

DEFINING YOUTH WORK



GLOBAL DEFINITIONS

PREPARED BY

COMMONWEALTH
ALLIANCE OF YOUTH
WORKERS' ASSOCIATIONS

2022



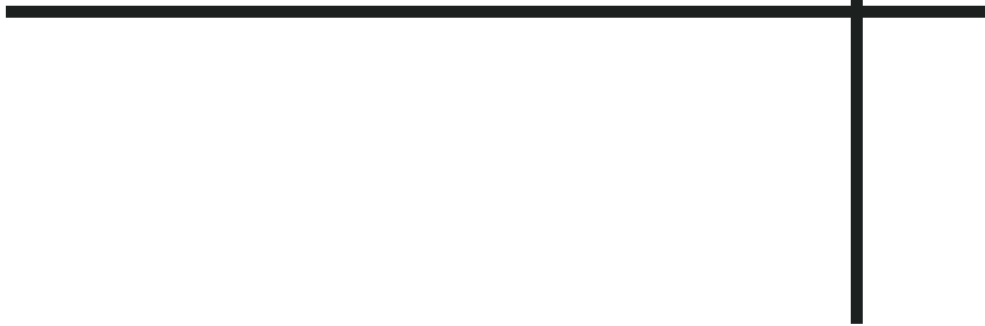
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'Defining Youth Work: Global Definitions' - 3rd edition

Prepared and published by:

Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Workers' Associations (CAYWA)
Melbourne, Australia

<https://www.caywa.global/>





The Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Workers' Associations (CAYWA) brings together national and regional organisations and is the official voice of youth work professionals in the 52 member countries of the Commonwealth.

Our mission is to raise the standard and status of youth work by connecting, strengthening and championing the professionalisation of youth work across the Commonwealth and beyond.

Youth Work is defined by the Commonwealth Secretariat as:

'All forms of rights-based youth engagement approaches that build personal awareness and support the social, political and economic empowerment of young people, delivered through non-formal learning within a matrix of care.'

(The Commonwealth 2020)

FOREWORD

When we set out to write this document we want it to be a living document. So as Youth Work continues to grow around the Commonwealth and around the globe so will this document. Our simple play on words evidences just how much we have in common as the larger the word the more common it is in the range of definitions. It is evident that Youth Work aims to build the capacity of young people to be global citizens but more importantly it is an educational/learning pedagogy.

Commonwealth Education Ministers agree. At the twentieth meeting of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Nadi, Fiji in 2018, the final communique of outcomes stated:

“Concerted efforts are required to impart global citizenship by inculcating universal and humanistic values through peace education, creating better understanding of social rights and responsibilities, and respecting cultural and religious diversity through formal and informal education and training. Ministers acknowledged the contribution of non-formal and informal learning in building the resilience of young people and the role of youth and community workers in delivering non-formal and informal education.”

I also want to highlight the social and political context of Youth Work. Young people often do not have a voice in their communities and certainly not in their countries. So there remains a political imperative in Youth Work that aims to give back that voice. That often means the shifting of power from the powerful.

This document aims to make a small contribution to those struggles, by providing evidence of how many countries recognise Youth Work to assist others in that fight for recognition. A national definition is but a first step but a very important one.

Emeritus Professor Robyn Broadbent

Chair of the Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Work Associations



Australia

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

(AYAC 2013)

Belgium (Flemish Community)

'Non-commercial, voluntary socio-cultural work organised in the leisure sphere for or by young people between the age of three and thirty years old and under educational guidance. It promotes the advancement of the full development of young people'

(European Commission 2020a)

Canada

'Child and youth care workers specialise in the development and implementation of therapeutic programs and planned environments, and the utilisation of daily life events to facilitate change. At the core of all effective child and youth care practice is a focus on the therapeutics relationship; the application of theory and research about human growth and development to promote the optimal physical, psycho-social, spiritual, cognitive and emotional development of young people towards a healthy and productive adulthood; and a focus on strength and assets rather than pathology.'

(CCCYCA 2020)



Council of Europe

'Youth work is a broad term covering a wide variety of activities of a social, cultural, educational, environmental and/or political nature by, with and for young people, in groups or individually. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes focused on young people and on voluntary participation. Youth work is quintessentially a social practice, working with young people and the societies in which they live, facilitating young people's active participation and inclusion in their communities and in decision making.'

(Council of Europe 2020)

England

'Youth work focuses on personal and social development – the skills and attributes of young people – rather than to 'fix a problem'. It is an educational process that engages with young people in a curriculum that deepens a young person's understanding of themselves, their community and the world in which they live and supports them to proactively bring about positive changes.'

(National Youth Agency 2020)

Estonia

'Youth work is a creation of conditions for promoting the diverse development of young people which enables them to be active outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education system, and work on the basis of their free will.'

(Republic of Estonia 2017)

Finland

'Youth work means the promotion of active citizenship in young people's leisure time, their empowerment, support to young people's growth and independence, and interaction between generations.'

(Finland Ministry of Education 2006)





Greece

‘Education and welfare services to support young people’s safe and healthy transition to adult life, as well as leisure time activities which aim to contribute to the personal development of young people and enhance their active political participation and social inclusion.’

(Petkovic & Howard 2015)

India

‘To build future looking, wholesome adolescents and youth leaders through psycho-social interventions leading to economic, political and social inclusion. We believe that social change is effected through deep mind-set change of individuals and along with the empowerment of the socially excluded, it is imperative to hugely shift the attitudes of individuals in powerful decision-making positions in order to change the social structures that marginalise communities.’

(Pravah 2020)

Ireland

‘A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young people through their voluntary involvement, and which is complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training and provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.’

(National Youth Council of Ireland 2020)



Jamaica

'Youth are an important part of Jamaica's history and future but often remain an untapped resource. This makes youth work practice a very important part of enabling an environment that will ensure youth become recognised and supported as the valuable human capital that they are. We promote youth work, as well as are involved in innovating the practice to achieve positive youth outcomes.'

(JPYWA n.d.)

Kenya

'The Policy defines youth work as all forms of youth engagement that build personal awareness and support the social, political and socioeconomic empowerment of youth. This Policy holds that youth work involves skills and competency development among the youth while enhancing their self-esteem, social connectedness, economic productivity, emotional and intellectual maturity and autonomy as well as supporting their self-empowerment within caring and supportive environment.'

(Republic of Kenya 2019, pp.15)

Malta

'Youth work in Malta is a non-formal learning activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people. Youth workers engage with young people within their communities, including the voluntary sector, and support them in realising their potential and address life's challenges critically and creatively to bring about social change. Youth work takes into account all strands of diversity and focuses on all young people between 13 and 30.'

(Teuma and Zammit 2019)

Malaysia

'Educational in nature (developmental) and not therapeutic (remedial), involves constructive interventions with young people in non-formal and informal settings. Primarily concern is personal and social education. Characterised by the voluntary engagement of young people.'

Most effective when:

Planned and delivered with clear objectives

Informed through continuous monitoring, evaluation and critical reflection on the processes and practices employed.'

(Abdullah n.d.)

New Zealand (Aoteroa)

'Youth work is the development of a relationship between a youth worker and a young person through: connecting with young people; where: young people are empowered, including the choice to engage for as long as agreed; and that: supports their holistic, positive development as rangatahi that contribute to themselves, their whanau, community and world.'

(AraTaiohi 2020)

Nigeria

'Youth work is defined in Nigeria as youth engagement practice and methods that provide for the empowerment of its young men and women between ages 15 and 29. Putting their participation at the centre of National development efforts to meet their needs and aspirations; and to seek solutions to their problems irrespective of their ethnic, religious, and socio-economic background through non-formal learning delivered within international best practices.'

(Nigerian Youth Work Association 2020)

Norway

'Youth work is informed by the needs of young people and their participation, and through spaces where they engage with competent and caring adults.'

(Kramer 2020, pp. 3)

Romania

'Concepts in youth work are: participation, especially political and civic participation, leisure activities such as summer/winter schools, and counselling for young people on different issues concerning education, jobs, travelling, associations, information, training and voluntary work.'

(Youth Partnership 2020)

Scotland

'Effective youth work helps young people to learn about themselves, others and society through non-formal educational activities which involve enjoyment, challenge and learning.'

(Youth Scotland 2020)

Serbia

'Youth work is planned educational curriculum, created with the purpose of providing support to young people in the process of independence, by helping youth in personal and social development to become active members of the society and participants in the decision-making process. The idea of youth work is to create a safe environment and opportunities for active participation of young people on a voluntary basis in the process of acquiring skills, competencies and knowledge.'

(Youth Partnership 2018)

Singapore

'A person who works with young people to help them become socially, morally, emotionally, physically, and cognitively competent, through the provision of developmental, preventive and/or remedial services.' It also recognised that there is no fixed job definition or role for the youth worker, varying with each individual youth organisation.'

(Tan 2009, pp.89)

South Africa

'Youth work is primarily focused on challenging the view that young people are an impediment to national progress. Youth Work is a field of practice that focuses on the holistic development of a young person.'

(National Youth Policy 2020)

Spain

'Youth work is to strengthen the participation and integration of young people in different spheres of society as citizens with full rights.'

(Youth Partnership 2020)

Sri Lanka

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

(Professional Youth Work Association 2018)

Sweden

'Youth work in Sweden takes an inclusive position, aiming for to reach all young people, from a positive standing point where they are seen as carriers of resources and possibilities.'

(European Commission 2020b)

Wales

'The aim of youth work is to enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential.'

(National Occupational Standards 2014)

Zambia

'Youth work is a profession committed to serve young people in their struggle for agency in their own lives and inclusion in the common wealth of their society. We are engaged with the environments in which they live, walking alongside them in their journey towards full citizenship and participation, working towards clearing the barriers that they face, and advocating for social change where this is needed.'

(Zambia Youth Workers Association 2013)

Zimbabwe

'Full participation of young people in sustainable development through advocacy and capacity building of youth and youth organisations in Zimbabwe.'

(Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust 2020)

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