The Centre for Effective Services connects research, policy and practice to improve outcomes for communities, children and young people across the island of Ireland. We work to influence policy and systems change; champion innovative service design and implementation; and build knowledge, skills and capacity for government departments, organisations, researchers and practitioners.

Part of a new generation of intermediary organisations, CES is a not-for-profit that helps communities, children and young people thrive.

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IDEAS IN ACTION – in practice
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*Our thanks to all.*
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Foreword

With the support and assistance of local and international colleagues, and the valuable contributions of a working group led by the City of Dublin Youth Service Board, the Centre for Effective Services created this *Ideas In Action In Youth Work* resource.

It has been designed in direct response to the needs identified by youth workers during a series of road shows in 2012, which focused on the Irish National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work (NQSF). The purpose of these events was to connect the *theory* of youth work with the *practice* as it is experienced by those working in the field. At each event youth workers discussed a range of difficulties and issues they experienced, and it quickly became clear they had identified a gap that needed to be bridged. The function of this resource is to help and support them in planning their work; to put that planning into practice; and to evaluate the results.

This section, *In Practice*, is action-oriented and provides models, practical guides and toolkits, as well as links to articles and other resources. A second document, *In Theory* explains the origins of the resource; who it is for; how it might best be used; and the approach taken to its development.

In developing this resource, three underlying principles were applied. First, where possible the materials and references would be freely available online. Additional resources can be accessed via the Online Route Map produced by the Centre for Effective Services. Second, that it is not a one-off programme: it is designed to be accessed as needed. And finally, that it is not static: over time it will be extended and improved upon in direct response to user feedback. Your views as users are important, we want to hear them. *Ideas in Action In Youth Work* was designed for your benefit and that of the young people you work with. Any views, comments, and suggestions should be addressed to Dr John Bamber: jbamber@effectiveservices.org.

Please note the following statement.

This resource does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of all the theories underpinning youth work. Nor do we suggest that the theories and theorists featured here are correct, the best, the most important or uncontested. They have been selected from a range of many possible sources, solely for the specific purpose of assisting workers to develop their ability to strengthen the relationship between theory and practice.

You will not find everything that you are looking for. To answer your questions and meet your needs, the point is to adopt the process of learning illustrated by this resource.

Familiarity with the process and the contents will help to cut down the amount of time needed to meet your needs. So use the resource frequently!
We really need to make the theory-practice link clearer. But how?

There’s so much of it, and so many theorists! Where do I start?

All well and good but what has it got to do with my problems on a Monday morning?

I love ideas but I’m not given the time to do the reading or the research these days.

I learned a lot in college but I can’t remember it now.

Youth workers need to know the theory, but as a manager it is not really necessary.

As Marx said, the point is not to philosophise about the world but to change it!

Obviously, practice that has a theoretical underpinning is stronger practice.

How many theorists does it take to change a light bulb? None. They don’t do practical!
Ideas In Action In Youth Work In Practice is for use by youth workers in conjunction with the Online Route Map, also produced by the Centre for Effective Services. The thinking behind its development is fully explained in an accompanying paper entitled: In Theory. The idea for the resource came from a series of road shows in Ireland in 2012, which were about connecting evidence in youth work and the Irish National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work (NQSF). At these events, youth workers communicated a number of difficulties and issues with making links between theory and practice. Commonly, they were unsure about the theoretical sources for the work, where such sources could be found, or how to use theory in ways that could relate to and underpin their work in a practical way.

Typical comments expressed at the road shows are those on the previous page.

In responding to their desire to strengthen the interplay between theory and practice, this resource provides youth services, organisations and workers with a structured framework to assess, articulate and enhance their work in relation to the five NQSF Core Principles:

1. Young person-centred: recognising the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation.

2. Committed to ensuring and promoting the safety and well-being of young people.

3. Educational and developmental.

4. Committed to ensuring and promoting equality and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults.

5. Dedicated to the provision of quality youth work and committed to continuous improvement.

The City of Dublin Youth Service Board has produced a valuable guide to the NQSF, which can be accessed here.
Youth work is strengthened when practitioners access a wide range of evidence and check this against their philosophical and political convictions. This strengthening can be achieved through a continuous improvement cycle of thinking and acting, in which practitioners can become clearer about the reasons for their work, what they hope it will achieve, and what skills and activities are needed to reach their goals. This cycle informs the work and allows practitioners to add to the evidence base as they learn from activity.

Figure 1: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE
Empowerment

The resource encourages youth workers to support young people in a process of empowerment. Empowerment is a central concept because:

1. It refers to a way of working with young people (process), as well as to the intended results of that work (outcomes); and

2. It expresses the widely accepted purpose of youth work, which is about personal and social development.

Youth workers support individual young people to come together in groups to pursue common interests, or to address self-identified problems and issues. In turn, group development can lead to collective action to bring about desired changes, for example in personal and communal circumstances, service provision, or ultimately in social and economic conditions.
Using this Resource
Using this Resource

The first use of this resource is to systematically connect the three aspects of empowerment to relevant theoretical areas and then through hyperlinks to illustrative theorists. These links provide access to a wide range of ideas, and to other resources, so you can access the information in ways that you find most relevant.

It should be stressed that the theories and theorists can come under one or more categories. The ones featured here for illustrative purposes have the merit of: being well known; having been subject to significant scrutiny and criticism; and having stood the test of time in terms of durability. For these reasons, and despite being partial, limited, flawed, and contested, these sources can help in the task of providing a theoretical underpinning for your work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Relevant Theoretical Area</th>
<th>Theory or Theorist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal development</strong> (includes): The development of critical thinking skills, acquiring or enhancing new practical skills, learning to plan and to set goals, or more broadly learning to learn, or to question and develop values and beliefs.</td>
<td>Developmental psychology Human development Human interaction Learning theory Education theory Non-formal education</td>
<td>Dewey – Experiential learning Kolb – Learning cycle Bruner – Discovery learning Rogers – Core conditions Mezirow – Critical reflection Maslow – Hierarchy of needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group development</strong> (includes): The development of interpersonal and communication skills, awareness of and respect for others, capacity for leadership, capacity for participatory decision-making, ability to identify sub-goals and tasks, capacity to follow through and to review progress.</td>
<td>Social psychology Social groupwork Pedagogy Leadership</td>
<td>Vygotsky – Socio-cultural learning Bandura – Reciprocal determinism Revans – Action learning Tuckman – Group stages Habermas – Communicative action Anyon – Socially useful theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social development</strong> (includes): The capacity to identify and to research issues or areas of interest, to understand social structures and power relations, develop defensible positions and put forward views, to develop strategies to address situations, to challenge, or to work with other groups, to address circumstances and conditions that influence, determine or disadvantage young people (e.g. young women, LGBT young people, black young people, poor young people in certain geographical areas).</td>
<td>Sociology Politics Community development Theories of equality and diversity Action research</td>
<td>Marx – Class conflict Gramsci – Hegemony Bourdieu – Habitus Foucault – Power/knowledge Freire – Conscientisation bell hooks – Engaged pedagogy Bronfenbrenner – Ecological systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second use of this resource is to connect the theorists and theories to the 5 Core Principles. This can be achieved with the aid of trigger questions as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Principle</th>
<th>Theories and theorists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Rights and Participation</strong></td>
<td>Marx – Class conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gramsci – Hegemony</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bourdieu – Habitus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foucault – Power/knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freire – Conscientisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Safety and Well-being</strong></td>
<td>Rogers – Core conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bronfenbrenner – Ecological systems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maslow – Hierarchy of needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 Education and Development</strong></td>
<td>Kolb – Learning cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruner – Discovery learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bell hooks – Engaged pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vygotsky – Socio-cultural learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bandura – Reciprocal determinism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Habermas – Communicative action</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anyon – Socially useful theory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dewey – Experiential learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 Equality and Inclusiveness</strong></td>
<td>bell hooks – Engaged pedagogy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marx – Class conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5 Quality and Improvement</strong></td>
<td>Kolb – Learning cycle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruner – Discovery learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Revans – Action learning</td>
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<td>Tuckmann – Group stages</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mezirow – Critical reflection</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What would be your own questions, and how would you connect them to these theorists and theories? What theories and theorists would you take out or add to this list?
The **third use of this resource** involves a small group exercise to stimulate dialogue about improving youth work practice.

The task for the group is to read one or more of the short introductions to the illustrated theorists (you decide the actual number), which you will find below. The introductions highlight their key concepts, and the relevance to youth work practice.

Each group member selects 1 – 3 concepts, which they find interesting to discuss. Feel free to come up with concepts of your own!

Try to describe the chosen concepts to the rest of the group members and connect them to improving youth work practice. Questions to consider are:

- What relevance would you see in your own work? In what ways do the concepts enable you to think differently about your work?
- How do they relate to concepts with which you are familiar?
- How do you react to the quotes from the theorists?
- Can you come up with a quote of your own?
- What concepts would you add, and in what way would these be relevant to your work?

As a group try put together the concepts. Do they belong together? Are they overlapping or contradictory?

Finally, each group member shares what they have gained (if anything) from the exercise.

Are there any shared conclusions? What about future actions and consequences?

The **fourth use of this resource** involves a form of ‘grazing’, which means simply looking through the materials in a more or less unstructured way. For example, you might explore each of the hyperlinks (stations) on one of the routes in the Route Map. The content might have a use that could not have been anticipated, and that might stimulate your thinking in new directions.

The **fifth use of this resource** is about improving practice. As explained below it should be undertaken by task groups or teams of practitioners. This is a sustained activity which ‘builds’ your understanding and capability with regard to a specific question or issue.
With respect to each of the Core Principles on the following pages:

1. Identify an issue, situation, problem or opportunity that you are currently thinking about in your work. This should be something that is complex, where understanding is not complete, and where a solution is not obvious or straightforward.

2. Identify questions based on what you want to know in relation to this situation, and see how it connects to one or more of the Core Principles. Try to be as specific as possible as this should cut down on unnecessary searching. Try also to be clear about your purpose. What exactly do you want to achieve?

3. Look at the relevant part of this resource which contains a model and information about action or concepts and values. A model is a representation (often in graphic form) of a process that (a) accounts for the constituent elements of the process, and (b) in so doing, provides a framework for analysis, or serves as a guide for activity.

4. Consider the extent to which the model provides a useful way of thinking about the issue that you have identified.

5. If you are mainly interested in practice, check out the information in the hyperlinks under the heading of Action. Divide up this work between yourselves. Allow time to examine the resources. Ask each member to report back verbally or with notes on what they have found.

6. If you are mainly interested in developing your thinking, check out the information in the hyperlinks under the heading of Ideas. Divide up the work between yourselves. Allow time to examine the resources. Ask each member to report back verbally or with notes on what they have found.

7. Discuss and bring together the information, and take action on the basis of what you have found. Go through the Plan, Do, Review cycle set out in Figure 1.

8. Consider and learn from your actions, and decide if you need further information.

9. Repeat the exercise as appropriate until you are satisfied with the results.
Core Principles
**CORE PRINCIPLE 1: Rights and Participation**

*Young person-centred*: recognising the rights of young people and holding as central their active and voluntary participation

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To consider the ‘how’ of your work, check out these resources

- **Young Voices**: Provides guidelines on involving young people in youth work.
- **University of Minnesota**: Video presentations on Youth Engagement and Civic Participation in an American context.
- **Youth-Adult Partnership**: Guide from the Freechild Project for young people and adults to the resources, training, and technical assistance needed to create new roles for young people throughout society.
- **Democratic Civic Practice**: Guide to building more democratic communities with young people.

To analyse your approach to participation check out this model

**Participation Model**

The Freechild Project Measure for Social Change

*By and With Young People*

- All community members equally make decisions, take action
- Young people initiate, share decisions & action with adults
- Young people consulted, adults act
- Young people assign action but inform decision-making
- Adults initiate shared action with young people
- Young people initiate, young people take action

Loosely adapted from Roger Hart’s Children’ Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship UNICEF Innocenti Essays, No. 4, UNICEF/ International Child Development Centre, Florence, Italy, 1992. This model © 2003 The Freechild Project. All rights reserved.

To consider the ‘why’ of your work, check out these sources

- **Fundamentals of Youth Work**: National Youth Council of Ireland overview of the definitive features of Youth Work.
- **Empowerment**: Article describing the role of the youth development professional in incorporating an empowerment process into programme planning.
- **Youth Rights**: City of Dublin Youth Service Board information on the rights and entitlements of young people.
How to use the participation model

Most people are familiar with Hart’s and Arnstein’s Ladders. The idea of ‘levels’ implies that ‘lower levels’ are not as good as ‘higher levels’, yet participation at ‘lower’ levels can be more appropriate depending on the context. This spiral model from the FreeChild Project features different types of young people’s participation.

According to the project’s website:

‘The spiral represents the non-linear motion of social change. You don’t simply start in one place and end in another; instead, it is a process that continually evolves while hopefully growing larger. It has been going on a lot longer than the present, and this model is meant to acknowledge the past. The spiral also shows the motion of opportunities becoming narrower as fewer people are engaged.’

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http://www.freechild.org/measure.htm

Relevance to Practice/NQSF

Explanatory
Allows you to show young people and others the different levels of participation that can be achieved and their role in the process.

Planning
Helps you to identify the most appropriate type of involvement, methodology, and planned for outcomes.

Action
Indicates what is involved in sharing power with young people.

Evaluation
Helps you to assess the extent to which participation is taking place.

Generate thinking
Helps you to ask searching questions such as: Why is the organisation here? Why can young people not make all the decisions? Why can young people not do everything they want to do?
CORE PRINCIPLE 2: Safety and Well-being

Committed to ensuring and promoting the safety and well-being of young people

To consider the ‘how’ of your work, check out these resources

- **Firm Foundations**: Needs assessment toolkit.
- **Protecting our Children and Young People**: National Youth Council of Ireland toolkit on protecting young people.
- **Needs Assessment**: City of Dublin Youth Service Board guide to best practice regarding the needs assessment process.
- **Duty to Care**: Guide to safe practices in work with children and young people.

To analyse your **approach** to safety and well-being check out this model.

**Safety and Well-being Model**
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-actualisation</td>
<td>morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, acceptance of facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem</td>
<td>self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, respect by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love/Belonging</td>
<td>friendship, family, sexual intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>security of body, of employment, of resources, of morality, of the family, of property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiological</td>
<td>breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis, excretion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To consider the ‘why’ of your work, check out these sources

- **Youth Mental Health Issues**: Irish Health Service Executive report on mental health and well-being.
- **Strength-based Practice**: Resiliency Initiatives give an insight into the Strengths-based Approach.
- **Resilience**: explained in this Australian online publication.
- **Literature Review of Risk Assessment Resources for Children in Conflict with the Law**: Irish Youth Justice Services.
- **Ecological Approach**: Article on the Ecological Systems theory that human development is influenced by the different types of environmental systems.
- **Web Wheel**: Youthreach links to mental health websites.
- **Well-being**: Barnardos introduction to issues surrounding the well-being of young people.
How to use the safety and well-being model

Maslow’s triangle is often taken as a hierarchy, which means that ‘lower’ needs have to be met before ‘higher’ levels can be fulfilled. This is questionable. Better to see the triangle as one way of graphically representing a range of needs, which derive from the interaction between individual, familial, and social and economic conditions (see Bronfenbrenner). With respect to each of the areas, practitioners can ask a number of useful questions including:

- What is the situation of young people?
- Are they being hurt, threatened, deprived, disadvantaged, or undermined?
- Are they being blocked or hindered in any way?
- What are the factors that are getting in the way of satisfaction or fulfilment?
- What are the causes, and how can these factors be addressed?
- If they cannot be addressed head on, can anything be done to compensate?
- What needs to change in the young people, what needs to change in their environment, and what needs to change in the relationship between the two?

For example, with respect to loving and belonging, the role of the family is vital. If, however, there is a breakdown in family relations, can the community offer opportunities to belong to a group, team, or organisation in which young people could develop confidence and gain a feeling of acceptance amongst their peers? Alternatively, if the environment is racist, sexist, prejudicial or discriminatory, what can be done by working with young people to tackle these issues?

Seen in this way, the triangle is a framework for proactively supporting the development and aspirations of young people in a range of areas.

Relevance to Practice/NQSF

Explanatory
Shows that promoting young people’s safety and well-being means more than just keeping safe; it can mean supporting healthy risk taking.

Planning
Helps you to think about the place of safety in relation to the other aspects of the well-being of young people.

Evaluation
Helps you to assess whether the programme or project provides safety that is appropriate to the stage of development of the young person and the group.

Generate thinking
Helps youth workers to extend their understanding of safety alongside other aspects of their well-being.

Analysis
Helps you to examine the ways in which you promote young people’s safety and well-being.
CORE PRINCIPLE 3: Education and Development

To consider the ‘how’ of your work, check out these resources:

- **Index of Learning Theories**: References theories and models of learning.
- **Experiential Learning**: James Neill’s compendium of experiential learning activities and resources.
- **Dialogical Teaching/Learning**: Freirean approach that provides a number of resources on how to make education something which, in being serious, rigorous, methodical, and having a process, also creates happiness and joy.
- **Action Learning**: Explains how participants in groups learn from reflection, especially regarding the actions they take to address the real-world priorities.

To analyse your approach to education and development check out this model.

To consider the ‘why’ of your work, check out these sources:

- **Critical Practice**: Article on the possibilities for critical practice in youth work.
- **Report on In/Non-formal Learning**: Overview of different views of non-formal and informal learning.
- **Benefits of Youth Work**: Publication explaining that youth work is neither social care nor formal teaching, but combines elements of both in the context of creating learning and supportive opportunities for young people.
- **Social Pedagogy**: Mark Smith on the European concept of social pedagogy.
How to use the development model

In this model, empowerment begins when a small group of young people who share similar characteristics and interests are encouraged by youth workers to make and to discuss statements about things that they are interested in or care about. In this first stage, the worker will focus on helping participants to develop their communication skills. It may well require attention to individuals and work relating to self-awareness, particularly those aspects of talking and behaviour that might prevent people from listening to others respectfully, or expressing themselves in ways that provoke unnecessary arguments or other negative reactions. Often this involves work on emotional as well as conceptual levels.

Developing self-awareness and communication skills in turn assists with the second stage of strengthening the ability of the group to work together or to more carefully debate a topic. The point of this stage is for participants to gain a more accurate or in-depth picture or understanding of a social issue or problem of concern to the group. This stage is about developing the resources of the group for critical thinking or problem solving.

Enhancing group capacity opens up the possibility of a third stage concerning action. In this stage the group decides on a course of action in line with their interests or to address a social issue or problem. Here a plan of action is developed and agreed, and responsibilities assigned for carrying it out. This stage involves learning from implementing the plan and also learning from the results. Workers can help participants with planning and also with reviewing progress.

The model does not stipulate that the process must start with a focus on individual development. Depending on the situation the starting point could be with the group or the action stage. It means that workers should pay attention to individual and group development issues, even if the group is focussed on social action. Similarly, if the focus is on individual or group development, the worker needs to be mindful of the potential for social action.


Relevance to Practice/NQSF

Explanatory
Shows how youth work is a non-formal educational and developmental process.

Planning
Shows how reviewing/reflecting, concluding/learning allows you to plan for the development of young people.

Action
Reminds us to stop and think each time we do something.

Evaluation
Describes a simple model of learning and development that can help you to evaluate your work.

Generate thinking
This model can be used to introduce new thinking about development.

Analysis
This model can help you to examine the ways in which you promote young people’s education and development.
**CORE PRINCIPLE 4: Equality and Inclusiveness**

Committed to ensuring and promoting equality and inclusiveness in all its dealings with young people and adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To consider the ‘how’ of your work, check out these resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access All Areas</strong>: National Youth Council of Ireland’s diversity resource kit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practice Examples</strong>: Examples of youth work from the Community Relations Equality and Diversity (Northern Ireland).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12 Steps to Good Practice</strong>: Explores quality intercultural youth work in Ireland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Think and Act.ie</strong>: Online resource for primary teachers interested in social justice issues, with high-quality animations with age-appropriate stories and scenarios that can also help Youth Workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equality and Diversity</strong>: City of Dublin Youth Service Board on how to proof policies, procedures, guidelines and materials against a diversity and equality policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Let’s Act on Inclusion</strong>: This video series presents young people and youth workers talking about inclusive youth work.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To analyse your approach to equality and inclusiveness check out this model.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusiveness Model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making sure we include the voice of young people at all levels of our youth service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policies and procedures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a written commitment to deliver an equal and inclusive service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public image</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How we present our service to the community – to young people, their parents and other community services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is about the staff and volunteers being trained and supported to deliver an inclusive youth service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme planning and delivery</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making sure our programmes are designed and delivered to consciously include diverse needs of all young people in the community.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>To consider the ‘why’ of your work, check out these sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equality-Proofing</strong>: National Economic and Social Forum paper, illustrating procedures that attempt to achieve equality objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anti-discrimination</strong>: Link to the Declaration of Principles on Equality among other useful resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your Rights</strong>: European Youth Portal on basic civil rights in various areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Rights</strong>: Youth for Human Rights provides comprehensive materials, including education videos that cover a range of human rights issues.</td>
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</table>

Access All Areas – the 5 P’s proofing model
National Youth Council of Ireland
How to use the inclusiveness model

The 5 Ps is a way of thinking about your work across the whole of your organisation taking in 5 key aspects of youth work practice. In *Access All Areas* the 5 Ps model is used to organise checklists that practitioners can use to assess and reflect on how well they are working toward inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances. On completion they can determine what actions they can take to improve their practice.

The actions can best be informed by engaging with the appropriate chapters in Access All Areas. Chapters include working with minority ethnic communities, young Travellers, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) young people, young people with a disability (physical, sensory or learning), early school leavers or young people who are NEET, young people involved in the juvenile justice system, young parents, young people with mental health issues and taking a gender-conscious youth work approach.

How an organisation meets the criteria in the checklists will involve a number of actions. These are organised in Access All Areas in themed sections. Practitioners will need to know:

- Who is the target group: look at the sections on *demographics*.
- How to refer to and speak to the target group: look at the sections on *terminology*.
- What issues the target group face: look at the *needs and issues* sections.
- What practice needs to be changed, adapted or put in place: look at *developing inclusive practice*.
- How to challenge misconceptions: some chapters have a *challenging myths* section.
- Who to network with: check out the *useful contacts* section.

Text on ‘How to use the inclusiveness model’ was provided by Anne Walsh, Intercultural and Equality Project Officer, National Youth Council of Ireland.

Relevance to Practice/NQSF

**Explanatory**
This model shows how equality and inclusiveness can be achieved. It also provides a way of describing to others how equality and inclusiveness can be achieved.

**Planning**
This model will help you to plan for young people’s equality and inclusiveness in a more explicit way.

**Evaluation**
This model can help you to assess the effectiveness of your plans to ensure young people’s equality and inclusiveness.

**Generate thinking**
This model can be used to introduce new thinking about equality and inclusiveness.

**Analysis**
This model can help you to examine the ways in which you promote young people’s equality and inclusiveness.
CORE PRINCIPLE 5: Quality and Improvement

Dedicated to the provision of quality youth work and committed to continuous improvement

To consider the ‘how’ of your work, check out these resources

In Defence of Youth Work:
Well-produced stories that help practitioners to focus in different ways on understanding the process and results of youth work.

Improving Performance:
Introduction to Logic Modelling and how to apply it to benefit practice and professional development.

Team Building:
Database of free team building activities all of which have been tried and tested.

Professional Supervision:
Youth Action and Policy Association guide to professional supervision.

To analyse your approach to quality and improvement check out this model.

Reflective Practice Model
Kolb’s Learning Cycle

Concrete Experience
(designing/having an experience)

Active Experimentation
(planning/trying out what you have learned)

Reflective Observation
(reviewing/reflecting on the experience)

Abstract Conceptualisation
(concluding/learning from the experience)

To consider the ‘why’ of your work, check out these sources

Evaluation:
Infed.org exploration of some important issues and possibilities around evaluation in informal and community education and youth work.

Evidence-informed Approach:
Sandra Nutley on seven key lessons for those seeking to improve the use of research evidence in practice settings.
How to use the reflective practice model

The learning cycle has been extensively referred to as an explanation of experiential learning, and also as a way of talking about all learning. There are also many criticisms, including the model’s over-individualistic emphasis (learning is a social as well as an individual process), and the inability to take account of the influence of context (where we are placed in an organisation, in a social system, in an historical or particular cultural context, all shape what and how we learn). Notwithstanding these significant limitations, the model has been widely used and has the benefit of being (fairly) easy to grasp. It can be used to help learners think about how feelings (reflection), thinking (abstract conceptualisation), and action (active experimentation) are all part of how we react to situations and then try to do something about them. Simple questions to ask learners are:

- What is the situation/problem/issue that you are concerned with? Can you establish any facts?
- What do you feel about this (and what are your feelings ‘telling’ you)?
- What are your thoughts about this, and where do you get your ideas and information from, and how reliable are these?
- What do you want to do about it, and why do you think it will make a difference?
- Having acted, what is the situation now, or how has it changed? Has anyone benefitted, or anything improved?

Start the cycle again with the changed situation.

For more information see the piece on Kolb on the Infed website


Relevance to Practice/NQSF

Explanatory
This model shows what it means to focus on quality and continuous improvement. It also provides a way of describing to others what it means to focus on quality and continuous improvement.

Planning
This model will help you to plan for quality and continuous improvement.

Evaluation
This model can help you to assess the effectiveness of your quality and continuous improvement measures.

Generate thinking
This model can be used to introduce new thinking about quality and continuous improvement.

Analysis
This model can help you to examine the ways in which you approach quality and continuous improvement.
Jean Anyon (1941–2013)

Link to youth work: Education and Development

The structural basis for failure in inner-city schools is political, economic and cultural, and must be changed before meaningful school improvement projects can be successfully implemented.

Key Concepts

The hidden curriculum
Everyday taken for granted processes of teaching and learning in schools can reproduce social class. For example, being quiet and following rules (though sometimes necessary!) can encourage a tendency towards subservience. In other words people meekly doing what they are told to do or think. Conversely, when schools deliberately seek to challenge disadvantage they can make a difference.

Socially useful theory
Anyon argues that theoretical understanding is not primarily derived from reference to other theories but from the dialogue between values, vision or goals and current activities. The point is to connect local activity to wider societal constraints so that people can see a way forward instead of being overwhelmed by the idea of trying to ‘change society’.

Relevance to youth work
Youth workers adopting the socially useful theory approach would try to:

- Connect personal problems to social issues.
- Analyse individual and local situations within a wider socioeconomic context.
- Develop theoretical understanding to resolve issues and problems.
- Draw from research and literature to inform practice.
- Address inequality, disadvantage and imbalance of power in society.
- Work from the fundamental values of democracy, justice and equality.

Points to consider

Anyon’s message about the hidden curriculum of social reproduction in schools (and other institutions, as schools are part of a wider set of policies and provision) was uncompromising. Though reform needs to be comprehensive (schools, housing, transport welfare, economic, etc working in tandem), she did think that education can make a positive difference when teachers and schools are committed to transformation.
Albert Bandura (b1925)

Link to youth work: Education and Development

They produce their own future, rather than simply foretell it.

Key Concepts

Social Learning Theory
There are three core concepts within Social Learning Theory:

- Behaviour is learned through modelling and imitations of behaviours observed in the wider environment.
- An individual’s thoughts about observed behaviour also influence the person’s behaviour.
- Learning does not automatically lead to changes in behaviour.

Reciprocal determinism
For Bandura there is a constant interaction between behavioural influences from both the social world and personal characteristics. Human functioning is explained through these reciprocal interactions in which an individual’s behaviour, personal factors and judgement and the environment are operating. It is because there is reciprocity that people can determine their own futures.

Self-efficacy
Is defined as the strength of an individual’s own belief in their ability to successfully perform specified tasks at designated levels, expend greater effort, and persevere in the face of adversity.

Relevance to youth work

Enhancing a young person’s powers of observation of the social world is helpful in terms of their own learning and development, as well as increasing the capacity for learning in social groups. This learning is also reciprocal with influences going both ways between people in communication.

Points to consider

Youth workers should note that Social Learning Theory has been criticised for not accounting for biological factors in behaviour. He has also been criticised for insufficient attention to social conditioning through, for example, class, race and gender.
Pierre Bourdieu  
(1930-2002)

Link to youth work:  
Rights and Participation  
Equality and Inclusiveness

As sceptical as one might be about the efficacy of the sociological message, we cannot dismiss the effect it can have by allowing sufferers to discover the possible social causes of their suffering and, thus, to be relieved of blame.

Key Concepts

Habitus
Habitus is the result of the interplay between social structures that produce social norms and free will. It is the basis for dispositions, the fundamental, deep-founded, unconscious beliefs, taken as self-evident, that steer peoples’ actions and thoughts. Though it is lasting and has a tendency to reproduce social norms, it is not permanently fixed and can change over time.

Capital
As well as economic and material assets, ‘capital’ may be social, cultural or symbolic. Cultural capital plays a vital role in establishing and maintaining the social order in people’s minds. This is achieved through ‘cultural products’ including, for example, systems of education, language, judgements, and values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life. These can all lead to an unconscious acceptance of social differences and hierarchies, to a sense of one’s place, and to exclusion and self-exclusion.

Field
Bourdieu uses the concept of ‘field’ to define the various social networks, social structures, profession or set of relationships in which people maneuver and struggle in pursuit of certain sorts of capital. A field is a system of social positions (for example, a profession such as the law) with internal power relationships. A person can be powerful in one field and not in another.

Relevance to Youth Work

Bourdieu’s theory locates the influence of ‘place’ (this is not a spatial term, e.g. geographical) in peoples’ lives. This means that a person is placed in a certain social position by cultural means so that they live and work within particular fields, and actively reproduce this placing unless they become aware of it and reject it. The significance for youth workers is the need to work with young people to become aware of their dispositions (towards other people, to education, to religion, to politics, and so on), in a way that lays this placing open to question and challenge.

Points to consider

Youth workers have historically been mandated to work with young people to develop their capacity for critical thinking, and this inevitably leads to questioning the social order. In non-formal education settings, some young people will respond to this challenge immediately whereas many will take time to come to it, and still others will not engage with the youth service for this purpose at all. There is a need to respond to the wide range of interests as well as the needs and positioning of young people.
Urie Bronfenbrenner
(1917-2005)

Link to Youth Work: Safety and Well-being

*If the children and youth of a nation are afforded opportunity to develop their capacities to the fullest, if they are given the knowledge to understand the world and the wisdom to change it, then the prospects for the future are bright.*

**Key Concepts**

**Human Development**
Bronfenbrenner emphasises the importance of social and environmental influences on a child’s development. The process of human development is shaped by the interactions between the individual and their surroundings.

**Ecological Systems Theory**
There are many different systems that influence a child’s development. This theory has recently been renamed as the Bio-ecological Systems Theory to incorporate biology as a primary factor in the child’s development.

**Structure of the Environment**
The environment consists of multiple, layered and interacting systems:

- **Micro:** The layer of structures that are directly linked to child development (school, family members).

- **Meso:** The social settings and relationships between environmental structures within the microsystem (interactions between a child’s family and school).

- **Exo:** This layer consists of factors that are not directly involved with the child’s environment but nevertheless may impact on development (e.g. influence of the parent’s employment on the child’s development).

- **Macro:** This is the outermost layer of a child’s environment and incorporates cultural values, norms and societal structures (e.g. Law).

- **Chrono:** This layer focuses on time and the timing of events and their impact on a child’s development (e.g. the impact of moving school, family loss, puberty).

**Relevance to Youth Work**
Bronfenbrenner’s theory highlights the importance of relationships in a child’s development, and how these are affected by influences at different social levels. In youth work, positive relationships can help young people develop into active citizens but this often means attempting to build on positive while countering negative influences in the various layers of the environment.

**Points to consider**
Bronfenbrenner has been criticised for not paying sufficient attention to the cognitive and biological factors in a child’s development. He has also been criticised for the lack of specificity in the stages of a child’s development.
Jerome Seymour Bruner
(b1915)

Link to Youth Work:
Education and Development
Quality and Improvement

The outcome of cognitive development is thinking. The intelligent mind creates from experience ‘generic coding systems’ that permit one to go beyond the data to new and possibly fruitful predictions.

Key Concepts

Discovery learning
Encourages learners to become active participants and be able to use their own experiences, intuition, imagination and creativity in the learning process. It is both a technique and an outcome.

Learning
There are three models of representation in which information is processed and stored, which can illustrate the individual’s learning progress:

- Enactive representation (action-based): information is stored in the form of a motor response (for example, driving a car), which can be difficult to describe to another individual.

- Iconic representation (image-based): Information is stored as an image.

- Symbolic representation (language-based): Information is stored as words or symbols.

Language is important for the ability to deal with abstract concepts (symbolic representation). It is through language that we learn, understand and think about new concepts and objects.

The process of education
The teacher should facilitate the learning process through the following elements:

- Spiral curriculum: This involves information being structured so that complex ideas can be taught at a simplified level first, and then re-visited at more complex levels later on.

- Discovery learning: This involves students constructing knowledge for themselves.

- Scaffolding: This involves the educator controlling those elements of the task that are essentially beyond the learner’s capacity, thus permitting the learner to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his or her range of competence.

Relevance to youth work
Bruner’s work puts the learner back into education, where the focus can too often be solely on the activity of the educator as an imparter of knowledge. Since language is central to learning, enhancing young peoples’ capacity to articulate their thoughts and feelings is a significant educational objective.

Points to consider
Bruner’s contribution is to help educators to think carefully about the process of education. While the emphasis on process is vital in non-formal education, if taken too far education could become devoid of content and aimless.
**John Dewey**

(1859 – 1952)

Link to Youth Work: **Education and Development**

*Education is the continual reorganization, reconstruction and transformation of experience.*

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**Key Concepts**

**Individual Experience**

Education must be concerned with the world of everyday life and individuals must be the instigators of their own experiential learning, which is a process of doing and then reflecting on what has happened.

**Reflective thinking**

Reflective thinking involves focusing on a real problem which arises out of present experiences. Suggestions for a solution come to mind, relevant data are observed, and a hypothesis (explanation for how to address the problem) is formed, acted upon, and finally tested.

**Learning (active rather than passive)**

Educational growth consists in combining the past with present experiences in order to prepare for the future. To grow, the individual must continually rethink the past in the light of new experiences. The major instrument of human learning is language.

**School and Life**

The value of knowledge can be seen in its usefulness or relevance to the concerns and interests of students in their everyday life. Students learn best when they are ready to learn.

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**Democracy**

The extent to which democracy has been attained in any society can be measured by the extent to which differing groups share similar values, goals, and interests and interact freely and fruitfully with each other.

**Relevance to youth work**

Education should be relevant to the interests and concerns of learners. Moreover, experience itself is the ‘stuff’ of education, with a focus on real problems and their resolution through a process of reflection and action.

**Points to consider**

While Dewey’s work can provide a justification for why education is at the heart of youth work practice, an over-emphasis on education can compromise the essentially informal nature of youth work if it is not approached in a balanced way. This means honouring young peoples’ desire just to be together and to have fun. It also means trusting that learning can come through relatively unstructured, as well as structured, experiences.
Paulo Freire
(1921-1997)

Link to Youth Work:
Rights and Participation
Equality and Inclusiveness

Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects that must be saved from a burning building.

Key Concepts

Dialogue
Through mutually respectful communication, existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created. Dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants.

Conscientization
This is Freire’s word for the process of becoming critically aware of social reality through reflection and action.

Praxis (Action/Reflection)
Action is fundamental because it is about changing reality. People must act together and reflect upon their environment in order to transform it through further action and critical reflection. Freire says that we all acquire social myths which have a dominant tendency, and so learning is a critical process which depends upon uncovering these myths so that people can address the underlying problems and needs.

Banking concept of knowledge
‘Banking’ is education in which ‘knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing’.

Relevance to youth work

The youth worker must relate to the young people as equals, while not losing their identity as an educator. The process is dialogical, and essentially conversational, but it goes beyond this to action in which young people are assisted to transform their social and economic situation. Young people are encouraged to reflect on the realities of their lives, and beyond this to engage in concrete actions to bring about desired change. Through reflection on these attempts at change young people learn through their successes and failures, and develop knowledge and skills that help them to become stronger and more powerful.

Points to consider

Freire’s focus is on adult education with a strong emphasis on teaching, albeit through non-formal methods and often in informal settings. This approach might not always sit easily with youth work’s more open and relaxed approach, and the emphasis on young people having fun.
Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

Link to youth work:
Rights and Participation
Equality and Inclusiveness

The social chain does not rest on a few; nothing of what happens in it is a matter of luck, nor the product of fate, but the intelligent work of the citizens.

Key Concepts

Hegemony
Hegemony is the means by which dominant groups in society secure the political and ideological consent of subordinate groups to the social order. This is done through the exercise of moral and intellectual leadership, as well as by economic means. It is not simply ‘top down’ but achieved through a constantly negotiated process which can involve struggle and the use of force.

Ideology
Ideology is a system of meanings and values that taken as a whole provides an overarching explanation for the social order. For Gramsci it is based on self-serving class interests.

‘Common sense’
The taken-for-granted notion that the social order (established through hegemonic processes) is actually the way that things are and should be; in other words the ‘natural’ order. This amounts to acceptance of the ideology of the dominant groups.

Organic intellectuals
If the working class wants to overturn the social order, it must first of all develop its own intellectuals to develop a new ideology.

Culture
For Gramsci, culture is the means by which hegemonic ideas operate through social institutions, such as education and religion, and also through the media and popular culture.

Relevance to youth work
Gramsci’s work directs attention to the everyday ways in which the social order is reproduced, which also involves processes of rejection and struggle. Young people can often be left out of decision-making processes, requiring youth work to acknowledge the inequalities that exist within cultures. This means working with young people to question the social order, so that the way that they are represented in it is not simply taken as a given. Gramsci’s work highlights the importance of non-formal education as a means to raise awareness of hegemonic forces and to people to become more questioning and critical of their own society.

Points to consider
While developing a critical attitude and recognising inequalities within societies is important for young people, youth workers need to be aware of the impact this knowledge may have on a young person. Depending on how it is handled, some young people could find such an approach too intense and ‘political’, while others might welcome the awareness that it brings.
Jürgen Habermas (b1929)

Link to youth work: Education and Development

“In a process of enlightenment there can only be participants.”

Key Concepts

Validity Claims
People use speech to influence what others think and do. When people speak to one another in everyday processes of communication they are involved, whether they are aware of this or not, in a reciprocal process (two-way) of making statements about, for example, proper conduct in social relations. In this sense, all speech is action-oriented.

Redeeming claims
When the underlying process of making claims is brought into the open, participants are required to give convincing reasons in support of claims. In a situation in which participants are seeking understanding, convincing others cannot mean coercing people into submission through threats or manipulation. Acceptance of the reasons depends on cooperative behaviour; seeking agreement about what, in the end, constitutes the better argument. However, cooperative activity does not eradicate disagreement because in giving reasons to support claims people will often fail to agree.

Ideal Speech Situation
In order to resolve disagreements people must resort to a more rigorous process of argumentation known as discourse. In discourse claims are ‘redeemed’ through a process of criticism. In other words through debate. To be most effective, some basic presuppositions or ‘rules’ in argumentation should be followed:

- Everyone is allowed to take part.
- Everyone is allowed to question any assertion.
- Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion into the discourse.
- Everyone is allowed to express his or her attitudes, aspirations, and needs.
- No-one may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising their rights as laid down above.
Knowledge
Knowledge is developed through these processes of argumentation. Therefore knowledge is socially constructed. In other words it comes about through interaction between people.

Relevance to youth work
Habermas’s work points to the importance of developing young people’s communication skills, which means emphasising the capacity to listen and empathise with each other, as well as to express oneself clearly. The idea that knowledge is created through social interaction reinforces the centrality of groupwork. Moreover, it shows that groupwork in non-formal settings can be educational. Youth workers need to create the right atmosphere and conditions for young people to participate, and the theory of communicative action places this work at the very centre of human endeavour.

Points to consider
Habermas has been criticised for not sufficiently taking power into account, even though his theory was developed as a way to counter common processes of coercion and the exercise of power in human relations. When youth workers are working in informal situations, every communication with and between young people has the potential to open up new knowledge about themselves and the world in which they live.
bell hooks (b1952)

Link to youth work: Education and Development Equality and Inclusiveness

To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin.

Key Concepts

Engaged pedagogy

- The educator needs to acknowledge their authority, and the limitations of it, but also to consider how both teacher and students can learn together, and in a way that neither uses the classroom to dominate people.

- Attempts at domination are not restricted to the teacher/student relationship. Where there is diversity, for example race and gender differences, everyone can engage in power struggles, to coerce, dominate and silence.

- Instead the classroom should be a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and students together work in partnership.

- Teachers must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students.

- Pedagogy needs to be responsive to the specific situation of each particular group of students and education can occur wherever people are.

Relevance to youth work

The commitment that hooks shows to feminism and anti-racism serves to remind youth workers of the deep seated and continuing nature of these issues. It is not simply that youth workers should express their support for particular causes or groups. Her idea of an engaged pedagogy is about the potential of education to counter prejudice and discrimination based on sex and race. She envisages a form of open and honest interaction between educators and learners; a space that consciously seeks to counter domination from whatever source. Youth workers need to behave in ways that embody these commitments, while seeking to provide experience and opportunities for young people to treat each other in respectful and caring ways.

Points to consider

Although hooks writes about Higher Education, the principles that she puts forward translate well to youth work settings. She is in favour of a holistic approach that does not split off academic learning from personal development. She also emphasises the importance of the group for learning purposes, and in particular looking at the internal workings of the group to develop participants’ awareness of social issues.
David Kolb  
(b1939)

Link to Youth Work:  
**Education and Development**  
**Quality and Improvement**

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**Key Concepts**

**Experiential Learning**  
Taking his cue from Dewey, Kolb says that experience has a key role in learning. Knowledge is generated through a process of reflection on experiences in a ‘cycle of learning’ with the following elements:

1. Concrete experience (doing/having an experience).
2. Observation of and reflection on that experience (reviewing/reflecting on the experience).
3. Formation of abstract concepts based upon the reflection (concluding/learning from the experience).
4. Testing the new concepts (planning/trying out what has been learned).

The process of reflection is divided into two learning activities: perceiving and processing.

**Learning Styles**  
Understanding an individual’s learning style enables a person to realise their own strengths and weaknesses. The four prevalent learning styles, according to Kolb, are:

- Diverging: Preference for looking at things from different perspectives.
- Assimilating: Preference for a concise, logical, thoughtful approach.
- Converging: Preference for finding solutions to practical issues.
- Accommodating: Preference for practical, experiential approach

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**Relevance to youth work**

The experiential learning cycle provides youth workers with a commonly understood way of talking about non-formal and informal learning. The framework lends itself to questions appropriate to each stage in the cycle that can be useful in terms of helping young people to analyse and capture their own learning.

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**Points to consider**

Kolb’s learning cycle has been criticised for being too individualistic with not enough account of societal influences on learning. It is also useful to remember that young people have different learning styles, and that youth work provision should cater for these different styles.
Abraham Maslow (1908–1970)

Link to Youth Work: Safety and Well-being

In practically every human being there is an active will toward health, an impulse towards growth, or towards actualisation.

Key Concepts

Human Motivation
Maslow focused on what constitutes positive mental health and happiness in people. His work is based on the idea that people are motivated to meet needs, and once a need is met, they can move on to the next unmet need.

Hierarchy of Needs
Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs that culminated in self actualisation (Maslow further developed this hierarchy to incorporate cognitive needs, aesthetic needs and transcendence needs). In reverse order the hierarchy is:

1. Biological and Physiological: air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep.
2. Safety: protection from elements, security, order, law, limits, stability, and freedom from fear.
3. Social: belongingness, affection and love, – from work group, family, friends.
4. Esteem: achievement, independence, dominance, prestige, self-respect, and respect from others.

According to Maslow, people are primed towards reaching self-actualization, but if needs on lower levels are not met this can lead to a person being stuck or fluctuating between levels.

Relevance to Youth Work

Instead of a rigid hierarchy, the needs identified by Maslow can be understood more simply as representing a range of social and other needs that a young person may have. Thinking about what is working against the satisfaction of these needs can provide a useful starting point for youth workers in thinking about how to support young people.

Points to consider

The hierarchy of needs is well known but it is argued that there is little evidence to scientifically support the stages of development. Instead, some prefer to shift the language from needs to rights to which young people are entitled.
Jack Mezirow
(b1923)

Link to Youth Work:
Quality and Improvement

A more dependable frame of reference is one that is more inclusive, differentiating, permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflective of assumptions, emotionally capable of change, and integrative of experience.

Key Concepts

Frames of reference
Frames of reference are made up of habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Frames of reference are often acquired uncritically in childhood through socialisation processes. These frames act as lenses through which people make sense of experiences. Transformation Learning is the change that occurs within a frame of reference.

Mezirow identified ten phases of perspective transformation:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
8. Provisionally trying out new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective.

Critical reflection and rational discourse
Number three in the list above is a crucial aspect of transformational learning. Critical reflection refers to a process of questioning the integrity of assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience. It is about consciously turning attention to what we think we know, feel, and believe.

Relevance to youth work
The idea of transformational learning is important for youth workers because it is not simply about acquiring a specific skill or item of knowledge. It is about learning in a much wider sense; more about a basic worldview, philosophical and ethical approach to life. Mezirow’s work emphasises the important role of the non-formal educator in helping people to critically reflect at this deeper level.

Points to consider
His work helps youth workers to understand the potentially transformational process at the heart of non-formal education. However, this will not happen by itself, which means that educators have to structure non-formal interventions in ways that can support critical reflection.
Reg Revans (1907-2003)

Link to youth work:
Quality and Improvement

Knowledge that you can do nothing with is no knowledge at all. And nothing is nothing, no matter how long you talk about it.

Key Concepts

**Action Learning**
Action learning uses a group process to help participants reflect and address societal issues. The group promotes learning from experience by creating opportunities for development and change.

**The learning ‘set’**
Participants form learning clusters to address and resolve troubling or complex issues. The contributions of other participants enable the presenter to consider the situation in more detail, or from different points of view. The process is about drawing out understanding and developing insight. Following the meeting, the intended action is carried out and the results brought back to the cluster for further analysis and the cycle begins afresh.

\[ L = P + Q \]

Learning (where responses to problems are not obvious from the start) = Previous knowledge (P) which can be applied, plus questioning insight (Q), which is needed in response to new problems.

Relevance to youth work

Revans’ ideas have particular relevance for continuing improvement and quality issues. The relevance for youth workers is about the potential power of the group to address issues and support learning. Priority is given to listening and giving each other time, and posing challenging questions in a constructive way. The main aim of the group is that people learn from the experience of attempts at change, as the group members help each other to address the self-limiting fears that undermine effective action.

Points to consider

Revans was not in favour of facilitators assisting groups, but others have questioned the ability of groups to function without facilitators. Youth workers should not simply assume that they are needed, however, and will be most effective when they carefully consider what they can offer as a facilitator and as a (learning) member of a group.
Carl Rogers (1902–1987)

Link to Youth Work: Safety and Well-being

Individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behaviour. These resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be provided.

Key Concepts

A Person-centred Approach
This Person-centred Approach emphasises the views of the young person rather than the practitioner’s values. Young people can develop through processes determined by themselves in their own time and in their own ways.

Actualising Tendency Theory
Similar to Maslow, Rogers believes that every individual strives to fulfil their own potential and inherent in humans is the individual’s own potential to realise their own abilities.

Core Conditions to facilitate learning

- Empathy: The practitioner attempts to accurately understand the young person’s positions, background and experiences.
- Congruence: The practitioner enters the relationship with the young person as a genuine person, to achieve the maximum effect and development for the young person.
- Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR): The practitioner is accepting of the young person as a whole. This enables the acceptance and trust to develop between the practitioner and young person.

Education
Enabling significant learning is dependent on environments that pose no threat to a young person, and on the nature and quality of relationship between the young person and practitioner.

Relevance to youth work
There is an emphasis on the central part of the learner in learning, which underpins youth work’s commitment to a participative approach. There is also a fundamental belief in the worth of young people, which can be contrasted to more problem-oriented approaches.

Points to consider
Although focused on the therapeutic relationship, the basic principles transfer easily to other settings. However, while Rogers emphasises the potential in each individual, this has to be counter-balanced by an understanding of the limits placed on people through social positioning.
Key Concepts

Developmental stages in groups
Tuckman originally drew attention to four sequential stages in group development: forming, storming, norming, and performing. He later added ‘adjourning’ as a fifth stage.

- **Forming**: is characterised by testing and dependence in which the group worker usually plays a dominant role and members are likely to be positive and polite to one another. As the group develops, conflict may arise between members.

- **Storming**: occurs when members vie for position, or question (overtly or covertly) the authority of the group worker.

- **Norming**: a hierarchy of group members is established, the group seeks cohesion and people find acceptable ways of relating to one another. The group can lapse back into the storming stage from time to time.

- **Performing**: where efforts are actively directed towards achieving the group’s goals and tasks are distributed accordingly. As the group completes its work or comes to the end of its natural life.

- **Adjourning**: in which progress is reviewed and new directions sought.

Relevance to youth work
At each stage of development there are particular tasks for the youth worker:

**Forming**
- Facilitate introductions
- Clarify purposes and expectations
- Negotiate the contract
- Discuss and decide on the programme
- Clarify the worker’s role
- Foster the group culture

**Storming**
- Resolve issues about control and power
- Deal with dominant individuals
- Resolve dependency – autonomy
- Encourage positive achievements
- Be realistic and concrete about goals

**Performing**
- Intervene less frequently
- Assist in resolving conflicts
- Keep group focussed
- Clarify emerging understandings
- Summarise progress

**Norming**
- Encourage participatory decision-making
- Assist sub-goals and tasks
- Review progress
- Provide positive feedback and support
- Legitimise expression of feelings
- Foster relationships
- Encourage individual responsibility

**Adjourning**
- Evaluate and review

Points to consider
The framework is also a reminder that groupwork is a developmental and progressive activity. Every group need not go through the stages sequentially. It is helpful to know that storming is normal, which means that youth workers should have some confidence that the group will come right eventually, always providing that it is being lead in an appropriate manner.
Key Concepts

Social Development Theory
Social interaction is central to the development of an individual’s cognitive abilities. Community plays an influential role in this process by ‘making meaning’ for the individual. Cognitive development occurs initially on a social level, between people, and then on an individual level. Social learning, according to Vygotsky, is considered to precede the development of an individual’s cognitive abilities.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)
The ZPD is the area between the existing ability and skills of an individual and the potential development of an individual with assistance and interaction. The ZPD is continuously evolving as an individual develops and learns new skills and abilities.

The role of Language
Language is the main method in which information and learning is shared between individuals.

Relevance to Youth Work
Youth workers need to be aware of and sensitive to the social and cultural influences that affect an individual’s learning and development. This is not simply a question of acceptance, since some contexts are oppressive. Workers need to be able to enhance young peoples’ abilities to become critical (not to be equated with negative or dismissive) in relation to their own social and cultural context.

Points to consider
There is a need to be aware of the risks in developing critical thinking. If not handled appropriately this could risk alienating young people who are committed to and proud of a particular tradition and communities.
Links to theoretical resources

Jean Anyon

Albert Bandura
- http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/self_efficacy.htm
- http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/crimtheory/bandura.htm

Pierre Bourdieu
- http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/bourdieu-and-habitus

Urie Bronfenbrenner
- http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Urie_Bronfenbrenner

Jerome Bruner
- http://www.instructionaldesign.org/theories/constructivist.html
- http://www.theoryfundamentals.com/bruner.htm

John Dewey

Paulo Freire
- http://www.freire.org

Antonio Gramsci
- http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-gram.html#role

Jürgen Habermas
- http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas

bell hooks
- http://infed.org/mobi/bell-hooks-on-education

David Kolb
- http://infed.org/mobi/david-a-kolb-on-experiential-learning

Abraham Maslow
- http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html
- http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/hierarchyneeds.htm

Jack Mezirow
- http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/critical1.htm

Reg Revans

Carl Rogers

Bruce Tuckman

Lev Vygotsky
- http://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html
- http://psychology.about.com/od/index/g/zone-proximal.htm