be relevant in addressing the nature of the question being asked by the supervisee. *Formative/Educative, Supportive/Restorative, Managerial/Normative*, (Kadushin 1976) (Proctor 1988), are the three identified functions of supervision. As a supervisor you adopt a *Formative/Educative* function to address issues around developing practice. I adopted this approach with the supervisee in supervision session 3 when we were exploring the development of practice at work.

In supervision session 1, I moved between two supervisory functions, the *Supportive/Restorative* and the *Managerial/Normative*, when helping the supervisee work through his issue about conflict at work. The whole process of working through the problem was both *Supportive* and *Restorative* for the supervisee, giving him a sense of having more stable ground upon which to work. Helping him to see how he could protect himself by utilising some of the policies of the organisation was the *Managerial/Normative* part of the process.

When the supervisee was outlining the conflict at work, I had to be very careful in my responses as I am also a worker in the organisation. In not wanting to be drawn into a colluding position, I was mindful of the model placing the roles of persecutor, rescuer and victim in a triangle (Butler-Sloss 1988).



I wanted to be careful not to take up any of the positions above. To adhere to the value of *Adulthood* I could not occupy the role of rescuer. I had to attempt to empower the supervisee to rescue himself. I did not offer to speak to his line manager or the Director on his behalf, rather I suggested the supervisee consider writing them both an e-mail outlining the supervisee's position the next time he had an issue.

Throughout the supervision sessions I utilised several different techniques to support the function of supervision I was engaged in. One of which was *Socratic Questioning* (Paul & Elder 2006), whereby I asked the Supervisee questions to help him probe the topic he had chosen for discussion. This technique is widely used in informal education and encourages the supervisee to navigate and reflect on his experiences to increase his knowledge of what he is doing and why.

I also used mapping as a technique to help the supervisee see how and why the conflict between his line manager and the Director was occurring (Craig & Borthwick 2007). This technique he expressed as being very useful as it made the issues clear to the supervisee and he could see how they were affecting colleagues and why they were reacting in the ways they were. This increased understanding helped the supervisee to see what he could do to help keep within his professional frame of reference.

In explaining some concepts, such as ‘the role of supervision’ and ‘how to prioritise for effective time management’, I drew diagrams to illustrate my points. This is a technique that my supervisor has used with me in the past when trying to outline a concept quickly and clearly. It worked well for me as a supervisee and now my supervisee expressed that he also preferred to see concepts diagrammatically as straightforward discussion can be too abstract with no point of reference.

When I presented my thoughts on approaches to supervision to my regional study group they had a number of suggestions and questions. It was pointed out that as supervisor it can be very difficult to hold the middle ground, not stepping into the role of *rescuer*. I think that this is a good point as it is almost a natural reaction to want to fix any problem presented. I think that this is a reaction that we can be particularly susceptible to if we are not clear on our role as supervisor. It was suggested that some supervisors see themselves as super advisors which of course is in direct conflict with promoting the values of *adulthood* and *autonomy*, limiting any ability to foster self directed learning in the supervisee. One student asked about how your approach as supervisor may change as the experience and knowledge level of the supervisee increases and your supervisory relationship deepens. I think it is more important than ever at this stage of supervision to employ the right techniques, no matter what the experience and knowledge level, using the *Socratic questioning* method will be a useful supervisory tool.

Conclusion

This article explores my first attempt at taking on the role of supervisor and as such there has been a considerable amount of learning that I can now identify in my practice. I believe the learning to be considerable because the theory

I have explored has given me a greater appreciation for the complexity inherent in the process of supervision. I feel that I must continue to build my experience as a supervisor to begin to be proficient at negotiating its nuances in a competent and confident way.

In identifying and analysing two themes arising from the supervision sessions I conducted I was able to target my reflections and seek relevant theories to confirm or reject my practice of supervision. In analysing the first theme I looked in detail at the formation stage of the supervisory process. I wanted to find out how important it was, what pitfalls there were and how best to avoid them. Through the consultation of theory, helping define the right type of supervision to engage in for the context, I chose to adopt a *non-managerial* framework. To give greater clarity to the role of the supervisor in this framework I located it on a continuum. This gave both the Supervisee and I a point of reference to start from. The process of clarification continued with setting the contract for our supervision, the relevancy of which was supported by theory. Finally this analysis was tested in a forum of my peers, who felt that I had identified the relevant type of supervision and had laid the groundwork for a productive supervisory relationship.

Theme two took a closer look at the process of supervision. This led me to explore the values that underpin supervision in the helping profession. This helped me to understand how to direct my responses to the supervisee as it gave me greater clarity over what the process of supervision is trying to achieve. To give some thought to how best to go about carrying out this work in practice, I looked at the techniques I used as a supervisor. I incorporated, *conflict mapping*, *Socratic questioning* and *drawing diagrams* to illustrate concepts. It is important that these techniques are used to help the supervisee see options for

how they can implement action but not to tell the supervisee what to do.

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Coffee, conversation and reflection

Lucy Sam

In this article I will explore my work with individuals over a period of three months drawing from recordings in my journal. These reflections have provided me with the opportunity to think more critically about my work with individuals. I will also look to draw on some counselling theories and explore what influence these may have in my work. Reflecting on my recordings I will then discuss the environments I create for meetings, how I use conversations and the types of skills and theories I use within this. Through reflecting on this work I will then identify any learning that has occurred for me and the individuals I work with and my role in supporting any change. I will conclude with learning that has occurred for me as a result of undertaking this project.

I have identified that my work is influenced by Psychodynamic theories and in particular person-centred ideas. In looking into the work of Rogers and the 'person centred approach' I can identify that the ethos of my work comes from my organisations' mission statement which conveys the idea that all young people have the right to live secure and fulfilled lives and to reach their full potential. This resonates with Sanders that 'all human beings have an inbuilt capacity to grow and achieve their full potential' (Sanders cited in YMCA: 2007:48).

Rogers states that 'individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and for altering their self-

concepts, basic attitudes, and self directed behaviour; these resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided' (Rogers 1980:15); it is this theory that underpins my work.

The influence of Psychodynamic approaches can be seen in my work because I take into account that past experiences can impact on future behaviour, relationships and experiences, and the 'importance of unconscious influences on how people function' (Nelson Jones, 2005:306). In relation to understanding different counselling theories, when I reflect on my previous role in the accommodation and support service, I recognise that I was mainly dealing with behaviour management which is linked with 'behavioural approaches'. Having experienced both behavioural and humanistic theories I realise that I prefer to work with humanist approaches as it is one that complements my values as an informal educator. This is because, rather than focus mainly on what I view to be problematic, the emphasis is more on starting where the young person is at, and trying to ascertain what it is they want to achieve and therefore work on.

As a support worker the environments in which I meet young people are public places, such as a café with a quiet corner so we are able to discuss things that are private. Because of this the space is informal and I believe this helps to put the young person at ease; as it is neutral ground, I believe it allows the conversation to flow more freely. I am also able to use other facilities in the community such as the family centre, or when I accompany young people to Connexions or other agencies.

I identified that my support work role links closely with what Geldard and Geldard describe as the 'proactive approach', which is focused on meeting adolescent needs.

This approach is based on the following areas: 'Existentialist philosophy' which takes the view that 'the only way human beings can make sense of their existence is through their personal experiences' (Geldard and Geldard, 2004:62); 'Constructivist thinking' which 'is based upon the philosophical assumption that all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement' (Ibid, 2004:64); 'Personal qualities of the counsellor' – which includes being able to understand the developmental processes that adolescents go through, and being able to respond to the adolescent by being able to relate to them from remembering how it was to be a adolescent. Using 'Rogerian qualities of congruence and unconditional positive regard' – by being genuine, not judging and accepting and being able to relate easily and with empathy; finally 'qualities of the adolescent-counsellor relationship' – although I am not there as a counsellor, I would aspire to use some of the same qualities in my role as a support worker, in developing 'congruent, open, honest, sincere and respectful' relationships (Ibid 2004:71), showing that you accept and value the young person, being empathetic and using 'friendly conversation'. By drawing on this proactive approach I use 'primary counselling functions [which] are relationship building, assessing the problem and addressing the problem'. (Ibid 2004; 79-80)

In my work it is important that I build a relationship with the young person. Through an initial meeting I discuss in more detail the purpose of the support and establish a working agreement which can be related to what Gray describes as the 'frame'. This 'provides the holding environment in which individuation can take place... In the best of situations it provides a safe space with secure foundations, one in which clients...are able to develop their own authentic emotional lives' (Gray, 1994:10). For me this ties in with the importance of discussing and

establishing boundaries, and I would also look to discuss confidentiality at the initial stage.

The young person then completes an assessment form which is set out as scales in relation to how they feel about particular areas of their lives, and also allows them to identify things they would like support with. At the beginning I spend some time getting to know them, their interests, likes and dislikes. By establishing boundaries, building relationships, choosing appropriate venues and using conversation, I am able to use what Culley and Bond describe as particular skills which are 'Attending and listening...listening with purpose and intent and responding in such a way that clients are aware they have both been heard and understood (Culley and Bond, 2005:17-18, cited in Smith and Smith, 2008:99). By doing this I am able to create environments to support young people in committing to change.

By reflecting on my work with a young woman I was able to identify an issue that was important to her which was her relationship with her boyfriend/ex boyfriend. She described in a session how other people had told her she was better off without her boyfriend and that they could not understand why the relationship was important to her. When she shared this I was careful not to 'impose [my] ideas of what might make for human flourishing on the other person... Our task is to work with the other person to create an environment in which truth can emerge and be acted upon' (Smith and Smith, 2008:57). Other people had already imposed their ideas onto her and I did not feel that I should be party to this.

Geldard and Geldard echo these sentiments:

By engaging in adolescent communication processes, even if we do not agree with a young person's point of view, if we can validate what they are telling us by letting them know that we understand their beliefs, attitudes and constructs, and accept them for who they are, then collaboratively we have the opportunity to help them explore, review their constructs... Thus we can join with them and create a genuine, open, and honest relationship, where they can feel safe in exploring their own ideas with us (Geldard and Geldard, 2004:92).

From this I was able to put my thoughts aside and explore what she thought a good relationship was.

On reflection I recognise that through our meetings and by working with this young woman in this way she was able to come to new understandings about her relationship; we achieved this by allowing the conversation to flow, and using different processes as described above. I was able to draw on a constructivist philosophy with the young woman by engaging 'in an assessment procedure which encourages the client to express their view of the world and explore this view in the client's own terms' (Geldard and Geldard 2004:65). During our sessions she was able to come to new understandings about her relationship with her ex boyfriend and she finally decided that she was not in a good relationship and that she did not want to get back with him.

When I first started working with another young woman, I can remember thinking how easy she was to be with as she talked freely. I can recall recording 'her strength, passion, caring nature. Self awareness and awareness of others is a pleasure to see in a young person despite her negative

experiences. She's very inspiring to me and it's a pleasure and privilege to be able to meet with someone that although I'm providing a space where she can make sense of her own experiences and feel listened to, I come away feeling motivated and inspired' (journal recording).

After meeting with her a few times I then found it difficult to contact her and our meetings were a bit sporadic. When I did meet her I noticed that she would talk about lots of people in her life and what they were doing rather than herself. When I tried to steer the conversation to focus on the small bits she mentioned about herself or things she was interested in she would move away from it.

Through research I came to understand that 'many adolescents are likely to move in and out of the conversational process, flit from one idea to another and desire to be in control of the conversation at all times. Adolescents who have difficulty in talking about the things that trouble them most will want to do this in their own time. They need to be allowed to digress and move towards and away from important issues in the counselling conversation, the adolescent may well be diverting temporarily, waiting for a time when it is more comfortable to continue' (Geldard and Geldard, 2004:76) which may help explain what was going on with her.

I was finding it difficult working with her as I often came away feeling like I hadn't achieved anything with her, particularly when she seemed to close up. I took this to supervision to explore further, but still did not come away feeling like I understood what I could do. By using line management supervision, journaling and process recordings, reflections and my own evaluation methods, I was able to come to understand my relationship with the young woman better and identify new ways of working to

support her in promoting change. I recognised that ‘the simple act of listening to another, giving them the time and attention can be beneficial and affirming in itself.’ (Smith and Smith, 2008:42)

When I reflect on my experience I refer back to ‘reflective thought’, described by Dewey as: the ‘active persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends’ (Dewey, 1993:118). This process does not just mean thinking about particular ideas; it also involves ‘entertaining and returning to experiences and attending to our feelings and emotions’. Smith and Smith (2008:28). Through my work with this young woman it has also helped me to identify that the learning process is often two-way and my own experience has been enriched by working with this young woman as she often left me feeling inspired.

To conclude I have learnt that my work incorporates humanistic approaches to counselling and the ‘person centred approach’, I also draw on other theories when working with young people. As Gray states:

All practitioners whatever label they put to their practice, are individuals and the way in which they behave...owes less to theoretical ideas than to the sort of people they are... The way in which the therapeutic relationship is established and maintained is not simply about theory – it is about the experience itself (Gray 1994:2).

Through the process of reflecting upon a piece of work with an individual, I have gained a clearer picture and greater understanding about what may be going on for the

individual I am working with, and have been relieved of some of my anxieties of feeling I am not doing enough. By exploring counselling theories, I have been able to understand some of the processes I am using to support making change possible for the young people I work with and for myself. At times I have questioned if I am doing enough with the young people I am working with; but by reflecting on the process of working with individuals I am able to recognise that I have facilitated change in some of the young people I am working with.

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Change: process or command?

Nicholas Estephane

Introduction

This article is based on examples from my professional practice with individuals. I have used theory to critically examine my practice.

I consider the process of working with individuals to make 'change possible'. This raised a number of questions for me:

- For what, or whom, am I making change possible?
- Why do we feel the need to change others?
- As a professional task, what is 'changing' others? Is it promoting conformity?

The ambition to change others

In my experience of working with individuals, people react and respond to change differently. An effort to enforce change on adults seems to invite problems of resistance and conflict. This history of colonialism and empire confirms this impression (see Bolland, 2003, Darby 2001 for instance). It should perhaps not be surprising if young people (often depicted as rebels against any proposed change: see Baker 1999, Schwartz 1987) react in the same way as adults.

I can empathise with the possibility that young people might reject or rebel against efforts by professionals to initiate changes in their life direction or behaviour. It often seems as if professionals, who are more or less the paid representatives of adult society, promote conformity to adult expectations, rather than supporting amorphous or nondescript change. This attempt to regulate behaviour takes place on people, usually without their invitation or request, in places and times when people seem to be relatively happy with their social position/life style. The moment informal educators turn up with their professional schema for change, the assault has begun. Unless we can claim that our target-oriented professional organisations, who are tied to change tasks via funding and policy, just ‘go with the flow’ of change that would have happened anyway? That claim would of course raise questions about the point, and social and economic cost, of our deployment.

It feels patronising and arrogant of me as a professional to ‘measure’ and evaluate whether learning has taken place from a piece of work I have carried out with a young person. I have come to realise that you can teach an individual adult or child, but you cannot make them learn. Often learning, carried out in a humanitarian manner, appears to be the fruit of collaborative efforts. Singer Sherrié Austin (1998) provides an extra twist to an old-time saying: ‘you can take a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink, send a child to school but you can’t make them think’. In any ethical environment, it is the learner who leads, defines the direction and character of learning. Anything else would seem to be morally contradictory, and threatens to transform a potential learning situation into a site of instruction or blunt training: a workshop of domination where conformity is wrought (see Errey and Schollaert 2005).

Logically my role as a youth worker is to be a guide for the young people I come into contact with: to work with them, as their awareness of the various pathways through their lives develops, on their journey through life and society, and as they move towards levels of independence and forms of co-operative reliance. But there is a great danger that this task can become marginalised and abstract. Some young people may feel, before the arrival of the committed informal educator, relatively or even completely independent and capable within themselves. However, I as the professional may once again patronise them, being wedded to a view that sees them as dependent on my guidance. My view may be based both on the aims of the organisation I work for (by way of my job description) and on state policy (that my organisations is, to a greater or lesser extent, bound to).

Working to change Dave

An example of this can be taken from my work with a young person whom I have been working with since October 2008. I've changed his name to respect confidentiality.

Dave approached JusB (the organisation where I carry out my professional practice) as a result of a referral by his YOT (Youth Offending Team) Support Officer. I was told that he needed help and assistance finding a suitable college course and part-time employment. He was soon to move into his own flat and needed regular income.

Dave and I agreed to meet every Thursday afternoon to work together on completing application forms, making job searches and editing his C.V. We also planned to

attend college open evenings together, as well as meetings with other agencies where appropriate. I was told by his YOT officer that Dave lacked confidence socially and educationally, as he had no qualifications from school, and so needed extra guidance and support from JusB.

I arranged for us to attend a college open day, to give Dave an opportunity to find a course that he might want to pursue. He was particularly interested in plumbing, as he had some previous experience of this type of work, but had not acquired a qualification. Dave and I spoke with the relevant tutor, and he advised us that given Dave's educational background, it would be useful to consult the Skills Academy faculty about getting a basic level competency test to assess Dave's capacity to manage the course requirements.

Dave took and passed the test, a basic literacy and numeracy test, and was then given a list of options as to how he could get a place on the plumbing course. The plumbing tutor showed great enthusiasm for Dave getting involved in the Skills Academy course, and explained that he could enrol there and make a start the following week. I noticed that there were several people from a range of age groups being enrolled onto the Skills Academy course, and found myself wondering if the Skills Academy was anything more than just another government incentive to achieve quantity rather than quality.

Otherwise, all seemed well with Dave as he had successfully gained a place on the course he had been interested in. He appeared pleased and surprised: he did

not expect to pass the competency test, as he had been out of education for some time.

The following week, I called Dave to see how he was doing on the course. He told me that he had not attended as he had to sort out his financial situation, which involved a change in his benefit status. I was disappointed, as I felt he could be missing a good opportunity to get started on a course he had seemed so keen on, something he appeared to want to do. However, I had no intention of telling Dave about my feelings. Instead I reminded him that he could lose his place on the course if he failed to attend, as an attendance record was being kept. Dave promised that he would attend the next session. I then reminded Dave that he was not obliged to make a promise to me, as I was not the one who wanted the place on the plumbing course. But I did say that perhaps he could make a promise to himself to do the thing he had wanted to do. I also made a point of letting him know that if he needed any advice, guidance or support I was only at the other end of the telephone.

Dave continued not to attend the course, which eventually resulted in the college sending him a gentle reminder. However, Dave continued to procrastinate over the next few weeks, with a fairly overwhelming array of excuses as to why he could not attend college. Ultimately, due to his continued absence, the college withdrew his enrolment and his student status.

Dave – anti-colonialist hero

Looking back on this situation, I concluded that Dave was simply not ready to start any course of education or

learning. I do not believe there is any real evidence to suggest it was somehow due to a lack of confidence on his part. If Dave had really wanted to pursue the course, I think he would have done so. It may be that he will take up the course in his own time, perhaps when he is prepared to be placed under the conditions set out by a Skills Academy course that might be understood as a process to change him and convert his activity into a form of social capital. Or he may indeed do something quite different.

There is evidence to suggest that Dave had at least some appropriate skills, as he had previous experience of working in plumbing. However, the YOT worker involved may have been rather over-confident in claiming to have the ability to measure Dave's comparative social and educational confidence. Perhaps Dave was diagnosed wrongly, and confidence was never a major issue to begin with. Does it take more social confidence *not* to attend a course, *not* to comply with the various pressures to conform, than it does to simply, passively tick the appropriate boxes? Like me, maybe Dave had not felt the course to be what it had at first seemed. If so, this demonstrates a level of consciousness that might indicate well-developed social awareness. Of course, this is seeing Dave as having the potential to control his life direction (perhaps not as articulately as possible), the capacity to question and even resist, rather than perceiving him as inherently lacking in insight or confidence.

It is interesting to think about Dave's position and action as someone using strategies to withhold compliance. Looking at the situation from this perspective, from an intellectual and logical standpoint, Dave didn't seem to have a problem: he successfully resisted the pressures put

upon him. The only sign of someone having a problem was the professional who made the psychological diagnosis of Dave (seeing him as lacking confidence socially and educationally) that seemed to be based on impression rather than evidence, and guesswork rather than any kind of specialist training in measuring comparative levels of confidence in human beings.

Diagnosing the professional diagnostician

I myself as an undergraduate degree student lack confidence educationally, as I am never entirely satisfied with my learning and development. There are times and places when I'm probably less socially confident than usual. Do I then require some sort of specialist referral, guidance, treatment or medication? But in making these observations, I have more or less diagnosed myself, as I am the one who feels as though I lack confidence socially or educationally. Therefore isn't confidence a mere feeling or state of mind that is prone to change according to mood, circumstance and situation? Perhaps it sometimes is a more lasting condition, but that did not seem to be the case with Dave.

Maybe the YOT worker induces forms of withdrawal and resistance in some people, and then might interpret this as lack of confidence? To see a difficult professional encounter as being about a client's deficit, rather than the assessing professional's lack of skill, or the understandable feeling of threat that might exist between an authority figure and the individual over whom the authority is being exerted, might be seen as myopic analysis.

Do we need to be diagnosed for everything? More importantly, who needs diagnosing? I have just offered a

counter-diagnosis to the professional's diagnosis of Dave – I wonder if we should take that as an accurate truth about the professional?

My point here brings me back to the questions posed in the introduction. When we speak of educating to change, who or what are we looking to change? Why do we want others to change? Does the individual we are looking or hoping to change actually want to be changed? Are we not, as a professional group, asking young people to conform to suit the standards of our organisations that are in turn set by state policy and legislation?

It sometimes seems that we more or less covertly dictate to young people all the dos and don'ts of life, and introduce them to a long list of rules when they enter the youth facility. At the same time, our funding applications tell stories about working with challenging youth whom we allow to be themselves – while requiring these same people to remove their hoodies that they feel comfortable in, because it unsettles us. This seems more than contradictory; it feels dishonest. It therefore becomes a double dishonesty when we go on to claim that we cultivate trust and transparency in our work.

Stetson autonomy

My late Uncle Fredrick, rest his soul, used to say to me when I questioned him about wearing his Stetson hat everywhere he went, '*Boy, if it ain't broke, don't fix it!*' (This sounded even better when he said it in Creole.) My uncle's Stetson was placed on top of his coffin. That was who he was. He wore his hat till the end. So who am I to change anyone if they don't need changing – hoodie or Stetson?

During the Atlantic Slave Trade, thousands of Africans were torn away from their homes to be distributed and sold in various parts of the world. Their descendants, in both Africa and elsewhere, were thus assigned their place amongst the colonised. The colonisers came with the intention to ‘teach’ these people, provide them with education, religion and civilisation (all these things were of course well in place hundreds of years before the colonisers destroyed the societies they invaded). This history was premised on the disgraceful assumption that those colonised were ‘barbaric’, something less than fully human. The colonisers wanted the indigenous people to change and conform.

The colonisers’ diagnosis about those they colonised was based on assumptions laid on a foundation of ignorance with the aim to exploit. How far is my analysis of Dave’s situation (above) from this colonial malaise?

If we work to change people, could we be working to the same standard as the coloniser? This is a difficult question, and it might be easily dismissed. But it needs consideration when we remember that we ask young people to conform and change so that they can fit into society – be useful; become part of the relatively cheap, relatively flexible workforce required to attract capitalist enterprise away from Britain’s economic competitors. Of course, not so long ago it was raw colonialism and slavery that gave the UK its economic domination over the rest of the world.

Too often young people are treated as barbaric entities. The deficit labels have changed and are more subtle, set in psychological jargon pronounced as all-too ready clichés. In the time of slavery and colonialism, the indigenous people were categorised with deficit labels. We do much the same thing to young people now.

The barbarity of thoughtless categorisation has been condemned by history. Perhaps this is enough for us to question the heritage of the institutions we serve, moulded as they were at the height of empire, and the culture that they perhaps preserve.

Conclusion

Looking back on the above, I can't help but ask if we are working in a society that focuses too much on change and not enough on finding out what young people actually want. It is quite easy to slip into this way of working without realising what you are doing, not to mention the impact your actions will have on a young person's future. As youth workers, we say our main quality is that of empathy and understanding. In actual fact, we often do not seem to make an effort to understand the position of young people. We sometimes patronise them, in many cases engineering dependency on us as the professional or adult.

I believe that the social position of young people will not alter until we, as the professionals and adults, stop doing this. Young people, any people, will justifiably rebel when others subtly or otherwise look to change them when they simply do not need, want or request our efforts to alter their behaviour, activity or motivations.

The government have made many proposals concerning change and young people, but who does this benefit? The government, capitalist (exploitative) industry or the young people? I believe we as youth workers can work with young people so that we might together discover the character of society and what has shaped it. On the foundation of this growing awareness, young people may

figure out how they can change society to suit them, rather than merely passively allowing it to change them in the interests of those who gain from economic and social exploitation.

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A look at child development in John Boyne's novel 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'

Helen Perry

The novel 'The boy in the striped pyjamas' is written by John Boyne and is set in Germany during the Second World War. The main character Bruno is nine years old and he lives in Berlin. His father is a Commander in the German Army. Bruno's father is promoted and put in charge of a concentration camp, outside of Berlin. This means that Bruno's family that consists of his mother, father and sister Gretel (who is twelve years old) have to move to a new house that overlooks the concentration camp. Bruno struggles with the move. Leaving his three friends and grandparents behind in Berlin upsets him greatly. His relationship with his sister is troubled with sibling rivalry. Bruno is aware of his parent's views of how he should conduct himself and he seeks to abide by their rules and use good manners. Bruno hates the new house and its surroundings but has no understanding of what is happening to the people in the concentration camp or what is happening in the world around him. He loves his father, but struggles to understand why he has to obey rules that his father doesn't. For example why can his father interrupt others when he cannot?

Bruno is lonely and bored with his new life. His mother seems to withdraw from their relationship and appears to be suffering with depression and alcoholism. He seeks support from the servants around him, but is ultimately missing having someone to play with. In his need for something to do he explores around the outskirts of the

concentration camp (an area where he is told he cannot go). After a while he meets a boy of the same age called Shmuel who is a Jew held captive in the camp. The two boys develop a friendship meeting regularly and sharing their experiences of bereavement and living in a new place. Bruno does not grasp, what has happened to Shmuel, but seeks to relate his experiences to Shmuel's. He seeks to behave in a polite and friendly way so that he doesn't upset Shmuel in his conversations. Bruno demonstrates great commitment to the friendship by helping Shmuel look for his lost father in the concentration camp. Bruno leaves his side of the fence, dresses in the same clothes as Shmuel and starts a search for Shmuel's father. Unfortunately on their search both boys get caught up in a procession to the gas chamber and they die together.

I chose this book because I have always been interested in the history surrounding the Second World War. I have a nine year old daughter so felt I was able to understand the way in which the nine year olds in the book were thinking and feeling. The story was moving and I was interested in the way in which the boys related to each other, seeking friendship and human contact. I was touched by the way the boys related their experiences to each other and supported one another regardless of their differences.

“Humans are always in social relationships from the moment they are born and they remain part of a network of other people throughout their lives”. (Burkitt 1991:2). Having human contact and being in social relationships is an important part of life and development. Burkitt recognised that this process starts at birth and continues throughout a person's life. Griffin writes “An important part of developing social relationships is making relationships with people of our own age”. He says that when we are with our peers we hopefully have “something

in common”. (Griffin 2009:7 Unit 1 CYP human development II).

Bruno is deprived of friendship. He has lost his three close friends since moving house and is looking for someone of his own age to play and interact with. He tries to relate to his sister but his needs are not met. Bruno starts on a journey of exploration to find friendship. Finding Shmuel, a boy of his own age is very important to Bruno and although they cannot play like Bruno would like, because of the fence that separates them, they develop a deep friendship, chatting and sharing with each other. Bruno and Shmuel find that they have ‘something in common’ and talk about the changes to their lives. Erikson when looking at initiative and guilt says; “Initiative adds to autonomy the quality of undertaking, planning and ‘attacking’ a task for the sake of being active and on the move” (Erikson 229:1995). Bruno uses his initiative and plans to walk around the outskirts of the concentration camp. His need to be ‘active’ overrides his guilt over doing something that he knows he shouldn’t do. Bruno struggles with the need to explore his environment versus his understanding of his parent’s rules and expectations. His parents have told him he is not allowed to go near the concentration camp, but his boredom overcomes his need to behave in this situation.

Meadows when speaking about children’s views on changes in friendship cites Shantz and speaks of “a shift from rather concrete behavioural definitions” which centre on the child playing with things and change in “emphasis” to the more “abstract dispositional description” which involves “caring, sharing and comforting” of one another. (Shantz cited in Meadows 1992:193). This is something that I observed from reading the ‘Boy in the Striped Pyjamas’. Bruno’s relationship with Shmuel moved from one where Bruno’s focus was on wanting Shmuel to play

with him, to Bruno's realisation that this wasn't possible due to the fence and ended with Bruno and Shmuel creating a friendship where feelings, experiences and comfort were shared.

Griffin believes that social interaction is important to the child's development; "almost everyone has the desire to be social" and "if we want to spend time with, and interact with other people we have to learn the rules" (Griffin 2009:3 Unit 3 CYP1). He adds "Children construct their ideas about right and wrong from experience" and that "Once children have discovered what the rules are they regard them as invariable" (Griffin 78:2009 Unit 4 CPY1). This is evident in the story where Bruno is aware of the rule that it is not right to interrupt an adult when they are speaking but cannot understand how his father is allowed to do this and get away with it. This is because the child is regarding the rule as 'invariable'. However, Bruno knew the rules regarding where he was allowed to go, but chose to ignore this, due to his need to explore, be active and find a friend.

Meadows states "Piaget's theory of the development of thinking has at its centre the child actively trying to make sense of the world, just as any organism must try to adapt to its environment" (Meadows 1992:33). The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas shows Bruno to be struggling with the world around him trying to make sense of it through his limited life experience. He believes that the Jews in the concentration camp are having a great time because there are lots of people living together and therefore there are lots of children for Shmuel to play with. Having children to play with is something that Bruno is missing in his life. He is unaware that something more sinister is going on in the concentration camp. Bruno's twelve-year-old sister has more understanding of what is happening in the world around them and in the concentration camp because her

thought processes are more developed and are closer to the thought patterns of an adult.

Rutter speaks of the attachments that children make saying that most children have “multiple selective attachments” in addition to the ‘mother’ often including grandparents and older siblings. She says that these attachments provide “comfort and security” (Rutter 1992:113), that “aspects of relationships reduce anxiety and provide emotional protection in circumstances of stress” and that attachments and relationships “apply across the life span and right into extreme old age” (Rutter 1992:121). Meadows makes a similar point; “attachments are important both for the present happiness of the individual and for his or her future prospects” (Meadows 1992:177). The story shows Bruno’s need and longing for other attachments in his life.

I realised that Bruno’s story held lessons that could illuminate and inform my own work with children and others. It is important to recognise that social interaction is important for children, adolescents and adults and is a vital and essential to ones well-being. It is also important to recognise the significance of ‘relationships’ and ‘attachments’ that children and young people have. Being aware of how important these ‘attachments’ are to young people and how they can be affected should the ‘attachments’ in their lives change is of great importance in helping young people understand and evaluate their experiences. Providing opportunities and safe places where young people can discuss and look at how change affects their relationships is paramount.

“Adolescents can think about abstract ideas like time, space and moral systems” (Griffin 69:2009 Unit 4 CPY). As Piaget suggested there is a move during childhood from thinking that is fragmented, partial and closely tied to

experience, to thinking during adolescence that is at least capable of being logical, abstract and flexible. (Meadows 1992:34). It seemed to me that Bruno is just taking those first steps from childhood to adolescence when his story ends. Understanding that there are changes in thought processes from childhood to adolescence as well as physical changes is important. By recognising that children's thinking changes from concrete to abstract, we are able to adapt the way in which we work with young people; our activity programmes need to reflect the change in young people's thinking and ability. It is also important to remember that young people do not all develop at the same pace.

Piaget's theory according to Griffin is that "we learn by the world around us" and that "we do not learn by spontaneous development from inside" (2009:55 Griffin). This is important for my work as it creates an awareness of the need to create opportunities where young people and adults can learn from their experiences and have the opportunity to meet with their peer group and where learning and support can be reciprocated. Providing opportunities for shared experiences and contact with people of the same age is important for the development of young people in order for them to grow emotionally, physically and socially. Helping young people to develop an acceptance and understanding of their culture and other people's cultures is an important part of development and social interaction.

Summary

Attachments are important for children, young people and adults; these may take various forms but are essential in providing 'comfort' and 'reducing anxiety'. Within Youth and Community Work it is essential to have an

understanding and awareness of the emotional, physical and social development of people. Informal educators need to be aware of the stages and changes in development for young people; assisting them in learning from their experiences with others and the society in which they live. Social interaction is important for all people regardless of their age and this is why it is important to provide opportunities and spaces where 'peers' can meet and interact.

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Making sense of human rights in a youth work setting

Andi Kewley

Aims and Methods

In this paper I want to look at the interplay of Human Rights legislation and the functioning of small, community based, voluntary sector, youth projects. I will, for reasons of space and simplicity, base most of my analysis on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) Articles, but will also touch on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. (UNCRC)

To support my critique and offer a range of insights into practice dilemmas, I will focus on 5 examples from practice covering issues of attempted suicide, theft, underage sex, physical abuse and neglect. These are not meant to be indicative of any particular individual(s).

I hope to paint a more critical view of rights based legislation from this piece, and present a more honest consideration and debate of the aspects of practice which 'work'; because I believe fear of public and professional pillory, for taking any route but the prescribed approach, is disabling and serves no-one's interests, least of all the vulnerable and those whose rights need protecting.

Introduction

Many thinkers have devoted time to the question of human rights; Alsop (2008a:10) believes that modern human rights

legislation is a reaction to the ‘inhumanising’ events of World War II. Edmundson (2004:18) traces its roots further back to the European Enlightenment, citing Grotius (1646): that “a right... has reference to a person”, and that a government is fundamentally a “...pact amongst men formed to further the aims of sociability” i.e. that rights, though directed at the individual, are aimed at the betterment of society; via “social claims for institutionalised protection” (cited Thompson 2008:2).

Thompson (2008:4) develops this thinking:

In modern society, it is our rights and freedoms that unite us, rather than our beliefs. Religion... political affiliation... are matters of personal choice... we share the right to vote, the entitlement to education and freedom of speech, making our social ties indirect rather than direct.

suggesting (2008:3) that:

Being members of society provides us with protection, co-operation, company, purpose and support, In return we must live by the rules of our society (the law) and we must uphold and perform our various social roles.

However, she also points out (2003:6-8) that this view of a benign, paternalistic body governing by consent is disputed; Marxist thought denotes a conflicting perspective whereby human rights are not designed to protect people but are designed to protect capitalism and so maintain the status quo. Alsop (2008a:10) supports this when he observes that the UDHR “favours the rights of capitalism but ignores the rights of economy and social justice”

Discussion

However one chooses to interpret the emergence of human rights, I agree with Haydon's (2008:8) commonsense assessment that whenever someone has a right, someone else must have an obligation/responsibility to do what the right demands; further, that human rights are about how people are treated by the state. This brings me to the question what/who is the state?

My role as a youth worker is to informally educate. I am qualified to a national standard. Keeping children safe and promoting their wellbeing is a responsibility of all in society, but there are additional demands made of me, and the organisation I work for, due to its role as a 'frontline service'. A demand, according to Laming (2009), that needs to have more energy and drive put into it. Viewed from a human rights stance it is a responsibility/ obligation that the organisation and I share and it is the state that we 'represent' in doing so.

The charity I work for, whilst locally accountable to a management committee, is licensed by the UK legal regulator, the Charity Commission, to operate and is subject to various policies and mandates laid down by central government; for example I am required to have an enhanced 'CRB' (Criminal Records Bureau) check. There is also wealth of legislation to which I must adhere, training I must undertake and legal frameworks I must work within. Two examples are Every Child Matters (ECM) and the 'Safeguarding Children' guidance which "reflects the principles contained within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK Government in 1991...[and] the European Convention on Human Rights" (Crown Copyright 2006:21) and is informed by the recommendations of the Laming enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié in 2003. (Crown copyright 2006:9)

My employment role places me in situations and circumstances where I get to know young people, their families and their communities. 'Relationship' makes me privy to information/intelligence that is usually private. In everyday practice, I am in a position to 'interfere' in matters of privacy and family, and challenge 'honour and reputation'. This is something Article 12 (UN 1948) argues against; "no-one shall be subject to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation".

The 'arbitrary' aspect is set against the role that I and my agency have in upholding some of the basic welfare rights of the young people we work with; "Life, liberty and security of person" (Article 3 cited UN 1948) more recently articulated in 'Every Child Matters' (ECM 2008) and resultant legislation under the mantra 'the welfare of the child is paramount'.

Already I am in a quandary; each individual's human rights competing against another's. I want to now consider some practice examples in depth, and rather than get caught up in the rights and wrongs of a particular situation, look at the wider concepts involved.

Practice Dilemma I

UNDHR Article 3: Right to life V's Article 12:

Right to privacy

The right to life is the most basic of rights, and was faced with the emergency situation of a young person coming into a project with friends reporting he had taken a pills overdose. Getting him to lifesaving medical treatment should have been the priority for all concerned, yet as he

ran away, I was slow to respond, “he’s left, what can I do?” My managers’ response was fast: “go out and look for him, we need to find him, we have to get him to hospital”. He then phoned the family to alert them too. I am critical of my own behaviour and wonder if my slowness to respond was because I was aware of the young person’s right to privacy. Do I contact the parent? In hindsight, I can see there really is no ethical dilemma. My organisation’s policy even supports such actions, yet I was disabled by the experience. Was this to do with the brevity of the situation or a misplaced sense of rights? My own prior experience within another organisation used to suggest that a young person’s right to make their own choices ‘trumps’ all.

I am grateful that my manager was there to direct me and dread to think of the possible consequences had he not taken charge. I believe I would have rung parents etc, but not before valuable time had been lost. My manager located and took the young person and friends to hospital, waiting until the family arrived. He later said that he was keen to attend hospital partly so he could ‘hand over’ to them, aware that their child protection protocols would now kick in (so that we wouldn’t have to). Whilst it is easy to be critical of us not wanting to ‘get our hands dirty’, it is easier for a large anonymous organisation such as the NHS to be pushing a ‘safeguarding’ agenda than it would be a small community based project.

Are there any downsides to this action? Did the young person choose to tell us because he wanted to disclose something else? Certainly I would guess that he wanted immediate help; he didn’t want to die. Could it be that we put him at further risk? I would argue not; the paths followed would be the same whoever the reporter and this way both he and the family is able to regard the project as being there for them in their time of need. The young person’s continued, regular weekly contact with the project

means there is always the opportunity for a listening ear should he want to talk.

In this situation, it is clear that the right that takes precedence is the right to life in line with ECM/Safeguarding legislation. However, the best way of achieving such welfare becomes less clear when the situation is not one of crisis (i.e. life and death) and when taking a longer term view.

Official guidance states that decisions to share information require professional guidance and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. (CWDC, 2008). Legislation then goes on to highlight those young people living in particularly stressful circumstances (and at higher risk to welfare):

Living in poverty

Where there is domestic violence

Where a parent has a mental illness

Where a parent is misusing drugs or alcohol

Where a parent has a learning disability

That face racism and other forms of social isolation

Living in areas with a lot of crime, poor housing and high unemployment

(Crown Copyright 2006:17)

The 'Working together to safeguard children...' document contains a seemingly inexhaustible list of definitions, types and descriptions of what constitutes all the various abuses;

together with the routes into formal assessment and intervention style proceedings. So, the irony is whilst it is stated that ‘professionals’ are expected to act on their own judgements, the reality is that they have little scope to do so. Legislation demands and prescribes the action to be taken:

1. Information sharing;
 2. Use of CAF (Common Assessment Framework);
 3. A designated lead professional to co-ordinate ‘help’ and support;
 4. A computerised ‘contact point’ to speed up interventions.
- (CWDC 2008a).

And the ideal way in which organisations may be ‘joined up’ in the future:

1. Multi-agency panel e.g. YISP youth inclusion/support panel;
 2. Multi-agency team e.g. behaviour and ed support/YOT;
 3. Integrated service e.g. Sure Start children’s centres.
- Cited CWDC (2008a)

Critics such as Hoyle (2008) claim that informal educators are being put into the role of “unquestioning technician of a favoured way of thinking promulgated and sanctioned by government”; really a ‘dumbing down’ of the youth work profession into “obedience and passivity which runs contrary to our vocation and calling”.

He claims that informal educators are being sidelined by the visible symptoms and failing to look deeper into the ‘structural inequalities’ inherent in society that these welfare issues are symptomatic of. He goes on to highlight a range of other difficulties facing society which I find a helpful ‘enlargement’ of the picture:

- United Kingdom ranked in the bottom third in a sample of rich nations on five out of six measures of child well being (UNICEF, 2007).
- Despite high levels of expenditure on attempts to eradicate it, truancy rates in England continue to rise (Paton, 2008).
- Childhood obesity rates in the UK are among the highest per capita in the world (Wilson and Reilly, 2006).
- The proportion of young people in England in custody is the third highest in Western Europe (behind Turkey and the Ukraine) (Janes, 2006).

(Cited Hoyle, 2008).

The area I work in is classed as being one of the 10% most deprived in Europe (Newcastle City Council, 2007) in relation to health, work, education and other indicators. In such an environment, it is no surprise that a large proportion, if not all of the young people, are exposed to

those ‘stressful circumstances’ highlighted earlier. I can see that CAF (Common Assessment Framework) could/would be beneficial for all the young people I work with. Am I failing young people if I do not complete the 6-page CAF forms with them? What is my ‘professional role’ if I think it is neither practicable nor desirable to be referring en masse to social services, filling out CAF paperwork and interagency working in the prescribed manner? How do I work as an informal educator whilst at the same time not ‘falling foul’ of my statutory duties?

Hoyle (2008) hits the nail on the head when he states that it is very difficult to criticise the contention that ‘every child matters’ but that the political, social and moral relations contained in this legislation need to be critiqued.

Jeffs (2006) provides an alternate, and, for me, a refreshing perspective, noting first that the Laming enquiry (looking mainly into failures in social work care) has, out of 108 recommendations, only 2 directed at the youth work profession. He is also critical of the ECM agenda that came in its wake; describing a model that sees the welfare worker/educator as a “[technician](#) who follows the plans and procedures set out by those higher up the command chain.” Instead, he favours the “local decision and informed action that characterised the orientation of many key pioneers in welfare” suggesting;

The self-belief ...is acquired from learning, reflection, practice and assurance regarding the correctness of one’s performance. Faith in the rightness of one’s actions and value base springs from an extensive knowledge base, comprehensive understanding of one’s role and professional identity set alongside the intellectual ability to coherently sustain and articulate a position however severe the buffeting.

Such thinking can be seen to epitomise the ‘forked road’ from which current informal education stems; that of the ‘professional’ which promotes self help, and improves the effectiveness and appropriateness of services within the existing social order and the alternative, that of the ‘radical’ which emphasises the need to change the existing social order (Barry,1996:4). The debate gives me the legitimacy I believe I need in order to explore practice dilemmas which often put me at odds with statutory safeguarding methods/demands and cause me to question my values, professionalism and legitimacy.

Practice Dilemma 2

UNDHR Article 17: Right to own property V’s Articles 23, 25, 26: Right to work, adequate standard of living, and education of the ‘whole person’

Occasionally, when young people come into the project, I overhear, and am put in the position of challenging, their desire to sell stolen goods e.g. bikes or shoplifted items to other young people.

Here, I want to look at how it may be possible for me to negotiate theft within a moral and professional framework. It has been the subject of lengthy supervisions with my manager; his approach regarding theft and other crime was to see the person first, and to maintain an environment where young people’s actions are challenged on a level of individual, social and organisational responsibility. So, instead of judging young people as ‘bad’ for stealing, instead, they are discouraged from selling stolen goods in the project in other ways i.e. the implications for themselves/their families/the project when they are caught.

An issue here for me is that my experience of crime and criminality differs from those around me. I was brought up to believe that stealing was totally, absolutely wrong, that someone who stole couldn't be trusted. As such, my interventions with young people are of a more publically challenging/hardline approach. ("Don't put me in the position of....", "have some respect for...") which seems less effective, more alienating, than those interventions with, say, my colleagues, as there is less room for discussion.

Where I work, stealing could be viewed by others as endemic; certainly low level petty crime/criminality is part of everyday life. In some ways, I perceive a view where opportunism is accepted and there exists a grudging respect for the criminal. The community has strong moral views about theft (as do the young people) - some types of stealing are seen as worse than others e.g. mugging an old lady versus theft of belongings when someone isn't looking. An individual may be well liked and reliable, but you wouldn't trust him in a room with your stuff, and this is just accepted.

The crime that I am faced with most often is opportunist, petty and not very profitable; shoplifting, bike theft, vehicle 'twok' (taken without owner consent) etc. Whilst I am under pressure both moral and professional to report crime to the police, I am also aware and in some ways sympathetic to the situation and circumstances. These people are on the 'bottom of the heap' of society. Article 25 talks about the right to an "adequate standard of living... health... housing etc" and Article 23 gives everyone the "right to work". In an area of high deprivation, ill-health, inadequate housing/schooling and with third generation unemployment are their human rights not being compromised as well?

The approach of the project which I follow is one that seeks, via conversation, to help young people recognise that their liberty is important. To challenge the view that many young men in particular seem to be socialised into accepting that freedom isn't that important; "I've had me frisk now" - a comment from a 19 year old lad out of prison for a week and expecting to be remanded for breaching his curfew. I am struck here by Rogowski's comment "the clearest form of exclusion is incarceration" (2004:65). We also talk about and challenge the impractical nature of stealing; the heavy costs (incarceration) versus the often paltry reward (getting £30 for a bicycle worth £1500+, for example). Pollock (1996:45) provides a good insight into why there are financially negligible benefits to crime in these communities; large scale, calculated, crime/fraud is less likely to be undertaken by the unemployed as they simply do not possess the contacts/equipment necessary.

Whilst they and I may see some moral justification to stealing (in the sense of the bigger societal picture), the reality is often that they are 'stealing from themselves' as it is from people (a working class community) who are in no better a situation than themselves that are the target. In 1996, Pollock (1996:50) described the challenge:

how can young people with few or no qualifications, family problems and often some form of criminal record be brought into the labour force in such a way that they will not quickly drop out of it?

Though said 13 years ago, the challenge remains the same, or has possibly got harder given the recent down-turn in the global economy. The young people he describes are familiar to me:

Far from being idle, work-shy and content with a life on benefits they are frustrated with being unable to support themselves...[and this is] often directed at themselves.

Initial optimism “probably related to their relative inexperience in the labour market” (Pollock, 1996:45) leading to the grim misery of having what Jahoda (cited in Pollock 1996:48) describes as being the worst aspect to being unemployed: having unstructured time on one’s hands. Pollock found, in his study that “most jobs were discovered through personal contacts”. This again mirrors my experience, and prior to working where I do now, I would never have believed that ‘area bias’ exists, but it’s the only explanation for why certain, very able young people have been unable to find even menial jobs, well below their capabilities. Jahoda (cited in Pollock 1996:49) found that unemployment took away four important functions of work:

- a. it gives a pattern to daily life and activities to do
 - b. it provides social contact outside the home
 - c. it gives a sense of participation in a wider collective purpose
 - d. it is a source of social status and identity
- (Jahoda, cited in Pollock 1996:49)

and the resultant stress causes psychological ill health. Pollock states that “the primary function of work is... to

finance other activities” and must therefore be another element of exclusion.

My manager talks about being intolerant of theft but also recognises the young people’s sense of joy in getting away with something. This enjoyment is at the expense of hurting other people. This we acknowledge and challenge as a project, but at the same time my manager asks me, why are these young people denied so much? There is much theory about the value of truth, and indeed truth is often seen as a cornerstone in youth work theory, but truth involves dilemmas that go beyond the rights and wrongs of an instance of theft. Within the project, I continue to struggle with my practice in relation to this.

Practice Dilemma 3

CRC Article 8 and 14: Freedom of identity, Respect for role of parents, V’s Article 34: Freedom from unlawful sexual activity

An issue for me as a worker is how to negotiate underage sex, or the probability of it in the light of other pressing priorities young people come to us with. They often don’t consider this the priority that adults or legislation do.

Guidance states:

It is an offence to intentionally engage in sexual touching with a young person aged 13, 14 or 15. ‘Touching’ covers all physical contact. (Brook, 2009).

At the same time, Newcastle C’card (Condom) scheme, like other schemes nationally, allows dispensing of condoms to under 16’s by youth workers, according to legally agreed methods of prescription (Fraser guidelines)

backed up by medical law (Gillick competencies) which through case law has ascertained methods to assess the ability of a child to be deemed mature enough to consent to their own medical treatment. (Oxford, 2010)

When a young woman came to the project reporting an (underage) pregnancy, I was there to offer information, advice and hand-holding. My actions in this situation were guided by knowledge of both family support, (the mother is aware that her daughter is having sex and whilst not happy, she recognises it is something she has little power to do anything about) and the maturity of the young person herself. Despite legislation, there was never any dilemma for me or question of going to the police. This was also backed up by understanding (complicity?) that the police and social services really wouldn't be interested.

Though legislation takes an extreme view of underage sex/"touching", the reality is very different. I have only rarely heard of instances where the police have been involved and this has been parental rather than young person-led. I could find no UK statistics on the numbers prosecuted for underage sex. Despite some evidence that "almost 30% of young men and almost 26% of young women report having had intercourse before their 16th birthday [in the UK]" (Brook 2009b).

Thus there is no freedom from unlawful sexual activity for the child, instead there is the silent acceptance of illegal activity by 'the authorities'. Any action to prevent 'unlawful sexual activity' is not guided by the protection of the individual, but conversely the belief that society needs to be protected from the actions of this child and the "sexually selfish and exploitative" costs to society (i.e. becoming pregnant) (Wallbank, cited Greene 2004:29)

whereby the delinquency of young women “manifests itself in their sexual and reproductive behaviour” (Levitas cited Greene 2004:28).

Brook (2009c) states that:

girls whose families are in social class V (unskilled manual) are ten times more likely to become teenage mothers... citing the “Social Exclusion Unit report Teenage Pregnancy” reasons for higher UK teenage pregnancy rates being; ignorance, mixed messages and low expectations.

Surely the basic human rights of these women according to UNDHR articles 23, 25 and 26: right to work with equal pay, adequate health and well being, and education for the ‘whole person’, are again called into question.

Whilst I am familiar with ‘low expectations’ of working class young women, I know that pregnancy does not equal the end of a person’s life. In some situations, it may have positive results; not least the relative safety from male attention that the state of pregnancy and motherhood can bring; but also the role and responsibilities the same brings, similar in many ways to the ‘functions of work’ illustrated in the earlier example by Jahoda (cited Pollock 1996:49). My action in such situations is guided more by relationship with the individual/family involved than legislation.

It is an irony to me that these young women in deprived areas with the least of opportunity, who could almost be viewed as victims of the state, are accused of perpetrating harm on the state. Jephcott (cited Turnbull 2000:96) gives

an amusing and relevant insight, which sums this up for me:

It is a curious and disarming fact that some English people of the most varied outlook and experience, and with the most diverse plans for the improvement of the social order, seem to consider that the main function of any social organisation for young people is to stop the girls from having unwanted babies. The girls themselves look for a much more positive good in their societies.

Practice Dilemma 4

UNDHR Article 3: Right to security of person V's Article 12: Right to freedom from arbitrary interference

Two young women came into the project, one I didn't know at all, the other I have some relationship with. In the course of a general conversation about what the project does, the one I didn't know told me that she is unable to attend college at the moment as she's not allowed to use her arm. Her friend explained that her rib was broken by her now ex-boyfriend who lost his temper when he found out that she went with someone else whilst they were split up. Here I offered space and a listening ear – was more demanded? The conversation centred on supporting the young person in the here and now; did her mam know? Was she still with him/scared? How was she feeling about herself, what was she doing about college?

When my project manager walked past us as we sat, I spoke openly about what had happened; thinking about the need to share information, and to break the taboo regarding talking publicly about domestic violence. He

asked “have you reported it to the police?” and “you should, that’s assault”. I am ashamed that I did not even think to ask this. I knew the answer, as did my manager, but in asking the question, it sets a moral precedent, and leaves open the opportunity for such a debate. Can we be criticised for not pushing such action? The young woman, I believe, neither came to us for this or would be accepting of it, (and in such a way I was recognising her right to privacy, to sort things out as she saw fit) however, it is our moral duty to offer such support, that her right to legal protection from violence should be upheld (and according to safeguarding legislation, it is probably our legal duty to act).

On reflection, I note that I have myself become numb and accepting of such violence towards women, perhaps because it is so commonplace? As a professional this is beyond lax, it is unacceptable. In this situation, am I upholding her human rights to make her own choices or am I failing to protect her welfare? Whatever my action or inaction in individual situations, I must think about the wider societal picture and consider the message I wish to send as an informal educator about what is morally right and wrong.

Practice Dilemma 5

CRC Article 3: Care of the child V’s Article 5: respect the role of parents

A young woman comes into the project regularly, she has a number of children under five and has suffered several miscarriages. She has numerous serious health concerns, as do several of her children, and usually, all have bumps and scrapes. She is looking very thin/malnourished/lacking energy. I’m very worried about her physical and

emotional health (possible depression) whilst I know I also need to consider her children's welfare (possible neglect).

With this kind of example, my main concern is about the social isolation of the mother and how to offer her support; encouraging her into the project; "it's not good for people to be indoors all day". I know that she will benefit from just being able to pop into the project for a cup of tea and to speak with 'sane' adults. Similarly, Brandon et al (2008:86) reports that in over one third of reviews of child death and injury from abuse/neglect, all three factors of substance misuse, violence and mental health issues were present. He goes on to state (2008:96) that, in many cases:

There is no evidence of any relationship with a professional in which she [the child's mother] becomes substantially engaged and which she uses to tackle her problems.

Being able to have a friendly, non-threatening place to go where she will be welcomed rather than 'spectacled' is in contrast to findings of a "systematic failure to engage with parents" blamed partly on a "succession of workers" (Brandon et al, 2008:81).

As a project, we demonstrate our care practically; calling round to visit, phoning to see how a person is, making cups of tea, encouraging a person to make and keep appointments, chatting and surprising a person with presents. This young woman knows that we care about her welfare and that of her children.

Thus the method by which we support the welfare of the child is, in this case, supporting the mother. We know already that other agencies are involved; the GP, social

services, housing, welfare education officers at school and she doesn't need to get the same from us.

Brandon et al (2008:107) highlights:

Most serious child abuse is essentially unpredictable - even if the 'whole picture' had been known, it would not have been possible to anticipate serious abuse for most of the children at the centre of the reviews.

Whilst I am not actively sharing information with social services, this is not unthinking. I am aware of the “serious backlog of cases...and delays in provision” (Brandon et al, 2008:23) that must occur in an area of high deprivation such as this and am acting in a “more creative, more responsive” way. (Brandon et al 2008:95)

Discussion

Looking at real-life practice dilemmas from a window of human rights illustrates that in all these case examples, the ‘secret to our success’ as a project and as professionals is in conflict with some important aspects of human rights thinking and legislation.

In formal settings such as schools, procedures are more prescriptive and there is a degree of comfort; both personal and professional in not having to put oneself on the line. Additionally, such professionals have the backing of the law; “the one right that carries a compulsion with it
UNDHR article 26: Everyone has a right to education...elementary education shall be compulsory” (cited Alsop 2008:3). Despite any referral, young people

are forced to remain in the 'care' of the project/
professional.

Working in an environment of voluntarism and accessibility, I am far less able to 'hide' behind protocol and the formality of institutions. In each case, there is also the wider damage to the project to consider. Trusting relationships with these young people and their families are not easily built and whilst I have an obligation (moral and legal) for the welfare of 'every child' I also need to consider how best to achieve this outcome. In many cases, 'referring to social services' would achieve little, if any, benefit to the individual and may be harmful. In following safeguarding legislation, I would have an untenable role; reporting virtually everyone I work with; it is possible that no-one would allow their children to be involved with the project.

CAF (Common Assessment Framework) procedures really demand a more rigid response, however, in the same way social workers are expected to prioritise their case-loads, I need to prioritise those I would refer to social services and to be willing to accept the consequences of my own moral and professional responsibilities to act, or not act. A criticism of my project is that we exist in a kind of bubble, perhaps not unusual for a voluntary sector organisation pulled in different directions, whereby we tend to ignore inconvenient or nonsensical legislation. But there is always the danger that the bubble will burst and we will have to attend to the consequences. As a professional, I have learnt that I do need to know more about national remits as they do affect my practice. There are legal arguments that I at least need to have considered, and as a qualified worker the weight of such dilemmas should not rely solely on the shoulders of my manager. Also, in being better informed, I can consider whether a CAF referral may be beneficial and link people to this resource.

Conclusion

Here I want to highlight some difficulties I have unearthed through the course of writing this paper:

Firstly, I found that Human Rights legislation separates sharply between victim and offender. There is no room for grey; for caring or understanding or sympathy; all is black and white, right and wrong. My difficulty with this assertion is that it fails to reflect true life, where a person can be a victim in one instance, a perpetrator in another. It is ironic that Human Rights legislation ignores the humanity of a situation e.g. a mother struggling to cope and instead sees simply abuse. A situation handled in two ways; removal of children according to rights legislation or the more sympathetic (to the family) route of support and guidance. Edmundson (2004:187) states that:

“despite this trend towards legal recognition, human rights are pre-eminently moral rights, whose existence and validity do not depend on their being recognised or instituted.”

Viewing these ‘rights’ as moral rather than legal would, I believe, allow the freedom to view from a more caring approach. I would go further than Edmundson and say that the legal recognition of human rights can obscure one persons rights in favour of another’s, depending on who has the better argument, such that rights can be judged according to an arbitrary process of prioritisation or ‘trumps’ (Haydon 2008:5).

Secondly, with its emphasis on a ‘best interests’ standard, human rights and other welfare legislation fails to engage with day to day realities of life for many people. As Westman claims parenting standards are subject to middle-class values and thus bias is prevalent (1991 cited Pardeck

2002:20-23). Freeman (1997 cited Pardeck 2002:23) voices his concern that there is a “strong case for the state not to intervene into family life”. Instead Westman advocates a ‘least detrimental’ standard as being a more equitably based strategy for legislation, and one in which realistic available alternatives are considered that bring least harm to the child.

Thirdly, in its lofty proclamations of equality of the individual, human rights legislation doesn’t fail to see that all people are not equal, but with its continuing emphasis on the individual it fails to give strength or support to those who are oppressed because of their grouping e.g. women.

I would like to consider the thought of Alsop (Alsop 2008:14) who provides for me a refreshing and alternate view of human rights legislation:

Can we be altruistic enough to decrease our control and power for the benefit of young people’s rights, or can we think of ever more creative ways for young people to express their struggle and claim their rights for themselves? Can we see graffiti; indolence; and rebellion’ and increasingly silly ways to wear a school tie; and petty crime as bigger than young people ‘going through a stage’ by trying to understand these acts as the acts of a minority group denied basic human rights?

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Is the grass greener on the other side? – a comparison of organisational cultures

Phil Watson

Introduction

For this article I will compare and contrast the organisational culture of two organisations. I will draw on relevant literature to help identify lessons to be learnt from both organisations and my understanding of practice. The two organisations that I am going to consider are two youth agencies I have visited: one is a statutory Youth Service (YS) which is part of a local authority Council, the other is a faith-based voluntary sector project (VSP). My visits included talking to staff and young people, as well as speaking to those in management positions. I have also referred to documents from both organisations, but for the purposes of this article I have kept the names of the organisations and any in-house documents anonymous.

Overview

The VSP is part of a larger Christian charity and states in its Aims and Purposes that:

At its centre are Christians who, regarding Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, desire to share their faith with others and make Him known, trusted, loved, served and exemplified in all human relationships. It

welcomes into its fellowship persons of other religious faiths and of none.

In practical terms it aims to:

Provide a welcome to members for themselves, in a meeting place which is theirs to share, where friendship can be made and counsel sought. Develop activities, which stimulate and challenge its members in an environment that enable them to take responsibility and find a sense of achievement. Involve all members in care and work for others. Create opportunities for exchanging views, so that its members can improve their understanding of the world, of themselves and of one another.

The YS's Council have laid out their goals in a four year plan. This states that the main goal is 'To deliver the best quality of life in Britain'. It goes on to set out its priorities:

Putting the customer first, increasing educational achievement and skills, promoting health and leisure, supporting vulnerable people, improving transport, promoting economic growth, protecting the environment, reducing and recycling waste and making communities safer.

The VSP is part of a wider charity which claims to reach over 1 million young people. By contrast, the local Council has responsibility for 1,360,000 citizens.

Comparisons

When considering the organisations' aims, the VSP has religious values at its heart whereas the YS is secular. The religious statement of the VSP may be problematic for many, even as someone who holds strong Christian beliefs I find the use of religious language of this type and in this context unhelpful. I think that it appears to be written by and for devout Christians and can have an excluding affect on those who may not appreciate the historic value of these phrases. From a cynical standpoint, the Council statement referred to above leaves out the political element in that those running the Council probably have an overriding aim, which is that they want to get re-elected and hold onto their power. If this is true does this indicate that the primary task of the organisation is the re-election of its members? 'The number and distribution of tasks vary between and within institutions and over time. Each whole or part has at any given time, a primary task – the task it must perform in order to survive' [Rice, A. K. cited in YMCA, 2008:1.8]

It would seem then whilst both sets of employees have been given information about what their organisations' aims are, they may in some cases have reservations about the motivations that drive those aims. I think that this has a more serious effect on the culture of the YS organisation and leads, in my opinion to a cynical outlook that permeates through the system and which can undermine genuine achievements by the organisation. I have reached this view after discussions with staff and although these conversations were somewhat informal, it does seem to me to be worthy of serious consideration. In the case of the VSP statement although the religious element may seem irrelevant to many at least, I imagine, it is accepted as genuine and transparent and allows employees to focus on the practical aims without the underlying distrust that I believe affects a YS within a local Council.

Huczynski and Buchanan (1991:467) describe the way that organisation members typically communicate and express themselves as representing elements of culture; one such element being the use of symbols and slogans. Morgan goes further stating that 'harmony and team work were also sought through the use of imagery to define the desired company spirit' and goes on to say 'the effect of this leadership style was to create a superficial appearance of harmony while driving conflict underground' (Morgan, 1993:123).

The VSP has a very strong branding which seems to have been achieved without much advertising other than the logo that appears on their buildings. The local Council has stated that there will be 'new branding to ensure consistency in all our print and electronic communications'. This has been implemented with almost desperate haste. Employees are bombarded with council magazines praising their achievements and extolling them to do better. The Council is also communicating its logo highlighting the five values that employees are expected to hold: to be passionate, responsive, inspirational, supportive and motivated, by putting them on all employees' computer desktop backgrounds. This has an element of brain washing and causes employees not inconsiderable annoyance as it makes the screen hard to read. If my assumptions about the different levels of trust that exist within the two organisations and the different way their cultures are communicated are accurate then this seems to be consistent with Morgan's observation about creating 'a superficial appearance of harmony' and may well be applicable to the local council setting.

Comparing the two organisations in their entirety is difficult due to the Council's diverse responsibilities in

administering a large county. To focus more closely how the organisations impact on informal education it would seem more productive to look at the organisations at local level. My visits to the local VSP and my discussions with the staff were quite enlightening. The VSP is an independent charity affiliated to the wider charity, which allows them to use their branding and support network. There is a general manager and an operational manager who are responsible for about seventeen workers. The general manager is responsible to a board of trustees; this would seem to indicate a flat structure with very few tiers between the workers and the Trustees.

The local structure of the Council's YS has four tiers of management for considerably more workers and would seem to be proportionally similar to the VSP structure. This would be consistent with Child's view that 'the maximum length of organisations hierarchies varies in a predictable manner with their total size measured in terms of employment' (cited in YMCA, 2008:4.2). However the YS area manager has many more tiers above him so the workers in YS are much further removed from the ultimate decision makers. 'There can be considerable communications difficulties and tortured lines of decision making in tall structures' (YMCA 2008:4.5). The VSP manager who conveniently used to work for the Council felt his easy access to decision makers allowed him and his staff to respond to situations much more quickly. It would seem that by being affiliated to the wider charity, the VSP has the benefits that a large organisation provides without the bureaucratic hindrances often associated with such structures.

Bill Gates asked the questions 'do people in my company feel free to send me an e-mail because we believe in a flat organisation? Or do we have a flat organisation because people have always been able to send e-mails to me?'

(Gates, 2000:185). Maybe the question should be reversed regarding the Council; is it a tall organisation because they don't feel free to e-mail senior managers? It would seem that e-mails have the capacity to flatten a structure should the organisation desire it. Recently during an OFSTED inspection, two of the YS projects were due to be visited and as very senior managers would be held responsible for a poor report the normal protocol of communicating through the line management was ignored. The YS projects were receiving personal e-mails asking questions and being given advice on a regular basis, 'the primary task – the task it must perform if it is to survive'?

It seems both the local organisations that I have observed have open structures in that 'the open model system assumes that the system is constantly in relationship with the external world or environment' (YMCA, 2008:3.4-5). In fact, in the current climate of partnership and joined up working, it seems difficult to imagine how a closed system could exist. A few years ago, the YS projects seemed to be more self contained, visitors were rare and, due to its size, the Council appeared to take very little interest in it. Times have changed. The VSP manager spoke of his 'culture shock' when he left the Council to start working at the VSP: 'there were hardly any structures or policies to follow'. It would seem that he and possibly many others have come to rely on the structured methods which statutory organisations provide.

There was little evidence of the religious ideals of the VSP, apart from a copy of the Lords Prayer on the wall of the conference room. This contrasts sharply with the amount of YS Council policy statements, which are compulsory in all centres. Funding is a major issue for the VSP, as all their money has to be bid for, so contracts for staff are normally short term. This makes long term investment in training an issue and the organisation experiences

difficulties employing staff for substantial part time hours, 'they either want to do a couple of hours a week or work full time'. This leads to a transient work force. The funder's needs also have to be met which means adapting programmes to satisfy them which the manager at times finds frustrating. Although some of these issues occur within the YS Council in particular chasing targets, they are not in my opinion so detrimental to their work.

Conclusions

Both organisations have their strengths, the VSP because it is only affiliated to a charity and thus has a relatively small hierarchy and can react quicker and enjoy greater flexibility than the Council; the YS in turn can offer better training, more job security and the protection offered by its systems and policies. The Council because of the diversity of work carried out has a one size fits all corporate aims where as the VSP has a more concentrated area of work and is able to provide more focussed aims.

The VSP is constantly seeking core funding and this may lead to a more imaginative culture developing as opposed to the relative security of the YS where a safe, comfortable less creative culture could be tolerated. Maybe a lesson for the YS is, instead of trying to merge its organisation into one uniform public face, to allow the individual departments to have and celebrate their own identity and individuality. Were this to happen I believe a culture of pride would emerge leading to increased quality and output. As for the VSP I can offer little advice other than to enjoy the lack of constraints and the support of the wider charity, because unless the government funding attitudes change dramatically I fear they will have to continue living on their wits.

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