

Submission from Youth Work, RMIT University.

**YACVic Victorian Sector Code of Ethical Practice
Submission from the RMIT Youth Work Program**

20 April 2007

We welcome YACVic's initiative in generating this Draft Code of Ethical Practice and acknowledge the hard work that has already gone into the development of this 'code of ethical practice'.

We begin by addressing the questions provided by YACVic as requested. A 'model to inform a code of practice' is offered in our answer to question 3. We then make 10 recommendations. These recommendations reflect some of our primary concerns with the Draft Code of Ethical Practice. An appendices is also provided that spell out the usefulness of Developmental or Virtue Ethics for developing a code of practice.

Question 1: What are the strengths and weakness of a human rights framework as a base for a code of practice?

There appears to be a proposal to ground the current Draft Code of Ethical Practice in a framework of human rights. The rationale for why and how the authors of the draft reached this view is however not clear. For example we can see how the role of an instrument like UNCROC can be used to help to shape youth policy, but it is not clear what its role could be in shaping youth work practice.

If YACVic wants to ground its code of ethical practice in a human rights framework a case for why this is the best way to proceed is needed. How a rights framework can be used to inform a code of ethical practice is needed. This includes providing examples of what that would look like in a systematic fashion throughout the document.

From our perspective there are three clear reasons why using a framework of human rights (ie., UNCROC) might be used to inform a code of ethical practice. They include the following:

(i) Arguments to rights can be used to audit and improve the treatment of young people within institutional and organizational settings that provide services for young people. In this way a human rights framework can be used to help prevent exploitation and abuse while also working to opening other approaches to ensuring young people can develop in all the ways they capable can.

(ii) If there is a legislative basis for identifying and securing human rights (as there is now in Victoria following the passage of the Charter of Rights in 2006), then there is an authoritative, legislative and legally enforceable framework in which youth workers, and those who work with young people work. The legislative status of the charter (albeit limited at the moment) can be used to secure and protect young people's human rights and well being.

(iii) A further advantage of rights framework is that it can be used to highlight the fact that most young people now regularly have their human rights breached and/or that many young people do not currently enjoy a wide range of human rights (like freedom of speech, self-determination...). Paying attention to rights in a code of practice may in turn raise questions about why young people's rights are so regularly ignored. We refer to the underlying popular assumptions and prejudices that young people are not fully human and thus do not enjoy the moral status as fully fledged human beings. This in turn informs their legal status and why it is that young people do not currently full citizenship or legal status and rights that most others people do.

While we agree that rights ought to play a critical role in the Draft Code of Ethical Practice, it needs to be done in ways that are mindful of what is said above.

Attention also needs to be given to the distinction between negative and positive rights and how negative rights can sometimes be used to the disadvantage of young people.

Having said this there are also some significant weaknesses in rights-based discourse and practice that have to be both acknowledged and addressed.

Weaknesses of using a human rights framework:

(i) unless the goods or the values that the human right is meant to give effect to, rights-based discourse and practice are susceptible to serious and credible critique by people who do not like the right being promoted. For example the 'right to choose' (ie., abortion) can be attacked by right-to-life groups who claim it offends a basic good like the enjoyment of life.

If the aim is to assist practitioners who work with young people then some clarity is needed to help deal with the problem of conflicting rights (which is a common occurrence).

This can be done by articulating

- what the good or value is that rights secure and
- who it is a good a right to X works to secure.

(ii) if a human right that is being promoted does not have legal enforceability then it is debatable whether there is practical benefit will result from promoting that right. (There may be longer term value – in developing moral arguments and raising public awareness, but in the short term the benefits are likely to be limited).

(iii) Frequently those who promote rights talk do not identify the accompanying duties or obligations. This goes to questions like:

- are there obligations on the people who are having a right of theirs upheld specifically who has the duty or obligation to ensure that the right is respected (O'Neill 1989).

On their own an appeal to fundamental moral, natural, human rights is not enough. In other words, the rights option is difficult to realize in isolation because, *by implication it obligates, yet it does not specify who owes the obligation*. This is why rights talk can often remain an empty albeit well meaning political gesture. For this reason we argue that any argument about rights needs to be accompanied by a parallel statements about who has duties and obligations, why they do and what that might mean in practice.

(iv) It would assist the grounding of this code of ethical practice in human rights if specific examples are provided to illustrate how human rights discourse informs youth work practice and that this is also done consistently through the document.

Question 2: Is there more information that is needed in the definitions of the youth sector, youth workers and youth work...?

A code of ethical practice is strengthened by a statement that explains why an occupation like youth work needs a code of ethical practice.

At a minimal level it would be useful to say something more about the current state of youth work knowledge, education and professional development, and expectations of employers governments etc that necessitate the development of a Code of Ethical Practice. This could address issues like where youth work is in respect to professionalisation, what the traditional benchmarks are of that and where youth work is located along that continuum.

Something also needs to be said about the fact that youth workers in Australia do not currently require any formal admission to practice, registration or other forms of regulation that many other occupations require.

A more developed rationale for a code of ethics is needed, something that says what 'the sectors' various beliefs on matters of importance are. The current focus on the document – securing the well-being and safety of children and young people is too narrow. It also sits uncomfortably with the clear mandate of the recent Victorian legislation which directs attention to both the safety of young people and the well-being of young people. The latter idea of 'well-being' opens important ethical questions namely what goods or values constitute the well-being of people and what will best promote those goods and so enhance well being.

More generally, the inclusion of a statement on the status and aspirations of this code of practice are would help. This may include for example that 'ethical practice' refers to:

- the identification of the ethical ideas (namely, ethical values or goods) that will help to define the ethical orientation of youth workers when they face the question 'what should I do in this particular case?'

and;

- the kind of practical interventions that are informed by those ethical ideas which youth workers would engage in.

(Its also worth noting that the implications of this document are that some existing modes of youth work practice should continue. (What might they be? If we are serious about using a rights framework then what might a document like this imply and what might it reveal as malpractice?)

What are the implications of its effect on what are or have been standard forms of malpractice by youth workers?

Will one effect of this document be to describe certain routine practices as unethical?

A contextual section that offers an account of the youth sector that begins at international levels and zones in to regional, national and state is one way to begin. A light map of the sector would also help demarcate the ground you are referring to. Certainly the role of government, NGOs, unions, private providers is needed. So too is a sketch of the key youth peaks.

A more detailed account of the different schools of thought on what youth work is, is needed. It would also be useful to say something about the kinds of knowledge which youth workers might be expected to 'have' and to use, since this is a normal idea in occupations like law, medicine, architecture and accountancy.

Question 3: Are there further values (other than those listed from YACVic and the Commonwealth Youth Program) that you think underpin youth work that you think should be included?

The answer to this question is 'yes'. However this answer is qualified by the concern that the document does not say what 'values' are.

Moreover in its current form the document runs the risk of creating a lot of confusion. This is because at various points the Draft Code announces that it wants:

- to ground the code in 'human rights' - whose relationship to values is not clear;
- to identify 'values' - yet we do not know what values means or refers to;
- identify 'principles' - whose relationship to the values is not clear.

If the idea of values are to be used (and we believe they should), then it is critical to say what 'values' are. This is not done. An account of what values are belongs in the body of the document and in the context of arguments about their importance (as opposed to a definition in a glossary).

The absence of such basic clarification leads to a serious inconsistency in the document that need to be addressed.

For example, on page 11 it reads:

'There are a number of ways to address the issue of ethics. These may include adopting or subscribing to specific underpinning ethical theories or philosophies. However, many would argue that one of the strengths of the youth sector is the diversity of philosophical and religious traditions contained with in it. As such we believe'

The paragraph goes on to imply that one philosophical tradition will not be drawn on because that would entail imposing one particular world view on a sector of community that is pluralistic and culturally diverse. However the Draft code then proceeds to propose using a rights-based framework.

There is a contradiction/problem here. It is not possible to provide a rationale like this for not drawing on specific traditions and then propose to use a rights based framework. This is because a 'rights-based framework' is precisely the kind of western construction that you said you do not want to privilege. Rights based discourses have evolved from particular Anglo-American liberal and legal traditions.

Moreover, this statement does not acknowledge that many of the classic philosophical traditions can be universalized and applied to by practitioners and others in specific settings and in ways that do not violate any particular cultural, religious sensibilities. We suggest that the rationale be qualified – or altered in ways we described later in this submission. (see response to question 3)

NB: There is further confusion on the same page (p.11) when in the next paragraph reference is made to Outten's definition of a code of ethics:

'A code of ethics can also be described as 'a set of norms based on the belief systems or values of a group of people who agree to adhere to commonly held philosophical principles' (Outten 1991: 8).

The point is that you cannot say:

- (a) you are not going to draw on any particular philosophical tradition out of a respect for the value of diversity in the sector and then
- (b) use a quote to explain what a code of ethics is that says its on about articulating norms etc that work towards developing an 'adherence to commonly held philosophical principles'.

It would be useful to either replace that quote with one that supports the rationale or delete the rationale.

Finally, there is the failure to specify what is meant firstly by 'values' and secondly by 'principles' which produces some unhelpful confusion and an impression that the Code is generating a indiscriminate set of ideas.

The table below offers an approach to how the goods, values, and principles might be considered and articulated to inform a code of practice.

xxxINSERT DIAGRAM HERE xx (below ---to be reformatted into a diagram)

A Model to inform a code of practice.

The defining features of an ethical youth work practitioners. (Dispositions, actions virtues to be developed and encouraged).

- a sense of and commitment to justice
- courage
- good judgment
- capacity and will for critical thinking
- generosity
- temperance
- humility, discretion
- honesty
- prudence.

Intrinsic values or goods.

(these can be made youth work, youth specific)

1. A good life that is valuable

- to develop in all the ways one can
- to ensure the means is available to live a full life.

2. a healthy biological life

- the means is available to a healthy human life in good health

3. Meaningful social being (sociability and meaningful social relations)

- To form and maintain a range of attachments and identities
- This extends to human and non-human life as well as objects and facilitates the right to love, grief, experiences of desire and appreciation.
- It also relates to individual and collective identity

4. Aesthetic Goods

- opportunities to appreciate and give expression to beauty, creativity and innovative
- to ensure the means is available to live a imaginative full life.

5. Knowledge

- to access and explore truth, beliefs, wisdom
- to develop a complex cognitive life.
- to develop confident understandings, to learn, to perceive and reason.

6. Moral, philosophical or spiritual life.

- to have the opportunity and resources to pursue eternal verities or 'the profane'.

7. To form a conception of good: to be a virtuous person

- engagement in critical reflection
- to plan one's own life.

8. To play and enjoy recreation.

- . access to the material resources and emotional security to enjoy pleasure through play and simple amusement.

The above is a statement of human good or values and the dispositions or actions that can be facilitated and achieved through the actions of good youth work. This *provides a basis for articulating a code of practice that is framed as an enabling document*, in terms of the positives rather than a more interdictive approach that focuses on prohibitions or what practitioners should not do.

In respect to principles, we note that principles are rules, norms, laws or policies in the ways they are used to instruct people on what they should do. An approach that is framed as an enabling or positive code that spells out what is good and what youth workers can and ought to do to achieve those will not require principles.

Moreover, there is the problem that principles or any rule approach can raise problems because at times it is not the right thing to obey them.

One further general observation in respect to question 3 'are there further values...': all key concepts need further elaboration in the text itself - as opposed to a separate glossary. An additional or supplementary glossary for quick references is a good idea, but not instead of systematic and clear statements and expositions of what ideas like 'values' 'principles', 'rights' and 'justice' mean and how they go together which needs to be embedded in the text itself.

Finally, we refer to page 24 and the description of 'empowering', 'ensuring', 'enabling' etc as values. We point out that these are not values (or human goods), they are actions or capacities.

On this point too it is also not clear why one particular organization is being drawn on in terms of its views. Why the Commonwealth or Nations Youth Secretariat...? To avoid the appearance of the document being the product of random selection it is important to say why this agency matters in the context of many other organisations that offer statements on 'values' - ie., why not refer to similar documents from for example UNICEF or the UN, DEST or indeed an indigenous organisation?

Question 4. Do you have any comments on specific principles?

As mentioned above, there is confusion in this document about principles - ie;

- what they are generally and more specifically what they are in respect to youth work practice
- how they are different to values,
- how principles connect to or work against values/goods etc.

Before talking about principles we need clarity on what 'values' are - and what values are critical to youth work, and this needs to be accompanied by a stated about 'practice'.

Providing a list of 'principles' will not be helpful when the idea of principles and other key ideas are left unclear.

A Code that relies on a list of 'principles' and where the relationship of one 'principle' to another is unclear runs the risk of being confusing and being seen as a random collection of ideas that do not cohere.

In short, you need to say *what is the status or capacity of each principle to inform a certain kind of practice?*

And, are principles needed if you articulate the values/good and how they can be achieved? (This latter model is our preferred option)

Question 5. Are there any principles that have not been included?

Because it is not clear what is meant by principles it is difficult to answer this question. There are a number of duties and obligations that are missing along with an account of why we need to pay attention to them -like the idea of fiduciary duty, moral duty and how they connect to justice for young people.

There also needs to be something about conduct towards/with colleagues, policy and the law. For example is interpersonal respect between colleagues important?

Question 6. Could you as a youth worker [or professional working in the sector] carry out your work under these principles?

No – for the reasons explained.

Question 7. What is the potential value or usefulness of a Victorian youth sector code of ethical conduct to you?

Ideally it can have considerable value as a statement that articulates what is the good and as a guide for practitioners. Its usefulness however depends on the content of the final document. It can be a first step towards the regulation of the industry or sector, but that also depends on whether or not other mechanisms are developed and implements (ie., registration or admission to practice, the policing of professional conduct etc..).

Question 8: What impact could you see a code having on the sector, in an organizing setting on individual youth workers?

The impact of such a document depends on its final form as well as the process involved in producing it.

A code that is not directive (ie., a 'youth work must .. a youth worker will..) is less likely to be received well and be effective than one that offers a guide for ethical thinking and action.

Why people obey, comply with any guidelines, codes, policies or laws depends very much on whether they are seen to be credible and legitimate.

The document as it stands is not likely to fair well in this regard for the following reasons. One it is unclear on too many fundamental issues and says too little or nothing about very critical matters (ie., what is the good? what are values inform good youth work practice).

It is also unlikely to enjoy legitimacy in its current form because there has not yet been sufficient consultation with the sector. A call for submissions were posted on 2 April with a due date 20 April. During that period was the one week Easter break. That gives us 10 working days. Ten days does not give individuals or organizations (most of whom are very busy) sufficient time to read and consider the document, not does it allow us sufficient time to deliberate collectively and to produce a considered response.

We expect also that many organization will not yet know there has been a call for submissions.

In our case it has meant there is insufficient time to review the document in ways we would have liked to. It has meant for example that we have not been able to fully consult with youth work students who we believe (as future practitioners) are key stakeholders with a legitimate entitlement to be consulted and who may also offer quite valuable feedback that will improve the quality of the end 'product'.

The brevity of the consultation period plus the statement that the code will be launched on the 3rd May raises questions about legitimacy and the seriousness with which consultation is being valued. It is important to guard against any impressions that consultation is perfunctory if the desire is to produce a document that is seen as legitimate and for that reason will be effective.

In respect to consultation and participation is the role of young people in this process. We note that much attention is given to the importance of young peoples inclusion, hearing their voice and their participation etc. Given this and given the nature of the document it is important in respect to

legitimacy and consistency in what we say and what we do that it be clearly stated what the role of young people in this consultation process has been.

We note in the acknowledgment or thanks for those who contributed to the document that there is no acknowledgement of the young people who were involved. Are we to conclude from this that there were no young people involved? Or are we to conclude that they were but their contribution just not acknowledged?

As we argue in our recommendations that the forthcoming conference provides an excellent platform for launching a second round of consultations, rather than the launching of the final document. This is important not only for reasons that relate to the issue of legitimacy and due process, but also because there are likely to be many valuable contributions that come in which will make this document stronger and more likely to be effective.

Question 9. Would a glossary of terms be useful in this document?

A glossary would be helpful, but not instead of there being clarity in the body of the document about the key concepts that have been used.

Question 10. A companion document outlining how a code can be used in an organisational setting is being considered for later release. Would that be a useful companion document?

This depends on what the final draft of the code looks like? (ie., whether the code is credible, internally consistent and generally seen as having legitimacy etc..)

It also depends on the content and intent of that companion document?

More information on what is planned is needed before we can provide detailed feedback. We do none-the-less note that there is nothing in the existing document about how ethical decisions connection to action or what does or ought to inform good youth work practice.

Editorial comments

A substantive and copy edit is needed.

Recommendations.

1. That there be a longer and more inclusive consultation for the reasons that go to the question of good outcomes. Good process and legitimacy of the final document (see our answer to question 8).
2. that the forthcoming conference be used to launch a 2nd draft and a more inclusive consultation process.
3. That there be clarity about the meanings of key concepts that are used, and what philosophical traditions they relate to.
4. That young people be consulted and that their contribution to the document be acknowledged.
5. That the contradictions currently existing in the document are addressed (re., arguments regarding a need to maintain diversity are used to justify not identifying specific philosophical traditions, yet the human rights framework is used etc... See response to question xxx).
6. That there be clarity about and acknowledgment of the philosophical traditions that are being drawn on.
7. That there be acknowledgement of the role of duty or obligation and clarity how that ought to connect with a rights framework.
8. The inclusion of statements about how we can understand or identify ethically competent youth work practice and what it means to be a 'good' youth worker.

9. A change in the declaratory tone of the document. There is an emphasis on the 'bad' or what is prohibited evident in statements that the youth worker must not or will not do x', thereby avoiding a focus on the kinds of 'goods' or values that youth workers might commit to.

10. That there be clarity regarding the fundamentals or 'the goods' or 'values' that youth worker or a practitioner working with young people might want to give effect to.

Such a statement may point us in the direction of one major tradition which is making a revival in the Anglo-American context namely 'virtue ethics' or 'developmental ethics'. This approach is worth considering as a tradition that can inform contemporary youth work practice.

APPENDICES.

The usefulness of Developmental or Virtue Ethics for informing a code of practice.

Proponents of this tradition emphasizes the capabilities people have to act well based on their character and their possession -or not- of a range of key virtues. In our own time the idea of virtue refers to qualities long admired like courage, honesty, self control, loyalty ...

virtue ethicists focus on the person and say it is their character that makes them good or bad and that our capacity to be ethical has much do with our upbringing and opportunities we have to articulate and practice virtues. This has implications for the sector – and particularly those involved in the education of practitioners.

This tradition is helpful for saying what it means to be a good youth worker. Answering such questions entails being able to identify what is good, or what particular abilities or aptitudes help in identifying the good youth worker?

We suggest that being a good youth worker rests on:

- knowing *what youth work is for?*
- knowing what goods or values a good youth worker will seek to promote

One challenge here relates to the fact that our ideas about what youth work is for and are the goods or values youth work ought to promote or achieve may not be shared widely, or even at all, by others in our community. (Here lies the challenge of working in a culturally diverse context). For this reason any discussion of good youth work practice needs:

- to be clear about what it means to be a human being who is young and how that might be understood in different socio-economic and cultural contexts. (This involves acknowledging there may be competing ideas about what is good).
- to be clear about what it is to fulfill any tendencies inherent in young people as fully fledged human beings.

A tradition of virtue or developmental ethics implies that good youth work will call on the practitioner's ability:

- to recognize the goods or values they want to achieve
- to make good judgments,
- to promote and exercise virtues like courage, critical thinking, trust, loyalty or resolve
- to work towards being the best possible youth worker which in part is understood as *enabling young people to flourish or thrive in all the ways they can.*
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All this raises the question of application, about how practitioners make good judgments about know what they ought do. *Practice issues are ethical questions because practice questions require actions that are aligned with our thinking.*

How can youth workers make good judgments, and how they enact those judgments.

How can youth workers recognize what it is to work towards achieving a value or good in their daily actions in different contexts? We suggest that an answer lies in thinking about the idea of 'practice wisdom' and 'the regulative ideal'. Connecting thoughts about what is good to practice is where we can make a useful intervention with a code of practice.

Practice issues or connections ethics to action or practice.

Practice wisdom refers to the capacity and will to make good judgments. Conventionally practice is seen as a course of action that involves applying some kind of knowledge, theory or principles to an intended course of action. Typically this understanding relies on the premise that 'theory' is different from and may on occasion be opposed to practice.

Theory or professional knowledge is also commonly seen as containing rules, principles or laws that can be extracted and applied to help workers figure out what to do in situations they find themselves 'on the ground'. While this is a popular understanding of 'practice' and 'theory', we suggest that it can promote a serious misunderstanding of professional practices such as youth work. The harm lies in *representing worker as not having an interactive or reflective role*, and as simply being an agent who executes that which is already determined by the directive or principles inherent in the theory.

Proponents of 'practice wisdom' reject the plausibility of the theory practice divide as described above and say theory and practice are connected in a complex interactive way that means they cannot be so easily separated or distinguished. In other words, action is informed by theory and is never atheoretical in the same way that theory cannot be without purpose or without connection to action.

Practice knowledge refers to knowing how to act ethically and relies on the ability and willingness to ask questions about knowledge gained through experience and by being reflexive. This is especially the case when talking about action guided by ethical dispositions like acting out of a concern for the well-being of young people and to enable them to develop in all the ways they can. This begins with thinking about the good that is required to achieve that end – that is, thriving. Ethical dispositions are critical for good judgment because they guide practitioner engagement as active thinkers and players.

Practice wisdom helps people work out how to act in specific contexts and to judge where 'the line' is between exercising a virtue like courage by overcoming fear, and a vice or stupidity by acting recklessly or irresponsible manner. For writers like Flyvbjerg obstacles to good judgment for professions like youth work are found in contemporary professional education which is grounded in a positivist tradition that speaks of value free social sciences that has no place for emotions or values (Flyvbjerg 2001). From this perspective, practice wisdom arises from our ability to critically analyse *the 'epistemology of practice', by assessing kinds of knowledge that informs professional practice* (positivist, hermeneutic, critical etc), as well as the different types of human interest that inform those knowledge making interests (to extend governance of young people, to enable young people to thrive, or to enfranchise them). For this to happen that consideration needs to incorporate the role of emotions, morals and values.

Good judgment is grounded in our deliberative capacities. As modern writers like Donald Schon observed, reflection or 'thinking on our feet' is fundamental to effective professional activity in part because it provides an important corrective or counter measure to the technical rationality which professional knowledge is grounded in (Schon 1983). Reflective practice is about observing our own experiences, recognising our feelings or emotions, and drawing on knowledge or theories to understand what is happening and to decide how to act. Indeed good judgment owes much to the worker's capacity to develop deliberative and reflective skills in and through the daily encounters and exigencies experienced in youth work practice settings. It entails developing thoughtful understandings that inform our actions as situations unfold.

Schon says ideally we should try out certain theories or put our ideas to the test which allows us to learn and extend our repertoire of knowledge and skills and future options. This also relies on being able to draw on existing knowledge while also having the confidence to depart from conventional forms of wisdom and expertise, and to see every person and situation as distinctive.

In this way Schon draws on the Aristotelian notion of the relationship between the ideas or guiding plans of what they want to achieve, the 'technical' or the skills and the knowledge the worker use in making action - the 'practical' (1983). For virtue ethicists and others who draw on Aristotelian ideas of 'the technical' and 'the practical', *our deliberative capacity is intricately, and necessarily, linked to our action*. Our actions are purposeful: we have goals and we think about how to achieve those goals (Argyris and Schön, 1974).

When we think and act in the ways described above, then we display intellectual virtue. And while we are born with natural endowments or the potential to do certain things, *practice is needed*.

While virtues may be inherent they remain dormant unless they are recognized and cultivated. This entails developing tendencies or habits of acting in virtuous ways, and by constantly repeating those acts over time we develop a disposition to conduct ourselves in that way. It becomes a habit and a part of who we are.

For some readers this raises the 'chicken and the egg question'. If the habit of acting virtuously is important for ethical youth work practice how then can we begin to act in ethical ways? Apart from some obvious implications for the curriculum which helps to 'train' youth workers, this points to the relevance of the 'regulative ideal' becomes important.

The Regulative Ideal

The regulative ideal is a 'thought exercise'. It involves imaging a character or a hypothetical person who demonstrates the inherent virtues needed for good youth work. Articulating this ideal provides a way to learn and practice virtue, and indicates how this tradition might inform contemporary ethical codes of practice.

The 'regulative ideal' offers a clear picture of the dispositions that a good youth workers would display. Once that profile is clear the next step is to take on or adopt those ideas. The learning and application of virtues is a central aspect of good youth work education and training. This is because the 'regulative ideal' provides an image that can be used to inform a person's reasons for acting so they work towards matching the ideal or standard. In other words, a person who has a clear idea about, or who incorporates what it means to be a 'good youth worker' is then guided by that idea so what they end up doing is aligned with their conception of a youth worker. This may suggest something in respect to the role and content of codes of practice. Is there value in articulating the virtues of good youth work as a guide or statement that practitioners can use to inform their action?

What might such a regulative idea look like for youth workers?

If the highest virtue is an end in itself (van Hooft, 2006, 54-55) then it helps to think in terms of *pursuing actions that enable young people to develop or thrive*. A good youth worker is one who works towards achieving that end. A good youth worker is a practitioner who is motivated by both a will and ability to act that way. This includes knowing what is required to promote that end.

This raises the question of content. A regulative ideal for youth work is a character who displays the following kinds of dispositions or virtues like:

- *A sense of justice*: a will and ability to make judgments that are fair and equitable as well as a determination to speak, think and act in non-hurtful ways towards and about young people.
- A capacity for *critical thinking* and a disposition not to accept 'truths' about young people as unmediated reports on reality.
- *Courage and strength*. This does not imply reaching a point where fear is never experienced. The virtue of courage is how we understand and act in response to fear. If we are prepared to face fear and can judge where 'the line' is between courage and recklessness or irresponsibility, then we have gained a disposition that is moving us towards being courageous.
- *Generosity* is a virtue that involves wanting to give of oneself or of the resources available to you. If you have to force yourself to act generously towards a young person or colleagues then the development of that virtue has some way to go.
- The same can be said of other virtues that are critical for good youth work practice such as *integrity, honesty* and *patience*. Attaining these virtues takes more than determination to act in particular ways, it requires a active desire to be patient, or honest or not to be corrupt.
- Similarly *humility, dedication, temperance* and *discretion* do not come naturally to us, but are desirable qualities for youth work.

This profile of a regulative ideal for good youth work places an onus on 'pre-service' and 'in-service' youth work educators to produce a curriculum and pedagogy that spells out these dispositions and provides opportunities for students to rehearse them to the point where they become a critical part of their professional identity and practice.

It also raises questions about the kinds of virtues, values or goods professional codes of practice promote as well as the value in articulating ethical framework they rely on.

References and other texts that may be helpful.

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