

CHAPTER 8: YOUTH WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

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A survey of the literature on youth work in South Africa. It focuses on practice amongst young people between 15 and 35 in order to align with the National Youth Commission (2004) (Presidency of South Africa, 2009) and the Department of Social Development (2008) 'State of Youth Work in South Africa' draft policy on youth work compiled by the Youth Work Association (SAYWA) in 2001.

The primary focus on youth work in South Africa includes pertinent examples regarding youth work in other countries such as Brazil and South Africa. We chose these countries both for the range of comparison it provides and to compare the state and status of youth work in South Africa with other BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China) since South Africa is a new addition to the emerging market countries. However, very little information is available on these countries.

The report is divided into four sections. First, attention is given to the conceptualisation and definition of both 'youth work' and 'youth worker'. We do so since these definitions are fundamental to understanding youth work as a discipline and to establish how the field of youth work relates to allied disciplines. We also show the distribution of youth work in South Africa by province and gender, and discuss the strengths and challenges of youth work in South Africa.

A critical view of the current training available for youth workers in South Africa, along with the status of such workers, answers the questions on who is being trained, where youth work training is occurring, and how qualification/accreditation of youth workers are occurring, and remuneration in relation to this. We compare youth work to similar qualifications such as those for social workers, Health and Social Work.

Third, we offer a summary of the debates concerning the professionalisation of youth work. We especially consider the role of higher education institutions in professionalising youth work and highlight the requirements for standardisation of both youth work and accreditation policies.

Finally, we conclude by summarising the benefits of youth work to youth development, and offer a number of recommendations with regards to the state and status of youth work in South Africa, if youth work is to effectively support the goals of the National Youth Policy (Office of the Presidency, 2009).

CONCEPTUALISING YOUTH WORK

This section defines 'youth work' and 'youth worker' as these are important in understanding youth work as a discipline and in articulating the relation of youth work to other professional disciplines such as social work and community development. The distribution of youth workers will also be presented along with challenges associated with the profession.

Defining 'youth work'

In its youth work policy, SAYWA (2001, p. 9-10) defines youth work as follows:

Youth work is the professional practice that focuses on the holistic development of the adolescent and young person. Youth work offers learning opportunities that support and promote the personal, social and economic development of young people. Central to that is the quality of the youth worker's relationship with young people and the consequent influence on their learning and development. Learning can occur in planned and focused programmes, or it may be spontaneous, through informal encounters with individuals or with groups.

SAYWA is careful to note the multi-faceted nature of youth work as well as its relational aspects – between youth themselves and the youth workers they encounter. According to SAYWA, youth workers play a significant and complimentary role to teachers, corrective services' personnel as well as health personnel such as psychologists and social workers. Youth

work is seen as a demanding yet fulfilling professional skill that needs to be developed through training of youth workers and professionalisation of the practice of youth work in order to provide responsive and effective youth programmes.

The Department of Social Development (2008, p. 7) similarly defines youth work as 'a professional practice that focuses on the holistic development of the adolescent and young person'. The National Youth Commission (a precursor to the National Youth Development Agency) also refers to this 'holistic development of young people' and continues to describe youth work and public policy on youth work as acting 'synergistically in order to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and values they require to make appropriate choices throughout their lives' (cited in Molebatsi and Lesoana, 2009, p. 6). Youth work is therefore concerned with developing young people's personal, social and economic livelihoods and 'offers opportunities for young people to acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of the personal and social skills necessary for them to relate effectively with others, and to participate fully in the life of their own community and beyond' (SAYWA, 2001, p. 10).

According to Stats SA 2010, p. 42, 'slightly more than a quarter of all youth in South Africa live in households where not a single member of the household is working'. As youth work's main concern is the 'holistic development' of young people, including their economic development, youth work has the potential to offer young people in these households a chance to contribute to the economics of the country, and change their personal trajectories.

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Britain, youth work is promoted under the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP). The CYP views young people as key partners in development and recognises that young people's skills are essential for the future of the Commonwealth. The CYP therefore aims to create opportunities for young people to be active participants in the development of their communities. This is a change in some of the original emphases of youth work, as described by Furlong et al (1997, p. 3) who writes that organisations such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Britain in its early years focused on 'correcting young people who had perceived deficiencies rather than encouraging them to make informed choices about their lives'. In contrast, the contemporary definitions of youth work described above aim at an asset-based definition rather than a deficit definition.

Defining 'youth worker'

The current definition of youth worker still needs to be well conceptualised in order to fully incorporate this broader view of the profession. DSD (2008, p. 8) defines a 'youth worker'

as 'any person who is involved in work that primarily aims at addressing the needs of the youth and society that seeks active participation, liberation and empowerment of young people'. SAYWA (2001, p. 1) in turn defines youth workers as 'practitioners and volunteers who work either at the cutting edge of society with young people... [or are] managers of youth-based organisations'. Youth workers play a number of roles including trainer, educator, councillor, social worker, and community development worker amongst others – for which they ought to receive professional training. Consequently, youth workers play a critical role in the lives of young people in each of these roles. SAYWA (2001, p. 1) makes it clear that youth work is both a practice and a profession. Youth workers are therefore practitioners and professionals.

STATUS OF YOUTH WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The World Youth Report (United Nations, 2007) noted that even though youth (under 35) constitute over 40% of the population, they still experience continued limited access to opportunities for self-development. In 2001, SAYWA commissioned a research study on the status of youth work in South Africa. According to this study, youth work was found to be vaguely defined and lacking direction, resulting in government's lack of interest and overall lack of progress within the project of professionalisation (SAYWA, 2001, p. 15). A need for capacity development is also one of the challenges that youth work currently faces. Currently, there is limited training and resources available to youth workers. Many practice their profession without formal training and even fewer have access to tertiary education (SAYWA, 2008, p. 16).

SAYWA's study also found that financial resources for youth work were severely lacking. Not only were there limited finances available for youth worker salaries, but even less for meeting places for youth activities and transportation. As a result, it was frequently found that what little money was available was used on youth workers themselves rather than on youth development activities.

Furthermore, a lack of government involvement in the youth sector was also found to be damaging the sector. Many respondents felt that while government is one of the key stakeholders in the youth work sector, no formal links exist between government and the NGOs dealing with youth. This has the effect of limiting resource sharing, capacity development and collaboration.

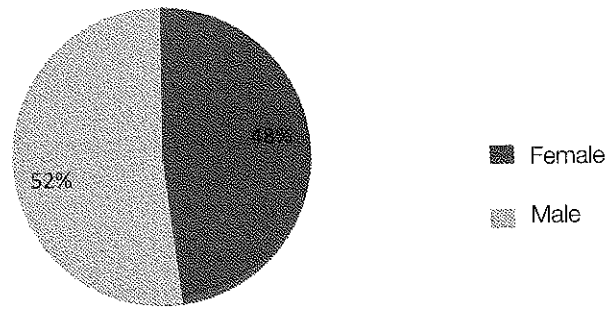
In 2008 the Department of Social Development's Youth Directorate (DSD, 2008) conducted a study on the status of the youth profession in South Africa. It obtained the views of 960 youth workers out of a database of about 5,000 child

workers from the National Association of Child workers. Figures 1 to 5 give an indication of and distribution of youth workers in South findings of the survey.

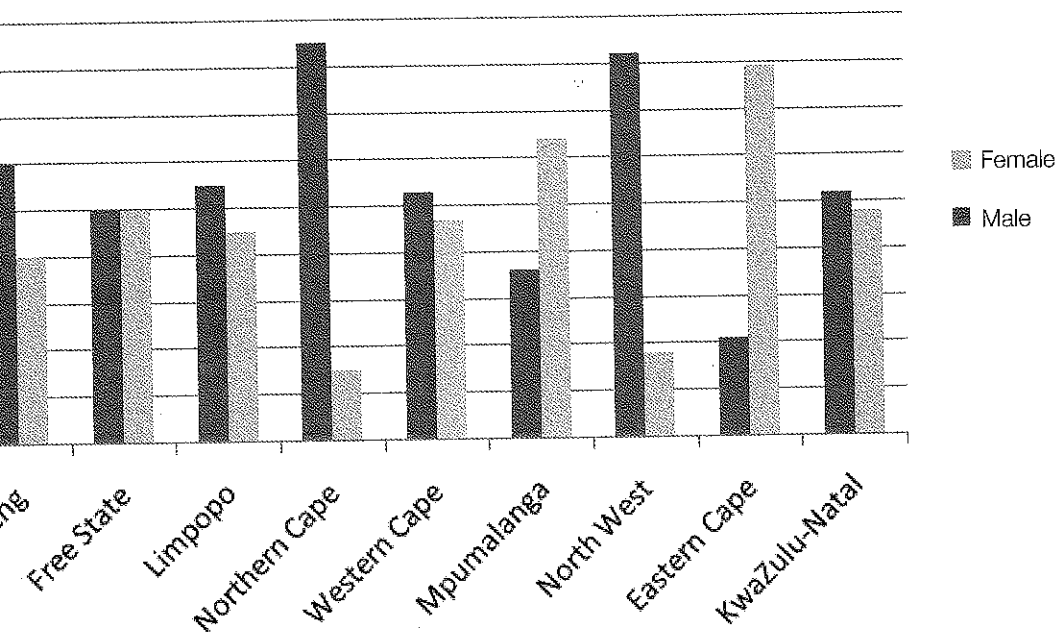
There is a nearly-even spread of both male workers throughout the country. Fifty-two workers are male and 48% are female. This is very similar for five out of nine provinces the Northern Cape and North West there are more male youth workers than female youth workers. In Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape more female youth workers were reported according to the survey.

Distribution of youth workers in South Africa by gender

Figure 1: Gender breakdown of youth workers in South Africa

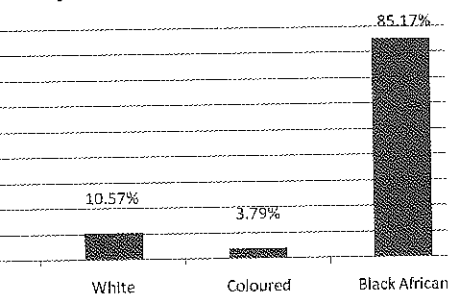


Source: The State of youth work in South Africa (DSD, 2008)



Source: The State of youth work in South Africa (DSD, 2008)

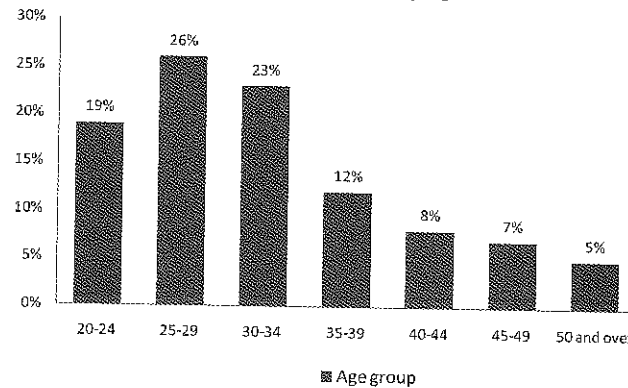
Distribution of youth workers by race



Source: The State of youth work in South Africa (DSD, 2008)

With regards to race (Figure 3), overall 85.17% (by far the largest proportion) of youth workers who participated in the survey were Black Africans. This was followed by Whites 11%, Coloureds 4% and Indians (under 1%). These results generally follow the demographics of South Africa's population. However, it may also be argued that the high number of Black African youth workers indicate Black Africans' enthusiasm to engage in youth development initiatives since they have been the population group most marginalised in the past and most in need of youth development.

Figure 4: Distribution of youth workers by age.

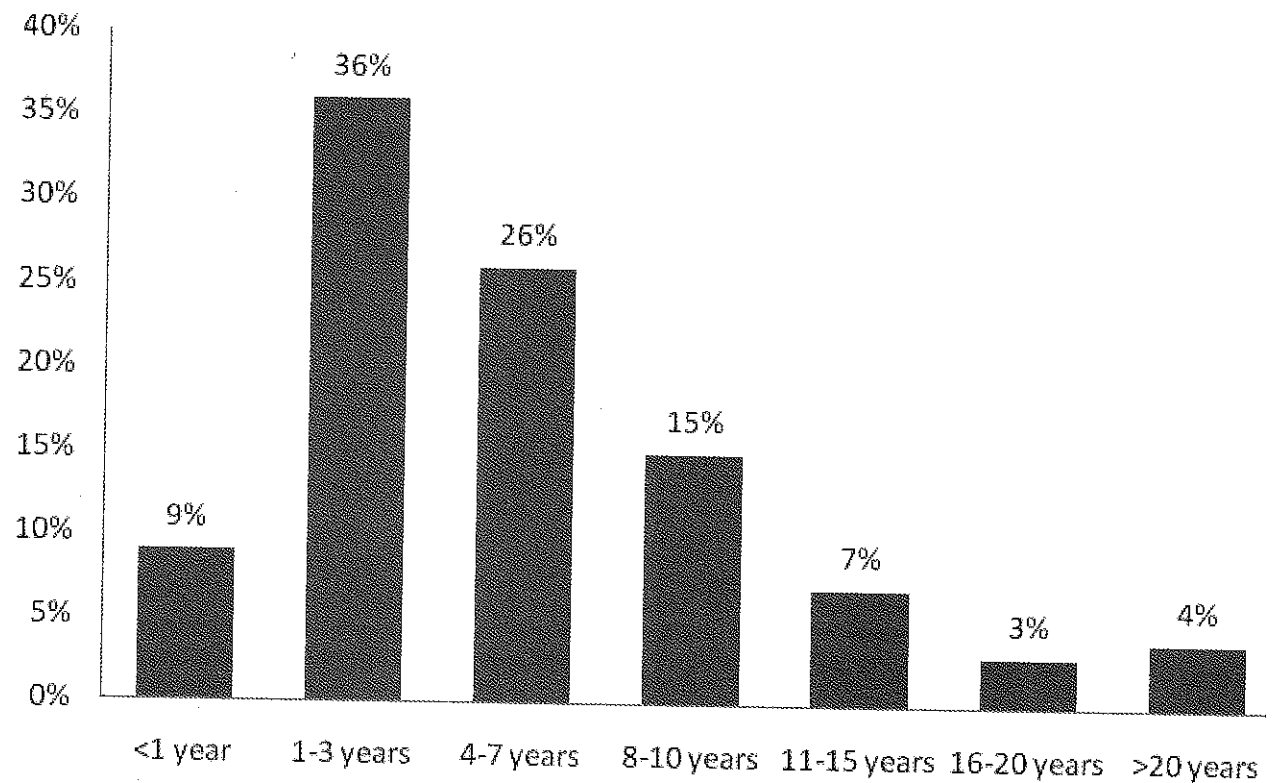


Source: The State of youth work in South Africa (DSD, 2008)

Findings from the DSD (2008) survey furthermore found that the age distribution of youth workers throughout the provinces is similar (Figure 4). Most range between ages 20 to 34 (68%). Less than 5% of youth workers in South Africa are over age 50.

With regards to employment the survey found that nearly

Figure 5: Experience in youth work



Source: The State of youth work in South Africa (DSD, 2008)

50% of respondents were in full-time employment, with 11% employed on a part-time basis. The remaining 39% were either unemployed, doing voluntary youth work or engaged in tertiary education while doing youth work. Of those who were employed, 45% were employed as youth workers (DSD, 2008, p. 32).

With regard to levels of experience (Figure 5), survey results found that the highest proportion of youth workers (36%) had between one and three years of experience. Twenty-six percent had between four and seven years of experience and 9% had less than one year of experience. In addition, 4% of youth workers had more than 20 years of experience. This was highest in the Western Cape and Gauteng province (10% and 8% respectively).

Problems and challenges facing youth workers

SAYWA (2001) highlights three main challenges for the profession and practice of youth work, viz. lack of employment opportunities, lack of support and collaboration, and poor training and qualifications opportunities. Each will be considered in turn.

f youth workers has proved to be a youth workers are based in voluntary s and churches. These are notoriously nts and as a result youth work as a s precarious with little job stability or es. SAYWA (2001, p. 26) argues that ial to expand the number of settings in s may be based. The offer the following as in which youth workers may be based:

- rammes
- thorities
- thorities and youth employing bodies
- ntres
- ntres
- ce centres and clinics
- obbying agencies
- ctor
- grammes such as HIV/AIDS prevention

placement areas are especially important o become recognised as a professional

ort and low priority given to youth work is e facing youth workers. There is little or no ween government and youth workers in youth policy and youth development. This o a misunderstanding of youth and youth holders. Youth workers (and youth work o struggle to obtain consistent funding for s. In addition, when donors are sourced, ave to frequently be tailored to the needs of han young people's contextual development recognition of youth work is also among a lack of support. As a result many youth untarily and have no formal qualifications or WA, 2008, p. 18). This leads to high turnover orkers which in turn affects the sustainability

of capacity is evident in the gap between nd trained professionals. SAYWA (2001, p. this 'creates a fear and inferiority complex orkers as trained professionals approach n a theoretical perspective'. This challenge ising primarily through the provision of high nd the standardisation of qualifications.

YOUTH WORK TRAINING

we offer an overview of the current training outh workers in South Africa. We discuss

the nature of this training as well as where youth work training occurs. The section also covers the recognition and accreditation of the qualifications offered in training institutions and how reward and remuneration compares to allied qualifications in South Africa.

Where youth work training occurs

Youth work training in South Africa began in the 1980s and has been conducted mainly by the Huguenot College in Wellington. At the time, the Huguenot College primarily trained social workers and community development workers. At a later stage, other institutions offered youth work courses including the University of South Africa (UNISA), University of Venda and the University of Port Elisabeth. UNISA offered a stand-alone programme called the National Diploma in Child and Youth Development from 1999-2010. The course was benchmarked against international universities in Australia that had been involved in the development of study materials. The course has since been phased out (in 2010), due to a low uptake of students and limited enrolments. Only 40 students were registered for the course over a seven-year period (1999 to 2006). This is considered a poor indicator of performance by university standards (DSD, 2008, p. 24). Similarly, UNISA is phasing out its BTech degree in Child and Youth Care. Youth work training in other institutions forms part of a core subject, most notably practical theology at the University of Stellenbosch and Pretoria, which then offers youth work as a series of modules.

It is evident that a lot of work still needs to be done in marketing the training and accreditation of youth work as a desirable qualification and course with an appealing curriculum. As with many tertiary programmes, people's fears of a lack of exit/ placement opportunities are likely to be among the reasons for this low rate of enrolment.

Table 1 shows the student enrolment for the stand-alone youth work course, initiated at Huguenot College in 1981 and then moving to Stellenbosch University in 2008 where it now forms part of the theological programme.

A noteworthy observation from this data shows that there was a high rate of enrolment in the years 1998 and 1999 respectively, with a total of 100 and 107 students enrolled in each year. In more recent years this enrolment has nearly halved in number, especially in 2006 to 2008. While there is no ready indication of the reasons for this drop, it is possible that the challenges mentioned above, especially the lack of placement opportunities and funding affected enrolment. UNISA reports similar declines in enrolments for their BTech and also report on a high dropout rate in this course (DSD, 2008, p. 24).

Table 1: Student enrolment 1997 to 2008: Huguenot College and Stellenbosch University

Year	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	Honours	Masters	Doctoral	TOTAL
1997	19	19	13	6	0	0	57
1998	26	24	20	3	27	0	100
1999	28	19	21	6	33	0	107
2000	22	16	17	5	21	0	81
2001	29	11	17	5	6	0	68
2002	27	24	10	3	13	2	79
2003	25	19	26	1	14	3	88
2004	18	24	20	7	14	4	87
2005	15	19	19	3	10	3	69
2006	9	8	17	5	5	2	46
2007	10	8	8	2	9	4	41
2008	8	10	10	5	8	0	41

Source: The State of youth work in South Africa (DSD, 2008)

The nature of training

In order to fully engage in the profession, a youth worker needs to engage in programmes that respond to the needs of youth. With the exception of Stellenbosch University, universities across the country have offered programmes that include youth work as a module under a specific main subject. These courses take the form of either Practical Theology 'youth work' modules or Community Development with 'youth work' modules. Undergraduate and graduate degrees, diplomas and certificate programmes have all been available to those interested in a career in youth work from a number of South African universities. There have also been partnerships with international universities especially at the Masters level. Of note (Table 1) is the fact that 18 people currently have doctorates in youth work in South Africa. This is an opportunity for the growth of the youth work profession.

Recognition/accreditation of qualifications

Despite training being offered for youth workers at many South African universities, employment opportunities for youth workers is still an issue, as many struggle to secure employment after training. Youth work is not implicitly recognised as a profession on its own, when compared to other developmental disciplines such as Community Development and Social Work. As a result it is often difficult for youth work graduates to obtain stable employment outside of NGOs and religious institutions (DSD, 2008, p. 9).

Even though youth work is ranked by government as the 5th most important form of work in South Africa (DSD, 2008, p. 10), little substantial effort has been done to create relevant opportunities for youth work. Even when youth workers get

opportunities, the work is frequently unrelated to their youth work qualification.

Higher education institutions play an important role in the standardisation and professionalisation of youth work as they are responsible for the accreditation, standards and curriculum required. DSD (2009) has argued that the professionalisation of youth work would improve the practice in the long run. In the South African context of a developmental state, this is especially important so that youth workers can start at the same level of competency and aim for similar outcomes in their youth work – aligned to government priorities. It follows therefore that youth work ought to be recognised and remunerated in the same way as other developmental disciplines since the development of youth is essential to a country such as South Africa, newly emerging from oppression and deep inequality. It is not possible for this to happen without the professionalisation of youth work, around which a number of debates exist.

DEBATES AROUND YOUTH WORK PROFESSIONALISATION

This section offers a summary of the debates concerning the professionalisation of youth work by especially considering the role of higher education institutions in professionalising youth work and highlighting the requirements of standardisation of both youth work and accreditation policies.

The dilemmas of professionalisation

To date, youth work has not been recognised as a professional practice as no qualifications (or registration with a professional body) are required in order for one to enter into the youth work profession. This has resulted in many youth workers

asis on the need for experience in youth value in their credentials as these form little < practice (SAYWA, 2001, p. 32).

ombe (1997) one of the challenges to the of youth work is the fear of some youth will be disqualified from the profession and s they have no formal education. As youth elves as agents of change, there is a fear g the discipline may come with stringent reditation which some may be unable et. Some youth workers fear that with there may be barriers in securing a new sionalisation may bring about standards of eliminate existing styles of practice which 'orthodox' (Sercombe, 2004, p. 22).

n (1994, cited in Sercombe, 2004, p. 22) of a discipline may bring about ambiguity alisation is an ethical commitment limited more, Koehn argues that professional d by 'a certain kind of relationship'. might change the current nature of youth onships upon which it depends. On the e (2004, p. 21), argues that institutions have increasingly become cautious of orkers without professional recognition. 1) argues that 'youth work should not be efore, youth workers must be trained as can develop appropriate, responsive and rammes for and with young people'.

Education institutions in

n institutions are considered the main e professionalisation of youth work as l and informal training of youth workers. 38) argues that students and educators group of stakeholders who impact on n development practice. In the South mechanisms for taking the process of d professionalisation forward would need onal institutions as they play a critical role and nurturing of professionals. With the er education institutions, which would be evant curricula, standardising a youth work ation would be relatively easy to achieve. ducation institutions could also be tasked oing professional development for youth et al (2004) and others have documented essional development in improving youth

Standardisation

ork to be professionalised there is a need

for a code of conduct which will be used to guide behaviour much like teachers, doctors, lawyers and social workers have. In addition, a requirement of standardisation requires that a body of knowledge needs to be developed in order to ensure that graduates are able to use similar analytical techniques, apply problem-solving skills and recognise and aim for best practice. The National Qualification Framework (NQF) asserts that the course has to be on level seven and above to qualify as a profession rather than a qualification (DSD, 2008, p. 15). This is the equivalent of a Bachelors or Bachelors honours qualification. Research is also necessary to keep the profession alive and this is the role of higher education institutions and research institutions (DSD, 2008, p. 15).

SAYWA (2001, p. 32) argues that youth work requires:

- A specialised body of knowledge and skills
- A specialist literature
- Intensive training and educational qualification at degree level
- Adhere to a professional code of conduct
- A legal or regulated admission to the practice
- A mechanism to investigate and sanction misconduct
- Continual renewal and educational upgrading
- A professional association to unify the field and protect consumers
- The provision of career paths and opportunities for advancement within the discipline
- Minimum working conditions for practitioners by employers.
- Conditions for registered practitioner placement
- Guaranteed rights to organise and for collective bargaining.

Both locally and internationally, the professionalisation of youth work has proved to be a major challenge, especially in setting standards for training in youth work. An applied career preparation programme that develops youth and human service professionals is important for the professionalisation of youth work. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (cited in DSD, 2008, p. 12) maintains that professionalisation is achieved in stages. Before a profession can be recognised it has to meet certain standards. These stages entail:

1. Education as the basis of training
2. The need to have experience in the profession
3. Assessment of competence
4. Registration
5. Admission to the practice
6. Licensing and awarding of professional designation.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (DSD, 2008, p. 15) lists four advantages to professionalising youth work: (1) It strengthens the capacity of young people and their networks, governments, and civil society partners to develop and deliver value-added youth development services and empowerment; (2) it strengthen stakeholders ability to utilise the evidence-based approach to youth policy development implementation; (3) It assists to create a framework for youth workers to operate professionally in various sectors of society, that in turn results in better standards for youth work as a result of increased access to education and training; and (4) It provides opportunities for partnerships to be created between key agencies and training organisations, that have a positive impact on youth development.

Furthermore, professionalising youth work will be of advantage since it will serve to improve the credibility of youth work practice because it has to adhere to standards, codes of conduct and recognised theories of change. Professionalisation will also improve the practice of youth work in the long term through the introduction of compulsory training, by enhancing public confidence in services rendered, and by ensuring fair conditions of service for youth workers.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the literature reviewed in this report, it is clear that youth work is an important part of the youth development sector. Furthermore, the professionalisation of youth work has benefits to young people and South Africa as a country although there are a number of concerns that must be addressed. Exclusion from a profession that has historically attracted those who are pioneers (and not necessarily formally educated), and who implement a wide range of (not always orthodox) practices, is an issue that will need careful consideration if professionalisation is to be pursued. In addition, the standardisation of curricula and the role of higher education institutions are both time-consuming and expensive factors that require resources and government support.

The National Youth Policy (2009-2014) asserts that young people are the future of the country and should be given the chance and platforms to engage in youth development

and the growth of the country. Clearly youth work, with its developmental aims, is beneficial to young people's skills and empowerment. This is especially important for the majority of impoverished youth for whom unemployment and ongoing inequalities are predicted.

The challenges with which youth work has to contend include a standard definition, agreed-upon standards and stronger partnerships. Partnerships are especially important in order to allow for mutual understanding and recognition of youth work, resulting in stable employment for youth workers and long-term youth development goals being aimed for and achieved.

A further issue that needs to be addressed is the informal nature of youth work, as this limits youth workers access to support and funding from government and relevant stakeholders. Youth workers also need a wider range of placement opportunities. This will contribute to the endeavour being better understood by business, government and communities; including the ways in which it differs from professions such as social work and community development.

Youth workers themselves need to be helped to understand the importance of standardisation including the academic requirement for youth work. Declining enrolment in those institutions that currently offer youth work as stand-alone courses or as elective components in other disciplines are cause for further research and investigation. Furthermore, professionalising youth work can only be well implemented when proper steps have been followed for the purpose of meeting SAQA standards.

Lastly, if youth work is to effectively support the ten priority areas of concern for the National Youth Policy (2009-2014) - education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency, leisure time activities and effective participation of youth in the life of society and decision-making - then government and other stakeholders need to be thoroughly involved in setting standards for youth work as both a profession and a practice. Failure to capitalise on the benefits that youth work offers will have considerable impact on the ability to enhance human capital and economic potential in South Africa.

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