THE YOUTH WORK CURRICULUM

and the 'Transforming Youth Work Agenda'

JON ORD

The context for this paper is the recent publication by the NYA of *Towards a Contemporary Youth Work Curriculum* (Merton and Wylie, 2002) and by the DfES of *Transforming Youth Work, Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* (DfES, 2002). I shall argue that these documents propose a conception of the youth work curriculum which significantly deviates from the curriculum that has been developed in the field. Furthermore there is a pre-eminence placed on outcomes for young people, which runs contrary to the processes of youth work. The paper will explore the origins and history of the concept of curriculum, look at some theoretical concepts of curriculum, as well as look at what is meant by curriculum in practice. It will focus on the various curriculum documents in use in the field, and argue strongly for a reintegration of the concept of process into the youth work curriculum proposed by the NYA and the DfES.

The notion of curriculum in youth and community work does not have a long history. It does not appear in any detail, if at all, in the major government reports of Albermarle, Milson – Fairburn or Thompson. There was a widespread consensus amongst the youth work profession from the early 1950s through to the late 1980s that 'curriculum' was the preserve of schools, and had little use or place in youth work. Ewen, in *Curriculum development in the youth club* (1983) did suggest that curriculum is a credible term to use to answer the question 'what are we doing in the youth club' (Ewen, 1983:1) referring generally to the activities, such as sports, arts and some issue based work which went on in the average youth club. Judging by the overwhelming response against the concept of curriculum both at the first Ministerial Conference and the consultation preceding it in 1989 (NYB, 1990), this can be seen as a minority view and most youth workers thought that the idea of curriculum was inappropriate.

The Education Reform Act 1988 provided the context for what would become a radical change in perspective on curriculum. This Act saw the introduction or 'imposition' of the national curriculum in schools. The teachers' relative autonomy over their classroom delivery had gone. They were told what they would teach, what outcomes they would produce and testing regimes were introduced to measure those outcomes. This radical shake up of the school curriculum set the scene for an application of curriculum to youth work, and by 1989 the First Ministerial Conference was planned, entitled 'Towards a core curriculum'. Though

some 'consultation' was undertaken prior to the conference, most involved saw the process as a 'top down' attempt to introduce an unwanted and unmerited concept – the curriculum.

The keynote address at this conference was made by Alan Howarth MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Science. Howarth began by admitting that he was being 'deliberately controversial' knowing that there was great antipathy to the concept of curriculum in youth work. But he very clearly spelt out the business for the conference, as consisting of three specific aims:

- to clarify the core business of youth work
- to prioritise the outcomes of youth work
- to agree the concept of 'Core Curriculum' for youth work.

He was also very clear about what he meant by the concept, '...core curriculum – that is the priority outcomes which the youth service should seek to provide' (NYB, 1990:34) Howarth was keen to distinguish clearly between other aspects of youth work, which he thought might be incorporated: '...by curriculum I mean not the aims of the youth service,.... Nor do I mean the detailed activities or methods of delivery... but the outcomes...' (NYB, 1990: 34).

The conference, attended primarily by Principal Youth Officers and Heads of voluntary organisations, did not whole-heartedly welcome the minister's address. Business was slow and there was considerable opposition to the concept of curriculum. There were no firm conclusions as to what the core curriculum was or should be. In particular there was opposition to any imposition of a curriculum and the evaluation forms reiterated the need for 'ownership' by the field of any 'core curriculum' (NYB, 1990:80).

The background papers and evaluation of the conference, as well as the ministers address was published as *Danger or Opportunity: Towards a core curriculum for the youth service* (NYB, 1990). The title defines the tension between the antipathy amongst the field towards the concept of curriculum and the necessity of the profession to be seen to work with government and not be in opposition to it. This mirrors the present day tension in the profession's relationship to the current Transforming Youth Work Agenda. I shall return to this later in the paper.

At the same time that the government of the day was working hard to implement a core curriculum in the youth service, there was also a shake up of the youth support bodies. This saw the formation of the NYA out of a combination of the National Youth Bureau (NYB) and the Council for Education and Training of Youth

and Community Workers (CETYCW). The NYA became more closely aligned to government policy than the more autonomous NYB had been, and the first chair of the NYA, Janet Paraskeva, was quoted in the TES as saying 'You've got to be inside the system now' (Davies, 1999:129).

Despite what could be interpreted as a lack of achievement in the first conference, a second Ministerial Conference, continuing the theme of a national curriculum, went ahead in November 1990. The second conference refined its objectives to producing a clear statement of purpose. 'An invitation for written submissions produced over 165 responses, - 79 from local authorities and 86 from a variety of 'voluntary and other organisations' (Davies, 1999:133). This alone was a further indication of the difficulty of the task of producing a core curriculum and showed very clearly the pluralistic nature of youth work. The Minister did not attend the conference but gave an address by video link, re-emphasising the importance of outcomes and introducing terms like 'performance indicators' and the notion of an 'outcomes matrix'.

A statement of purpose was agreed, which included a commitment to 'educative and empowering practice' as well as ' to equality of opportunity and challenging oppression'. Importantly this represented the views of the field and to a large extent was contrary to the views of the minister. The Government response was that Howarth distanced himself from the statement, regarding it as 'politically charged' (Davies, 1999). Howarth encouraged decisions to be made locally about the acceptance of the statement of purpose, thereby undermining its credibility, though he did return to the original question of 'a core curriculum' recommending that this was still an important objective.

A third Ministerial Conference was held in June 1992. By this time Howarth had moved on and the momentum had considerably slowed. Some work was undertaken on learning outcomes and performance indicators and the NYA was given the remit to produce curriculum guidelines to help local authorities (NYA, 1995).

Clearly the impetus for the introduction of a core curriculum had slowed. Yet it would be wrong to see Howarth's task as a failure, despite achieving little in terms of his specific objective of creating a 'core curriculum as outcomes', for the task of introducing the concept of curriculum into the youth service had begun. This task was to be progressed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1993) and by the NYA (1995).

In 1993, an expectation was placed upon statutory youth services to produce a locally agreed curriculum by Ofsted. *The Youth Work Curriculum* (HMSO, 1993)

was also produced by HMIs to offer guidance, direction and to comment on some of the current work being undertaken in the field. The HMI document is not prescriptive and does not attempt to impose a predetermined concept of curriculum. Significantly, it does not emphasise 'outcomes' as being integral to the youth work curriculum and it certainly does not equate the two concepts. In section 2 – 'The Curriculum', the document focuses on descriptions of the educative principles of youth work: 'Educative means introducing young people to ideas and areas of experience from which they can learn new skills and knowledge and develop understanding' (HMSO, 1993:5). It considers methods of delivery: 'Often the method is experiential – learning by doing...' (HMSO 1993:5); as well as going on to describe in more detail some of the broad 'curriculum areas', including Sport, Arts and Outdoor Education. Importantly this document clearly acknowledges the importance of process in the youth work curriculum: 'The youth work curriculum is complex because its dimensions include not only the activities that young people take part in but also the relationships they develop through the process' (HMSO 1993:16).

In 1995, the NYA published *Planning the Way: Guidelines for producing your youth work curriculum* and presented the curriculum in a format the field would be able to both recognise and utilise. It emphasised the process of experiential learning, introduced the idea of curriculum areas and appropriate methods. It also attempted to link objectives and performance indicators to them:

The [curriculum] *guidelines should:*

- *Enable youth workers to talk about their planned curriculum in professional terms; and*
- *Enable youth workers to stand back from their practice in order to relate their decisions regarding process, content and outcomes to professional debate.*

(NYA, 1995:3)

It would appear that a shift in policy on the youth work curriculum had occurred, from the narrow focus of the Ministerial Conferences where curriculum was equated with outcomes, to a broader definition of curriculum encompassing both the processes and products of youth work and incorporating descriptions of the broad educational methods employed. Whether or not this backtracking is viewed as a direct result of the opposition encountered by the government, ultimately the curriculum produced by the field is a more accurate reflection of youth work in practice. However, the importance of the NYA in taking up the mantle of the

youth work curriculum should not be underestimated. They, as well as HMI and Ofsted, played a vital role in encouraging the field to adopt the notion of curriculum (NYA, 1995; Ofsted 1993). As a result many statutory youth services in the early 90s produced their first attempts at curriculum documents. For example, Kingston Youth Service produced the aptly named *Breaking the Mould: A youth work curriculum* (1992).

Curriculum Theory

Mark Smith (1996, 2000) has suggested four ways of approaching curriculum theory and practice:

Firstly 'curriculum as syllabus' is associated with traditional formal education. It is concerned with the transmission of specified content. There is an emphasis on delivery by teacher to pupils who receive the information passively.

Secondly Smith suggests that 'curriculum as product' has become the dominant mode of curriculum theory in late twentieth century. This is based on the idea of the development of competencies, and builds on the work of Franklin Bobbitt (1918). Curriculum as product is synonymous with curriculum as outcomes. 'Objectives are set, a plan drawn up, then applied and the outcomes (products) measured' (Smith, 1996, 2000: 3) Significantly the outcomes are of paramount importance.

Thirdly and in contrast, 'curriculum as process' is conceived of without necessarily having any predetermined outcomes. Learning occurs as a result of the interaction between youth workers (or teachers) and the young people. Understanding is developed out of the process. What is brought to the session is important eg. previous experience, knowledge, as well as what is prepared in advance. But it is the 'dynamics' of the session that are important, in determining the potential for learning.

Finally curriculum can be seen as praxis. This is a development of the process model, which extends the notions of meaning making and developing understanding within the process model and asks questions concerning whose interests are served. The praxis model raises questions of power and oppression (Freire, 1972) in both the educational environment and the wider world. There is some resonance here with the work of Foucault (1974), with conceptions of power as knowledge. Praxis extends this and is concerned with what action will be taken asking what will be done as a result of the new found knowledge or skill.

'The curriculum in practice' 1989-2003

One can appreciate the difficulty which Howarth faced in trying to impose the concept of curriculum onto youth work practice by referring to work in the philosophy of language. In his detailed analysis of meaning, Wittgenstein suggests that the

meaning of words relates directly to the use to which they are put. 'The meaning of a word is its use in language' (Wittgenstein, 1958 [b]:20). 'The use of a word in practice is its meaning' (Wittgenstein, 1958 [a]:69). That is words and concepts acquire a currency based on their use.

Exploring this analysis in relation to the concept of curriculum in youth work provides some interesting insights. Prior to 1989 curriculum had no use in youth work. As a result, there was antipathy in the field to the imposition of what was essentially an alien concept to the practice of youth work – it had no currency, no use, and therefore no meaning and little purpose could be envisaged for it. However, since then, the concept of curriculum has undergone a process of gaining currency and 'usage' in the field of youth work. This has been a collaborative and democratic process involving all levels of the profession, from principal officers to part time workers and volunteers. It has been a 'bottom up' process, which has enabled ownership to be gained of the concept. Ironically this was one of the requests made in the evaluation of the first ministerial conference (NYB, 1989). A use has been found for the concept and it is to that use that we need to look to understand what we mean by curriculum in youth work.

I would suggest that there are aspects of all four of the models identified by Smith (1996, 2000) in the contemporary youth work curriculum. The syllabus model (perhaps the least important), can be seen to be analogous to the content areas prevalent in the curriculum documents produced by local authority youth services. Different documents use different terms to categorise the content, eg Herefordshire uses a list of twenty 'delivery topics', which include independent living, sexuality, citizenship and health. St Helens uses the notion of eight 'curriculum categories' including justice and equality, relationships and Europe and the world. The notion of curriculum as syllabus in its crudest sense as the 'filling of empty vessels', in examples of rote learning, clearly has no relevance to the dynamic learning environment of youth work. But I would argue that it does make sense to talk about 'content' in youth work, and the categorisation of broad areas of learning and the content areas found in curriculum documents equate to this.

The product model with its emphasis on outcomes appears in many documents. However there are clear differences of emphasis between general and specific outcomes in them. For example Shropshire County Council utilises the three broad categories of outcomes provided by 'Skills: personal/actual ability to express creativity'; 'Knowledge: of self, others and issues'; and 'Attitudes: group skills and ability to express feelings'. Plymouth City Council distinguishes between tangible outcomes such as securing paid/voluntary work, and intangible outcomes such as

self esteem and confidence. West Sussex Youth Service has produced a list of desirable outcomes which correspond directly with specific elements of the key curriculum areas. This is an attempt to reduce youth work to individual specific outcomes, which result from specific inputs. This, I would argue is problematic and I will return to this later in the paper, with a broader critique of outcomes.

The process model equates directly with the youth work process. Cumbria County Council articulates part of the process in a description of the youth worker as a facilitator, mentor and guide. Devon Youth Service creatively developed a model of a surfer on a wave to describe the dynamic quality of the process. The process articulated in the Devon curriculum document is organic, and the wave is used to show movement and progression. Leicester City Council emphasises the importance of the relationship with young people describing it as unique and voluntary, based on mutual respect and equality and as such providing the climate for growth.

Praxis is integral to the youth work curriculum, as the learning is not abstract but person centred and relevant to how young people live their lives. Curriculum as praxis relates to action and youth work is about what young people do – their behaviour as well as how they think and feel. The concept of praxis does not appear explicitly in the curriculum documents that I have reviewed but it is implicit and integral to the youth work curriculum documents in use in the field. Broadly praxis can be articulated through explorations of citizenship, which appear in many documents and through the encouragement of responsible community action. However there is a cross-over with curriculum as outcomes: many of the resulting actions described in examples of outcomes, (such as how a young person had the confidence to apply for and get a job), could be described by both models.

It is not possible to say which of the four models has more weight or is more or less dominant, as I have not exhausted the entire range of documents. However this is not my primary objective. It is sufficient to show that firstly the concept of curriculum in the field combines each of the four elements, and importantly the documents include 'curriculum as process'.

The concept of curriculum is used primarily as a framework in youth work. Some local authority documents are actually entitled *Curriculum Frameworks* eg Plymouth City Council, Leicester City Council and Derbyshire County Council. The curriculum documents are essentially descriptive, detailing the variety of aims, content, process, methods, models, values, issues, the planning and evaluation cycles, as well as the 'outcomes' of the work. However, what is important to note is that the curriculum frameworks that have been produced by the field since the early 1990s, describe both the products and the processes of the work. The elements

of the process of youth work, such as building relationships, engagement with the young person as a person on their terms, meeting the needs of young people through voluntary engagement, are essential elements of the youth work curriculum.

The use of the term curriculum in youth work is a synthesis of the unique educational contribution that youth work makes. The curriculum documents draw together key themes and processes that are incorporated in youth work as well as articulating the products and outcomes it can provide. The curriculum now has a currency, which not only provides use as a training aid to members of staff, but is also a method of articulating professional expectations of the youth service to local politicians. The curriculum also has a use in enabling other organisations working in partnership with youth services to better understand the role youth work can play.

Adopting the concept of curriculum has enabled youth work as a profession to be clearer about what youth work is, both to itself and to the outside world. The concept of curriculum 'in use', and that which has gained currency amongst youth workers in the field, (particularly in the statutory sector) is not the narrowly defined 'curriculum as outcomes' originally conceived of by Howarth. It is a creative, dynamic and locally produced expression of the unique educational contribution youth work makes. It synthesises the processes and products of youth work. Perhaps those present at the first ministerial conference did not appreciate it, but the introduction of the notion of curriculum was in fact an opportunity to develop a useful tool.

The current climate

Interestingly the current climate in youth work is revisiting some of the issues initially raised at ministerial conferences. Whilst the concept of curriculum is now to a large extent embedded into the operations of the statutory youth services throughout the country, the new developments within *Transforming Youth Work* (DFES, 2001, 2002) have brought back into sharp focus the tensions relating specifically to 'curriculum as product', and youth work outcomes.

In addition, the relationship between NYA and DfES has also been brought into clear focus within the current climate of *Transforming Youth Work*. Bernard Davies (1999) commented on the dynamics at the NYA's inception, around the time of the ministerial conferences, and the scepticism about whether or not the NYA would become the 'government's poodle or the field's rottweiler' (Davies, 1999:126). Close inspection of the present publications from both the NYA and the DfES gives rise to suspicion and would appear to validate concerns over the autonomy of the NYA and the relationship between the NYA and government policy. There is in fact a near identical match between the government's conception

of curriculum in *Transforming Youth Work: Resourcing Excellent Youth Services* (DfES, 2002) and The NYA's chief executive Tom Wylie's conception of curriculum in *Towards a Contemporary Youth Work Curriculum* (Merton and Wylie, 2002).

Should this concern us? I think the answer should be that if the conception of curriculum within both documents is representative of the concept of curriculum that has been embedded in the practice of youth work since the early 1990s, then youth workers should have nothing to fear. However if there are any clear discrepancies or differences then a question should certainly be raised. Unfortunately the latter would appear to be the case.

The two publications use the same three basic elements to describe the youth work curriculum – content; pedagogy; assessment/outcomes. The first, content, is relatively uncontentious as many curriculum documents in practice utilise the notion of curriculum areas, which broadly summarise young people's issues, interests and concerns. One could argue that the choice of four core areas of skill, knowledge and understanding which Merton and Wylie have adopted - emotional literacy, creativity and enterprise, health and well being, active citizenship - do not encompass the totality of the young people's experience. But by and large there is not a distinct conceptual difference between Merton and Wylie's concept of content and the content areas previously discussed in relation to curriculum as syllabus.

The second element of curriculum proposed by Merton and Wylie (2002) is pedagogy. Here there is clear divergence with the conception of curriculum being portrayed within the new agenda and the curriculum embedded in youth work practice. Pedagogy, defined by the Oxford dictionary as 'the profession, science or theory of teaching', is a concept that is transposed primarily from teaching. Pedagogy does not appear, to my knowledge in any of the curriculum documents produced in the field. Pedagogy does have some quite separate links with informal education and youth work through the work of Freire (1972). But this bears no relation to the work of Merton and Wylie. So this raises a question as to why it is introduced by them.

Merton and Wylie's use of the concept of pedagogy may well be a deliberate attempt to use the strong association with formal education and teaching to give added credibility to the 'educational' basis of youth work. However, an analysis of what is meant by the pedagogy of youth work, within their conception of the youth work curriculum does give cause for concern.

I would suggest that Merton and Wylie are utilising the term pedagogy to both legitimise exclusively the product based model of youth work and to avoid the concept of process in their description of the youth work curriculum. Merton and

Wylie describe the pedagogy of youth work (and the resulting youth work curriculum) without reference to fundamental aspects of the youth work process.

> *Youth work has a pedagogy which is based on learning by doing, often in small groups; people tackling real life problems and finding real life situations, planned, done and reflected on; lessons learned and applied elsewhere. It is essentially educational groupwork.*
> (Merton and Wylie 2002:10)

The above is not anathema to youth work but I would argue an essential element is missing and Merton and Wylie's description of the pedagogy of youth work as educational groupwork, does not sufficiently account for the interpersonal dynamics of the youth work process.

To illustrate let us look at an example in practice of an informal drug education session at a local youth club, described in terms of the four areas of the curriculum. The content of the session could be described as the facts and information, which the youth workers wish to communicate to the young people. The outcomes may be an increased knowledge of the relative harm that drugs can cause, or safer ways of taking drugs. The praxis element of the curriculum may relate to what the young people will do as a result of their newly found knowledge for example, what informed decisions the young people will take about their drug use. The process in the dynamics of this session is important. The extent to which the young people would be able to be involved and engage openly and honestly in sensitive conversations about their drug use would be dependant on the level of trust and the quality of the relationship the young people have with the youth workers. Without this element of the process the possibilities for significant engagement and the consequent learning are limited. Very often the quality of the learning in youth work is dependant on the quality of the relationship. Within Merton and Wylie's description of the pedagogy of youth work as 'educational group work' there is no mention of this aspect of the work.

Youth work is not teaching, but what is occurring is that there is a blurring of the edges between the two. Clearly both teaching and youth work are concerned with learning but this similarity should not be used to disguise the clear distinctions. Merton and Wylie describe the pedagogy of youth work as 'essentially educational groupwork' (2002:10) which is an attempt to describe how youth work is different to the dominant pedagogy of school. I am sure a lot of teachers would consider that they undertake educational groupwork. What is distinctive about youth work and clearly distinguishes it from teaching is the 'process'. Educational groupwork is not synonymous with the process of youth work, it does not sufficiently account

for the interpersonal dynamics of the youth work process. Merton and Wylie's description of educational groupwork do not require the building of a relationship of voluntary participation or mutuality.

What is meant by process? It is complex, and Ofsted (1993) acknowledged this, (HMSO 1993:16). This does not however, mean that clarity cannot be added to the understanding of the concept or that because it is both difficult to understand and to articulate that we must get rid of it. It is true that historically youth work has failed to fully clarify the meaning of process and consequently has been accused of being 'woolly'. I would argue that process is an essential ingredient of the youth work curriculum and without a clear recognition of the place of the process of youth work in the curriculum, there is a danger of undermining both the effectiveness of the work, as well as one of the cornerstones of the profession.

The youth work process is integrally linked to the formation of the relationship between the youth worker and the young person(s). The relationship is characterised by equity and trust, and generally, though perhaps not exclusively, based on voluntary participation, as well as mutuality. Through this relationship young people are safe, and free to explore and address issues of their personal and social development. The 'process' involves learning about your 'self' in relation to others, and through experience.

Why would Merton and Wylie (or the DfES) be so keen to introduce the concept of pedagogy into youth work, describing it as 'educational group work' and ignoring a 'given' in youth work practice – the importance of the relationship in the process? I think the answer gives important insights into the *Transforming Youth Work* agenda. Process is necessarily, at least to some extent, open-ended. It may start with the needs of the young people and perhaps with a specific aim for the session but it does not start with a predetermined notion of what the outcome would be. In the example of the drug education session one could begin with fantastic content, up to date knowledge, well-designed leaflets etc. The workers may have excellent relationships with the young people but ultimately only the young people themselves can make the informed decisions and it would be foolish to predict what the outcomes would be prior to the session or indeed be 100% sure about what they were after the session! Not least, this is because the workers may well not witness the resulting actions. The omission of the youth work process in Merton and Wylie seems to be intentional, as it potentially conflicts with, and could be seen to undermine, what is the primary focus for the new agenda's transformation of youth services to that of an 'outcome-based' model. Merton and Wylie have rather cleverly, though I think wrongly, omitted the youth work

process, and substituted it with the concept of 'pedagogy as educational groupwork' to enable a direct application of the outcome model of youth work. The underlying reason for this I would suggest is the New Labour manifesto commitment to 'improve' public services and their need to ensure maximum accountability. What Merton and Wylie are attempting to do is substitute the 'person centred process' which characterises both contemporary youth work curriculum and youth work practice, with an 'outcome based' model.

To illustrate this further, we must look at the third element of the curriculum proposed by Merton and Wylie: assessment/outcomes. It is in relation to this element that the convergence between the NYA and DfES is most evident. In fact the text is at times identical, eg 'Such broad goals need to be expressed in a set of more specific outcomes if they are to be helpful in the planning and in practice. The more clearly we can specify the ends, the better we will be able to choose the means for achieving them' (DfES 2002:11; and Merton and Wylie, 2002:2)

The above quote exemplifies the extent to which Merton and Wylie have adopted a model of curriculum as outcomes. It shows that the starting point is in fact the end product -the outcomes. This is exemplified in the statement: 'the more clearly we can specify the ends, the better we will be able to choose the means'. Such a position runs counter to the youth work approach wherein the ends or outcomes develop out of the process and *ipso facto* cannot be specified in any detail prior to the activity, session or experience. Both means (or methods of youth work) and ends (outcomes of youth work) cannot be specified until the young people have been engaged with, a relationship built up and their needs identified. It is the process that develops from this that will lead to the outcomes. Merton and Wylie are in fact 'putting the cart before the horse'.

The extent to which outcomes take precedence in Merton and Wylie's model is further illustrated by their suggestion that in fact we need to ask the question, 'What might one expect a personally and socially developed person to be?' (Merton and Wylie, 2002:2) Their idea is that we can best undertake youth work if we know the specific end products. Whilst this may make sense if we are concerned with broad outcomes, what Merton and Wylie are proposing is a strict application of the outcome model, necessitating specification of individual outcomes for each particular piece of work. This does not apply to youth work. It may makes sense to talk of general or broad outcomes or aims before engaging young people in a process but to frame youth work at the outset in terms of specific outcomes bears little relation to its reality.

Let me illustrate. It is widely accepted that youth work is concerned with personal and social development. Let us look at a one aspect of that: human kindness. (This

relates to youth work as well as to everyday situations of friendship and parenting etc.) Few would argue, that as a rule, if you genuinely show kindness, care and attention to someone consistently and reliably over time this will have a beneficial effect on how the recipients of that behaviour will feel about them selves, they are more likely to think of themselves as worthy of care and their sense of well being will probably improve. They will also probably behave towards others 'with care', and the quality of their relationships with others will improve.

It is a different thing to argue that as a result of specific acts of kindness one can specify outcomes in terms of a person's well being. One is guilty of the fallacy of arguing from the general to the specific. Yes, each individual act of kindness played a particular part in the overall behavioural change but it is impossible to say which one was most important, if in fact, there was one. It is also difficult to say at which stage in the process the changes or learning had taken place.

The first description is a general rule relating to a process of interaction, which has broad outcomes. One can only even begin to be specific about the outcomes in terms of the degree of change and be clear about end products after the event. The outcome model of youth work curriculum fails to account for the complexities of people, and the complexities of learning associated with the personal and social development. Personal and social development is necessarily complex and the process will reflect this.

Broadly a distinction can be drawn between the 'open ended - person centred - educational process' contained in the youth work curriculum in practice, with the 'Outcome based model' proposed by Merton and Wylie. Youth work is not about producing specifically predetermined outcomes, it is about the personal and social development of young people.

> *Youth work is educational and therefore following Dewey, it is not an activity for inculcating rigid patterns of socially acceptable behaviour. It is not a static yard stick but a set of processes which must be reassessed to meet the needs of individual, situations and circumstances.*
> (Young, 1999:79)

The relationship between outcomes and process is further illustrated by what Smith (1988) refers to as the 'Incidental' nature of learning. That is the learning or outcomes in youth work develop out of a process but are indirect. They are a consequence of the process, but are not necessarily specifically attributable to any specific part of it. Learning results from purposeful activity, but does not directly result from a single or series of specific inputs. The learning is not accidental but

incidental. The acquisition of social skills is like this, eg young people may learn appreciation of each other. But this learning will derive out of a process of interaction over time. Even if each individual involved could attribute their learning to a specific incident within that process, where perhaps their need was met specifically by someone's intervention, in truth the change is most likely to be due to a complex interplay of a number of factors and incidences. And certainly even if this was the case it is another thing to suggest that one could have anticipated such an eventuality and planned the activity accordingly, having previously specified this as a desirable outcome.

One of my contentions in this paper is that there has been shift in policy at the NYA, most notably by its director Tom Wylie, in how youth work is conceived; and that this is exemplified in the recent descriptions of curriculum. (DFES, 2001, 2002; Merton and Wylie, 2002) This shift is further evidenced by a comparison of the Merton and Wylie (2002) version of curriculum with his previous paper on curriculum: *Developmental youth work 2000* (Wylie, 1997). A clear change is evident. In the former paper, Wylie places no emphasis on outcomes within his description of curriculum. The similarities between the reference to curriculum areas, processes of informal education and experiential learning, and the educative, participative and empowering values of youth work, as well as the importance of the promotion of equality of opportunity are strikingly similar to the various curriculum documents produced by the individual youth services. Merton and Wylie (2002) ignores many of these embedded principles, wrongly replacing the youth work process with the concept of 'pedagogy as educational groupwork' and implicitly advocating an outcome based curriculum model.

The change in policy at the NYA, at least by its principle advocate, Tom Wylie, coincides directly with the election of New Labour and the new agenda of *Transforming Youth Work*. This new agenda focuses heavily on accountability, which underpins the commitment to improving public services, though this is arguably through a managerialist regime of target setting. It could be argued that this signifies a return to the Thatcherite emphasis upon increased accountability in public services. The commitment to accountability was the primary motivation for the original introduction of the curriculum in 1989 by Howarth from within the Thatcher government. Without clear, predictable outcomes specified prior to the activity, the youth service would be less accountable. Perhaps part of the original antipathy to the notion of curriculum by youth workers at the time was the implicit assumption by youth workers that such accountability would imply a loss of independence to prioritise process in their work.

This paper is not arguing against accountability *per se*. But it maintains that if youth work is to be brought to account this should be on the basis of what youth work is; what youth work 'is' should not be changed to fit into a system or method of accountability!

We are in a new climate and it is evident that a government for the first time has officially recognised the role of youth work (DfES, 2002). However, whilst on the one hand it acknowledges the benefits of quality youth work, sadly at the same time it is denying the main tool utilised for that benefit – the youth work 'process'. The NYA ought to draw some distance between itself and the government and return to the consensus on curriculum. Reintegrating the importance of the relationship in to the youth work process as an essential element of the work; and this should be emphasised rather than attempt to devise, in cahoots with the DfES a new and irrelevant framework for the work which doesn't relate to youth work in practice and if implemented would undermine quality.

The role of the NYA as champion of the profession and communicator of youth work to the wider world, has been undermined by this shift in policy. Interestingly the initial questions over the role of the NYA were raised the first time a government tried to introduce notions of a youth work curriculum as outcomes (NYB, 1989). Merton and Wylie (2002) and DfES (2002) have shown such clear convergence, that suspicions have again been raised. Furthermore the commonalities are clearly at odds with both the current youth work practice and the curriculum documents which describe and communicate this practice.

To conclude, prior to the implementation of the *Transforming Youth Work* agenda, the various locally determined models and frameworks of curriculum in use in youth services added to the armoury of those services. The documents have a wide range of uses, eg as training aids for volunteers and part time workers, to facilitate partnership work or to educate local politicians. They have the potential to enhance the quality of youth work and enable both workers to be clearer about their work and for others to be clearer about what they do.

Importantly, despite the impetus for the introduction of the concept of curriculum in youth work at the first ministerial conference, with an attempt to impose 'a core curriculum as outcomes', the production of these documents has been organic and democratic. This has embedded the concept into youth work practice.

To understand the meaning of curriculum in youth work one must refer to how the concept is used, not to any externally imposed criteria (Wittgenstein, 1958[a] 1958[b]). The use of curriculum in youth work practice reflects all four models of syllabus, product, process, and praxis outlined by Smith (1996/2000). The curriculum

documents are creative locally devised frameworks used to describe and explain what both youth work is in the locality, what its essential elements are and what it can provide.

The changes proposed by Merton and Wylie (2002) and DfES (2002) defining curriculum as the three essential elements of content, pedagogy and outcome is essentially a shift from the person centred curriculum embedded in youth work practice, which includes the essential element of 'process' in youth work, to a reintroduction of the outcome based model. This approach unnecessarily formalises youth work and ignores the role of the process. The context of the person is being lost to an application of a method of delivery. This method exclusively emphasises specific outcomes. It fundamentally ignores the importance of the relationship between the youth worker and the young person(s) as the primary vehicle for producing both the products and the processes of the work. 'Curriculum as outcomes' does not accurately reflect the curriculum in practice or the substance of youth work.

The fundamental alterations in the description of the youth work curriculum will over time produce alterations in practice and any undermining of the importance of the process, if implemented, will undermine the effectiveness of the work. The limited aspects of youth work best approximate to this model, like the quasi-school based sessions, which are illustrated by prior - specific learning outcomes. For example the sexual health workshops, which set out to increase young people's knowledge of methods of contraception, will become the norm. Sessions will be organised to focus on those few specific issues, which fit the model. The depth of work and potential for genuine growth through involvement in personal development processes will be lost. Youth workers will end up ticking boxes relating to knowledge or skills which the workers had decided in advance they would be 'teaching' and fail to engage fully with the young people in a equitable relationship, to begin to ascertain and meet their real needs.

Jon Ord *teaches Community and Youth Work at the College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth. Until recently he was a youth officer with Kingston Youth Service.*

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