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Is Youth Work an endangered profession in England?

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‘Is youth work still needed?’ (France and Wiles, 1997)

- 1997 was the first year of New Labour government (Blair);
- France and Wiles wrote ‘Dangerous Futures: Social Exclusion and Youth Work in Late Modernity’;
- They concluded that changes in late modern society necessitated new approaches to youth work in England’s statutory sector;
- They proposed work tailored to ‘market segments’ – but has this happened? Does it remain an idea worth consideration? What might it look like?
Existing approaches

- Detached youth work;
- Youth workers in school settings: supplementary and complementary provision, pupil referral units and alternative education schemes;
- Youth workers in college settings: supporting specific groups of yp, working with elected student representatives in student unions, providing pastoral support.
New Approaches

- National Citizenship Service (originally proposed 2011 and a statutory service since 2016);
- Setting focussed work (health / hospital settings, housing, drugs agencies etc.)
Potential areas for development

- Intergenerational work (see Tony Jeffs’s recent writings);
- Drama, art and music (damage to school curriculum done by e-bacc and focus on ‘academic’ subjects);
- Entrepreneurial initiatives;
- Work with the ‘digital generation’ of young people where they’re present (particularly YouTube).
Conclusion: Is youth work still needed – or not?

- Austerity combined with / resulting from governmental ideological opposition to public sector means scant ££ and nobody knows what impact Brexit will have;
- Young people still need access to professionals who aren’t their parents / carers or teachers;
- Youth workers need to consider how they’re using their skills, values and knowledge: do young people engage of their own volition? Does the work have an educational foundation?
- There are exciting new directions from specialist settings to YouTube that youth work might take in England.
References

See notes box below