

Chapter 6

Trends in National Youth Work Practice

6.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines baseline findings on trends and approaches in State-led or nationally co-ordinated youth work practices. While the focus will be on State-led youth work, it will also cover other non-State national or major regional policy and programme structures, such as in Australia and New Zealand. These structures are, however, often supported by the State (as in Australia and New Zealand), and they also influence State practice (as in, for example, India). Later chapters will examine the relationship (or lack thereof) between practice, and legislation, policy and regulation.

6.2 State/national responses to youth work

The following tables present some State responses to youth work including through partnerships with non-governmental players, where evidence was shared by countries.

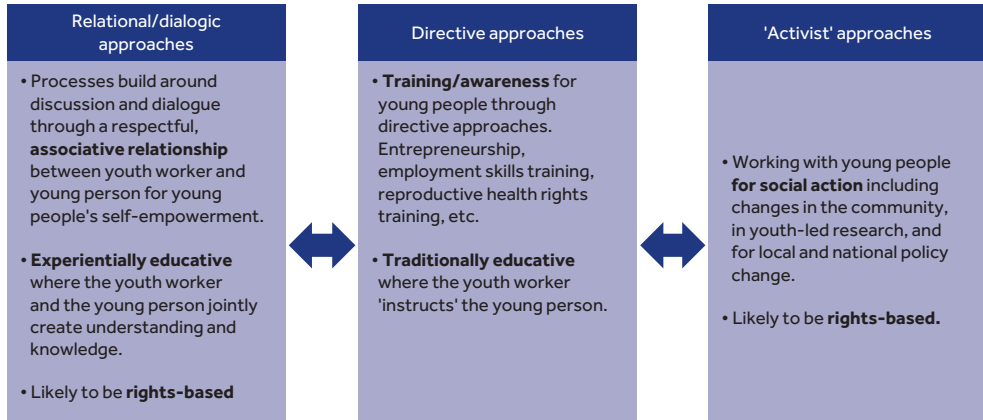
Criteria for identifying a State as engaging in formalised youth work practice (irrespective of the existence of legislation and policy around youth work) were as follows:

- The existence of State-endorsed or nationally endorsed definitions of youth work and/or,
- The existence of systematic youth-work related strategies and programming including through youth clubs, youth parliaments and other youth spaces (with a particular scrutiny of its asset-based nature where possible).

Youth work practice, as discussed above, is diverse, and much that may be considered as youth work might not fit in with the Commonwealth ethos of asset-based youth engagement. However, much work that may not superficially ‘look’ like youth work, such as social entrepreneurship or employability schemes, may, in fact, have many relational, dialogic aspects built in.

Much of what was observed as youth work practice across the Commonwealth can be described as having features as indicated in Figure 6.1. The arrows in the figure indicate that these are not mutually exclusive approaches and that many of these forms of engagement overlap.

While the Commonwealth recognises all forms of engagement with young people that are empowering as valuable, we promote youth work practices that are relational and dialogic and embraces all tenets of youth work as outlined in Figure 2.2. These approaches can also be developed in more ‘instrumentalist’ forms of youth work described as directional and traditionally educative, or in more ‘activist’ forms of

Figure 6.1 Types of 'youth work' practised

youth work that have a social action focus. While it was difficult to assess nuances of existing practice in a survey-type inquiry, what was reported to us by country consultants as youth work in the specific country contexts is discussed below.

For the most part, however, observations across the regions indicate that the agenda of the State in putting in place what could be potential youth work delivery spaces, such as youth clubs, is not necessarily to foster youth-work like engagement with young people. However, wording such as 'youth empowerment' appears in much of the material defining State practice.

This chapter also makes specific mention of a one-year pilot practice model trialled in India by the Commonwealth Youth Programme in partnership with the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) Punjab/Haryana and the NGO Pravah which attempted to articulate a model of rights-based youth work practice.

A setback to developing and delivering youth work through sustained and resourced structures has been the fact that youth work is often one of the first casualties of rationalising public services. The need for youth work is seen to be less 'urgent' than other core services, and many State structures deliver based on the bare minimum of funding and expertise.

These observations highlight the need for

1. Greater executive-level capacity building on the design and delivery of youth work strategies through State mechanisms, whether policy commitments exist or not,
2. Better conversations between trained field officers and executive staff on the design and delivery of youth work strategies and programmes,
3. Greater State and non-State linkages in building youth work capacities.

6.3 Trends in regional responses

6.3.1 Africa

In Africa, in general, there is little or no prevailing definition of youth work that underpins practice, in spite of some level of policy commitment (see Chapter 7).

In **Ghana**, the Youth Empowerment Agency (YEA) has national, district and regional co-ordinators responsible for the day-to-day running and operations of the agency. The YEA appears to be relatively instrumentally educational in its operation.

In **Kenya**, there are neither youth clubs nor designated 'safe spaces' for youth activities in State-supported programmes. There is no well-defined methodology or standards. Box 6.1, however, indicates a selected non-State example of youth workers amplifying youth work approaches through voluntarism from Kenya and Tanzania:

Box 6.1 Youth work volunteerism in Africa: The case of volunteer business mentors for street youth in Kenya and Tanzania

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In Africa, similar to other countries of the world, youth work has an expanded tradition of volunteerism. Volunteerism has remained a strong feature of youth work within the local authorities and the not-for-profit sector. In large sections of traditional African society, the initial volunteer youth educators were grandparents who gave instructions on social and life skills to the youth (who usually spent a night in their grandparents' huts) in the evenings before they slept.

However, with the weakening of traditional family ties, not-for-profit agencies and local authorities have become more dynamic in facilitating youth participation, social and life skills developments, measures to empower youth and role-modelling (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2006). The spaces where such youth work volunteerism have been practised in Africa are largely in youth sports for development, youth faith-based actions, youth cultural and entrepreneurial movements, local authority youth informal education centres and street youth rehabilitation and reintegration, amongst others. In Africa, the age ranges of youth involved in such youth work practices can be estimated at between 15 and about 25 years for both female and male youth.

This story is a recollection of practice experience during the implementation of measures to empower street youth (Kisumu in Kenya, Moshi and Arusha in Tanzania) to reconstruct their lives and gradually opt for life out of the streets. Street youth can be described as young people who have opted to live and work in the streets rather than their homes (Ennew, 2000 and Panter-Brick, 2004). In both countries, street youth were empowered (by two not-for-profit agencies – Pandipieri and Mkombozi Centres) with skills on small business management,

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savings schemes, business licence, business mentorship, grants for small business start-ups and residential options off the streets.

The emphasis is business mentorship which was offered to the youth by community volunteers operating diverse types of businesses in urban centres. Upon deciding on viable businesses and business locations in the streets, and with the support of street educators from the agencies, the young people then identified business mentors who were individuals operating (sometimes similar) businesses within the selected locations. Youth participation and ownership of decisions was a key component of the enterprise whereas the volunteer youth mentors were recruited based on their ability and willingness to provide constant support and follow-up to the youth, including frequent feedback and progress reports to the not-for-profit agency.

While the street educators are trained in social work, teaching, child protection and child counselling and entrepreneurship, amongst other skills, the capacity of the volunteer street business mentors was built through tailor-made training workshops and backstop meetings arranged by the agencies from time to time. This included meetings of all the business mentors to share their experiences, in addition to meeting with all the youth involved in the project so as to address emerging common problems. An example of an outcome from this practice is a street youth who started an arts studio in Moshi in Tanzania where other young artists can bring their art work for display and sale. Another street youth in Kisumu in Kenya established a construction firm where he employs dozens of youth in his various construction projects. Some of the volunteer mentors expanded their business strategies due to the knowledge and skills gained while mentoring the street youth. Thus, the business volunteer mentors gained new tools to respond constructively to different life situations. Furthermore, close collaboration with local authorities in both countries helped in identifying business locations and providing business licences. However, the dynamic nature of such local authorities, their constantly changing functions, leadership and management made it difficult to draw up long-term policies to protect the street youth from any form of disruption by the field personnel of the same local authorities.

A larger part of funding (grants and limited finance from the local authorities) for youth work projects are from erratic sources. Thus, human and financial resources are a key hindrance to the prosperity of unique and high impact models of youth work that involves volunteers from the grassroots (Jenkinson, 2000). This has made it difficult for such projects to achieve a secure sense of sustainability while powering tangible outcomes for the street youth and the business volunteer mentors. Amidst these challenges and lessons learnt, **volunteerism remains a key feature of youth work in Africa that requires distinct recognition when structuring, implementing and reviewing youth work practices.**

Table 6.1 State/national youth work practice – Africa

Country	Asset-based approaches to youth work in State/ national settings	Partnerships
Ghana Kenya Malawi Nigeria South Africa Tanzania Uganda Zambia	While national-level government mechanisms exist in some cases for working with young people, evidence of systematic and well-articulated asset-based youth work practices offset by clear guidelines for youth work practice within these national structures was more difficult to identify. Partnerships specifically to strengthen youth work practice as a distinct profession were also not clear, except in the case of Zambia where the professional association reported playing a role.	

In **Uganda**, while youth officers existed at District level in previous administrative structures, the work of this position has now been undertaken by community development officers (CDOs). While it was beyond the purview of the baseline to assess the impact on work with young people themselves, there is still a need for clear definitions, guidelines and practice standards for youth work in Uganda, towards which Uganda is committed to move forward.

State youth work in **Zambia** is centred on Youth Skills Centres. The Government of Zambia engages with ten provincial youth officers in each province working across 19 youth centres across provinces. These youth centres cater for 60 per cent of youths out of the 15.5 million population of Zambia. There are on average two youth centres in each of the six provinces, except one which has four centres, with the rest having only one centre each.

As a means of improving youth service delivery, the government recognises the potential of diversifying partnerships in order to broaden its interventions and to reduce the financial burden on the government budget.

The Zambia Youth Workers' Association (ZYWA) (see Chapter 8) engages with officers in youth work in order to ensure professional practice and to expand on current prevailing practices in the skills centres around skills training – carpentry, mechanical engineering, tailoring, computer skills etc. While these skills are meant to empower youths, very few access any support to start their own ventures.

6.3.2 Asia

In Asia, definitions of youth work are sometimes explicit, and sometimes implicit.

In **Bangladesh**, for example, there is no specific definition of youth work. What is understood as youth work can be gleaned from what is expected in terms of changes for young people in the Youth Organisations (Registration and Operation) Act 2015, which refers to young people's 'physical, mental, moral and cultural development'.¹

The greatest evidence of attempts at systematic approaches to institutionalise empowering State sector approaches to youth work are from India, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

In **India**, evidence of developing practice is linked to indirect youth policy commitments to the education and training of youth development officers and to the establishment of the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD). State attempts at mainstreaming youth work are evident in Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), known to be the largest network of youth clubs in the world, and the National Service Scheme (NSS), a college-based scheme in India which connects young college/university youth workers to social development. Training specifically directed at youth service officers based on youth work principles was also available. However, the need for more systematic approaches to embedding asset-based youth work practice in State structures was highlighted by stakeholders.

Cases of well-articulated non-State practice significantly influencing national paradigms in India were those such as Pravah's '5th Space' concept, which has a reach across India through 25 members of ComMutiny, the Youth Collective. The 5th Space was also applied in a one-year long trial in India of a youth work practice model by the Commonwealth Youth Programme in collaboration with the Pravah and the Dhanas Youth and Sports Club managed by the Punjab/Haryana office of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), reportedly the largest network of youth clubs in the world.

Box 6.2 articulates the basic principles of this practice model as highlighted in the publication that was produced by the Commonwealth to document the model, titled *Co-Creating Youth Spaces: A Practice-Based Guide for Youth Facilitators*.²

Box 6.2 The Fifth Space – A Youth Work Paradigm from India³

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ComMutiny – the Youth Collective, Member of the Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Workers' Associations

In a world where meaning-making has become increasingly difficult, where adults do not know all the rules of the new game, where prediction and control of the future is becoming difficult, there is a need to empower the young to navigate through this. But we cannot empower anyone, they have to empower themselves. All we can do is to create a context and a space that facilitates such an empowering process. Unfortunately, the world is owned and run by adults. For most spaces occupied by young people, the rules have been created by adults and they are expected to follow these without questioning them.

We believe that as a society, traditionally we have 'legitimised' four spaces for young people – those of family, friends, livelihoods/ education and leisure/lifestyle (which includes sports, religion and recreation). Then, on the margins, there is a 5th space where young people relate to society. In development discourse, this is increasingly being referred to as the space of active citizenship. **However, active citizenship has started to be associated almost solely with social action and volunteering.**

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We argue that the 5th Space must be repositioned as a space that focuses as much on the self-transformation of youth as it does on transforming society through them. It must be a space that builds on the aspects of understanding the self, developing meaningful relationships and impacting society – all of which are critical to youth development. While impacting society, they impact themselves, and if facilitated properly, these experiences lead to heightened self-awareness, enhanced leadership skills and informed stances on social issues.

Our experience has shown that a thriving 5th Space is a critical element for the all-round development of youth. The skills learnt here are indeed the life skills that can help them to successfully navigate other spheres of their lives, such as the family, friends, work and leisure. The 5th Space has potential to make a positive impact on all the other spaces and society.

Each created space is unique because it caters to young people's individual experiences of identity, thought and understanding. In such 5th Spaces, we focus on co-creating an empowering space with youth, enabling their journey from self to society. As they change the world around them, we also encourage them to observe and reflect on how the world seeps into them and changes them in turn.

The guiding principles in establishing a 5th Space

Ownership is the key

Ownership is not given, it has to be taken. It comes from putting in your own brick when the building is being constructed. Therefore, in youth work spaces, it is imperative to engage in dialogue with young people to decide what to do together. This co-creation of the agenda of the youth club goes a long way in giving them a sense of belonging and they begin to refer to it as 'my space'. Other ways of building ownership are to allow self-expression, democratic decision-making, developing shared goals and common rewards and consequences and, of course, creating a common culture of learning together.

Co-leading the space

It has been found that though young people are wary of adult governance, and scatter at the first sign of being 'bossed around', they do welcome light facilitation and nudges in the right direction. Moreover, there are times when young people are unable to take leadership roles due to lack of experience, capability, or due to existing conflicts among them. In such instances, an external, unbiased facilitator can support by providing guidance and aiding conflict resolution. It works best if young people and the youth facilitator/s create a co-led space. A good youth facilitator lets things self-organise as far as possible by encouraging conversations among young people themselves, and stirs things up with light interventions when young people are avoiding constructive confrontation.

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Taking young people from what they know to what they don't

Young people need to move from what they are familiar with to spaces they are not, rather than the other way around. Starting with a focus on self and then moving to their immediate group and onwards to society is usually a better route to take than straight immersion into societal issues. Action is taken to learn first about the self and then the world and vice versa.

Learning from acting in the world

We believe experiences help young people to learn better than books alone. Youth citizenship action may not change much immediately in the world outside, but it has the potential for changing a young person from within. This emphasises a combined process of reflection and action, a process we call 'Reflection'.

A space that is empathic and healing

In a 5th Space, individual feelings of all young people are valued. The culture of the youth club needs to inculcate trust, give them space and provide a non-judgemental environment. The group should be able to sense each other's feelings and empathise, search, confront and co-heal. Everyone should be encouraged to take 100 per cent responsibility to resolve conflict situations. To help them learn how to relate better to each other, the youth club needs to ensure opportunities for emotional release and connecting.

A space that nurtures critical thinking

In a 5th Space, there is a need to go beyond the surface into the depth to recognise the 'social context in which individuals operate and respond'. This would entail critically thinking about the interconnected role of politics, the economy and culture that shapes young people's experiences. Such a 'conscientisation' approach (Freire, 1971) uses consciousness-raising for community education aiming to assist young people to explore the reasons for their political, social and economic disadvantages and powerlessness. This encourages young people to consider their own situation and problems in a broader context that requires both intellectual and emotional maturity which will lead to constructive, non-violent ways to create socially and politically enabling spaces. However, we need to be wary of young people's own tendencies to oppress those with less power which would require the youth facilitator to push within the space to reflectively avoid such tendencies of social forces and look for win-win solutions for all stakeholders.

Valuing the here and now

We are always preparing the young for a life of adulthood. Youth workers should support the creation of spaces to balance the long term with the present. Young people have emotions, needs, desires, and aspirations emanating from

their immediate context in the 'here and now'. Sometimes, when we work in the community, we begin to take ourselves too seriously. In the here and now, youth are looking for fun as much as making an impact. It has also been found that fun is one of the most effective ways of learning because it releases feelings that are critical for real learning rather than engaging in a mere intellectual exercise. And, if you want young people to join your club in large numbers, then make sure that you include a lot of fun and inspire everyone to spread joy.

Organic renewal of the space

In order to keep the vibrancy of the space, constant nourishment in the form of new leadership emerging within the youth club is critical. Like a seed that has all the genetic coding required to produce a new plant, the space should be encoded with the ability to infuse all the new people who come in with a will to take ownership and charge of the space. When the founders move on, the space should have the ability to reinvent itself organically in the spirit and the principles of the 5th space.

In **Singapore**, while this policy commitment is to emerge, a youth work supervision framework helps create dialogue among practitioners around reflective and responsive youth work practice.

Sri Lanka's Professional Youth Workers' Association (PYWA), which is independent of, yet collaborates with, the State youth agency, the National Youth Services Council (NYSC), has developed a distinct definition of youth work and is in the process of setting in place strategies and mechanisms to support the implementation of existing youth policy commitments (Chapter 7) to youth work.

The definition of youth work at the Professional Youth Workers' Association, Sri Lanka states that youth work involves

Appropriate processes conducted by youth workers with the active and willing participation of young people that enables and empowers them through ensuring their emotional, social, ethical, intellectual and physical development, in a caring and secure environment.

In line with this, the new short course developed by PYWA to enhance the practical field skills of youth workers is an indication of ways forward for transforming practice. The State endorsement of the definition and its implications for practice is still evolving.

Youth parliaments, national youth councils and other youth structures operate from sub-national to national level in almost all sampled Asian countries, and there are partnerships with UN bodies and other agencies in some cases to support these processes. However, it was difficult to draw conclusions on how these partnerships resulted in a specific focus on systematic strategies for rights-based youth engagement and youth work approaches in practice in most countries at this survey level. Most engagement with youth was found to be around theme-based work such as

Table 6.2 State/national youth work practice – Asia

Country	Asset-based approaches to youth work in State/national settings	Partnerships
Bangladesh	<p>Focuses on instrumentalist approaches and youth employment initiatives given the country's context.</p>	<p>No clear evidence was provided.</p>
India	<p>Youth worker competencies that enable the creation of programmes and processes for youth empowerment are variable due to the inconsistency of effective training and monitoring on the ground. The State work in Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) is done through a network of rural youth clubs, which are autonomous bodies that also have access to modest Government funding. There is much evidence of empowering and asset-based approaches to youth work here, though a systematic approach has yet to be developed.</p> <p>Urban youth are engaged through university chapters under the National Service Scheme (NSS). Today, NSS has more than 3.2 million student volunteers.</p>	<p>The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNID) works with many youth organisations for the education and training of youth workers.</p> <p>The National Service Scheme (NSS) works in partnership with a large number of civil society organisations as students volunteer in different civil society organisations.</p> <p>Partnerships in training and strategic programming include organisations like Pravah, ComMutiny – the Youth Collective (CYC), Yuva, Center for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA), Samvada, Jagori, Breakthrough and Youth Parliament, and collaborations with UN agencies</p>

Maldives Malaysia

No information

There are no State-based implementation structures for youth work/youth services. This has been proposed in discussions among youth work stakeholders. It will be further considered in ongoing deliberations in Malaysia on professionalising youth work and through moves to amend Malaysia's Youth Act (Chapter 8 – Asia). Youth work activities in Malaysia are also being carried out by the Ministry's youth and sports officers based at the federal, state and district levels.

No information

The Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) is a non-governmental voluntary organisation that is the sole co-ordinating body for youth and student organisations in Malaysia. It participates in the National Youth Consultative Council (a forum for governmental and non-governmental actors to meet and discuss issues relating to youth development), and plays an active role in the implementation and monitoring of the national youth policy.⁴ Youth work aspects of this work are not that clear.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports, Malaysia has also been supported by youths represented under the 'Young Friends' or 'Rakan Muda' and '1Malaysia For Youth' or '1M4U' programmes.

These three youth representative bodies play an active role in the implementation of youth development activities as espoused in the national youth policy.

Partnerships for youth action were mentioned. A focus on strengthening youth work as a professional category through these initiatives needs to be clearer.

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Pakistan

State-supported youth work in Pakistan takes on a largely social action focus. There is a general recognition that there is an asset-based focus, combined with a focus on general skill-development programmes.⁵ Evidence of actual youth engagement processes are not that clear in the State sector.

Table 6.2 State/national youth work practice – Asia (continued)

Country	Asset-based approaches to youth work in State/national settings	Partnerships
Singapore	<p>Evidence of field programmes, processes and spaces for youth work is nascent as national-level initiatives for professionalising the sector have begun only recently (to be elaborated on in later chapters).</p> <p>Empowerment and engagement strategies in the State Youth work sector can be improved, but mechanisms such as the Youth Parliament, and certain sub-national to national youth clubs structures, exhibit empowering/engaging practices, though this is not systematic, or inclusive of the diversity of Sri Lankan youth groups.</p> <p>Systematic programmatic support for youth work approaches is not clear. New policy recognises this limitation and aims to change the situation through capacity-building initiatives.</p>	<p>Youth sector partnerships were mentioned, but there was no clear partnership for strengthening youth work as a specific professional category.</p>
Sri Lanka	<p>The clearest State-civil society partnership on enhancing the quality of professional youth work practice is that which exists between the Professional Youth Workers' Association, Sri Lanka and the National Youth Services Council (NYSC).</p>	<p>The clearest State-civil society partnership on enhancing the quality of professional youth work practice is that which exists between the Professional Youth Workers' Association, Sri Lanka and the National Youth Services Council (NYSC).</p>

on reproductive health, but manifestations of skilled youth engagement including approaches to listening, dialogue and co-creating initiatives were not made evident in survey findings, perhaps due to the lack of written, systematic strategies for youth work.

In some cases, good practice was observed to be random, and dependent on specific youth workers rather than based on systematic programming, guidelines and approaches. For example, the education and training of middle-level officers in youth development work, often facilitated through the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work, has delivered results in some cases, but failed to demonstrate broad asset-based guidelines and approaches.

6.3.3 The Caribbean

According to the baseline, Barbados, Guyana and Jamaica have generally adopted the former Commonwealth definition of youth work as indicated in the Commonwealth Diploma which referred to youth work as concerning the personal and social development of young people in its broadest sense.⁶ How well this is linked to the design of programmes and practices is less clear, but indications are given in Table 6.3.

6.3.4 Europe and Canada

Youth work has been relatively well sustained and supported with official recognition at the highest level – for example a Youth Work Act in **Malta**. The Act defines youth work as ‘a non-formal learning activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people.’

In **Canada**, while the training predominantly caters for youth and child care work with a focus on at-risk groups, professionals also work in recreational/leisure-type settings such as in the YMCAs work with young people, or in boys’ and girls’ clubs, and Friendship Centres. However, youth work has no official recognition in Canada. Neither is it officially recognised in **Cyprus**.

In **England**, the closest to a national definition for youth work is the National Youth Agency (NYA) definition which states that ‘Youth work is an educational process that engages with young people in a curriculum built from their lived experience and their personal beliefs and aspirations. This process extends and deepens a young person’s understanding of themselves, their community and the world in which they live and supports them to proactively bring about positive changes. The youth worker builds positive relationships with young people based on mutual respect.’ It is still in the process of being significantly endorsed by agencies throughout England.

At a time which has seen a massive drawback on the funding of youth work, many qualified and experienced youth workers have either joined the ranks of the unemployed or taken up careers in other sectors (including employment totally unrelated to youth work, often not needing degree qualification). Others have been deployed to augment a weakened network of social services, becoming what some have called a labour force of ‘second class social workers’. Indeed, these workers do

Table 6.3 State/National youth work practice – the Caribbean

Country	Asset-based approaches to youth work in State/national settings	Partnerships
Barbados	<p>The State youth work sector utilises empowering/asset-based approaches, but evidence needs to be gathered. A lack of representation of all youth groups in youth engagement programmes was noted.</p>	<p>While partnerships for youth engagement were highlighted, partnerships for strengthening youth work as a profession were not that clear.</p>
Belize	<p>The Youth Development Policy and the Department of Youth Services (DYS) Strategic Plan articulates the positive youth development approach. More evidence needs to be gathered of its translation to practice through youth engagement programmes.</p>	<p>Partnerships for strengthening youth work as a profession were not clear.</p>
Dominica	<p>The Division uses seven key result areas (KRAs) in its approach to youth development work, which includes youth work facets such as a. training in leadership and youth participation in governance, b. voluntary youth service and participation in groups, schools, club, community-based leisure programmes, specialised programmes for at-risk groups. While this alludes to asset-based youth work, more evidence is required on how this translates to practice.</p>	<p>The Youth Development Division has strong cross-sectoral partnerships as well as strong partnerships within the youth work sector with various non-governmental agencies. These partnerships are strategic and mutual.⁷</p>
Guyana	<p>State-supported youth work in Guyana is to a large extent non-developmental in nature, and is largely carried out from a deficit/youth-in-development perspective. The survey found a largely activity-based list of programmes (sports, crafts, talks, discussion of needs), with little evidence of systematic youth engagement practices, or youth-adult partnerships. Reactive responses were evident, i.e. for teenage pregnancies, suicide and crime, etc.</p>	<p>While partnerships for engagement with youth around thematic areas were found, no explicit partnerships to strengthen youth work as a professional category were clear.</p>
Jamaica	<p>State-supported youth work in Jamaica is predominantly service-driven and is being undertaken by mainly untrained workers; its main focus is on mainstreaming youth in education, training and employment. The practice is still very reactive and reform-oriented in keeping with the general policy response frameworks for youth. No holistic strategy for young people.</p>	<p>No evidence provided.</p>

St Lucia**St Vincent and
the
Grenadines**

No evidence provided. Proposed commitments to youth work policy in the draft youth policy will change this. State vision and mission statements for youth indicate commitments to promoting their general development, and ensuring full participation in order to achieve a vision of integrating all young people in the programme of nation building (youth-in-development approach); no further practice evidence was provided.

No clear evidence yet of partnerships to strengthen youth work as a profession. No evidence provided

**Trinidad &
Tobago**

The strongest evidence of youth engagement approaches in the Caribbean was found here. The Youth Resource and Information Centre (YRIC) is a unique, innovative youth-friendly facility/space with computers, study areas, meeting/training rooms, and comfortable areas for conversations/discourse. It seeks to empower young people to make informed choices and enhance their personal and development. The Resistance Approach is undertaken in the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres (YDACs) target young men 15-17 years old. These centres provide not only technical vocational skills training in a residential two-year programme, but seeks also to provide a holistic approach to the personal development and empowerment of the young men.

The State supports youth-led and youth-serving organisations through grants and subventions.⁸ Again, there was no evidence of partnerships for strengthening youth work as a professional category or competency-based youth work delivery as an approach.

not have the powers or protections afforded to social workers, while being expected (albeit informally) to take on what might previously have been understood as social work roles.

Many NGOs in the UK that were once thought to be capable of replacing formerly government-funded services in local authorities (in the light of cuts in central government grants) have been devastated by the financial crisis that hit in 2008 and have yet to come close to recovering. Thus they have not been able to come anywhere near filling the employment gap left by statutory services. Commissioned commercial concerns have been able to take advantage of this situation.

In these public-private initiatives, usually local authorities will look to put whole or parts of services out to tender (this means they do not have the day-to-day responsibilities for plant or employees). A range of commercial and/or community-based enterprises respond and often the most 'value for money' tender is taken, usually after they have agreed to reach targets for areas of practice that can pull down government funds (not related directly to youth work, but considerations like skills, crime, extremism and so on).

However, the conditions of work and salaries for youth workers in many of these commercial/entrepreneurial (not philanthropic) manifestations of youth work have been less than satisfactory. Moreover, work is often temporary, part-time and/or relatively derisory. By no means are all of these organisations 'fly-by-night' agencies, exploiting conditions and circumstances, but some have proved to be.

Considering the UK as a whole, State-funded provision has been significantly redirected. Statutory youth work has historically been part of services provided by local authorities. As such, State funding for youth work has been mediated by way of the overall grants given to local authorities. However, the latter need to meet their collective service obligations (which include housing, policing, highway maintenance and a range of child care and other welfare responsibilities). The legal requirement on any local authority in terms of youth work is minimal, and while youth work is often said by academics and writers to be informal education, no mention is made of this in current UK-wide legislation.⁹

In this sense, there is a kind of vicious cycle of a lack of clarity around the nature and agreed outcomes of youth work, and therefore an inability to agree across the board how success is measured and reported. By extension, youth work has not shown itself to be effective in State eyes – in fact the last big enquiry took youth work to task as a practice for not being able to show evidence of its impact (outside of anecdotal material). Legislated or policy-driven measures in youth work could influence more positive establishment of youth work cultures, and provide greater clarity on what and how progress and impact are measured and reported.

Some local authorities have maintained investment in youth services, but more commonly core budgets have been reduced and in some cases cut almost entirely. As cuts have spread across most local authority services, the impact on statutory youth work has been significant (some say devastating). Box 6.3 illustrates a process that monitors cuts in youth work funding in the United Kingdom.

Box 6.3 Monitoring youth work funding – the United Kingdom

In August 2014 Unison, a UK trade union for public service workers, published a document predicting the impact of cuts to State funding on youth work. The National Youth Agency (NYA) of the UK maintains online updates on local youth work funding cuts.¹⁰ This is a good practice for youth ministries/departments, youth workers associations and other youth development stakeholders in other parts of the Commonwealth in order to keep track of investment in youth work, and lobby for greater investment.

However, initiatives funded by the National Lottery have generated a range of projects which support organisations to continue to provide youth work.

Generally, in terms of impact on the majority of the youth population, the UK's youth work offer has increasingly moved away from directly or indirectly (local authority) State-funded provision to delivery from community and voluntary platforms.¹¹ However, what funds local authorities have been able to allocate to responses that might be taken to fall into the youth work realm have increasingly been used to commission commercial organisations to deliver services (outsourcing).

The State currently understands youth work as providing preventative services. Many local authorities have linked the Government's 'Troubled Families' initiative with the role of children's services and many youth workers are now effectively working alongside social services and in multidisciplinary teams targeting vulnerable young people within this initiative. Once connected with the Department for Education, youth work is now, in terms of State policy, the province of the Cabinet Office and the Department of Communities.¹²

This said, a good deal of youth work training and education, perhaps partly because of the academic literature (which is often politically and socially uninformed and/or dated) places emphasis on youth work as essentially being informal education. At the same time, it is not unusual for employing organisations to recruit youth workers to undertake or offer non-formal (but also formal) responses to young people (including in schools and colleges). For all this, some charities and NGOs do continue to include some broadly educational tasks in youth worker job descriptions.¹³

For all this, the State is committed to a sizable investment in work with young people via the National Citizenship Service (NCS). While there is some doubt (particularly among youth workers) that this is youth work at all, and they question the claimed outcomes of this initiative, what indicators there are evidence that the NCS overall has provided young people with positive experiences and legacy opportunities.

In **Gibraltar**, a British Overseas Territory, the Youth Service has been a government statutory provision since 1963, run by qualified youth and community workers and locally trained, part-time volunteers and employees. The Youth Service forms part of the Ministry of Family, Youth & Community Affairs. Their mission statement is as follows:

Table 6.4 State/national youth work practice – Europe and Canada

Country	Asset-based approaches to youth work in State/national settings	Partnerships
Canada	<p>The Canadian government does not recognise youth work – people in youth work want to interpret what happens as being youth work – this means that external interpretations contradict internal perceptions.</p>	N/A
Cyprus	<p>None, even though there are some plans to set up initiatives such as ERYCA (youth and information provision) which may be a sign of emerging systematic youth work practice in Cyprus.</p>	No Evidence
Malta	<p>Perhaps one of the richest examples of systematic State-supported youth work structures. Since its establishment Aġenzija Żgħir (Youth Agency) has put in place nationwide administrative structures and operational procedures for the promotion and implementation of youth work practice and youth-related services. The agency has staff located in the Youth Agency and the operation of services are organised and co-ordinated from this single site, which is set in a 'Youth Village', which provides space, facilities and support for young people. A sports facility and a youth residential centre are also being planned for the site. They also develop and implement a wide range of programmes, projects and initiatives focused on youth empowerment, contemporary arts, social drama, literature, local democracy, music, volunteering and further study. New dedicated youth spaces at local community have also been provided, including youth activity centres, youth cafés and hubs. The latter operate in strategic locations.</p>	<p>The 'Youth Village' provides space, facilities and support for young people and youth NGOs to organise events and initiatives for young people based on youth work models.</p>
United Kingdom	<p>An interactive web portal, 'Youth Information Malta', was set up in early 2011 and is updated on a regular basis while 'Kellimni.Com' provides an online personal support service for young people. There has been a strong focus on engaging with and consulting young people. Their views, concerns and aspirations are valued in the development of practice. This is part of promoting the democratic participation of young people and the development of intercultural and social awareness. Co-operation at European and international level has been consistently prioritised and promoted; this has informed practice and acted as a means to review and energise policy.</p> <p>The main State funding for youth work is via the National Citizenship Service, largely supporting certification and skills-based services, rather than youth empowerment processes. The NCS's work through contracted providers may vary from relational services that may be identified as youth work, to less relational, more directive approaches, depending on the contractor. For example, the Essex Boys and Girls clubs have a big contract in that county, and they will take a youth work approach. Other contractors might have a mixture of relational responses, but be more like a cadet corps or school-based project (more directive and outcome- rather than process-related). Most professional associations may not identify much of this work as youth work.</p>	<p>Both voluntary and commercial organisations gain funding to deliver the National Citizenship Service. This makes up the majority of youth work funding of several county authorities.</p>

The Gibraltar Youth Service seeks to promote the social education and welfare of young people up to the age of 25 by adopting a policy of equal opportunities, free from prejudice and developing a curriculum, in partnership with young people, that enables successful personal relationships, awareness to local and global issues, individual self-expression and determination that assists young people in their social and personal development, and encourages them to embrace active and responsible citizenship.

This is elaborated as follows:

Youth work promotes young people's personal and social development, working with them to explore and learn about themselves, others and society, through non-formal educational activities that combine enjoyment, challenge, learning and achievement. Youth work offers opportunities to work in many different ways and settings. From structured, organised activities, like workshops in schools and youth clubs, to informal settings such as street corners and shopping arcades.

Youth work maintains a set of common values and skills; a commitment to the social, personal and emotional development of young people, a sound understanding of the issues that affect their lives and the communities with which they identify. (see <https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/new/youth-services>).¹⁴

This 'social educative' approach, by and large, describes the nature of youth work throughout the Commonwealth and the world.

A significant area of practice in **Canada** for youth work is located within residential settings. These programmes are very expensive and often are entry-level positions with high turnover of staff. Programme costs lead to hiring of 'cheap' staff – often with limited or no youth work qualifications. This happens most often in rural areas where there are limited qualified people available. When people with youth work qualifications are hired into positions in health settings or youth protection, significant shifts in practice occur.

For example, approximately five years ago in a large health centre in Nova Scotia, all child and youth care workers were replaced with licensed practical nurses. This change led to severely 'dysregulated' units where young people were not engaged with effectively. The impact of the change was noticed, and, in the recent past, child and youth care workers were hired back into these positions. In Alberta, the involvement of child and youth care workers on collaborative practice teams has shifted practice to a strengths focus and new numbers suggest that fewer young people are being placed in out-of-home care. In British Columbia, well-paid positions within government mental health and child welfare practice specifically identify child and youth care qualifications as a requirement for the position.

6.3.5 The Pacific

While it is likely that in a number of Pacific contexts there are examples of empowering/asset-based approaches to youth work in the State sector, the evidence gathered mainly pertained to **Australia** and **New Zealand**.

In the context of these two countries, the national youth sector has had intermittent support from State and federal governments. While government continues to be the regulator and primary funding body for the delivery of youth services, youth agencies are more reliant than ever on philanthropic and other sources of funding. New Zealand's national body Ara Taiohi continues to receive a small amount of government support but is principally funded through philanthropy and income generated through membership. The Australian equivalent, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC), has been defunded. State-based Youth Affairs Councils and regionally based youth workers' associations in Australia, and the emerging national Association in New Zealand, have also begun to play a role in enhancing and regulating youth work practice. In Victoria, the Code of Ethical Practice (Corney and Hoiles, 2007) introduced in 2007 has over the last 10 years had an important regulatory effect on youth work.

In **Australia**, the national Youth Affairs Coalition drafted the following definitional statement: 'Youth work is a practice that places young people and their interests first. Youth Work is a relational practice, where the youth worker operates alongside the young person in their contest. Youth work is an empowering practice that advocate for and facilitates a young person's independence and participation in society, connectedness and realisation of their rights' (Corney, 2014, p. 10).

In the Australian context, youth services are jointly funded by both state and federal governments. State governments also legislate and regulate the provision of services to young people. While there is no specific act defining or regulating the profession of youth work, state governments do recognise the work and do regulate the work of youth workers in various ways. An example in progressive youth policy is that of the State of Victoria. The current State Government's *Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria* is focused on young people co-designing services with youth workers and their agencies, particularly for the most vulnerable. The Children, Youth and Families Act is the legislation that covers all those who work with young people, children and families in Victoria and is prefaced on the UNHCR Convention on the Rights of the Child. It states that

For the purposes of this Act, the best interests of the child must always be paramount. When determining whether a decision or action is in the best interests of the child, the need to protect the child from harm, to protect his or her rights and to promote his or her development (taking into account his or her age and stage of development) must always be considered.¹⁵

Having legislation that locates work with young people in a human rights framework has had important implications for the development of Codes of Practice for youth work (please see case study in Box 10.2).

Youth Work in New Zealand is defined through the development of a relationship between a youth worker and a young person. This approach empowers young people, and provides them with the choice to engage for as long as agreed, and in a way that supports their holistic, positive development as rangatahi (young) that contribute to themselves, their whanau (extended family), community and the world.

Table 6.5 State/national youth work practice – the Pacific

Country	Asset-based approaches to youth work in State/national settings	Partnerships
Australia	The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, formerly government-funded, has the national role of supporting and encouraging quality youth work practice as stated above. However, since being defunded, its capacity to play this role has been significantly reduced.	Australian Youth Affairs Coalition members and State-based youth peak bodies.
Fiji	No official/national definitions or practice guidelines indicated.	No evidence provided
New Zealand	More State recognition needed for youth work as a valid/valued mode of youth development. Great emphasis is placed by the Ministries of Youth and Social Development on the importance of mentoring, which is work that is unpaid and largely carried out by people who do not hold youth development qualifications. The youth work vision is largely carried forward by the National (Non-State) peak body, Ara Taiohi.	Ara Taiohi members
Papua New Guinea	No official/national definitions or practice guidelines indicated.	No evidence provided
Samoa	No official/national definitions or practice guidelines indicated.	No evidence provided
Solomon Islands	Self-regulating code of ethics.	No evidence provided
Tonga	No official/national definitions or practice guidelines indicated.	Solomon Islands Youth Work Association
Vanuatu	No official/national definitions or practice guidelines indicated.	No evidence provided

All Pacific Island nation governments have legislation, policies and programmes focused on or relating to young people. However, as far as could be ascertained, small island states in the Pacific are yet to develop clear, official, nationally endorsed definition or legislation specifically regulating or defining the occupation of youth worker. Sustained State/national practice trends among small island states of the Pacific have been difficult to determine during the course of this survey, even though much exists on the ground as good youth work practice.

6.4 Conclusion

Generally, youth work across the Commonwealth has become increasingly instrumental. More direct and often repressive responses to crime, youth pregnancy,

sexual health, drug awareness, training and employment concerns have attracted funding, having found favour in government policy. This has influenced practice. In recent decades, youth work programmes in many instances have shifted to a point where some might suggest (with some notable exceptions), that much of what passes for youth work practice could be taken as forms of surveillance and social control.

This shift can be seen as part of a wider range of responses to produce a relatively cheap, relatively skilled, relatively flexible workforce, perhaps with passing reference to social welfare and health concerns. This approach predictably has some appeal in contexts where young people have the least stake in society, and therefore are seen as posing the biggest threat to social stability.

Nevertheless, the range of associative and dialogical phenomena that the Commonwealth commits to as youth work is being rediscovered, contextualised, developed and redefined. These emerging practices are improving organic, pragmatic approaches that are shaped and delivered by and for young people, and through empowering youth-adult partnerships. These are sometimes found in State delivery structures, including through civil-society-State synergies. A notable example is the work of organisations such as 'ComMutiny – the Youth Collective'¹⁶ and the efforts of youth workers' associations.

The next phase in the development of youth work will likely emerge in the global South, for this is where the majority of the planet's young people live – a situation that is unlikely to change over this century. Old practice frameworks such as social pedagogy, informal education and professionalism shaped by income and status need reassessing and probably replacing. ComMutiny's '5th Space'¹⁷ is a possible precursor of this. If so, youth work has an exciting and dynamic future.

Wherever there is youth work, it becomes embedded within, and shaped by, prevailing cultures, ideas and values. Various motivations for youth work, such as faith-based, philanthropic, political, or State-sponsored approaches all have historically impacted on and influenced the shape and aims of youth work within national contexts. This continues to be the case.

The varied background of youth work reflects the current state of, and in some cases, confusions around current youth work. It is difficult and perhaps somewhat redundant to try to chart a specific or linear history of practice, because it is not and never has been one set of practices or motivations.

For all this, being young is about 'becoming', changing and discovering the new. Youth workers, in order to be effective, need to be aware of this; they are in a 'growth profession'. On the one hand, if youth work stays as it is, if it is too much guided by what others see as the 'traditions' of practice, youth work will be rooted in the past. On the other hand, if youth workers work with and thrives on change, that is perhaps the history that it shares across and between contexts and cultures. The question is, are we ready to change?

Notes

- 1 This is an unofficial translation of the Act.
- 2 Available at http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/Co-Creating_Youth_Spaces_web.pdf.
- 3 This text originally appeared in a different version as a section in the Commonwealth-Pravah-Nehru Yuva Kendra Document *Co-Creating Youth Spaces – a Field-Based Guide for Youth Workers*.
- 4 Source: <http://www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/malaysia/>
- 5 There are many programmes at the national level with clear empowering, asset-based approaches to youth work in the State sector. For example, the Young Development Fellows programme of the planning commission of Pakistan, Young Parliamentary Associates Programme of iP, Prime Minister Youth Programme, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Youth Development Programme as well as skills, multiple skills development programmes that are delivered at national and sub-national level.
Other examples include the Young Parliamentarians Forum (YPPF), which is the official body of members of the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan who are below the age of 40 at the time of their elections and the Punjab Youth Parliamentary Caucus, an official body of members of the provincial assembly of Punjab, which are very vibrant platforms for young people and youth organisations.
- 6 This has since been fine-tuned to the present definition used in this document and beyond.
- 7 Key youth work agencies include CALLS, National Youth Council, Social Centre, Child Fund Caribbean, Operation Youth Quake, Girl Guides Association, Scout Association, Cadet Corps, 4-H Local Leaders Association.
- 8 Some of the organisations which benefit from State funding include: The Trinidad Youth Council and The Tobago Youth Council. Several NGOs also receive financial support to manage programmes on behalf of the State, such as the Child Welfare League which runs the CHOICES Adolescent Mothers' Programme, the Heroes Foundation and the Toco Foundation Gatekeepers Programme.
- 9 As such, the NYA's position that informal education is the rationale of youth work in England is somewhat out of date; in England the social function of youth work as far as much of the practice and legislation is concerned is part of preventative services.
- 10 <http://www.nya.org.uk/supporting-youth-work/policy/cuts-watch/>
- 11 The funding that local authorities allocate to youth work varies enormously as does the title of departments designated to deliver those services. At the time of writing one London Borough (with a population of just under 400,000) dedicates £10 million to youth work (Children's Services) provision. Another, a 30-minute drive away (with a population of nearly 300,000) has a youth work (Youth Support Services) budget of £250,000. Incidentally, both of these services are due to be cut; in the case of the latter, services will be outsourced, the former will see cuts over the next three years bringing funding down to £3 million.
- 12 There is no ministry or minister of youth work with UK-wide responsibilities or jurisdiction, and as freestanding practice youth work has no place in the Department for Education. Youth work (as a freestanding practice) is not inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), although youth work practice can come under inspection scrutiny in colleges, schools (where many youth workers find employment in fields such as 'enrichment') and other institutions/organisations when it is implicated in educational services.
While regional situations vary (vis-à-vis Scotland, the Province of Northern Ireland, the Principality of Wales, the Crown Dependencies of Guernsey, Jersey and overseas territory of Gibraltar for example), 84 per cent of the population is subject to the deficiency of national government legislation in terms of youth work. In terms of the perception of the UK state, is not essentially an educative practice. It has functions primarily focused on child welfare and care, and although this might implicate issues relating to learning and education, the fundamental role and function of practice is primarily preventative (attending to situations that might be thought to put young people at risk of harm or social disadvantage).
- 13 In the 2015 Autumn Review, the minister for the Cabinet Office said: 'We will also focus our energies on building the National Citizen Service (NCS) so our young people are more confident and capable.'

I'm very proud of the support we give to build civil society and promote engagement, cohesion and responsibility across the country. This evidences the state view of youth work. This, together with a huge push toward employability within commercial and indirect state-funded youth work (transforming NEETs (those not in education, employment or training) into EET (in education, employment or training), usually by way of commercially oriented organisations, demonstrates state concern for creating and relatively flexible, relatively skilled, comparatively cheap, employment-ready work force.

14 <https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/new/youth-services>

15 *The Children, Youth and Families Act*, Victoria State, Australia, p. 21.

16 see <http://www.commutiny.in/>

17 Society has four 'legitimised' spaces for young people – family, friends, career / career-related education and leisure or recreation. There is on the margins – a 5th Space – a space where young people discover themselves by engaging in social action, a space where they engage in active citizenship, volunteering and much more. The 5th Space can be repositioned as a space to focus as on the self-transformation of young people and at the same time the transformation of society through their activity. The 5th Space can be an area that builds on the aspects of understanding the self, developing meaningful relationships and impacting society – all of which are critical to youth development. While impacting society, young people impact themselves, and if facilitated properly these experiences lead to heightened self-awareness, enhanced leadership skills (such as problem solving, decision-making, team working, dialoguing, etc.) and informed stances and on-ground action on social issues.

A thriving 5th Space can be critical in the all-round development of young people. The skills learnt in the 5th Space are life skills that can help young people 'succeed' in the other spheres of their life, such as with the family, friends, at work and at play. Recognising the oneness between the inner and outer worlds of young people is the key to shifting from a 'youth for development approach' to a 'youth development approach'.