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Collaborative Governance and Youth Work Policy

A study of Youth Work Committee dynamics, actions and local policy impacts

By

Kieran J Donohoe BA (Hons), MA, DBS(IT),

UCD Student Number: 89172604

This thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Governance

UCD School of School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice

Heads of School:

Professor Karen Anderson, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD

Dr Michael Mulreany, Whitaker School of Government and Management, IPA

Supervisors:

Professor Jim Campbell, School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD

Dr Mark Callanan, Whitaker School of Government and Management, IPA

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Abstract

Collaborative governance theories are well debated, however the current body of knowledge identifies the evaluation of collaborative governance settings as problematic, with calls for research into this perceived gap in the literature. Currently, data is needed to understand the policy impacts and performance of collaborative actions.

Youth Work Committees (YWC) can be viewed as a mode of collaborative governance, and they are an appropriate site to make both theoretical and practical contributions to the literature. The thesis study assesses the impact of collaborative governance in YWCs in the improvement of policy outcomes for young people in Ireland. The aim of the thesis study is to begin with a problem, and answer two questions to greater understand stakeholder perspectives of collaborative governance: How YWCs in Ireland function? (RQ1); and, How stakeholders perceive the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts? (RQ2)

The research methodology is interpretivist in orientation. While the secondary research engages with collaborative governance literature and YWC materials, the primary research explores perceptions of how YWC stakeholders work together effectively in youth work policy implementation. Data from a cross-section of their experiences were gathered from sixteen digital interviews, offering views of the relationships between the concepts being examined. Thematic analysis was first used to identify key patterns in the interview data. The conceptual framework was then employed to further operationalise, analyse and interpret this qualitative data, as adapted from Emerson *et al.*'s 2012 *Integrative Framework*.

Based on the findings, answering the two RQs adds new understanding and insights into what facilitates YWC functioning and efficacy. Youth work governance in Ireland has undergone a significant period of intense change since the early 2000s, and the thesis study contributes to a better understanding of how changing governance has been viewed and experienced by stakeholders on the ground. These findings are based on the themes that emerged from the interview data: (i) understanding the structure and dynamics of YWCs; (ii) hearing and acting on the voices of young people; and (iii) the concept of power in such a collaborative governance setting.

In conclusion, the thesis study makes both theoretical and practical contributions that address the gap identified in the literature. It informs the debate on collaborative governance process, performance, and enabling factors. Collaboration dynamics enable actions that are likely to effect change in response to intended policy outcomes. From a youth work practice perspective, the thesis study also contributes to an understanding of how collaborative governance in YWCs enhances the effective oversight of limited resources, to deliver actions, and to achieve identifiable outcomes. Therefore, the thesis study concludes that when certain factors are present in collaborative governance settings, their actions produce policy impacts.

Statement of Original Authorship

I hereby certify that the submitted work is my own work, was completed while registered as a candidate for the degree stated on the Title Page, and I have not obtained a degree elsewhere on the basis of the research presented in this submitted work.

Kieran James Donohoe BA (Hons) MA DBS (IT)

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List of Abbreviations and Specialist Terminology

APNASR	Area Profile Needs Assessment and Service Requirements
BOBF	Better Outcomes Brighter Futures - The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020
CGR	Collaborative Governance Regime (in the Integrative Framework)
CNN	Comhairle na N'Óg
CRA	Charities Regulatory Authority
CYPSC	Children and Young People's Services Committees
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, formerly OMCYA and DCYA
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs (formerly) Officer of Minister of Children and Youth Affairs, OMCYA), renamed in 2020 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DNN	Dáil na N'Óg
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure Reform
ETB	Education and Training Board, formerly VEC
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
IYC	Integrated Youth Care (Belgium)
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex +
LVYC	Local Voluntary Youth Council (in some areas became YWC)
LYWP	Local Youth Work Plan
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NQSF	National Quality Standards Framework
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
OMCYA	Office of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, became DCYA and then renamed in 2020 Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
SLA	Service Level Agreements
SPY	Special Projects for Youth (DCYA)
TOR	Terms of Reference
TYFS	Targeted Youth Funding Scheme (DCYA)
UBU	Your Space Your Place – DCYA funding scheme for Youth
VEC	Vocational Education XXX, renamed ETB
VFM	Value for Money
VFMPR	Value for Money and Policy Review
YWC	Youth Work Committee (of ETB)

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background And Context

Youth work in contemporary Ireland has been undergoing many changes (Holton, 2017) including the reform of policy, legislation and governance oversight. These developments have led those of us involved in youth work to think about our practice in different ways (Devlin, 2017). Research is needed to reflect on our valuable experiences of this considerable change. It is an opportune time to understand how this learning can inform the future development of the sector, and how youth work stakeholders can work collaboratively with young people to achieve better policy impacts. The National Youth Strategy (DCYA, 2015a) matured in 2020, so a ‘policy window’ is open, with a potential for policy innovation and implementation (Kingdon, 1995) to involve those working collaboratively in youth work.

This presents a window of collaborative opportunity (Takahashi and Smutny, 2002; Cornforth, *et al.*, 2018), and the thesis study seeks to understand how this opportunity may be best realised to its full potential in achieving better policy outcomes for young people. These better outcomes can be achieved through hearing and acting on the voices of young people; understanding more clearly the structure and political dynamics (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012) of YWCs; and appreciating power relations and imbalances (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bryson *et al.*, 2015) in such a collaborative governance setting. Power is almost always distributed unevenly amongst participants (Bryson *et al.*, 2006), leading to tensions and conflicts (Bryson *et al.*, 2015), and this power play (Haugaard and Clegg, 2013) is a recurring theme in the stakeholder interviews, and features later in the discussion and conclusions.

The thesis study examines the experiences of Youth Work Committee (YWC) stakeholders who have witnessed the transitioning youth sector with significant policy reform, governance developments, emerging youth interests and resource needs. YWCs are viewed as a mode of collaborative governance and account for local youth work affairs in regions across

Ireland. These stakeholders have a valuable contribution to make in understanding the functions and policy impacts of collaborative governance in YWCs. This understanding is predominantly from the perspective of the stakeholders, as interpreted through my experiences as the researcher (Silverman, 2020; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011; Crotty, 1998). Highlighting the effectiveness or efficacy (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015) of YWCs may encourage decision-makers to engage more meaningfully in YWC structures, when their actions and policy impacts on the ground for young people are more clearly understood.

Chapter 1 sets the research goal in the context of the research problem. The two research questions concern the functioning (RQ1) and performance (RQ2) of YWCs. The heuristic paradigm is introduced and a brief introduction to the methods explains how the stakeholders' views are gathered and then interpreted to answer the two research questions. More specifically, to explore important policy context, a systematic review in Chapter 2 synthesises the grey literature (Gray, 2018; Dickson, *et al.*, 2013) on the governance and oversight of youth work policy, and the functioning of YWCs. To understand the policy impacts of YWC actions, a review of collaborative governance literature was carried out in Chapter 3 to identify conceptual frameworks that relate these concepts. Primary research with YWC stakeholders, gathered participants' views on how collaboration dynamics may enable YWC actions to produce youth-related policy impacts. Chapter 4 details the methods used, Chapter 5 presents the findings and Chapter 6 discusses them. In Chapter 7, conclusions and recommendations are drawn from stakeholders' perceptions of YWC functions, and the relationship between their collaboration dynamics, actions and policy impacts.

1.2 Research Problem, Goals And Aims

The thesis study's goals are understood in terms of 'perceived problems' (Maxwell, 2012) in collaborative governance theory. While these theories are well debated, the current body of knowledge identifies gaps in the literature on evaluating the performance of collaborative governance settings. A review of the literature in Chapter 3, highlights considerable academic interest in collaborative governance theory (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bevir, 2010, Ansell, 2012), and while there is an accepted understanding that collaborations contribute to outcomes and accountabilities (Bryson *et al.*, 2006), the literature suggests that there is a need for more empirical research on the productivity of actions (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020). There are calls for data on how collaborative governance enables actions that produce policy impacts, as evaluating the performance of such settings has proven to be problematic. There are clear calls for further research to address this gap in the knowledge (Papadopoulos, 2012;

Howlett and Ramesh, 2016; Howlett, 2019; Douglas, *et al.*, 2020) to ‘disentangle process and productivity performance’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 741), when examining productivity of actions (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020). So, the perceived problem being addressed by the thesis study concerns a gap in the literature on ‘what is causing what’ (Bryson, 2015), and in particular a need to understand how collaborative actions relate to policy impacts.

The goal of the thesis study is to explore YWC functions and outcomes as interpreted by stakeholders, to address this perceived gap in the collaborative governance literature. It examines how YWC dynamics enable actions and impacts (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012), at a professional practice level. In particular, it examines the ‘anatomy’ of collaborative governance (Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2005, p. 496) in the context of YWCs. There is a value to ‘clearly understand more precisely what is causing what’ (Bryson *et al.*, 2015, p. 13). So, a further goal of the thesis study is to ‘disentangle process and productivity performance’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 741) in YWCs so that their actions are related specifically to their policy impacts on the ground. To address these gaps, the thesis study links theory to practice by exploring the key concepts from the perspective of the stakeholders, as interpreted through my experiences as a researcher (Silverman, 2020) with management and governance experience in the youth work sector.

The aim of the thesis study is to understand collaborative governance in YWCs, and if their actions have an impact on the local implementation of youth work policy. The thesis study examines the policy impacts of YWCs, from the perspective of the stakeholders (Silverman, 2020). This is achieved by conducting qualitative research with stakeholders to explore the opinions of professionals and young people on the relationships between their actions and intended policy outcomes. This is intended to give a greater understanding of what is going on in YWCs and if their actions produce impacts on the ground, in terms of intended policy. These intentions inform the two research questions.

1.3 Research Questions

According to Bryman (2012), the posing of clear and concise research questions produces valued research conclusions with the possibility of generating new insights. The two research questions are designed to find data on the functioning and outcomes of YWCs, as experienced by research participants. Research Questions 1 (RQ1) concerns the functioning of YWCs. Research Question 2 (RQ2) considers the stakeholders’ views of performance in YWCs. So, rather than expecting any particular answers, these reflective questions (Roulston, 2010) are used to

explore perceptions of collaborative governance settings and the relationships between concepts there.

Research Question 1:	How do YWCs in Ireland function? (RQ1)
Research Question 2:	How do stakeholders perceive the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts? (RQ2)

Figure 1.1: Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1) focuses on the functioning of YWCs in Ireland, how they operate, and broadly explores the systems context, the drivers and some of the collaboration dynamics, which are introduced later in the conceptual framework as Concepts A, B and C respectively. For the purposes of the thesis study, system context is understood to involve youth legislation, youth work policies and the relationship between the State and the youth work sector. The drivers consist of the incentives and opportunities for YWCs and their members from the collaboration. For RQ1, dynamics are the principled engagement, shared motivation and capacity for joint action (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015).

Research Question 2 (RQ2) asks how stakeholders perceive the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions, and policy impacts, introduced later in the conceptual framework as Concepts C, D and E respectively. Here in RQ2, collaboration dynamics are the enablers and barriers (O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018) that aid or block the achievement of actions and impacts (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). In particular, RQ2 considers if these collaboration dynamics can 'propel collaborative actions' (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 722). For the purposes of the thesis study, actions are those YWC activities enabling young people's interests, that are found to be directly attributable to the collaboration (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). These YWC actions manifest in the data as involvement of young people in decision-making, garnering local decision-maker support for local youth interests, and more effective use of youth work resources.

YWC policy impacts in RQ2 are the 'alterations' (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p 18) in conditions on the ground, leading to change in relation to policy objectives. These YWC impacts manifest in the data as changes on the ground that respond to the *Youth Work Act 2001* or policy calls in

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)¹ *National Policy Framework for Children and Youth - Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*; *The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020*; and *Value for Money and Policy Review (VFMPR)* (DCYA, 2014b). So, the policy impacts are alterations in conditions, such as additional facilities for the youth population, that were enabled by YWC actions.

1.4 My Role, Interests And Motivations

Having reflected on the research problem, I want to make an academic and practical contribution to the governance of youth work in Ireland. Professionally, I believe that there are significant opportunities for those in the youth work sector to influence the shape and dynamic of the ongoing review and reform process. I want to highlight valuable stakeholder experiences, to suggest how collaborative governance in YWC works, and YWC problems, weaknesses or challenges (Aguilar, 1967). I also believe that the YWC governance role is not fully appreciated, so want to interpret these stakeholder experiences to demonstrate how YWCs enable actions that have policy impacts on the ground for young people. Youth work policy centres around achieving better outcomes for young people, and YWCs facilitate collaborative governance spaces that are inclusive of young people, community groups, youth services, and statutory authorities.

1.4.1 My Role And Reflexivity

In carrying out the research, it is important to acknowledge my role and positionality in interpreting the data (Koch and Harrington, 1998; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011). As a qualitative researcher, I accept that I am part of the process, where my prior experiences, assumptions and beliefs are influential, adding rigour to the quality of the findings (Koch and Harrington, 1998). The thesis study takes the interpretive approach, and my own background adds value to the analysis and discussion in Chapter 6, and the conclusions drawn in Chapter 7 in response to RQ1 and RQ2.

1.4.2 My Interests

I have an interest in the gap in the literature on collaborative governance and want to study it in the context of youth work in Ireland. I am a senior youth work manager, with a passionate interest in understanding how collaborative governance settings work. I have a

¹ In 2019, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) was restructured to become the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)

genuine, personal and professional commitment to achieving better outcomes for young people, and believe the thesis study's learning is valuable in times of organisational change. As the Irish youth work sector is experiencing a period of policy and legislative reform, I am interested in exploring potential opportunities that may exist, so that there is a clearer understanding of how collaborative governance enables actions and produces policy impacts. My findings and conclusions are intended to contribute to the collaborative governance literature. They support my academic and professional development, in the areas of governance and youth work.

1.4.3 My Motivations

In retrospect, my life appears to have led me to the fulfilment of this qualitative thesis study. I view myself as a product of youth work, having benefitted immensely as a young person from my participation in local volunteer-led youth clubs while growing up. For example, I was the only person from my local primary school to attend my secondary school, so involvement in my local youth club kept me connected with my home area. As a youth club member, I learned the importance of remaining grounded in my community and in giving something back through community-based programmes and activities within the parish. On reflection, while I significantly predate the current policy-regime, these personal experiences have given me a greater personal insight into the benefits of youth work, and the impacts that good practice can have for young people and the wider community.

These personal experiences of youth work as a young person, as a volunteer, as a professional and as a youth work manager contribute to the qualitative research methods used in the thesis study. My experiences of collaborative governance in interagency committees have been broadly positive. Working together to deliver positive outcomes for the community is a default position for those involved in youth work, and the thesis study helps to understand how this is achieved, in the example of YWCs. At times however, these settings can be fraught with tensions, rivalries and power plays. The YWCs have achieved positive outcomes for young people, however experiences across the country are varied as evident in the interview data. The thesis study has been designed to maximise my perceptions, experiences, interpretations and observations of these achievements and tensions.

1.4.4 Development Of Professional Practice And Academic Development

The thesis study has been significant in my own professional practice and academic development. For example, I have developed skills in research, project planning and academic writing techniques, and the findings have enabled me to further understand the changing youth work

governance landscape. Collaborative governance offers immense opportunities to the youth, community and voluntary sectors and I intend to share my learning within my own organisation, County Wexford and in the wider youth work sector. I will go into it in greater detail in Chapter 7, but the findings of the thesis study have already yielded a significant win in supporting me to have Rural Youth Work named as a strategic theme in our local YWC.

The reflective approach has also informed the way I now understand issues of leadership, governance and strategy. I specialise in the area of youth, community and early years lecturing, and this research process has greatly enhanced my academic appreciation of collaborative governance in our sector.

1.4.5 Research Log For Reflective Practice

A research log was maintained to record progress, data, and my observations throughout the thesis study. This critical, reflective strategy is common in youth work practice (NYCI, 2022). Seventeen volumes of detailed notes have been maintained as a journal of activities and ideas throughout, so that the research can be replicated, or can aid future researchers. In particular, my speculations, observed YWC problems and possible solutions, random ideas and references were reread periodically, to aid my reflection and due consideration. The research logs acted as a repository of information, and complemented my understanding of the study findings about how YWCs are located and operate in a changing youth work sector.

1.5 Approach

The heuristic inquiry approach is chosen for the thesis study. It begins with a problem, and answers questions by researching the meaning of spontaneous human experiences (Moore, 2006), providing a greater understanding of the concepts being explored (Moustakas, 1990; Gray, 2018). As introduced in Section 1.2, there is a perceived gap in the collaborative governance literature, and the two research questions are designed to explore prevailing perceptions of YWCs to construct new knowledge. In practical terms, the experiences of sixteen stakeholders provide an understanding of how collaborative governance among them enables actions to produce policy impacts for young people. These perspectives include public funders, community, young people and nonprofit youth organisations, and the governance of such public-nonprofit collaborations is complex and worthy of research (Stone *et al.*, 2010).

The thesis study explores issues of YWC collaborative governance functioning and outcomes rather than acting as an evaluation of youth work practice (which has been extensively

discussed elsewhere) (Batsleer and Davies, 2010; Bamber and Rowley, 2012; Dickson, *et al.*, 2013; Jenkinson, 2013; Spence, 2008; Ord, 2016). In the case of YWCs, stakeholders work together to agree strategic priorities for action over a given period and these agreed actions have impacts for young people. Thus, the actions and impacts being explored in the thesis study, are as a result of collaborative governance dynamics, rather than more formal evaluations of youth work practice.

1.6 Qualitative Research Design

The research design has been influenced by my own professional skillset, and the youth work backgrounds of the research participants. Their experiences, and indeed my own experiences, offer a rich source of valuable data, so youth work methods and values have influenced the qualitative research design including storytelling, reflection and interpretivism. As such, the thesis study design is informed by *Maxwell's Interactive Model of Research Design* illustrated in Figure 1.2 below.

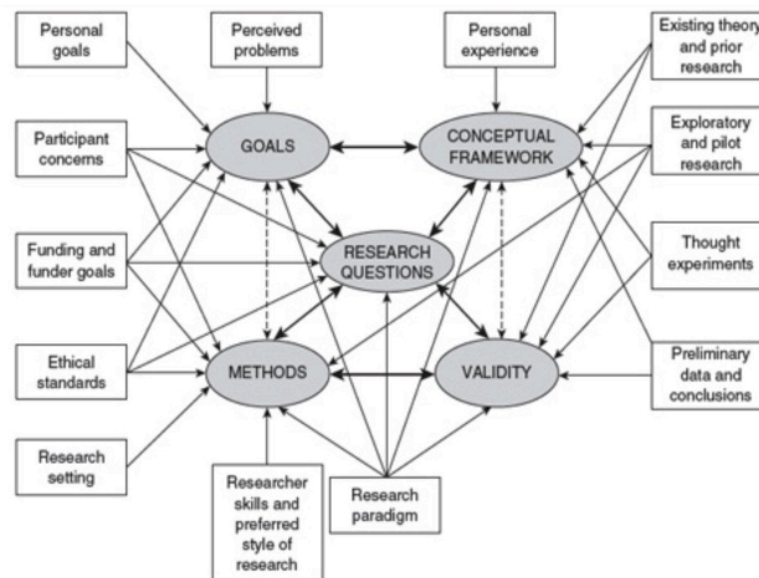


Figure 1.2: Maxwell's Interactive Model Of Research Design And Contextual Factors

(Maxwell, 2012, p. 5)

Maxwell's *Interactive Model* is used to introduce the research plan in this chapter, and the model is then further developed in Chapter 4 on methodology. This qualitative *Interactive Model* was chosen, as the research questions are at the heart of my thesis study's design both influencing, and being influenced by: the research goals; the conceptual framework; and methods. The model also has reflective qualities, rather than the linear flowchart of other designs (Maxwell, 2009). This interactive approach suits the thesis study, as it allowed approaches and designs to evolve and develop in response to emerging data at each stage of the research. As a result of this evolution and adaptability, the research process became more refined and precise, and has responded a number of

times to emerging data and developments. The interactive approach was also intuitive to those involved in the youth work sector, where reflection, questioning and problem-solving inform policy and practice, strengthening the interaction between the researcher and research population who broadly work in this way, on a daily basis.

1.7 Key Study Concepts And The Conceptual Framework

The title of the thesis study is ‘Collaborative Governance and Youth Work Policy, A study of Youth Work Committee dynamics, actions and local policy impacts’, and the meanings of each of these terms are considered here. These include brief definitions of: collaborative governance; youth work theory; youth work in Ireland; and YWCs. All these will be developed later, but are introduced here to aid the reader.

Section 1.7.5 then considers the relationships between the five core concepts: systems context; drivers; collaboration dynamics; actions; and policy impacts. These five core concepts are operationalised to interpret research participants’ reflections, and while introduced at this point, these concepts are more comprehensively explained in the literature review (Chapter 3) and in the methodology (Chapter 4). These are explored using my conceptual framework that was helpful in data analysis, but was not determining in the way in which the themes emerged. This remained flexible throughout the period of the study, and was adapted a number of times in response to emerging patterns in the data.

1.7.1 Collaborative Governance

As defined later in Section 3.4, I view collaborative governance as the governance arrangement where public bodies directly engage with non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process to make or implement public policy (Ansell and Gash, 2008). It includes those practices in which the State achieves policy goals in partnership with stakeholders and the public, by involving them in the policy process through shared decision-making (Bevir, 2010). Collaborative governance settings can include interactions between statutory, community and voluntary actors that aim to collaborate on shared issues over a specified time period, within a given geographical space (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020), suggesting that YWCs are suitable sites to explore.

1.7.2 Youth Work

As later explored in Section 2.2, I take the view that youth work in Ireland focuses on non-formal social education learning opportunities for young people, from everyday experiences. Young people are directly involved in this youth work process of identifying their challenges and opportunities, and empowered to plan organised responses in youth groups, digital youth work sessions, one to one support, detached youth work, or other youth development programmes. This is achieved through the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships between young people, their youth workers, adults and youth peers, through a variety of engagement media including leisure, music, art, sport, leadership programme work and other social opportunities.

Youth work may happen outside of the formal education system, or may be complementary to it, with the formal and non-formal running in tandem. The primary outcomes of youth work centre on the well-being of young people to empower their active, involved and valued contribution to society, family and life. In Ireland, the measurement of these youth work outcomes has been a pre-occupation of the sector and the funding government agencies, as explored later in Section 2.2.3.

1.7.3 Youth Work In Ireland

In Ireland at present, the youth work sector is adjusting to the changes introduced earlier in Section 1.1. These developments are raising issues for youth work practitioners, those managing them and governance structures overseeing youth work. There are ongoing debates in the literature on how youth work should be delivered, how it should be managed and how it should be governed. Significant policy reform has also impacted on collaboration and the distribution of decision-making powers between the youth work sector and the State (Kiely and Meade, 2018), and there have been varying reactions to these developments. The experiences of those involved in youth work are different, depending on their role and viewpoint, and these are considered in the thesis study. It is considered to be a time of great opportunity with a potential role for the those working in the sector and the young people they serve, to be more involved in the design and implementation of youth work policy (Ansell, *et al.*, 2017).

1.7.4 Youth Work Committees

YWCs have been selected as research sites as they meet many of the criteria set out in the collaborative governance material (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Douglas, *et al.*, 2020; Lincoln and Guba, 1994), as explained later in Section 4.4.1. They are considered to offer an interesting

setting for collaborative governance in youth work. YWCs operate across Education and Training Board (ETB) regions in the Republic of Ireland, and their primary role is to account for regional youth work and to report to ETB Boards on local youth work affairs. Also, YWC membership includes youth work organisations, statutory agencies and community organisations who work together to develop youth work in the ETB region, meeting the Douglas, *et al.*, (2020) collaborative governance site criteria, with potential to be included in their *Collaborative Governance Case Databank*. The roles of these members are discussed later in Section 2.4 on YWC actors, as Chapter 2 is dedicated to providing the comprehensive context of YWCs in Ireland.

1.7.5 My Conceptual Framework

An interpretivist approach has been used to understand the interrelationships between the concepts. In this approach, a range of theories seek to explain phenomena to extend existing knowledge (Abend, 2008), which then need to be explored through the experiences and perceptions of individuals. Emerson *et al.*'s (2012) *Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance* was selected as a basis for my conceptual framework. It introduces, describes and helps to explain why the research problem exists (Swanson, 2013), and is used as a guide to understand how YWC stakeholders behave, interact and work together to produce desired actions and policy impacts.

The literature highlights how the Emerson *et al.* (2012) framework has been employed successfully in empirical studies of collaborative governance (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015; Voets, *et al.*, 2015; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018). The approaches used in these three particular studies inform the research questions, and the research methodologies of the thesis study. The matrix presented by Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) for example, details important performance dimensions, by combining existing collaborative governance theory, logic model approaches and policy evaluation. Also, the logic modelling approach is familiar to those stakeholders involved in the thesis study, as it has become a significant feature of youth work policy implementation in Ireland (DCYA, 2019).

My conceptual framework is designed to help illustrate relationships and is expressed in the form of a systems model (Gray, 2018, pp. 298-299), suggesting linkages and subsets of linkages between the concepts. The thesis study focuses on relational interpretation, and my conceptual framework acts as a lens to understand these relationships. According to Gray (2018) the use of a conceptual framework 'forces' the researcher to specify what is to be studied and what is

to be omitted (p. 171). In the early stages of the thesis study, a number of alternative conceptual frameworks were considered including classical implementation theories, corporate governance models, nonprofit collaborative governance (Cornforth *et al.*, 2015), and other collaborative policymaking models such as Ansell *et al.* (2017). The following conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.3. below is an adaptation of the best aspects of these models and is viewed as a good fit for the thesis study. My adapted framework is informed by existing theory, prior research and preliminary data and conclusions (Maxwell, 2009), and specifically includes elements from: the *Black Box* (Palumbo & Calista, 1990); the *Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance* (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012); programme logic modelling (Gray, 2018); the *Policy -Implementation Process Model* (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Hill and Hupe, 2014); and the *Policy Analysis Framework* (Nagel and Neef, 1979). The contribution of each of these frameworks will be made clearer later.

My conceptual framework is designed to explore the factors in collaborative governance settings relating to actions and policy impacts on the ground. Figure 1.3 is presented below, illustrating the *system context* (Concept A), the *drivers* (Concept B), the *collaboration dynamics* (Concept C) which relate to YWC *actions* (Concept D) that have local policy *impacts* (Concept E). This conceptual framework guides the thesis study by first providing a tool to interpret what is going on in YWCs (RQ1), and secondly by demonstrating relationships between the concepts (RQ2).

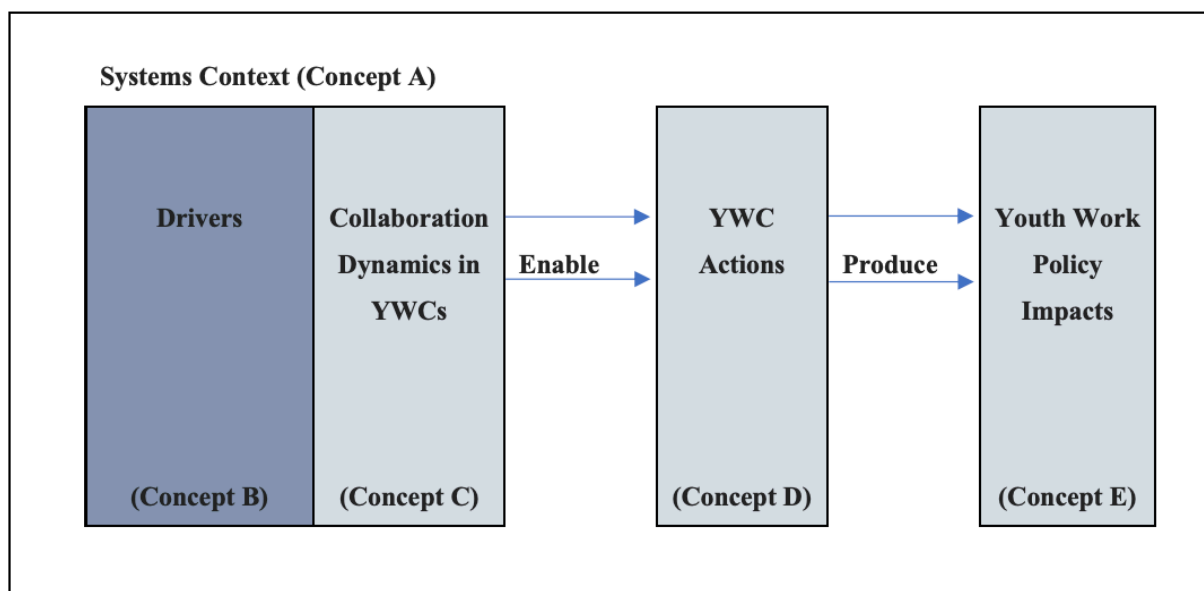


Figure 1.3: My Conceptual Framework Exploring YWC Dynamics, Actions and Policy Impacts

The thesis study's conceptual framework adapts Emerson's *Integrative Framework* in a few ways. These adaptations are considered significant, while they may at first appear modest.

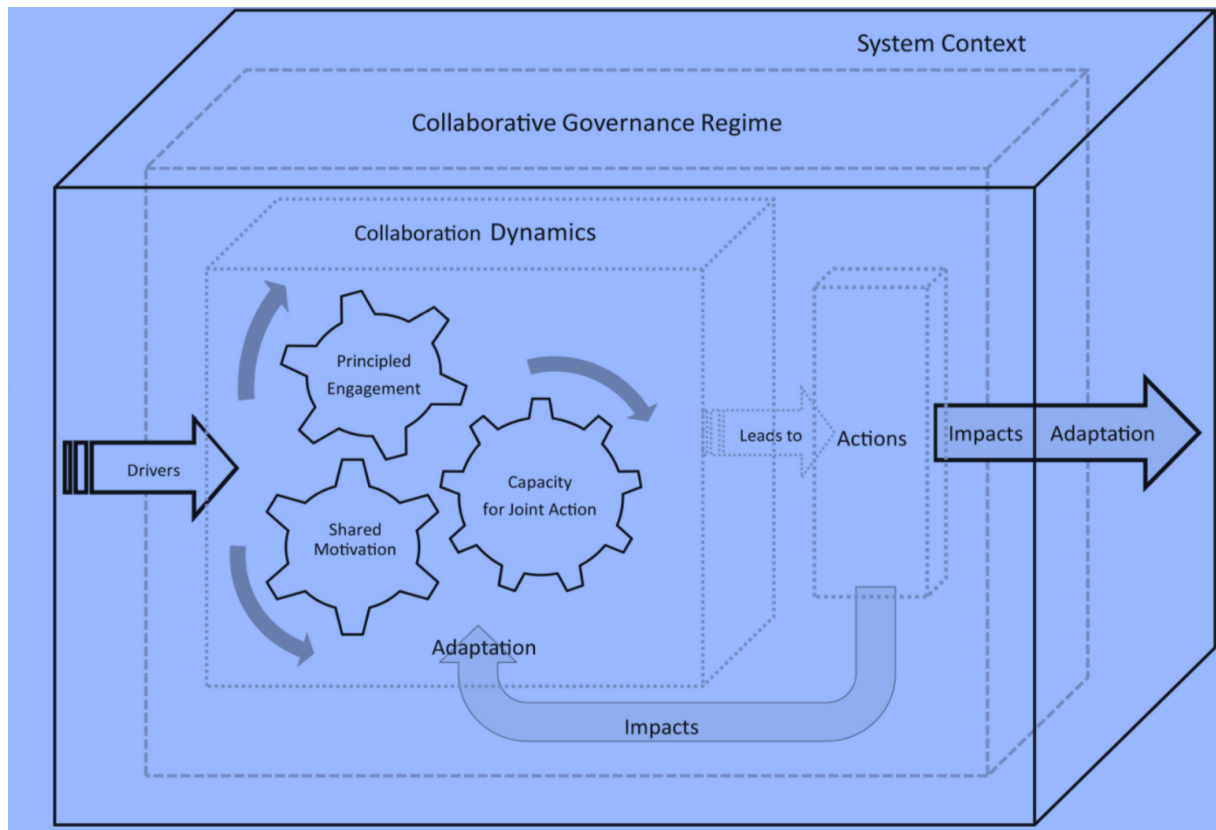


Figure 1.4: Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance

(Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 6)

Firstly, due to the qualitative nature of the thesis study, Emerson's use of the phrase 'leads to' was considered to suggest causation, so it was replaced with the word 'enables', as employed in studies by O'Boyle and Shilbury (2018), for example. Secondly, to facilitate the answering of RQ2, the use of the word 'produce' is introduced as a way of connecting to Emerson and Nabatchi's (2015) evaluation of collaborative governance settings. It is argued that these two adaptations, together with YWC references, and the labelling of concepts A to E facilitate a more complete study of RQ1 and RQ2. The core concepts illustrated above in Figure 1.3 are defined as follows:

Concept A is the **Systems Context** in which YWCs operate, and it 'influences the general parameters' (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012, p. 8) of power relationships and political dynamics. According to Emerson *et al.* (2012), the system context includes resource conditions, policy and legal frameworks, political dynamics, and the socio-economic environment in which the collaboration operates. More specifically, this system context includes: power relations; political dynamics;

resource conditions; policy legal frameworks; prior failure to address issues; network connectedness; levels of conflict or trust in the collaborative governance setting; socio-economic; and cultural health and diversity (Emerson *et al.*, 2012). In this systems context, the interrogation of collaboration dynamics later reveal in the thesis study the importance of types of power relationships. These are to be found in the context of Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.5), the literature review (Sections 3.3.1, 3.5.1, 3.5.4, 3.9.2.2), as a feature of the stakeholder experiences described and discussed in the findings in Chapter 5, in the discussion (Section 6.2) and in the conclusion (7.5.2).

The ‘socio-economic, cultural and political context’ of growing up is very important in the life cycle of young people (Kiely and Kennedy, 2005, p. 169). For the purposes of this YWC study, the systems context includes youth work legislation, youth work policy frameworks, and the status of the target young people in the local regions. For example, youth work policies and legislation, in the Irish context include the *National Youth Strategy*, the *ETB Act (2013)* and *Youth Work Act (2001)* and these are elaborated upon in the context synthesis in Chapter 2.

Drivers (Concept B) provide the impetus for collaboration, motivating members to become involved in YWCs and participate in collaborative governance. Examples include leadership, consequential incentives, interdependence and uncertainty (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 12). For the purposes of the thesis study these are taken to include YWC member incentives to join, interdependence, leadership, opportunities for YWC members and their organisations, and fear of uncertainty about the future of youth work or the youth work sector, which members feel can be allayed by being involved.

The three **Collaboration Dynamics** (Concept C) include the principled engagement, the shared motivation and the capacity for joint action shared between the collaboration stakeholders. The conceptual framework maps how these three dynamics work together to ‘propel’ the actions of the collaboration (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 722) that would not have been achieved by organisations ‘acting alone’ (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012, p. 17). These ‘collaboration dynamics foster desired actions and outcomes’ (Emerson, 2018, p. 3) and ‘enable’ the actions of the collaboration (O’Boyle and Shilbury, 2018).

Principled Engagement includes: discovery; definition; deliberation; and determination (Emerson *et al.*, 2012; Emerson, 2018). Manifestations in YWCs comprise: discovery of YWC common and different interests; definition of local problems or challenges for youth populations; agreed shared interests for YWC actors;

agreed planned changes (example: shared theory of change); and strategies for collective YWC purpose (example: Local Youth Work Plans, LYWPs).

Shared Motivation includes: trust; mutual understanding; internal legitimacy, where actors are recognised as trustworthy and credible; and shared commitment (Emerson *et al.*, 2012). For the purposes of the thesis study these are taken to include enhanced understanding of YWC actors' interests and local youth population needs; shared commitments to addressing these needs; and improved levels of trust among YWC actors.

Capacity for Joint Action includes: procedural/ institutional arrangements; leadership; knowledge; and resources (Emerson *et al.*, 2012). For the thesis study these include: the sharing of knowledge; networking; leadership; setting of procedures (example: Terms of Reference, TORs); and resources. (Donahue, 2004, Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015, Emerson, 2018)

Actions (Concept D) include 'securing endorsements, educating constituents or the public, enacting policy measures (new laws or regulations), marshalling external resources, deploying staff, siting and permitting facilities, building or cleaning up, carrying out new management practices, monitoring implementation, and enforcing compliance' (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p 18). They shape the overall quality and extent to which a collaborative governance setting is developed and effective (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 6). Actions attributable to collaborative governance are a primary focus of the thesis study, where the action by the whole may be more effective than when YWC members act alone. These are taken to incorporate YWCs enabling young people's interests, garnering decision-maker support for these local youth interests, and identifying resources.

While an action often results from the collaboration of the members, it does not necessarily need to be delivered collaboratively by all members. That is to say, the manifestation of collaboration may be demonstrated through a shared motivation, but the action may be fulfilled by one of the members on behalf of all on the YWC, where they agree to act as lead agent, for example. To labour the point, while the delivery of the action may be linked to a single member, it is linked to an intended impact agreed by all YWC members.

Policy Impacts (Concept E) are the 'Collaborative Outcomes' that 'aim to alter pre-existing or projected conditions' (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012, p. 7), and are the 'results on the ground' (Innes and Booher, 1999, p. 419). Emerson *et al.*, 2012 concedes that impacts are 'challenging to operationalise', but offer that:

‘Impacts are intentional (and unintentional) changes of state within the system context; they are alterations in a pre-existing or projected condition that has been deemed undesirable or in need of change. Impacts may also include the added value of a new social good or technological innovation developed by collaborative action. Impacts can be physical, environmental, social, economic, and/or political.’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p 18)

These changes are the improvements in services, expansion of provision or allocation of resources (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). Effectiveness is described by Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) as the primary performance dimension for outcomes, when assessing target policy goals where the primary indicator is ‘the extent to which the desired change in the targeted public condition, good, service or product is achieved’ (p. 732). Thus, indicators of improved quality, quantity or availability of services or supports for young people in line with intended policy, are to be interpreted here as policy impacts.

So, for the purpose of the thesis study, impacts are the changes that result from the collaboration’s actions, relative to the intentions of youth work policy. These involve the changes that are centred on achieving positive outcomes for young people (DCYA, 2014a). Therefore, impacts are the ‘alteration’ in conditions (Emerson *et al.*, 2012) on the ground (Innes and Booher, 1999) for local youth populations that resulted from YWC actions. Using the *Black Box Framework* (Palumbo and Calista, 1990) included in the literature review, policy sets out to address a situation or set of conditions, and impacts are the outcomes that YWC actions achieved on the ground for the local youth population. Indicators of these included YWC stakeholder experiences of situations where their collaborative actions altered conditions for youth populations in local areas. These manifest in the research data as addressing or responding to policy calls for more effective use of resources, producing additional or enhanced facilities, and inclusion of young people in decision-making. So, they are the alterations in conditions for the youth population that resulted from YWC actions.

These concepts are further discussed in Sections 3.5 and 3.6 of the literature review.

1.8 Contribution And Significance Of The Thesis Study

It is hoped that the findings and conclusions of the thesis study contribute to the knowledge base about YWCs and youth work in Ireland. In particular, an aim of the thesis study is to contribute to the understanding and development of collaborative governance theory, by examining actions and policy impacts in the YWC setting, as seen predominantly from the perspective of the stakeholders. A review of the literature suggests a need for such a thesis study, for example in contributing to *The Collaborative Governance Case Databank* (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020).

While there is academic agreement that collaborative governance is a useful explanatory framework (Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2005; Howlett *et al.* 2009; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015; Bryson *et al.*, 2015), it has been argued that more empirical evidence on actions and policy impacts in such settings is necessary (Douglas, et al., 2020; Emerson, 2018). The thesis study provides a depth of understanding of how collaborative actions relate to impacts in practice, and highlights enablers and their barriers. In terms of the research questions, the relationship between these YWC actions and policy impacts is evaluated by exploring the experiences of their members, former members and other stakeholders.

In addition, these YWC stakeholder experiences inform the debate on collaborative governance performance, and the enabling factors. They shared instances where dynamics enabled YWC actions that impacted the youth population in those regions studied. These experiences provide additional context, developing the understanding of concepts A to E in the conceptual framework.

From a youth work practice perspective, the thesis study also contributes to an understanding of how collaborative governance in YWCs enhances the effective oversight of limited resources to deliver actions that achieve identifiable outcomes. Actions produce policy impacts when certain factors are present. It is recognised that youth work policymakers, academics and those interested in collaborative governance theories are a viable target audience for a greater understanding of how stakeholders view the functioning and impacts of YWCs. A systematic review of the literature relating to youth work by Dickson *et al.* (2013) expressly identifies the need for additional research in youth work. In particular, by listening to the experiences of those involved in YWCs, and understanding actions and impacts in such a setting, the thesis study is expected to contribute to the ‘systematic map’ of youth work literature conducted in Dickson *et al.* (2013) that recommended Ireland-specific research in the area of youth work.

1.9 Thesis Study Outline

When ‘writing up qualitative research’, Bryman (2012) suggests the following structure: introduction; literature review/background; research design/methods; findings/results; discussion; and conclusions. Douglas *et al.*’s, (2020, p. 495) review of collaborative governance literature suggests that ‘the empirical literature still struggles to produce robust generalisations and cumulative knowledge that link contextual, situational and institutional design factors to process and outcomes’. For this reason, Chapter 2 provides the context of YWCs, and

introduces some of the institutional design factors. The experiences that emerge in the interview transcripts in Chapter 5, provide details of the situational factors that can be present in these settings. The examination of the concepts in the literature review, and the conceptual framework that has been developed from these concepts, provide an opportunity to explore linkages between processes and outcomes. YWCs actions, as described by the stakeholders, are linked to policy impacts. The flow of the thesis argument is largely based on this proposed structure, and is illustrated in Figure 1.5 below.

Argument Flow in the Thesis Study	
<u>Introduction</u> What is the research about?	
<u>RQ1</u> How do YWCs in Ireland function?	<u>RQ2</u> How do stakeholders perceive the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts?
<u>Context and Critique of Youth Work Policy</u> Provides the policy context and interrogates the YWC documentation	
<u>Literature Review</u> 1. Defines the concepts 2. Identifies Literature gap 3. Considers Methods to study the concepts	
<u>Method</u> Gathered stakeholders experiences of where actions had impacts (RQ2) and factors contributing to the impacts of actions (RQ1). Researcher interpreted this data to understand how it answer two RQs.	
<u>Findings</u> Stakeholders experienced collaboration, actions and impacts. There were observations on what factors are contributing to the impacts of actions	
<u>Discussion</u> Interprets the meaning and relevance of findings relating to the literature, grey literature (context) and RQs. Making an argument for the overall conclusion, acknowledging limitations.	
On Enabling Actions	On producing Impacts
<u>Conclusion</u> YWC actions produce youth work policy impacts Themes and subthemes emerged from the interview data: (i) hearing and acting on the voices of young people; (ii) understanding the structure and dynamics of YWCs; and (iii) the concept of power in such a collaborative governance setting.	
CG enables YWC Actions	YWC Actions can produce policy impacts when there are CG factors

Figure 1.5: Argument Flow in the Thesis Study

Chapter 2 studies the policy context for YWCs, by examining the policy materials and relevant literature in the youth work sector. A review of ‘grey literature’ (Gray, 2018; Bryman, 2012) was considered and is presented, providing the policy context and interrogating the YWC documentation. Chapter 3 considers theoretical frameworks to answer these questions on enabling and producing. The literature relating the theoretical concepts is discussed, where the findings of the literature review are presented in terms of collaborative governance, the *Integrative Framework* and empirical studies employing this framework. While significant interest in collaborative governance is to be found, evaluating such a setting remains a problem. This identifies a gap in the literature, linking collaborative actions to policy impacts. A critical evaluation of the literature is discussed, so that there is a clear rationale for adopting the approaches and methods used. Of particular interest is the literature which links collaborative actions to policy impacts (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012), the productivity of collaborative governance (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015), their enablers and barriers (O’Boyle and Shilbury, 2018; Vodden, 2015).

Chapter 4 outlines the qualitative research methods used to gather the interview data. It details the research methodology, based on the approaches identified in the empirical studies in the literature review. The rationale for choosing a qualitative research approach to gather data is supported by Chapter 4, where the interpretive methods used to analyse the data are explained. The concepts are operationalised further in Chapter 4, based on the *Operationalisation of Concepts and Data Analysis Coding Themes* template.

The findings are presented in Chapter 5, together with the preliminary data gleaned from the research participants. Chapter 6 discusses the implications of the thesis study for practice and policy, whether collaborative governance produces policy impacts (RQ2), and if so how collaboration dynamics enable this (RQ1) in the context of the theory and literature. In Chapter 7 conclusions are drawn, and recommendations and reflections made relating to collaborative governance theory, policy and practice.

1.10 Chapter Summary

Bryman (2012) suggests that the introduction provides an ‘immediate sense’ of what the thesis study is about ‘and where its focus lies (p. 695), so Chapter 1 introduced the research problem framing the research aim, and the two research questions. The research goals, design and approach were also detailed. To facilitate the reader, the thesis study concepts were defined, and the

conceptual framework used to facilitate an understanding of the relationships between these concepts. The significance of this understanding was expressed in practical and personal professional terms for YWCs in the context of the literature. Further context is provided in Chapter 2 and the literature is further discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2

Context and Critique of Youth Work Theory, Policy and YWC practice

2.1 Introduction

As introduced in the conceptual framework in Chapter 1, collaborative governance takes place within a context. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to place YWCs in the context of youth work theory, policy and practice. According to Bryson *et al.*, 2015, in empirical research, the assessment of leadership, power and environmental factors are key. This chapter considers these three concepts here, as it is important to clarify the sources of power dynamics and the environmental factors affecting YWCs, and tracks recent changes in governance and policy developments in youth work in Ireland. This intends to make sense of what has been happening in the wider youth work governance and policy landscape that is relevant in the proliferation of YWCs. This context helps to understand the complex nature of accountability, between power dynamics and political outcomes (Bryson *et al.*, 2015), which is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2 begins in Section 2.2 with a brief overview of what youth work is, and what is sets out to achieve for young people. Various perspectives of youth work theory are considered, in particular how voices of young people are heard, and the concept of power. Section 2.3 provides further commentary on youth work literature, but in the context of youth policies, governance, and the role of the State in youth work, as this supports a greater understanding of some of the experiences of stakeholders presented in Chapter 5.

Section 2.4 introduces the YWC actors, considering the membership. In particular it examines their roles and responsibilities, proving useful perspective of why they may be saying what the recount in the sixteen interviews. Section 2.5 plots the functions and historic development of YWCs. YWC documentation and materials gathered from across the country has informed the context of the thesis study. This is used to help understand what is already known about YWCs and relevant policy environments (Hart, 1998). This valuable material has

been synthesised to aid the reader understand Irish youth work policy and YWC context. These are considered, to place the thesis study in context of statutory funding and social policy (Forde *et al.*, 2009). This is important, as youth service in Ireland ‘has been very much shaped by the context from which it emerged’ (Kiely and Kennedy, 2005, p. 182).

In summary, Chapter 2 sets the context for the thesis study, explaining how the Youth Work Sector is working in relation to YWCs. It provides: a synthesis of governance and oversight of youth work policy (Figure 2.1); a synthesis of youth work policy in Ireland (Figure 2.2); the roles and responsibilities of the YWC actors; and analysis of YWC documentation (Tables 2.2 to 2.4). This context informs the interview schedule in Appendix F, guides the discussion in Chapter 6 by contextualising the interview findings outlined in Chapter 5, and supports the conclusions drawn in Chapter 7.

2.2 Youth Work Theory

Given the thesis topic, it is important to acknowledge and discuss the many interpretations of youth work (Batsleer and Davies, 2010). I take the view that youth work develops supportive relationships between young people and youth workers, parents, families, schools, society and peers. It aims to build young people’s emotional and social development in a non-formal educational setting. It introduces new experiences, and fosters increased confidence, self-esteem, ambition, resilience and empathy. Cooper (2018) argues that youth work should be understood in terms of the value of what youth workers do (Cooper, 2018). As there are blurred borders between youth work and other policies (European Commission, 2014), it is also important that youth work is distinguished from other approaches to work with young people (Davies, 2005). Youth work is a professional practice informed by different disciplines and should not be confused with youth services, youth care and youth support. Therefore, the thesis study of YWCs is carried out with regard to youth work practices, goals, principles, and outcomes.

2.2.1 Youth Work Practice

The literature on youth work in Ireland, including Dickson *et al.* (2013), Indecon (2012) and Brady *et al.* (2016), provides some clarity of what is understood by the terms ‘youth work’ and youth work ‘outcomes’, and how these both relate to policy. Youth work practice is informed by theories (Centre for Effective Services, 2014a) but these are often contested when applied in practice contexts. In general, youth work can be defined in terms of a public good

(Bowden and Martin Lanigan, 2011) and as a process, product and practice (Ord, 2016). It is based on values and ethics (Cooper, 2018), is value-led, dialogical, empowering and educative (Bamber, 2013). Youth work is further categorised as those activities taking place outside the traditional education curricular area, being viewed as embracing both informal and non-formal learning processes through participation which is voluntary (European Union, 2010). As an informal learning process (Batsleer, 2008) there is experiential learning in youth work (Ord, 2012) where young people learn and develop through activities, conversation and association (de St Croix, 2018). Youth work is therefore primarily concerned with education and development, and it relies on the voluntary engagement of young people where the role of voluntary youth work organisations is vital (Devlin, 2017). It is concerned with the development of the young person (Jenkinson, 2000), particularly personal and social development, and is fundamental to empowering and enabling them (Costello Committee, 1984; Forde, 1995).

Youth work sometimes serves all young people without distinction, referred to as universal work, and sometimes it is more focused on individual groups. In Ireland, youth work is primarily funded by government initiatives, either as open access mainstream youth work for the general youth population or targeted to tackle the social exclusion of young people deemed to be at risk or disadvantaged (Holton, 2017). For example, UBU² is a targeted government funding scheme for targeted youth programmes. Some organisations perform youth work as part of their mission, but they also work with other target groups that can include children or adults (European Commission, 2014). The aims of youth work include personal and social development, social change, education, career guidance and safety (Dickson *et al.*, 2013). Youth work also aims to engage with society and bring about social change in an unequal society (Jenkinson, 2000). It addresses key social issues in a way that simultaneously creates value for money while enhancing democratic life and combatting social disadvantage (NYCI, 2018).

Youth work is participative (Government of Ireland, 2013; European Union, 2010) in that young people choose to be involved and they feel accepted from the place they are at (Batsleer and Davies, 2010). Trusting relationships are developed with youth workers and friends in the context of diversity and equity (Batsleer and Davies, 2010). These activities are further classified by the means of delivery, whether via voluntary or professional youth leaders

² UBU is not an abbreviation

or youth workers and by the management structure self-managed, co-managed or managed (avoid the use of footnotes) under educational guidance (Verschelden *et al.*, 2009, Bamber and Murphy, 1999). Youth work outcomes are also subject to and influenced by situational dynamics (European Union, 2010).

2.2.2 What Youth Work Seeks To Achieve

This is a thesis study of YWCs, not a study of youth work practice as this has been done previously, however an understanding of what youth work seeks to achieve places into context the work of those involved in YWCs. In particular, youth work is concerned with building relationships. These relationships start with relationships between the youth worker and the young person, but also extend to relationships with family, friends, school and society. Trust is key in the building or rebuilding of these relationships. The youth work process of building relationships and trust takes the young person from the point they are at, without judgement, and based on a set of principles to engages young people to attain goals.

2.2.3 Youth Work Outcomes

Of particular relevance to the thesis study, is the well-documented move towards outcomes-led (MacKie and McGinley, 2012) and evidence-based youth work practice (Jenkinson, 2013). Some view outcomes-focussed youth work as destructive and disruptive of youth work provision, and undermining its practice (Kiely and Meade, 2018). While youth work practice tends to focus on empowerment, building resilience and supporting young people out of their situations, current policy centres around services that run the risk of actually doing the opposite. Policy imperatives tend to respond to identified needs, but sometimes through a problematic lens where young people ‘consume’ a service, rather than being more involved in decision-making processes. According to Gaynor (2011, p. 27) current State services substitute ‘self-help for redistribution and self-reliance for state accountability’. Young people often become long term ‘service users’, and thus further dependent on State services. De St Croix (2018) is particularly critical of state’s monitoring and evaluation of youth work outcomes, believing that this approach reinforces a culture of performativity in services. These can damage the youth work process as it has the potential how youth workers understand their roles and design their youth work. However youth work practitioners view these developments on youth work outcomes, State funding is contingent upon their measurement, so monitoring and evaluation have become a reality of our work.

State policy relating to youth work outcomes is clarified by DCYA, which was the government department responsible for youth work at the time:

‘In the context of public policy, indicators enable decision-makers to track progress towards the achievement of intended outputs, outcomes, goals and objectives. Indicators can suggest inputs, process, outputs and outcomes. Effective indicators provide a sense of whether expected results are being achieved’ (DCYA, 2017, p. 6).

As such, policy outcomes are key agenda topics in the youth work sector and, while there are disparate views and opinions on these developments, there is sectoral acceptance of their merit.

Youth work policy outcomes are drawn from youth work theory (Centre for Effective Services, 2014a) and they are more clearly understood in the context of the youth work theory. The Centre for Effective Services further clarifies that ‘when purpose, activities and intended outcomes are linked together in a conscious way, it becomes a theory of change, setting out why and how interventions can be expected to lead to desired changes in outcomes for individuals, groups, and social circumstances’ (Centre for Effective Services, 2014b, p. 22). It is important to visualise and understand the value of what youth work can do (Bamber, 2011). It is highly valued by, and beneficial to, young people (Ritchie and Ord, 2017). Youth work is a process-orientated and outcomes-based model (Holton, 2017) and its impact can often be determined in the medium to long-term, only making sense if it is seen in the context of its progression over time (Ord, 2014). A good youth work process achieves positive outcomes, including unexpected ones (Redmond, 2013).

On behalf of DCYA, the Centre for Effective Services commissioned a literature review of international youth work research which identified common themes of personal development, empowerment and voluntary participation (Dickson *et al.*, 2013) which led to positive outcomes for young people. Youth work purports to make a determined contribution to improving outcomes for young people. ‘Outcomes are considered to be any data/findings measured ‘after’ youth work as seen as a direct result of children and young people’s participation in youth work’ (Dickson *et al.*, 2013, p. 22). This focus on producing outcomes pushes those in youth work to quantify or evidence the impacts of their work.

McGarry (2013, p. 6) argues that youth work practice is often defined in terms of *soft skills* which may be difficult to monitor, evaluate and understand outcomes, with negative effects: ‘The absence of an agreed and universally used outcomes evaluation tool in the national context leaves the outcomes of youth work programmes invisible’. Youth work delivers a wide range of positive outcomes for young people including making friends, providing new activities and opportunities, non-formal and formal learning opportunities and advice and information (Devlin and Gunning, 2009). Youth work adds value to the lives of young people through helping them progress their life-skills, including but not limited to creating a sense of belonging, improving citizenship, fostering community spirit and promoting inclusion. It actively helps to develop a set of skills that prepares a young person for the challenges of societal life. In the literature, patterns emerge for youth work outcomes. Youth work outcomes are centred on human and social capital such as the capacity to engage in meaningful relationships with others, themselves and wider society (Dickson *et al.*, 2013). The principal outcomes identified from empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of youth work encompass the following: a young person’s relationship with others; a sense of self, community and society; health and well-being; values and beliefs; and formal education and training (Dickson *et al.*, 2013). These are developed with examples of common individual measures in Table 2.1.

	Examples of common individual measures
Relationship with Others	Positive peer relationship; positive relationships with adults; pro-social skills; leadership skills; decision -making skills; empowerment
Sense of self	Personal development; self-esteem; confidence; self-efficacy; identity; character
Community and society	Civic engagement; strengthen bonds to community; partnership working; develop new social interests
Health and well-being	Reduced alcohol/substance misuse; diversion from crime; prevention of risky behaviours; making healthy choices; general mental health
Values and beliefs	Future aspirations; values; positive diversity attitudes
Formal Education and training	Academic achievement; strengthen bonds to school

Table 2.1: Themes for youth work outcomes

(Adapted from Dickson *et al.*, p. 29)

Proximal outcomes, those garnered from face-to-face youth work, include changes to attitudes and beliefs, skills development, and changes of behaviour and knowledge. Distal outcomes further emerge including positive movements in education, improved relations with adults, advanced social conditions, enhanced economic conditions, and improved safety and service provision. Proximal outcomes are rarely the ultimate intention from a policy

perspective, while distal outcomes are associated with longer-term plans (Rossi *et al.*, 2018, p. 68).

The longitudinal impact into adulthood of youth work can be lost in the outcome measurement of youth work. Melvin (2017) suggests that the identification of ‘soft’ outcomes can be straightforward, such as the proximal outcomes which manifest shortly after engagement in youth work, but that there are other life skills that will not be evident until later in life. Therefore, the measurement of youth work impacts take time, and in some instances can take a lifetime before they can be recognised. Longitudinal impacts that manifest in adulthood, is of significant public benefit, but may not be seen or manifest for many years.

Outcomes suggest how much better off the organisation’s clients, or society as a whole, are as a result of that organisation’s activities (Larkin, 2013). It is worth repeating here that this YWC thesis study is looking at impacts for youth populations, not at the impacts of youth interventions on individual young people, making Larkin’s (2013) interpretation valuable. These outcomes are further classified as requiring evaluation post engagement with the youth work process and link directly to the youths’ participation in such youth work (Dickson *et al.*, 2013). Improved outcomes ultimately leads to greater service design and consequently better outcomes for young people. Evidencing outcomes and impacts is now a common feature of youth work practice, so it could be considered that the language on actions and policy impacts in the research questions, would be familiar to YWC actors.

2.2.4 Youth Participation In Decision-Making

The issue of youth participation, and how it is defined, has been debated in the literature. The term ‘participation’ generally refers to the process of ‘sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives’ (Hart, 1992, p.5). Using an eight-rung ladder as a metaphor ‘borrowed’ from Arnstein (1969), he describes the highest degree of participation as ‘child-initiated, shared decisions with adults’ (p. 8), while the lowest forms of participation are described as manipulation, decoration and tokenism. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child gives children the right to have their views given heard and acted upon in matters affecting them. Lundy (2007) developed a model clarifying a practitioner’s duties relating to an individual child’s right to be heard on matters directly affecting their lives through space (opportunity to express a view), voice (facilitated to express their view), audience (view listened to) and influence (view acted upon). In an Irish context, this model was broadly adopted by state agencies including Dáil na nÓg (DNN),

Comhairle na nÓg (CNN), DCEDIY, and Tusla – Child and Family Agency, where the four facilitate young people’s rights to be heard in both personal and public decision-making. Young people collectively have right to have their views heard in public decision-making, such as service planning and review.

2.2.5 Defining Power

Power has been defined in terms of a comparable relation between people, and is exercised by those who prevail over others in decision-making situations (Dahl, 1957). For Foucault (1976, p. 94) ‘power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations’. On the conceptualisation and study of power, Lukes (1974) suggests that there are dimensions in the study of power, including the less visible operating through social arrangements and collective forces that suppress areas of conflict. Personal interests are secondary to shared interests. More recently, Lukes (2021) contends that power must be observed in the broad sense, rather than narrowly. In the case of YWC dynamics for instance, this can be viewed as people ceding historically held power in favour of collaboration, partnership, power-sharing and networking for the greater good of young people. ‘Distance’ from decision-making (Hofstede, 1980, p. 65) is a feature of YWC power relations between the various stakeholders discussed later in Chapter 6, where the role of the State is not neutral, and where its agents may exercise a degree of power in order to fulfil youth work policy agendas.

More specific to the study of power in youth work, Batsleer (2008) suggests adult/child power dynamics are caught within a matrix of power. In his study of power, ethics and youth work, Howard Sercombe (1998) suggests that power is one of the most fundamental in any study of human relations. He proposes that power is a mutual relation, and given up, or “ceded” to another person. He refers to this as cooperation, but suggests that at times these relationships can be corrupt or oppressive when power is used for self-interest, rather than, for example, the interests of young people.

Wildavsky (1979) suggests that the study of power in policy analysis is an art-form, more reliant on creativity than analysis, and that has been my experience in studying the way it has emerged in the data across all the concepts of interest (A to E). As such, these numerous perspectives of power have influenced how power-play has been interpreted in YWCs. For

example, power can be ceded (Foucault, 1976; Sercombe, 1998) by those with it, or taken by oppressors in their own interests. People can sense a distance from decision-making powers (Hofstede, 1980), depending on their strength in the social hierarchy. This becomes important in understanding the role of the State in relation to both youth work, and the statutory role of the ETBS. For the purposes of the thesis study, power is not something that is taken, or ceded, it is the effect of a relationship between the parties, where individual interests are secondary to the common good.

2.3 Youth Policies, Governance, And The Role Of The State In Youth Work

2.3.1 Search Strategy

To provide important policy context, a review (Booth, *et al.*, 2012; Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005; Jesson, *et al.*, 2011) of policy literature was conducted. The approach was adopted from Batory's (2019) method, and Dickson *et al.*'s (2013) review of youth work literature, as introduced later in Chapter 3. A number of search parameters were set to include material in English since the year 2000, related to Ireland and UK largely, including books, journals, government reports and publications (Bell, 1999). It has been argued that 'Government publications are a useful source of data, policy documents and reports for those researching in education and social science' (Bell, 1999, p. 78), so the Government Publications Office website was a valuable resource.

A number of steps were taken to search for policy materials relevant to the two RQs. A 'snowballing' technique (Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005) was repeated in the policy search, where the references and bibliographies of policy materials were used to signpost other related policy materials. So for example, when a DCYA policy document was reviewed, the bibliography was checked for additional policies and government publications in that field. This approach identified additional youth work policy materials that could be used.

The 'cited ref searches' technique (UCD Library, 2020) was re-employed for the grey literature review, to search 'Irish' or 'Ireland' AND 'Youth Work' AND 'Policy' OR 'Policies', where the number of listed citations pinpoints further journals or articles. Again, this weighted the significance of youth work policy materials, from the number of times they are cited by others, signifying popularity or significance. Terms such as 'Reform' and 'Participation' were

added to the keyword list as ‘more subject terms’ were discovered (Bell, 1999, p. 89). An effort was made to avoid information of ‘peripheral interest’ (Bell, p. 66), and restrict items to ‘the most significant and most relevant, because it is simply not feasible to include everything’ (Denscombe, 2003, p. 195). A mind map (Buzan, 2002) was developed to connect patterns in the youth work policies and governance materials. The data from this mapping process informed the synthesis as detailed below, shedding some light on the context for the discussions of findings later in Chapter 6.

Youth work policies were summarised using youth work policy documents, legislation, reports, commentary, DCYA and DCEDIY policy materials, and an analysis of the systematic review conducted by Dickson *et al.*, (2013). Examples of policy materials included national youth strategies, legislation and policy frameworks. While these provided insights into government policy intentions, academic commentary in youth work journals such as *Irish Youth Work Scene*, *Youth Studies Ireland* and *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies* gave useful context and perspective. The snowballing technique (Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005) was employed, where citations in policy material were used to signpost additional relevant material in the field. This yielded a range of policy documents and commentary to provide a coherent understanding of youth work context (Concept A) in which YWCs operate. In this review, youth work policy outcomes were also identified informing the discussion on the relationship between YWC actions (Concept D) and policy impacts (Concept E) in Chapter 6.

2.3.2 Changing Modes Of Youth Work Governance In Ireland

The thesis study took place in the context of the Irish youth sector during a period of significant policy, governance and regulatory reform. The extensive development of voluntary youth work organisations of volunteers, paid management, professional staff and state investment since the early 1990s heralded a need for accountability ‘supporting appropriate oversight and stewardship’ relating to governance (DCYA, 2014b, p. 7). In particular, the thesis study was conducted during a period of funding reform, when youth work programmes such as the TYFS and UBU were being introduced by DCYA or DCEDIY. Based on the findings in the *VFMPR*, the purpose of such funding was to support young people to overcome adverse circumstances by strengthening their personal and social competencies. These policy and governance developments significantly influenced the relationships between YWC members in terms of issues of power relations, trust and shared commitments, and contributed to the dynamics in the collaborative governance setting. Power, in particular, later emerges as a significant theme. As outlined below in Figure 2.1, the analysis and synthesis of the documents

revealed a number of themes to be discussed in subsequent text including decision-making capacity, budgets, resources, mandate and TORs. The interrelated components of this synthesis are explained in turn below, where details of the actors, their roles and their responsibilities are provided. Relationships between these actors are noted, as they influence participation and behaviour in YWCs, which is a focus of the thesis study.

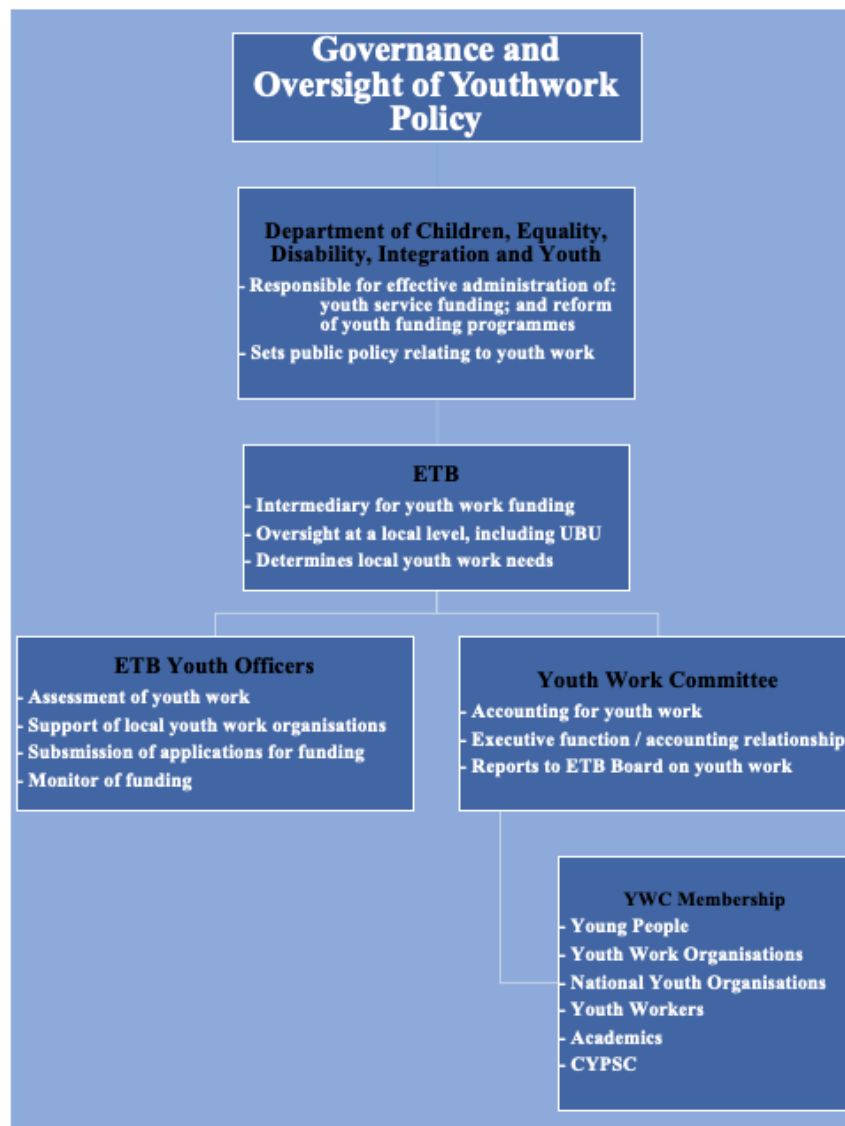


Figure 2.1: Synthesis of the Governance and Oversight of Youth Work Policy

2.3.3 The Governance Role Of DCEDIY

Figure 2.1 illustrates that the DCEDIY, formerly DCYA, is responsible for the administration of youth funding, and the reform of youth funding programmes. In its role as the grantor, DCEDIY has the overall responsibility for the scheme-level performance of funded programmes. To this end, it must monitor each youth funding scheme's performance and communicate decisions it takes on the implementation of youth services, policies, and funding

to funded organisations and ETBs (DCYA, 2019). DCEDIY is also responsible for the communication of individual scheme performance to the public and interested parties, indicating accountability to society, community, taxpayers, and stakeholders. The DCYA/ DCEDIY is also broadly responsible for setting government policy in relation to young people and youth affairs, and advising the Minister. These policies incorporate the *Youth Work Act (2001)*; *BOBF*; and *VFMPR* and provide context and inform the operationalisation of research concepts later.

Additionally, the DCEDIY is responsible for ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard in decision-making. For example, young people must be afforded the opportunity to be heard (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, p. 6), and have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. As set out in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015 – 2020*, the participation function in DCEDIY is largely fulfilled through engagement with Dáil na nÓg (DNN) and Comhairle na nÓg (CNN), (DCYA, 2015b). The need for policymakers to consider the voice of young people is specified in this DCEDIY strategy and generally, CNN has representation on YWCs. The voice of young people in YWCs is a particular area of interest, as including the targets of policy in decision-making is a focus of collaborative governance.

2.3.4 The Governance Role Of Local ETBs

While youth work policy is set nationally, it is generally implemented locally through ETBs who support the provision, coordination, administration and assessment of youth work services in their functional area (Government of Ireland, 2013). As illustrated in Figure 2.1, there are three ETB functions: they act as intermediary for youth work funding; to support oversight at local level; and to assess local youth work need. Firstly, the role of local ETBs is to act as an intermediary for youth work funding on behalf of DCEDIY. The Department are the grantor, but the funding is administered by ETBs where service level agreements are signed with designated local youth work providers. This responsibility impacts the behaviour of YWC actors, as 'funding' relationships emerge. Secondly, while public policy relating to youth work is set by DCEDIY at the national level, oversight of the implementation of this at a local level rests with local ETBs. Thirdly, for funding purposes, ETBs determine local youth work needs in area profiles (APNASR) and prepare service requirements on behalf of DCEDIY. In doing so, priority actions are determined by directing the funding for vulnerable young people to geographic regions of socio-economic disadvantage from data such as deprivation indices. In addition, special themes including disability, direct provision status, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Plus (LGBTI+), educational disadvantage, cultural status, mental

health concerns or marginalisation are taken into consideration are part of their function. These are statutory responsibilities as laid down in The *Education and Training Boards Act (2013)*, which outlines these general functions which:

‘support the provision, coordination, administration and assessment of youth work services in its functional area and provide such information as may be requested by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in relation to such support’ (Government of Ireland, 2013, p. 12).

The youth work function of ETBs, as prescribed under section 10(1)(j), explains the executive function of the ETB, and specify that it is the role of the ETB CEO to report youth work to the Board (ETBI, 2022b). This reporting may be informed by the work of YWCs, who have an ‘accounting’ but no executive function within the ETB. This means that while the ETB staff account for their functions concerning youth work to YWCs, the YWC has no remit to direct the ETB in relation to any matter. There is an accountability relationship here, but no executive or directive function as these are the responsibility of ETB staff and ETB CEO (Government of Ireland, 2013).

2.3.5 The Support, Monitoring And Assessment Role Of Youth Officers

The ETB employs Youth Officers to support designated local youth work organisations with their grant funding applications to DCEDIY and to monitor reporting. The quality of youth work is assessed by the Youth Officer on behalf of the ETB using the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS), to evaluate funded youth work organisations’ achievement of identified goals (European Commission, 2014). An assessment role is specified in the *ETB Act (2013)* and while not specifically named, the NQS continues to be the tool used for this assessment. Moving the Youth Officer’s role from one of support to that of assessor or evaluator appears to be a shift which has significantly affected power relations and dynamics between YWC actors.

2.3.6 Critique of Youth Work Policy In Ireland

The review and analysis of the documents revealed a number of key themes that help explain policy making in this area. The DCEDIY governance reforms introduced cultures of commissioning, tendering, managerialism (Ansell and Gash, 2008) and commercial practices, heralding periods of significant adjustment for those in the youth sector. For example, existing funding schemes were replaced with rules-based systems, such as ‘UBU, Your Place, Your Space’. To facilitate the thesis study, a synthesis of youth work policy has been developed, illustrated in Figure 2.2 below, to provide clarity for those outside the youth work sector to understand roles, responsibilities, relationships, and connections. The synthesis is then

expanded upon in detail, informing key relationships between DCEDIY, ETBs, YWC members, young people, and the intended consequences of policy. An analysis of materials relating to the reformed programmes found that funding streams and opportunities centred around meeting the policy objectives of the *NYS* or *BOBF*.

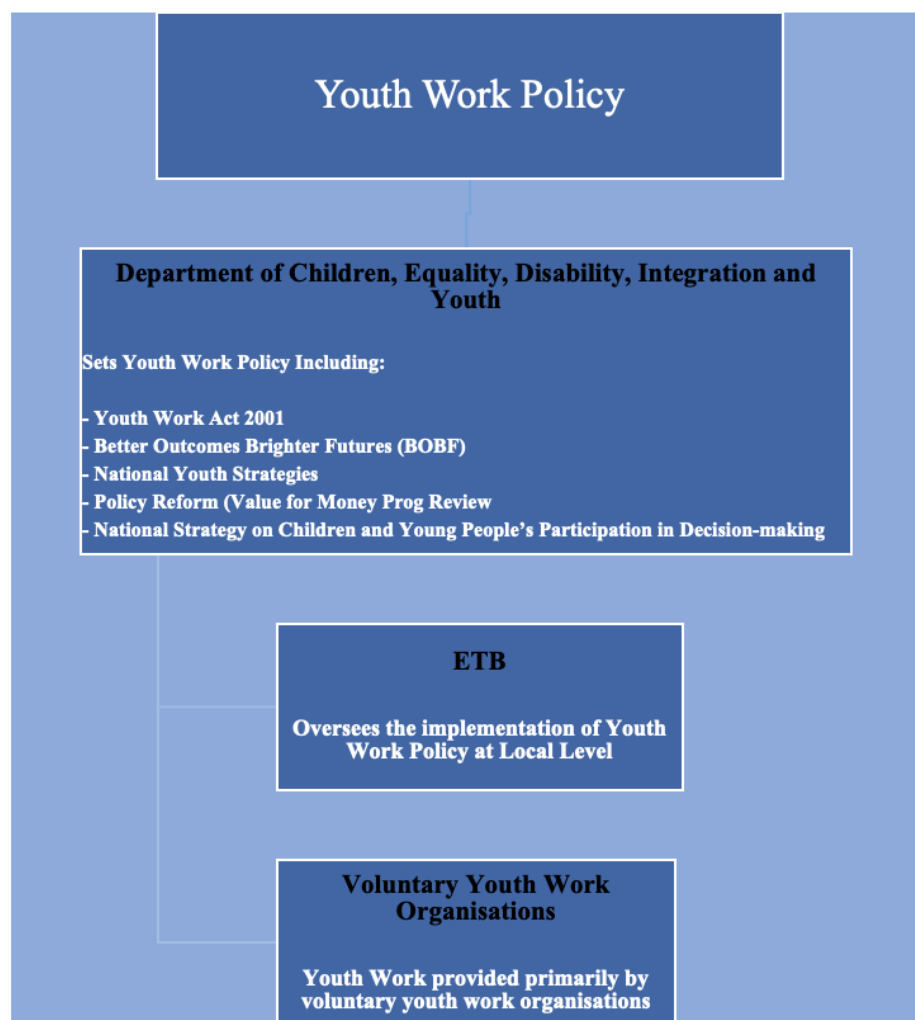


Figure 2.2: Synthesis of Youth Work Policy

2.3.6.1 *Youth Work Act (2001)*

As depicted above in Figure 2.2. the *Youth Work Act (2001)* can be regarded as the first significant step in enacting youth work policy in Ireland. The Act is the ‘most significant piece of legislation affecting youth work in Ireland’ (Jenkinson, 2013, p. 6) and defines youth work as

‘A planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation, and which is—

- complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and
- provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.’

This Act was influenced by the youth work sector's drive and ambition for establishing itself. For example, the *Costello Committee* (1984) was a key foundation stone of youth work in Ireland, and greatly influenced the thinking at the time of drafting the *Youth Work Act (2001)*. It was significant, as it recommended a national youth service, which was the 'first time that a need for such a service was officially recognised in Ireland' (Kiely and Kennedy, 2005, p. 177). It identified the primary challenge for social education as the transitioning of an insecure, dependent young person to a position of self-confidence in their ability to purposefully control and influence their situation and that of their community (Costello Committee, 1984).

2.3.6.2 *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF)*

BOBF highlights the policy position of government bodies and most critically, the direction of the DCEDIY. In summary, it coordinates policy to achieve better outcomes and informs the *NYS* to enable all young people aged 10-24 years to realise their potential with regard to the five national outcomes listed subsequently. These outcomes prove useful, when analysing the data relating YWC actions to policy impact.

2.3.6.3 *The National Youth Strategy (NYS)*

The *NYS* complements the *BOBF* by representing youth in the context of a distinctive developmental phase in the life course. It links youth policy in Ireland with other national and EU policies, identifying the aims and youth-specific policy objectives relating to the five national outcomes identified in *BOBF*:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Outcome 1: | Active and healthy with physical and mental wellbeing. |
| Outcome 2: | Achieving full potential in all areas of learning and development. |
| Outcome 3: | Safe and protected from harm. |
| Outcome 4: | Having economic security and opportunity. |
| Outcome 5: | Connected, respected and contributing to their world. |

(DCYA, 2014a)

These five national outcomes signpost policy expectations of all youth-centred policy actions. Government departments and those agencies and organisations funded by them co-ordinate their actions relating to these five outcomes. Additionally, the *NYS* optimises what stakeholders, particularly the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sector, can contribute and how they can work together to achieve these youth-specific policy objectives (DCYA, 2015a). The *NYS* principles are presented in Appendix I.

These principles outline DCYA expectations of those actors involved in implementing youth work policy. These expectations include valuing young people, respecting their interests, involving families/carers, equality, accessibility and quality. As the thesis study centres around collaborative governance theory, reference to collaborative working is encouraging. These principles co-ordinate, for the first time, a clear set of indicators for the policy of government departments, funded agencies, youth work organisations and services. Having clarity on these principles proves particularly useful, when analysing the interview data later, relating YWC actions to policy impact.

2.3.6.4 Youth Work Policy Reform

State sponsored reviews of youth work governance had a long-lasting implications for oversight, funding and delivery of youth work. The *VFMPR* highlighted ‘weaknesses in the ‘performance’ governance structure for youth programmes that require re-design’ (DCYA, 2014b, p. 116). It determined that the youth programmes provide a significant contribution to improving outcomes and should be considered for ongoing public funding. However, the *VFMPR* also concluded that the programmes and performance governance arrangements require significant reform. Most importantly these reform areas relate to the development of a robust performance evaluation framework to inform how the DCEDIY offers incentives for high programme performance and issues sanctions for poor programme performance (DCYA, 2014b, p. 11). It was established that the measurement or evaluation of youth programme performance was related to governance arrangements, rather than to the work or output of the programme itself. So the reform was about oversight of youth work, and hence impacted the dynamics and relationships between ETBs and funded youth work organisations. A series of twelve recommendations were proposed that have been broadly introduced since the publication of the report. These recommendations provide considerable context to the governance and oversight of youth work.

According to McMahon (2018), the *VFMPR* policy understands youth work as a site of neoliberal governmentality through the production of various, often problematic representations of youth work in relation to value for money and the assumption of underperformance, which appears to shift youth work from one of a human service, to one that is more determined by new economic and market imperatives:

‘VFMPR policy attempts to govern the future conduct and shape of youth work and to analyse how this might have damaging effects for the ideals and practices of open and open-ended youth work’ (p vii).

These imperatives have the effect of a restructuring of services and processes, which are more likely to follow business models, that may not necessarily suit the sector.

New outcome targets introduced by *VFMPR* included performance-related governance and counting rules potentially impacting relationships between YWC. Based on the findings of the *VFMPR*, the Department embarked on a programme of radical reform which significantly influenced the youth work sector, questioning the effectiveness of governance, ‘operations and capacity’ (DCYA, 2014b, 129); these changes impacted upon relationships between YWCs and stakeholders, shaping decision-making processes. As a result, youth work funding streams, some of which have been delivering since the 1980s, were collapsed and consolidated into one *TYFS* and were rebranded in December 2019 as UBU. In this redesigned scheme, DCEDIY is the lead agency and grantor for the funding scheme of €40 million and the intention is to provide quality, flexible and responsive youth services in local communities. It is important to note that this is not an additional investment, as this €40 million is from the budget of the previous Special Project for Youth (SPY) which was absorbed into *TYFS*. Such changes can be viewed as a potential source of conflict or discourse in YWCs, where some see UBU as new funding available for all, while incumbent youth work providers view it as merely a rebranding of existing funding they have held since the 1980s.

2.3.6.5 Strategy On Children And Young People’s Participation In Decision-Making

The goal of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020* (DCYA, 2015b) is to ensure that children and young people have a voice across the five *BOBF* outcome areas. While the strategy is primarily aimed at children and young people under the age of 18, it includes those up to the age of 24. This participation strategy is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The strategy focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people where they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. For children and young people, the strategy aims to provide a voice in the following areas: in decisions made in their local communities; in early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems; in decisions that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them; and in the Courts and legal system. So, clearly hearing the voices of young people is part of the national policy agenda. There appears to be a

genuine commitment to hearing and appreciating the voices of young people. The participation of young people must include the opportunity to be heard (UNCRC, 1989), and hence, young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. The *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015 – 2020* grounded national and local government policy to including young people in decisions that affect them.

2.3.7. Critique Of Youth Work Policy Material And Commentary

So that policy impacts could be evaluated later in the thesis study, youth work policy materials were examined enhancing understanding of the origins and development of Irish policy objectives, and resources available to youth work organisations. This information was then used to interpret the situation relative to the two RQs, offering insight on the views and opinions of the creators of the documents. Youth work policy documents were interrogated as 'it is the task of the researcher to expose the assumptions being made being made by the writer of the document' (Bell, 1999, pp. 115-116). These materials were subjected to a critical method of questioning on content, who wrote them, and the purpose of why they were written.

It was found that the thesis study took place during a period of significant policy, governance and regulatory reform, and the policy documents relate to the development of youth work in Ireland. The choice of documents helped to explain key relationships between key stakeholders, including the DCEDIY, ETBs, YWC members, young people, and the intended consequences of policy. Policy documents such as the *Value for Money Programme Review (VFMPR)* (DCYA, 2014b), the *Targeted Youth Funding Scheme (TYFS)* and 'UBU, Your Place, Your Space' (UBU) were reviewed.

These policy agendas and decisions that have occurred in the last decade can help explain how changes in working relationships between YWC members occurred. The commercialisation of youth work, prioritisation of value for money and the overuse of positivist evaluation methods (which were not sensitive to the soft skills nature of youth work practice) have adversely affected the sector (McMahon, 2018). This critical understanding of policy direction helps explain the changing nature of YWC processes and dynamics as described in YWC dynamics (Concept C), YWC actions (Concept D) and youth work policy impacts (Concept E).

It has been argued that the State's youth work policy agenda are more defined by top-down (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983) rather than a bottom-up approaches (Lipsky, 1980; Elmore, 1980). There was great hope with the Costello Report,

but these hopes were soon quashed with little or no impetus, and the non-enforcement of the *Youth Work Act (2001)*. The State's agenda, as the primary funders in many cases, is undermining what youth work seeks to do at times, with little or no regard shown for inclusion, participation or engagement with the youth work sector, questioning where the State is taking youth work, and leading it away from its own principles.

McMahon (2009) sees implications for the voluntary youth work sector's engagement with the State. While McMahon suggests that while the sector was originally hopeful of the State's actions relating the *Youth Work Act (2001)* and youth work development plans, relationship have 'become increasingly formalised over the years' (p. 105). The needs and rights of young people are questioned in this relationship, where the focus becomes service provision rather than a social movement concerned youth rights. Similarly, Gaynor (2011) suggests that the State is destroying community development, controlling the community sector and denying community actors a voice in their own development. Catherine Forde (2009, p. 141) refers to the relationship between the State and the community sector as a 'corporatism of democracy', again questioning neo-liberal agendas, where youth work is considered as a 'means of managing and socialising young people' (Kiely, 2009).

In a UK context, McGimpsey (2012) carried out case-studies examining the impact of disinvestment during austerity in ten youth services. The research analyses the effects of neoliberal policy making on the provision of services to marginalised young people across England. It argues that youth work policy is a social investment that seeks to reform local communities and their service providers. It finds that such neoliberal policy making disconnects youth services from communities and young people, replacing the natural youth work relationship-building with formalised interactions. Neoliberalism in youth services was further developed in McGimpsey (2017).

In summary, youth work policy aims to improve situations for young people, particularly those most at risk. *BOBF* commits to achieving better outcomes for young people including mental wellbeing, learning and development, economic security and contributing to their world. *UBU* (DCYA, 2019) aims to enable all young people to realise their maximum potential by supporting the establishment of safe spaces for them. The first goal of the *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020* commits to 'creating a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTI+ young people' (p. 13). Therefore, policy was found to be committed to the support development of further youth facilities in response to their needs. Better outcomes are the measure of such improvements, where youth work acts as the catalyst to build relationships with young people, assisting them in the identification of their potential and

supporting them to achieve outcomes. The thesis study explores the role of YWCs in this situation by examining the relationship between key concepts, using a conceptual framework.

2.3.8 Thesis Study Interpretation Of Impacts As The *Changes* Resulting From YWC Actions

The *National Youth Strategy (NYS)* aims to enable all young people aged 10-24 years to realise their potential (DCYA, 2014a), so additional resources, facilities and interests that encourage them to realise their full potential are to be included as indicators of policy impacts (Concept E). In YWCs, impacts are identified as the additional facilities that achieved any of the six overarching *Themes For Youth Work Outcomes* (Dickson, *et al.*, 2013), attributable to the collaboration (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). Impacts are the ‘alteration’ in conditions (Emerson *et al.*, 2012) on the ground (Innes and Booher, 1999) for local youth populations that resulted from YWC actions. So, for the purpose of answering RQ2, impacts are the *changes* that stakeholders perceive to have resulted from YWC actions, relative to the intentions of youth work policy centred on achieving positive outcomes for young people (DCYA, 2014a).

2.4 The Actors – YWC Membership

The research population later described in Chapter 4 is made up of YWC stakeholders, including members and non-members. This section explains YWC membership and their various roles, providing valuable perspective on who is saying what in the interviews (Chapter 5), and why, as discussed in Chapter 6. It is important to know who the actors are, where they have come from, as this impacts on how they perceive themselves in the hierarchy of collaboration, and the balance of power in decision-making.

Collaboration is critical in the both the delivery and oversight of youth work in Ireland. A key policy principle is that youth work providers operate collaboratively with other agencies and services to ensure an integrated response to the needs of young people (Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, 2010). As illustrated above in Figure 2.1, such collaboration includes the young people themselves, designated voluntary youth work organisations, national youth work organisations, Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC), youth workers and in some regions, academics. These stakeholders join local authority representatives who are appointed by the ETB Board. It has been argued that ‘this mode of governance brings multiple stakeholders together in common forums with public agencies to engage in consensus-oriented decision-making’ (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 543). It is important to distinguish the roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders (Freeman, 1984),

as they each have an interest in the functioning of YWCs, offer valuable insights on their operations and are a rich source of research data.

2.4.1 Young People

As primary stakeholders in YWCs, it is important to define ‘young people’. The *Youth Work Act (2001)* defines a *young person* as ‘any person aged between 10 years and 25 years’ (p. 6). It also defines *youth work* in Irish statute for the first time as ‘a planned programme of education enhancing the personal and social development of young people’ (Government of Ireland, 2001, p. 7). Therefore, the focus of youth work in Ireland is on the young person aged between 10-25 years who is passing through the stage of adolescence and youth policy is targeted at improving outcomes for young people in this age group. The significant contribution of young people in local decision-making was regarded by many of the research participants as one of the most crucial of YWC impacts.

2.4.2 Designated Local Voluntary Youth Work Organisation

Youth work providers should operate ‘collaboratively’ with other agencies and services to ensure an integrated response to the needs of young people (Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, 2010, p. 30). YWC membership may offer opportunities to do this. Youth work in Ireland is provided largely by voluntary organisations. These organisations are voluntary, community-based, staffed by professional and voluntary youth workers, governed by voluntary Boards of Directors, and managed by paid management teams. While corporate governance, control and accountability are ultimately the responsibility of these Boards of Directors, results are achieved through management teams (and chief executives) who support and supervise youth workers.

The environment in which youth work organisations operate has been changing dramatically over the last fifteen years, introducing elements of commercialisation to the sector. Voluntary organisations operating in the charity sector have experienced a period of great flux, with the establishment of the Charities Regulator (Charities Act, 2009), the strengthening of the regulatory environment (Companies Act, 2014) and the standardisation of accounting practices (FRS 102). Of these developments, the enactment of the Charities Act 2009 is of particular importance as it places an additional governance responsibility on management teams and Boards of Directors of charities. Youth work policy reform has taken place in the context of public expenditure reform, where relationships between the State and the voluntary sector changed dramatically. Concerns for the method and quality of policymaking in Ireland is one of

the prominent issues to have emerged during the austerity period that resulted from the economic crisis (MacCarthaigh, 2013, p. 89). For example, Department of Public Expenditure Reform circular 13/14 (DPER, 2014) established that those in receipt of public funding should ensure appropriate governance arrangements for the oversight and administration of funding, and for the control and safeguarding of funds from misuse, misappropriation and fraud. In addition, accounting records providing reliable financial information were required. These youth work policy reforms also changed the relationships between youth work providers and ETB Youth Officers, further affecting YWC dynamics.

2.4.3 National Youth Work Organisations

Several national youth organisations have been instrumental in the development and delivery of youth work and policy (Coyne and Donohoe, 2013; Kiely and Kennedy, 2005). They support youth work at both the national level in liaising and working with government on policy, and at a local level through youth work projects and services. Also, significantly, some YWCs reserve places for representatives of national youth work organisations. The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is named in the *Youth Work Act (2001)* as the representative body for national voluntary youth work organisations, responsible for raising the profile and status of youth work in Ireland. A Coyne and Donohoe (2013, pp. 95-101) summary is in Figure 2.3:

- Youth Work Ireland is a federated organisation of 21 independent and autonomous local voluntary youth services operating throughout Ireland. It aims to co-ordinate and develop the work of its member services.
- Foróige is also a national youth organisation with projects, clubs, programmes, and services throughout Ireland. These are managed and operated directly by Foróige. In comparison to Youth Work Ireland, it is not a federation.
- Catholic Youth Care (now Crosscare) operates in Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare and provides local youth work services in these regions.
- BeLonG To is a national organisation for LGBTI+ young people which delivers supports directly or through partnership with other local youth organisations, including Youth Work Ireland member services.
- Léargas is the national organisation responsible for the development of international youth exchange programmes and projects.
- Uniformed youth organisations include Scouting Ireland, The Catholic Guides of Ireland, The Irish Girl Guides, Council of Irish Guiding Associations, The Girls' Brigade and The Boys' Brigade. As the uniformed groups offer programmes that are developmental, educational, include voluntary participation and are provided by a voluntary organisation, they are also designated as youth work organisations.

Figure 2.3: National Youth Work Organisations

(Coyne and Donohoe, 2013, pp. 95-101)

Concern with rural youth work in Ireland has continued since the inception of the State. While the national organisations listed above have extensive regional spread, and are sited in many rural areas, Macra na Feirme was established for social, cultural, personal and community development (Kiely and Kennedy, 2005). It was instrumental in the establishment of Macra na Tuaithe (now Foróige).

These national organisations are experienced in policy and practice, contributing greatly to the youth work sector. Firstly, they support the delivery of targeted youth work through local affiliates or branches, and it is at this level that collaborative governance is most significant in dealings with regional ETBs and YWCs. In addition, for volunteer-led youth work, Youth Work Ireland and Foróige support volunteers to operate youth clubs in local areas. The work of uniformed groups is also broadly volunteer-led, while their support and supervision

are generally provided by paid staff of their respective national organisations. Youth Work Ireland, Foróige, Crosscare and the uniformed groups were all found to be represented on some of the YWCs across the regions.

2.4.4 Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs)

CYPSCs plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. They ensure effective interagency coordination and collaboration to achieve the best outcomes for all children and young people in their region. They are responsible for improving the lives of children, young people, and families at the local and community level by improving the provision and delivery of key services. All major organisations and agencies working locally on behalf of children and young people are represented on the CYPSC. For the thesis study, it is important to distinguish CYPSC's role from that of the YWC. This distinction is clarified in the previous section on youth work theory, where 'work with young people' (Davies, 2005) is distinguished from youth work. CYPSC's are represented on YWCs.

2.4.5 Youth Workers

Some YWCs have been found to include youth workers among their membership, while other regions had management representation from local youth work organisations. It is important to be clear about the youth work role (Spence, 2008), as they are responsible for guiding some of youth work's core purposes, particularly the personal and social development of young people, social inclusion, and the development of social capital (Merton *et al.*, 2004). Youth workers meet young people in groups or individually to build positive relationships with them so that young people feel supported and connected. Such youth work primarily happens in youth centres, youth café's, volunteer-led youth clubs or on the street employing outreach or detached youth work. For youth workers, interventions should be value-based (Corney, 2004). Also, they are expected to take responsibility for their aims, intentions, and outcomes; the programmes and projects; the one-on-one casework; educational experiences and environments; budgets; volunteers and staff; and young people (Tyler, *et al.*, 2009). In Ireland, youth workers are generally employed and supported by local voluntary based youth work organisations or community organisations. Volunteer youth workers are supported by similar organisations that provide training, governance oversight and supervision.

2.4.6 Academics

In some ETB regions, academics were involved with YWCs to enhance youth work practice and learning. These academics often act as a link between third level institutions,

bringing information on opportunities for young people. They also offer valuable resources in terms of the theory and practice of youth work.

2.4.7 Local Authority Representatives

Generally, local authority representatives are appointed by ETB Boards to YWCs. Local authority representatives tend to be elected officials, and occupy the position of chair in some regions. This arrangement offers a valuable link between decision-making in county councils, available resources and identified needs. It also offers opportunities for information sharing and signposting of resources.

In summary, YWC actors include young people, designated voluntary youth work organisations, national youth organisations, CYPSCs, youth workers, academics and local authority representatives. They are joined at meetings by Youth Officers, and other ETB officials who are not YWC members, but support the functioning of YWCs. These members and non-members offer a wide range of experiences, offering a valuable source of data.

2.5 YWC Functions And Context

Gray (2018) suggests that there is value in exploring ‘a wide variety of potential research sources’ (p. 102) including organisational documentation, such as annual reports, terms of reference, plans, agendas and minutes of meetings. This grey literature is the ‘published and unpublished material that cannot be identified through the usual bibliographic methods’ (Gray, 2018, p. 107). It lies ‘somewhere between traditional, academically produced secondary literature and “raw” primary sources’ (Sage, 2017, p. 1). These materials include those produced by organisations outside of traditional commercial and academic publishing channels, such as annual reports, white papers, or conference proceedings from government agencies, non-governmental organisations, or private companies. These materials proved to be valuable in their own right. They inform the interview schedule and the direction of interviews in particular regions, but also provide a rich context for the thesis study. Denscombe (2003) warns that too often in social research attention focuses on empirical studies, and not enough on the analysis of relevant documentation. This section analyses selected documents to achieve this (Galton *et al.*, 1980), as referenced in Bell (1999), using them to explain current YWCs and how policies have evolved, historically (Prior, 2016).

To place the thesis study and interview questions in context, local YWC documents were screened for regional actions, policy impacts and the factors (dynamics), including

enablers and barriers. While these exact terms as used in Emerson, *et al.*, (2012) are not present in the YWC literature, some synonyms commonly used in youth work were used. A synthesis of data from across the country was produced, which was valuable in its own right.

This YWC documentation review was carried out to help understand important local and national contexts that informed the policy and practice decisions about YWCs, and in the design of the thesis study, for example in terms of sampling and the design of data collection instruments. Historical analysis is a method of interpreting what has happened using records and accounts and is useful for establishing a baseline prior to observation or interviewing (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). Thus YWC documents were gathered and examined using an interrupted time series analysis (Matthews and Ross, 2010) to understand the impact of YWC actions over a length of time, examining the situation before and after those actions. For example, the situation before the adoption of the new TOR was found to be dramatically different across the country to YWC operations after. This is expanded upon in the findings in Chapter 5. YWC documents were compared with each other to evaluate potential relationships. The review of YWC documents including TOR, strategic planning documents and YWC meeting minutes were used to establish goals, expected or intended policy outcomes, shared actions, plans, strategies and desired improvements or changes. These were important in terms of understanding the use of broad questions and signposting areas of interest in the interview schedules.

Some of the open-ended interview questions were informed by the findings of the document search. Such interview questions included those around the local youth work plans, the terms of reference, YWC meeting agendas and minutes. The document review also identified areas of interest specific to a region, which were then included in that participant's interview schedule but not included in regions where it was less relevant including: outliers in membership specific to a region (e.g. Arts organisations), funding lines that did not appear in other regions or local special interests of concern or need. More detail on these questions are included in the methodology in Chapter 4.

2.5.1 Search Strategy: YWC Documents

Ten local ETB areas were contacted for YWC materials. These included minutes of meetings, newsletters, mission statements, job definitions, and were viewed as 'representations of reality of that organisation' telling 'what goes on in that organisation' and uncovering the 'culture or ethos' of that organisation (Bryman, 2012, p. 554). These were accessed online

during the period of the pandemic. The search also included Local Youth Work Plans (LYWP), ETB strategic plans, YWC Terms of Reference (TOR), correspondence, and Youth Officer reports delivered to YWCs. For the document review to ensure a balanced geographic spread of materials, YWC members and former members from across the country were contacted by telephone in May 2021 to gather electronic copies of YWC materials and documentation. Ten scheduled telephone interviews with managers in the youth work sector were made with the sole purpose of sourcing YWC documentation, and direct contact was also made with ETB offices by phone or via the website. These sources signposted a range of potential YWC documents.

The ten different ETB regions providing documents are listed in Appendix J. Electronic-copies of these documents were emailed to the researcher, or sourced from ETB websites where publicly available. For documentation that was not publicly available, but accessed by the researcher with permission from ETBs, electronic versions were saved and stored securely. The request for materials was regarded by sources as ‘unobtrusive’ in terms of time and effort (Gray, 2018, p. 502), as these documents existed already on file in ETBs. Other than signposting or forwarding documents, no additional work was required by sources in their preparation. This is important, as it was not possible to visit ETBs onsite during the Covid-19 travel restrictions, so the researcher was reliant on goodwill from those willing to support the thesis study.

2.5.2 YWC Terms Of Reference (TOR)

Consistency across YWC TORs was a significant finding. This review of YWC documents provided further information context (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2009; Bell, 1999; Gray, 2018), particularly around the TORs, that were found to be surprisingly similar across all ETB areas. This examination of YWC TORs was potentially, one of the most significant contributions of the thesis study, as interesting patterns and themes emerged across the regions, as summarised in Table 2.2 below.

		ETB Region (10)										National
Emerging Patterns and Themes		Cavan and Monaghan	Donegal	Kilkenny and Carlow	Laois and Offaly	Limerick and Clare	Longford and Westmeath	Louth and Meath	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim	Waterford and Wexford	ETBI (Template)	
Document Source Date		2020	2020	2021	2020	2018	2019	2018	2021	2019	2019	
Terms of Reference Documents	Advise / inform the ETB in relation to youth work.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Advise the Youth Officer on matters regarding youth work in the ETB area	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Provide oversight of ETB youth work functions	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	
	Provide a forum for youth work organisations and key stakeholders to discuss the provision of youth work	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	YWC fulfils no executive functions of ETB as these are within the remit of the Chief Executive and/or his/her delegates.	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	
	Receive updates on the Youth Work Audit on an annual basis	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Provide direction on the preparation of a Youth Work Plan.	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Ensure that the Local Youth Club Grant Scheme or any other such schemes are administered according to guidelines	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Receive an annual update on the implementation of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF)	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Report as required to the Education and Training Board on the delivery of the annual work plan.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Membership - a minimum of 8, but no more than 12 (Section 44 (2)), comprising ETB Members and members appointed by the ETB. (Voluntary Youth Sector, Statutory Sector, Young persons, Co-options	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	

Table 2.2: Sythesis of the YWC Terms of Refernce Documents – Patterns and Themes

Table 2.2 refers to nine local YWCs and one national organisation. An analysis of the TORs from nine regions across the country found a surprising level of consistency. In some instances, they were effectively the same document, regardless of the region. This was considered to have been more than a co-incidence, so further investigations found the source of the commonality to be an Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) briefing document circulated to ETBs around the country. This document suggested that ETBs should establish the YWCs in line with section 12(i)(ii) of the *ETB Act (2013)* which provides that one of the reserve functions of an ETB is the “*determination of the terms of reference and the regulation of the procedures of the committee.*” What transpired was that the TORs for most regions were closely based on this briefing document. As such, TORs were found to have similar terms, comprising the duties of the committee, the suggested YWC membership, the regulation of the meetings and terms of office.

Overall, at the time of the data search, all TORs sampled were established in accordance with Section 44 of *ETB Act (2013)*. They also referenced Section 10 of the Act which set out to: (i) support the provision, co-ordination, administration, and assessment of youth work services in its functional area and provide such information as may be requested by the Minister in relation to such support; and (j) assess the manner in which it performs its functions is economical, efficient, and effective. All those sampled also pledged to advise or inform the ETB in relation to youth work. Seven YWCs appeared to be using a similar version of the TORs with consistent terms including: Providing oversight of ETB youth work functions; and explicitly stating that YWCs fulfil no executive functions of ETB, as these are within the remit of the Chief Executives and/or their delegates. Interestingly the Limerick and Clare ETB included their YWC TOR in the LYWP, hence firmly embedding the YWC functions with local regional needs.

2.5.3 Local Youth Work Plans (LYWP)

The LYWPs were found to give the YWCs a strategic focus, linking to dynamics in the conceptual framework. These LYWPs appeared to reflect Emerson *et al.*'s (2012) principles of share motivation and capacity for joint action. There were LYWPs available in five out of the ten ETB regions sampled. In the five other areas sampled, LYWPs were either being prepared or were planned. An internal criticism of the materials available (Bell, 1999) found that in all cases these LYWP were produced by local ETBs, where the impetus for their production derived from the local Youth Officer. Table 2.3 below captures the emerging patterns and themes across the ETB regions surveyed:

		ETB Region				
Emerging Patterns and Themes		Kildare and Wicklow	Limerick and Clare	Longford and Westmeath	Louth and Meath	Waterford and Wexford
LYWP	Policy Context	1	1	1	1	1
	Socio-Demographic Profile	1	1	1	1	1
	Value and Benefits of Youth Work	1	1	1	1	1
	ETB Role in Youth Work	1	0	0	1	1
	Vision/ Values/ Principles/ Goals	0	1	0	1	1
	Current Provision/ What working Well	1	1	1	1	1
	Needs Analysis/ Improvements/ Changes	1	1	1	1	1
	Priorities for 3 years/ Action Plans	1	1	1	1	1
	Monitoring of Progress on Actions	0	0	0	0	1
	Ref to YWC Terms of Reference	0	1	0	0	1

Table 2.3: Sythesis of the YWC Local Youth Work Plans – Patterns and Themes

LYWPs were all found to begin with policy context, socio-democratic profiles and include a section on the value and benefits of youth work. Three of the regions studied included a section on the ETB role in youth work, clarifying the developing governance contexts across the regions. Vision, values, principles, and goals featured in the LYWPs in three regions. In general, the LYWPs sampled were found to comprise of: a scoping of local facilities available to young people in the region; an assessment of need; an audit of resources available to meet this needs; and a prioritisation of YWC actions within a given time period. All plans were found to include a section on needs analysis, and a projection of the areas in need of improvement or change. This was not surprising given that future funding decisions would be needs-based. All LYWPs included a snapshot of the local youth provision in their region, with some areas highlighting actions that were working well. Unsurprisingly, all regions also included priorities or action plans for the period of the plan. On this, all five LYWPs appeared to be committed to: (i) identifying the needs of young people in their areas; (ii) identifying the resources required to meet these needs; and (iii) alignment to national youth work policy. Usefully, one region included a mechanism for monitoring progress, which could be considered across all regions. Interestingly, two regions directly referenced YWCs' TORs, demonstrating a direct connection between those LYWPs and the work of YWCs. The quality of the LYWP varied from region to region, they were found to be for a period of three to five years, and some were found to be in need of updating.

2.5.4 YWC Meeting Running Order – Review Of Agendas And Minutes

The document search of YWC materials gave valuable context as the examination of documents 'are often an integral part of qualitative research' Bryman (1989, p 149). Below in Table 2.4 a synthesis of the YWC minutes and agenda documents demonstrates the patterns and themes emerging across the regions.

		ETB Region								
Emerging Patterns and Themes		Donegal	Kildare and Wicklow	Kilkenny and Carlow	Laois and Offaly	Limerick and Clare	Longford and Westmeath	Louth and Meath	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim	Waterford and Wexford
YWC Meeting Running Order – Review of Agendas and Minutes	Welcome/ Introductions/ Apologies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Ratify Previous Minutes / Matters Arising	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Terms of Reference	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Info Sharing	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Officer Roles	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
	Reports and Updates									
	Youth Officer Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	NQSF Update	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Project Updates	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	UBU/ Greenfield Site Update	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	ETB /Youth Affairs Update	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Funding									
	Funding Update – DCEDIY, ICT Grant, Capital/ Equipment Grants, Youth Employability Initiative	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
	Local Youth Club Grants	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Local Initiatives									
	Creative Partnership/ Music Generation	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
	LGBTI+ Mapping/ Grant	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	COVID-19 impacts on YP/ Youth Guidelines	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
	NEETs Research	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Planning									
	Youth Work Plan	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
	APNASR	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
	Closing									
	Date of Next Meeting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	AOB	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Table 2.4: Synthesis of the YWC Minutes and Agenda Documents – Patterns and Themes

YWC materials were used to inform the context in which these collaborations operate, giving valuable data on how they function (RQ1) and their actions and impacts (RQ2). In the analysis of the documentation, a number of patterns were found across the YWC regions. While the exact language used in the literature was not specifically used, it is believed that synonyms for these concepts were present.

A review of YWC documents revealed a certain degree of consistency across the regions sampled. Bell's (1999) twelve steps were used to summarise, explicate and extricate data from these documents (Flick, 2009), so that there was a greater understanding of YWC functioning and operations. According to the literature, meeting minutes, working principles, prioritised tasks, and more formal work plans can provide evidence of the efficacy of actions (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 729). Sixty-three soft copy documents were collected

including an annual report, ETB web content specific to YWCs (6 sites), TORs (9 documents), Agendas (7 regions), LYWPs (5 regions), Minutes (3 regions), YWC Meeting Invitation (2), Newsletter (1 ETB), and presentations to YWC Members (1 region). The materials appear to span the period from July 2018 to the time of that they were being gathered in May and June 2021.

These emerging patterns and themes reveal a number of interesting general factors in the functioning of YWCs across the regions. Firstly, it was found that YWCs prepared and retained similar documents including YWC meeting agendas, minutes and activity reports. Secondly, in general, meetings were held two or three times a year for approximately ninety minutes to two hours per meeting. Agendas were found to be circulated in advance by the ETB secretariat, and while meetings were chaired by an ETB Board member, they were largely facilitated by the local Youth Officer. Thirdly, access to meeting minutes proved difficult for confidentiality and data protection reasons, so it was not possible to conduct a meaningful analysis of these across the ten sites.

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) define productivity performance as ‘encompassing actions, outcomes and adaptation resulting from the collaboration’ (p. 720). These are the ‘results on the ground’ (Innes and Booher, 1999, p. 419). It follows that, in order to be in a position to determine stakeholder’s perceptions of the link between YWC action and policy impacts, it is critical to understand the intentions of Irish youth work policy. The analysis of the policy material found that youth work policy in Ireland is currently centred on achieving positive outcomes for young people (DCYA, 2014a), and while youth work policy is set nationally, it is implemented locally through ETBs who support the provision, coordination, administration, and assessment of youth work services in their functional area (Government of Ireland, 2013). YWCs are positioned in these ETBs and act in both an advisory and support role. For example, one ETB describes how they organise their youth work functions through their YWC, ‘a subcommittee of the Board’ and explain that ‘the YWC has agreed a Youth Work Plan 2017 to 2020 for the development of Youth Work in the area.’ (WWETB, 2021). This interpretation proves useful later in the data analysis of the thesis study.

A detailed examination of YWC documents revealed pertinent information about the impacts of YWC operations. As described in the literature: ‘the analysis of documents is

potentially quite rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting. Minutes of meetings, logs, announcements, formal policy statements, letters, and so on are all useful and developing an understanding of the organisation, setting or group studied' (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p. 164). Planning documents such as youth work plans, TORs and committee minutes were used to understand the intentions, values and beliefs in the YWC setting, so that they could later be compared to actions using the simple evaluation model of *plan, act and review* (Edwards and Talbot, 1994). It is worth noting that similar models of evaluation include Plan, Do, Check, Act (Deming, 1982) and Plan, Do, Review (High Scope, 2020).

In conclusion, Chapter 2 contributes to the study in a number of ways. Firstly, it helped to reframe the research questions, particularly in the area of youth work policy impacts. Secondly, it informed the methodologies (Chapter 4), including NVivo codes and the interview schedule with research participants. This was useful, as it was possible before the interviews to investigate YWC materials and see what kind of questions could be asked. It also pinpointed regions that were a little out of step with their peers, prompting special questions in these regions. Thirdly, it has informed the operationalisation of the concepts, informing how theory in the framework can be applied to practice in the YWC setting. In its own right, some of Chapter 2 is a valuable pool of information available for future thesis studies. This will be developed in Section 7.6. Finally, the clarity provided in Chapter 2 is reflected in the discussion (Chapter 6) and in the conclusions (Chapter 7), where the research findings were placed in the context of youth work theory, policy and governance reform.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, the thesis study aims to explore YWC stakeholder experiences of collaborative governance, enabling actions and how decisions impacted on policy and practices. To do this, it seeks to understand how collaborative governance functions in YWCs (RQ1), and ways in which stakeholders perceive the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, actions and policy impacts (RQ2) in the local implementation of youth work policy. The purpose of Chapter 3 is to map the current state of scholarship in collaborative governance theory, to identify perceived gaps in the literature which was used in the design of the thesis study.

This literature review approach was taken to clarify and develop the core concepts in the thesis study's conceptual framework presented in Chapter 1, namely dynamics, actions and impacts in collaborative governance settings (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). Clarifying these concepts has aided the YWC thesis study to explore the relationship between: policy, the implementation process and policy outcomes (Palumbo and Calista, 1990). This approach was used to build a convincing argument that is logical, analytical and persuasive (Thomas, 2019), relating stakeholder perceptions of YWC actions to policy impacts. Semi-structured interviewing was found in a number of empirical studies to be a useful tool for gathering such data (O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018), and interviews have been chosen for the thesis study. These prior studies also informed the approaches taken to analyse and interpret the YWC data.

Chapter 3 first presents the strategy used in the literature search, detailing the approaches, the search terms and the search results for this literature review. The review findings are then reported, focussing on collaborative governance performance literature. Models and frameworks used in prior studies are considered, and this learning is used to inform the design and methodologies detailed in Chapter 4.

3.2 Strategy Used In The Literature Search

This literature review was informed by methods recommended in UCD Library's online guides for research students (UCD Library, 2020). A research log of the search was maintained during this process (Appendix B). Patterns in the relevant search terms were identified to answer the two research questions, and subsequently searched for in library databases. Initial searches revealed substantial 'hits', the scale and scope of which were beyond the resources of the thesis study, so were refined to make the process more manageable. For this reason, funnelling was used to identify a series of sequential stages that refined the results from the initial, general search terms of 'policy implementation', 'policy process' and 'youth work policy' for example, to become more refined terms of 'policy analysis' and 'policy implementation analysis'. These revised search terms were narrowed to focus on the concept of 'collaborative governance'. Some studies of collaborative governance, which may not be related to youth work, were added if they were viewed to be important in informing the design of the thesis study as outlined in the research design in Chapter 4.

This literature review focused on searches of international English language publications about policy implementation, collaborative governance, and youth work theory. The search parameters excluded medical studies, psychological studies and psychiatric studies which were deemed to be less relevant. As youth work in Ireland is largely delivered by voluntary organisations and based on a personal development model, literature on nonprofit, community-based and youth studies were prioritised. These decisions were taken to inform more precisely the theory and methods of the thesis study of collaborative governance in YWCs. For clarity, and to ensure that the thesis study did not stray into fields of other types of work being done with young people, a distinction was made in this search strategy to concentrate on the term '*youth work*', which is the focus of YWCs, rather than the more generic concepts of general work with young people.

3.2.1 Search Strategy: Policy Implementation Analysis Models

To facilitate an exploration of the functioning (RQ1) and policy outcomes of YWCs (RQ2), an initial literature search of concepts included 'policy implementation', 'policy process' and 'youth work policy'. The Boolean operator technique, using AND/OR/NOT, was employed. The 'thesaurus-term' method was also used, where synonyms for the search terms were considered, so for example, Policy 'Process' was expressed as Process OR Theory OR Framework OR Technique. Synonyms, plurals, acronyms and alternative spellings were considered or truncated. A Google Scholar search of 'Policy Implementation' AND 'Process

OR Theory OR Framework’ yielded an unmanageable number of sources so the search was refined using ‘related searches’ which identified six relevant articles that are used extensively in this literature review. From these journal articles, the ‘snowballing’ technique (Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005) was employed, where the references and bibliographies of relevant articles were used to signpost additional relevant literature in the field. This approach was fruitful and resulted in the identification of relevant materials that could be used. Here, references in relevant journal articles were examined to identify more shared terms and principles. Keywords used by academics to describe the concepts included ‘Collaborative Governance’, ‘street-level bureaucracy’, ‘top-down’, ‘bottom-up’ and ‘governance reform’. A search of the terms ‘Policy Analysis’ and ‘Policy Implementation Analysis’ found important references in the literature to ‘Outcomes Measurement’, ‘Policy Evaluation’ and ‘Performance’. These findings have informed the evaluative aspects of the thesis study, greatly aiding the interpretation of how actions and impacts are experienced by YWC stakeholders.

3.2.2 Search Strategy: Collaborative Governance Theory

The searches of ‘Policy Implementation Analysis’ models in 3.2.1 highlight ‘Collaboration’ as a theme across some of the literature. In particular, the phrase ‘Collaborative Governance’ appeared frequently, so provided a clearer direction to the search terms. ‘Productivity’, ‘Effectiveness’ and ‘Analysis’ emerged across the empirical research. A Scopus search of ‘Policy Implementation’ AND ‘Collaborative Governance’ yielded 28 sources which were full-text reviewed. The results of a UCD One Search of ‘Policy Implementation Theory’ were initially deemed unrealistic with an unmanageable amount of articles. The search process was refined, to focus only on recent articles from the previous three years, and one key source of literature was found: Hill and Hupe (2008). Subsequently, a later version Hill and Hupe, Third Edition (2014) of this publication was sourced and is referenced extensively in the thesis study.

A cited reference search of significant articles on ‘Collaborative Governance’ was used to identify references by other academics (UCD Library, 2020), where the number of articles that cite the reference pinpoint further journals or articles. The UCD Library Guide explains that this approach can weight the significance of articles, from the number of times they are cited by others. For example, in Google Scholar, the number of times an entry is cited by other academics is detailed, giving some indication of its popularity, significance or academic weight. This technique also signposted additional areas of interest and additional keywords.

For example, Ansell and Gash (2008) was the most highly cited article with 4458 cites listed in Google Scholar.

A further Scopus search of ‘Collaborative Policy-Making’ AND ‘Implementation’ yielded 36 results where all material was full-text reviewed and three works were considered useful. A UCD One Search of ‘Collaborative Governance’ resulted in four journal articles by Bingham (2010), Purdy and Jones (2012), Howlet (2019), and Emerson *et al.* (2012). These were particularly valuable in using snowballing to access other relevant material on collaborative governance materials. Other literature was identified on the key concepts of ‘policy actions’, ‘policy impacts’ and ‘dynamics’ (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). A subsequent Web of Science search for ‘Collaborative Governance’ found 984 articles. The results of this search were examined thoroughly, and five sources were deemed relevant and included in this literature review. A Web of Science refined search of ‘Collaborative Governance’ AND ‘Policy Implementation’ found 99 articles where eight journals were found to be relevant. Some of these materials had been identified in other databases. A search of ‘Collaborative Governance’ AND ‘Empirical Research’ OR ‘Empirical’ yielded 16 materials and are referenced extensively throughout this literature review and across the thesis study of YWCs. A summary of these research processes and results is described in Figure 3.1 below:

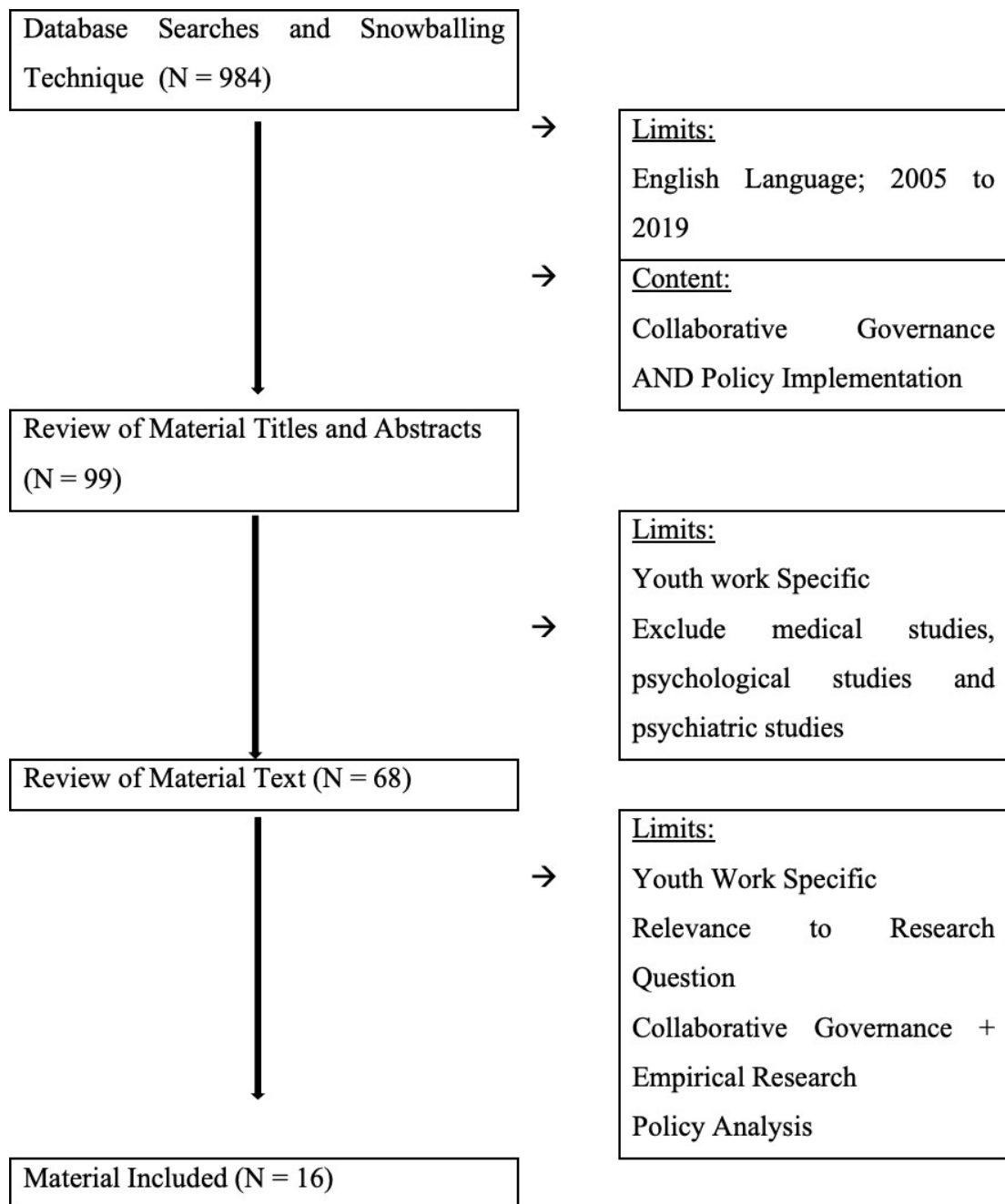


Figure 3.1: Flow of Materials in Literature Review

3.2.3 Search Strategy: Actions And Policy Impacts In Collaborative Governance Settings

The snowballing technique (Greenhalgh and Peacock, 2005) was used again to re-examine previously reviewed literature to identify connections between actions and impacts in collaborative governance settings. Concept mapping was used to identify ‘cross links’ (Novak and Cañas, 2006, p. 2) in the literature between the concepts of ‘actions’, ‘impacts’ and ‘productivity’. A mind map was then developed to determine the frequency in the literature of specific words (Buzan, 2002) associated with the policy impact of actions in collaborative governance settings. To enable the operationalisation of key concepts of the thesis study, in

particular the language on performance, dynamics and additional factors, academic material including Wanna (2008), Papadopolous (2012) and Biddle (2017), Bryson *et al.* (2006), Purdy (2012), Primmer *et al.* (2015), Scott and Thomas (2015), Ulibarri (2015) were used as sources to apply theory to practice in Table 4.5. This design is explained more fully in Chapter 4. The identification of *The Collaborative Governance Databank* (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020) was a particularly useful development from this technique in the literature review, as it established a set of criteria that was later used in the thesis study to establish YWCs as a mode of collaborative governance.

In the case of each piece of literature, the key arguments or conclusions are presented, questioning if the evidence is relevant to the argument being made by the thesis study, and if the results are reliable (Ridley, 2012). Of the 68 pieces of retrieved literature, 16 sources had relevant content and are included or referenced in this literature review (Figure 3.1). They are critically assessed and presented under themes including policy implementation theory in Section 3.3, and collaborative governance models in Section 3.4 to 3.7. A number of particular theoretical positions that emerged from the literature review and which inform an understanding of the five core concepts (A-E) were:

- Policy-Implementation Analysis Models (Cornforth, *et al.*, 2018; Nagel and Neef, 1979; Palumbo and Calista, 1990; Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Hill and Hupe, 2014)
- Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bevir, 2010; Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2005)
- Empirical Research on productivity, impacts, efficiency and effectiveness (Voets, *et al.*, 2015; Ulibarri, 2015; Biddle, 2017; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018; Emerson, 2018; Douglas, *et al.*, 2020; Waardenburg, *et al.*, 2020)
- *Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance* (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012)
- Productivity in collaborative governance settings (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015)

In summary, this literature search strategy informs the language, technical terms, indicators and the variables used to explain the core concepts of actions and policy impacts in collaborative governance settings, as employed throughout the thesis study. It highlights a gap in the knowledge, but also suggests important models which may help develop this area of

learning. The literature review findings also support the rationale for choosing the research instruments employed in gathering and analysis of data as later outlined in Chapter 4's methodology.

3.3 Models to Analyse Policy Implementation

A number of models have been considered in the thesis study to analyse policy implementation and impacts. This Section 3.3. reviews a number of these models and identifies the rationale for choosing the approaches adopted.

3.3.1 The Black Box – Implementation And The Policy Process

During the search process a number of studies referenced Palumbo and Calista's (1990) 'Black Box' to understand the relationship between policy, implementation and outcomes. As illustrated in Figure 3.2 below, such a policy-implementation analysis model can be used to link public policy, implementation and the resulting outcomes for the intended population. Whilst relatively simple, this is an effective demonstration of how models are used to associate policy-implementation and performance. Classical public policy conceptual models such as top-down (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983) and bottom-up approaches (Lipsky, 1980; Elmore, 1980) have been well researched. These approaches can be viewed to be quite linear and do not take account of the incremental nature of public policy implementation because of the way that learning, and experiences are lost upstream or downstream (Bingham, 2010). They may provide a holistic 'big picture' overview of policy implementation, but do not accommodate a full appreciation of the interaction and dynamics between stakeholders.

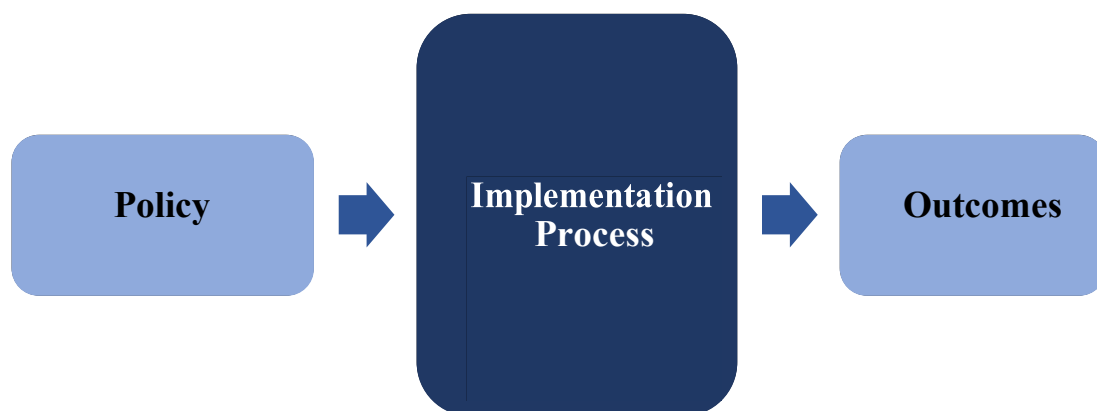


Figure 3.2: The Black Box

(Palumbo and Calista, 1990)

3.3.2 Model Of Policy Implementation Process

The literature suggests that there has been an ‘evolution from government to governance’ (Hill and Hupe, 2014, p. 200), where public management is moving away from the hierarchical model of government to the work of networked governance, such as collaborative governance. Hill and Hupe (2014) claim that it is *worthwhile* to study the operational part of governance and that ‘it is feasible to quantify variables’ (p. 161). They describe the Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) *Model of Policy-Implementation Process* as a straightforward model providing a valuable starting point for studies of the policy implementation process (Figure 3.3). They propose how researchers may deal with the multiplicity of layers in the policy process and how best to study inter-organisational relationships in this context.

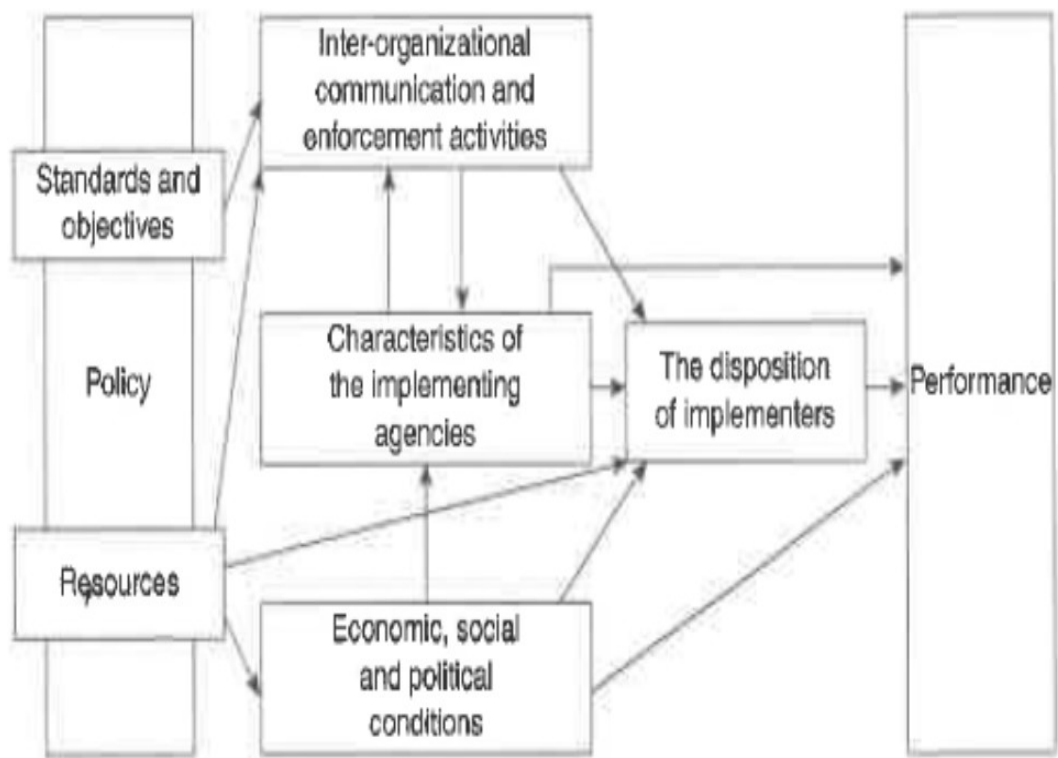


Figure 3.3: Model of Policy Implementation Process

(Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) as depicted in Hill and Hupe (2014, p. 49))

Of particular note in this model is how policy is linked to performance through a series of variables. In this ‘cluster of variables’ (Hill and Hupe, 2014, p. 49), six link policy to outcome performance, which include: policy standards and objectives specifying goals; resources available; inter-organisational relationships, connections and enforcement; characteristics or qualities of implementing agencies, including organisational control; political, economic and social environment (PES); and disposition/response of the implementors

including their understanding of the policy, their response (accept, neutral, reject), and the intensity of response. This perspective is useful in the context of collaborative governance in YWCs for two reasons. Firstly, the model demonstrates how the relationship between policy and performance is influenced by factors affecting the role YWCs play in youth work policy implementation. Secondly, the six variables that link policy to outcomes prove valuable in the interpretation of the research data. For example, in the study of actions and impacts, the ‘disposition of the implementors’ or the ‘characteristics of the implementing agencies’ involved in the YWCs may be found to be perceived by stakeholders as an enabler or a barrier to collaborative governance outcomes. Additionally, the pooling or sharing of ‘resources’, or ‘interorganisational communication’ may be a factor in whether YWC actions result in better policy impacts on the ground.

3.3.3 Policy Outcomes

Impacts, which are represented as Concept E in the thesis study’s conceptual framework, are informed by policy outcomes which are the intended, expected or desired result of collaborative actions. For the purposes of the thesis study, outcomes are understood to be the anticipated changes or transitions named in policies such as *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* (DCYA, 2014a), as introduced in Chapter 2. In their study of policy cycles and policy subsystems, Howlett *et al.* (2009) assert that as public policy goals are often neither clear nor explicit, subjective interpretation is required in the ‘post-mortems of policy outcomes’ (p. 182) to understand what is achieved in assessing policy success or failure. Success and failure are hard to define. They argue that different actors in the policy process, such as bureaucrats, politicians, think tanks, interest groups, private consultants and non-governmental bodies each define success in different ways, and as such have different success indicators and therefore different analysis techniques. For example, Howlett, *et al.*, 2009 (p. 185) suggest that ‘value for money’ is the accomplishment of goals at the least possible cost. Other actors prioritise policy success against ideals such as justice, democratic impact or social inclusion (Howlett, *et al.*, 2009), and it is argued that these three indicators have a more natural fit with the principles of youth work. While funders and those responsible for oversight may concentrate on value or costs, other participants in the thesis study may experience YWCs in other ways, such as the impacts on socially excluded target groups, marginalisation or injustice.

Ansell *et al.*, (2017) associate three limitations with such classical implementation theories. Firstly, the delivery chain between policy design and policy implementation is long and is subject to many *veto* points which may influence the intended policy to deviate from the

original goal (Ansell *et al.*, 2017). The length of the chain can determine the likelihood of delivery failure. For example, with sixteen independent ETBs acting locally on behalf of the government department responsible for youth work, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), there are many veto points between actors setting policy centrally, and those overseeing and implementing it locally. This will invariably influence the formation and agendas of YWCs. Also, as discussed previously, the development of youth work policy in Ireland has been a long and circuitous process that has experienced many obstacles and delays. For example, in such an extended timeframe, the policy that was intended by the Costello Committee in the early 1980's may not be reflected by local YWCs in the youth work policies of today.

Secondly, while street-level bureaucrats associated with the bottom-up approach (Lipsky, 1980) can be closer to the intended service user of policy beneficiary, their work can often be open to less regulation or monitoring (Ansell *et al.*, 2017). Also, they appear to be caught between their need to serve the demands of the policymaker and the policy-target so may distort the overall policy objectives to cope (Ansell *et al.*, 2017). Ansell *et al.*, (2017) associate the third limitation of classical implementation theory with the unanticipated behaviour of the policy target and private stakeholders. While the traditional chains of governance described above may assume that citizens comply with the intended policy, they may obstruct or resist it. In this instance, 'behavioural reactions' put policy implementation beyond the discretionary action of street-level bureaucrats (Ansell *et al.*, 2017, p 470).

3.3.4 Power Dynamics

In their journal article on *the Windows of Collaborative Opportunity*, Cornforth *et al.*, (2018) consider issues of power dynamics. Their conceptual framework, that is used to explain the formation, governance and life-cycle of such collaborations is useful in the study of YWCs where institutional interests and power relations between non-profit organisations and public authorities may be found. They suggest that these power dynamics are 'fraught with institutional interests', (p. 1) between non-profit organisations and public authorities. It is proposed that the governance of collaborations involves 'the design and use of a structure and process that enable actors to set the overall direction of the collaboration, and that co-ordinate and allocate resources for the collaboration as a whole and account for its activities' (Cornforth, *et al.*, 2018, p. 2). Their framework refined an earlier model developed by Lober (1997) and Takahashi and Smutny (2002) on the temporal dimension of policy windows of opportunity (Kingdon, 1995).

3.3.5 Providing Context – using PEST

For research context, a PEST analysis can be used to scan an environment, including political, economic, social and technological aspects (Aguilar, 1967). Relating this to collaborative governance, Cornforth *et al.*, (2018) argue that, over time, political, economic and social changes influence the organisation of the collaboration and hence policy implementation. They also highlight the capacity of collaborations to adapt to these changing circumstances, such as economic and political changes. Cornforth *et al.*, (2018) conclude that collaborations need to be aware of the external influences of political, economic and social changes and also that internal tensions lead to changes in the governance structure. YWC context was critiqued in Chapter 2, and a variety of collaborative governance models are considered here in Chapter 3.

3.4 Defining Collaborative Governance Theory

Collaborative governance, which originated in public administration literature, has been described as the ‘new paradigm’ for governing in democratic systems (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 3). It generally refers to public, state and non-state actors working to achieve common goals or tasks (Shilbury *et al.*, 2016, p. 331) and is based on a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-orientated and deliberate (Ansell and Gash, 2008). Ansell and Gash define quite clearly their interpretation of collaborative governance as a:

‘governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets’ (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 544).

They stress six important criteria for collaborative governance:

- ‘(1) the forum is initiated by public agencies or institutions.
 - (2) participants in the forum include nonstate actors
 - (3) participants engage directly in decision-making and are not merely "consulted" by public agencies
 - (4) the forum is formally organized and meets collectively
 - (5) the forum aims to make decisions by consensus (even if consensus is not achieved in practice), and
 - (6) the focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management.’
- (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 544-545).

Ansell and Gash (2008) also offer that collaborative governance is a type of governance in which:

‘public and private actors work collectively in distinctive ways, using particular processes, to establish laws and rules for the provision of public goods’ (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 545).

The Ansell and Gash (2008) reference to ‘stakeholders’ is of particular interest to the thesis study of YWC experiences. They view stakeholder’ participation, comprising citizens as individuals, organised groups, public agencies and nonstate organisations. This is particularly useful for the thesis study, as it both suggests the members of a collaborative governance setting, and indicates a potential research population to be sampled. Engagement with these stakeholders should be two-way, and collective. For the purposes of the thesis study, this is interpreted as meaning stakeholders should be consulted *with*, rather than *at*, where their views are included in the decision-making process, rather than asked for their views of a decision that is being made. This interpretation is supported by their assertion that:

‘Collaboration also implies that nonstate stakeholders will have real responsibility for policy outcomes. Therefore, we impose the condition that stakeholders must be directly engaged in decision-making.’ (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 546).

Their distinction between managerialism and collaborative governance, is also important as it notes contrast to the top-down approaches (Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983) mentioned earlier in this chapter. Collaborative governance engages stakeholders to identify public problems and to co-design potential solutions through effective policy implementation. This is achieved through the building of relationships and trust between policy actors, and a ceding of power associated with classic hierarchical and managerial systems of governance, in favour of collaboration, partnership and networking. This distinction between managerialism and collaborative governance later supports the interpretation in Chapters 5 and 6 of how YWC actors experienced the policy reforms. Ansell and Gash (2008) informs on the risks of not directly including stakeholders in decision-making:

‘In managerialism, public agencies make decisions unilaterally or through closed decision processes, typically relying on agency experts to make decisions (Futrell 2003; Williams and Matheny 1995). Although managerial agencies may take account of stakeholder perspectives in their decision-making and may even go so far as to consult directly with stakeholders, collaborative governance requires that stakeholders be directly included in the decision-making process.’ (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 547).

According to Donahue and Zeckhauser (2005) collaborative governance is a particular form of ‘public-private collaboration’ in ‘the pursuit of authoritatively chosen public goals by means that include engaging the efforts of, and sharing discretions with, producers outside

government’ (Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2005, p. 496). This interpretation of collaborative governance is particularly important to the thesis study, as it acknowledges the sharing of ‘discretions’ on public goals with public and private producers. For example, designated local youth work organisations, would have a role to play in such a setting.

Bevir (2010) provides further context on a definition of collaborative governance, offering that:

‘Collaborative governance focuses on the dilemmas of promoting practices in which state actors can achieve policy goals in partnership with stakeholders and the public, and especially by encouraging the public to involve themselves in the policy process. Typically, it emphasises shared, negotiated and deliberative decision-making’ (Bevir, 2010, p. 12).

In these definitions, policy implementation is not necessarily viewed as a top-down state-led process, but suggests an emerging role for non-state actors to be involved and to be influential. Emerson *et al.*, (2012) extended the understanding of collaborative governance:

‘the processes and structures of public policy decision-making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and/or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 2).

It is claimed by Emerson *et al.*, (2012) that this definition is not as limited as that of Ansell and Gash (2008). More recently, Douglas *et al.*, (2020) conceptualise collaborative governance as:

‘a collective decision-making process based on more or less institutionalised interactions between two or more actors that aims to establish common ground for joint problem solving and value creation’ (Douglas *et al.*, 2020, p. 498).

Douglas *et al.*, (2020) have distilled core elements of collaborative governance for coding including: starting conditions, institutional design, leadership, collaborative process, accountability and outputs/outcomes. These coding elements inform the operationalisation of concepts in the thesis study. To be included on their, Douglas *et al.*, (2020) specify that a case of collaborative governance ‘brings together a set of actors who collaborate on a shared issue over a specified time period within a given geographical space’ (p. 498). These criteria are noted with great interest by this YWC thesis study.

The literature distinguishes between the process outcomes of collaboration, such as the value of collaborative governance as a concept, and other outcomes (Emerson and Nabatchi,

2015; Shilbury *et al.*, 2016). This distinction between process and outcomes or policy impacts, is key to the YWC thesis study. While there may be consensus on the benefit to those involved in collaborative governance, less is known of the relationship between collaborative actions (Concept D) and policy impacts (Concept E), which is the focus of RQ2. ‘Productive’ collaborative governance includes power sharing, trust, leadership, overcoming conflict, establishing structures, collaborative dynamics, shared understanding, and resource sharing (Shilbury *et al.*, 2016, p. 331). Additionally, collaborative governance can be useful to resolve wicked problems and improve trust (Weymouth and Hatz-Karp, 2015), so there is a potential opportunity to inform interview questions concerning the barriers that prevent the production of better policy impacts for youth populations.

In order to provide additional clarity for the term ‘collaboration’, a more conventional interpretation portrays it as ‘joint working’ or ‘working in conjunction with others’ (Wanna, 2008, p. 3). This implies that actors, such as individuals, groups or organisations *co-labour* and co-operate in a shared endeavour (Wanna, 2008). The literature identifies that collaborative governance is largely dependent on such behavioural actions or indeed inaction on the part of those charged to govern in these systems (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Emerson *et al.*, 2012; Shilbury *et al.*, 2016; O’Boyle and Shilbury, 2018). O’Boyle and Shilbury (2018) have synthesised aspects of the literature to highlight the importance of power sharing, trust, leadership, overcoming conflict, structural impediments, collaborative dynamics, shared understanding, incentives to participate and resource sharing in collaborative governance theory.

Collaborative governance is also defined as ‘the pursuit of authoritatively chosen public goals by means that include engaging the efforts of, and sharing discretion with, producers outside of government’ (Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2005, p. 496). To distinguish collaborative governance from other collective action, Donahue and Zeckhauser (2005) suggest reading the governance element of the phrase in terms of *public purpose* normally associated with government. They posit that as there are emerging benefits from collaborative governance, scholars and practitioners need to find analytical frameworks to harness the benefits and limit its ‘costs’ (p. 522).

Bingham (2010) references Ansell and Gash (2008) who carried out an analysis of 137 empirical case studies across various policy sectors in this field. Ansell and Gash (2008) support the need for face-to-face dialogue between actors, trust-building, a commitment to the

process, plus a shared understanding of the policy and outcomes. These are important variables to consider in the context of the thesis study, for example, in terms of prior history or conflict or co-operation, participation incentives for stakeholders, power and resource imbalances, leadership and institutional design. Process factors are also identified including face to face dialogue, trust building and the development of a shared understanding. In particular, it is found that ‘small wins’ (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 561) contribute to the deepening of trust, commitment and shared understanding. These variables, factors and small wins in the intermediate term, are used as a springboard for investigation YWC functions and policy impacts.

3.5 Collaborative Governance Frameworks: Theory And Practice

Collaborative governance frameworks have been used previously in empirical research, and some of the learning has been adapted and adopted in the thesis study. This prior research is reviewed here to signpost some of the current language and perspectives on how collaborative governance frameworks are used to understand the relationship between concepts. This learning will be relied upon in Chapter 4 on Methodology, and later in Chapter 6, when the findings are discussed.

3.5.1 Frameworks To Understand Power Relations And Trust

Power relations and trust are important in collaborative relationships. Bryson *et al.* (2006) focussed on cross-sector collaboration used in solving complex problems and offer a *Framework for Understanding Cross-Sector Collaborations* to demonstrate links between the initial conditions of the collaboration, the processes used, the governance structure, the contingencies, the constraints, the outcomes and accountabilities. While the term ‘collaborative governance’ is not explicitly referred to in Bryson *et al.* (2006), the framework is useful in demonstrating linear relationships between collaborative relationships and endeavours. Of particular relevance to the thesis study, contingencies and constraints are defined as types of collaboration, power imbalances and competing institutional logics. Trusting relationships are described as ‘both the lubricant and the glue’ (Bryson, *et al.*, 2006, p. 47) facilitating and holding the collaboration together where partners build trust by ‘sharing information and knowledge and demonstrating competency, good intentions, and follow through’ (Bryson, *et al.*, 2006, p. 48). They argued that power imbalances can threaten effective collaborations when they are a source

of mistrust and often stymie a shared purpose through strategic planning and scenario development (Bryson, *et al.*, 2006, p. 50).

3.5.2 Five-Level Scale Of Collaboration

Wanna (2008) offers a five-level scale of collaboration that categorises patterns of activities. For the highest degree of collaboration, indicative activities include ‘transformative’ interaction between actors, ‘substantive’ engagement and empowerment, consensus and co-operation and coalition building between governmental and non-governmental actors. These are referred to as a ‘high normative commitment’ to collaboration (p. 4). The medium to high degree of collaboration is referred to as ‘strong normative orientation’ (p. 4), where strong engagement in the policy process, devolved decision-making and complex innovations in the policy delivery process are presented as indicative activities. The medium degree of collaboration includes activities where there is a commitment to inter-agency consultation, joined strategies, formal joint activities and joint funding initiatives. This medium degree is where there is a commitment to ‘multiparty input and buy-in’ (p. 4). Co-production, technical improvements in delivery chains, assisted compliance with obligations, joint consultation with service users, systematic use of evaluation data and public reporting are presented as activities indicating a medium to low level of collaboration. Here, there is a commitment to ‘get the job done’ operationally (Wanna, 2008, p. 4). The lowest degree of collaboration is termed ‘marginal operational adjustments’, and activities include ‘incremental adjustments’ based on service user feedback is shared to inform the needs of the collaboration (Wanna, 2008, p. 4). Wanna (2008) aims to analyse the black box of ‘opacity’ (p. 11) that characterises collaboration in policy implementation and as such their categorisation of activity patterns across five levels is useful in the assessment of collaborative governance. The language and categorisation used in the five-level scale, is useful in analysing collaboration between governmental and non-governmental actors.

3.5.3 Coefficients For Partnership In A Non-Profit Community Sector

While not specific to collaborative governance, Andrews and Entwistle (2010) are briefly included in this literature review for two reasons. Firstly, in their discussion of the delivery of services, they argue that state agencies should partner with the non-profit and community sector as they offer a ‘way of connecting to, and learning from, different voices within civil society’ with performance benefits (Andrews and Entwistle, 2010, p. 684). Secondly, concepts of ‘coefficients for partnership’ examine additions or improvements to the

baseline. This use of coefficients in a non-profit and community sector is useful when studying the role of designated voluntary youth work organisations participating in YWCs.

3.5.4 Power: Framework For Assessing Power In Collaborative Governance Processes

The *Framework for Assessing Power in Collaborative Governance Processes* (Purdy, 2012) outlines how authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy can be used to influence stakeholders, design and the content of a collaborative process. In this framework, power can be overt and visible on the surface, including particular stakeholders in the process, or deployed more subtly such as the language used to present issues for discussion. The notion of relative power (Emerson, et al., 2012, p. 7) occurs when stakeholders are susceptible to exclusion or disregard in decision-making processes as discussed later in Chapter 6. Purdy's (2012) analysis describes how actors were disadvantaged by issues of authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy referring to the relative power of participants and the potential for domination by those who had previously held more powerful positions³. Their case study results are presented in a matrix illustrating that the framework can be used to assess sources of power, and how power is exercised during collaborative processes. Purdy (2012) concludes that the knowledge gleaned from this matrix provides a more thorough understanding and evaluation process: 'The multidimensional definition of power offered by the framework allows a richer understanding of the dynamics and outcomes of collaborative processes' (Purdy, 2012, p. 415). Power can be at play in collaborative governance settings, with imbalances affecting collaboration between actors. For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, ETBs provide their local YWCs with administrative support, Youth Officer resources, and information. At the same time, ETBs are also the primary intermediary for youth work funding, so some designated youth work organisations may act or interact differently, at YWC meetings, as their funders are present. This could be understood as a power play where 'power is an emergent phenomenon that is shaped by interaction' (Purdy, 2012, p. 416); such processes, as discussed later, are prevalent in YWC interactions, particularly in terms of funding relationships.

3.5.5 Empirical Analysis Of Collaborative Governance In Ecosystems

In their conceptual framework for the empirical analysis of ecosystem serviced governance, Primmer *et al.* (2015) include ideas about 'adaptive collaborative governance' in their assessment of policy implementation. Their analysis aims to highlight the 'integration of norms' and stakeholder commitment where they review knowledge accumulation, collective

³ According to Purdy, discursive legitimacy helps to appreciate the challenges and unanticipated issues faced by those working collaboratively. A YWC example has been given later in this paragraph.

learning and sensitivity to changes (Primmer, *et al.*, 2015, p. 161). Here it is found that through collaborative governance, different actors exchanging information and views can contribute to positive outcomes. This interaction between the actors develops the capacity for joint action (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012), that is expected to be found in YWCs.

In their study of ecosystem restoration partnerships, Scott and Thomas (2015) operationalise two collaborative dynamics from Emerson, *et al.*, (2012), principled engagement and capacity for joint action, to find increases in consultation planning and implementation (Scott and Thomas, 2015). They find that increases in ties resulted from three facets of principled engagement, namely enhanced awareness of the interests and values of other organisations, increased face to face communication and a shared use of common language (Emerson, 2018). They highlight one area of learning from their research and suggest that future research should focus on shared problem definitions or common perspectives instead of language. These measures lead Scott and Thomas (2015) to suggest that collaboration dynamics reduce transaction costs and strengthen ties between actors in the collaboration (Emerson, 2018). This operationalisation of these two dynamics is valuable in the analysis of research data gleaned in the thesis study's digital interviews.

Cheng *et al.* (2015) examined the adaptability of collaborative governance settings associated with publicly managed ecosystems. They develop an analytical framework to examine collaborative governance change and adaptability over time (Cheng *et al.*, 2015). They relate changes in external factors to government bureaucracy through the internal dynamics of collaborative governance and respective recommendations, guidelines, protocols and shared databases. Four primary sources of data were gathered including: notes and reports over a period of nine years; in-depth semi-structured interviews with stakeholders; interviews with collaboration members on the perceived benefits of collaborative actions; active participant observation by the researchers during general meetings, sub-team meetings and field trips. Interviews were transcribed and coded using the NVivo software and codes were interactively modified as data sets were compared with each other. Coding branches of coding trees were used to organise the data for 'sense-making' (Cheng, *et al.*, 2015, p. 35). The literature highlights the way in which aspects of social learning, social capital and flexibility for innovative actions on the adaptive capacity are important for understanding collaborative governance. As Cheng *et al.* conclude, these can be classified against implementation actions over time. This classification approach is adopted in the thesis study of YWCs.

In a comparative analysis of collaborative governance, Vodden (2015) used case studies to understand the conditions that influence the governance processes and outcomes of three coastal communities (Vodden, 2015). Here data was collected on (i) the characteristics of collaborative governance, (ii) the sustainability of objectives and outcomes and (iii) barriers and enablers to the governance process. The data searches inform those of the thesis study, as they appear to mirror the asks of the two research questions. Of particular note is the examination of the conditions that influence the governance process and outcomes. The characteristics of collaborative governance were described in terms of six categories: collaboration and consensus; formal and informal mechanisms and relationships; key roles for local actors; sharing of resources, responsibilities and decision-making; integration; and learning and adaptation. Some of these features of collaborative governance emerged in the analysis of the thesis study data and are further discussed in the conclusions in Chapter 7.

Kossman *et al.*, (2016) present a marine environment case study that examines how collaboration dynamics in governance in a region of Indonesia lead to either ‘collaborative action’ or ‘collaborative inertia’. They observe that while collaborative governance leads to more effective decision-making, an assurance of sustainable outcomes is more difficult. Most interestingly, they recommend that, for the implementation of collaborative governance, attention should be paid to the multiple social elements that make up collaborative governance, including deliberation, trust and leadership.

Biddle (2017) conducted empirical research testing the effectiveness of a collection of collaboration components, included in the Collaborative Governance Regime (CGR) framework for achieving environmental improvement goals, using their EPA’s watershed-based approach (Biddle, 2017). This offers evidence on the importance of specific collaborative elements and provides public managers with guidance to improve performance and achieve goals. The study found incongruence between participants’ acceptance of assigned roles and responsibilities. It was concluded that finding the ‘right’ people was not sufficient; there needed to be a clarity about roles, an issue that emerged in the thesis study.

To analyse its performance, the functioning of the Black Sea Commission is analysed as a marine CGR through the study of enabling and fostering conditions (Avoyan, *et al.*, 2017). The data from the interviews were analysed by applying the empirical method of qualitative content analysis (Avoyan *et al.*, 2017). Using this data it is found that, despite evidence of a willingness to co-operate, the implementation of the shared strategic plan was weak due to

limitations in institutional and legal frameworks. Valuable recommendations are made on how these limitations can be addressed to enhance capacity to ensure more effective collaborative governance. The interview approach and their understanding of effectiveness is applicable to the thesis study of YWCs.

3.5.6 Three-Level Rating System For Collaboration Dynamics

When conducting a comparative case study of federal hydropower licensing, Ulibarri (2015) uses a three-level rating system of high, medium and low to relate collaboration dynamics to actions on decision-making. This rating system operationalised perceptions of high-quality collaboration as the effect of collaboration dynamic components (principled engagement, shared motivation and capacity for joint action) on decision-making, stakeholder satisfaction and environmental and economic changes.

They found that high-quality collaboration leads to ‘jointly developed and highly implementable’ (Emerson, 2018, p4) operational activities, thereby enhancing resources allocation. Conversely, it was found that collaboration of lower quality ignored stakeholder concerns and had less impact. These high, medium and low ratings are useful in the classification of the core concepts in the thesis study of YWCs, where collaboration dynamics were perceived by stakeholders to enable actions to varying degrees (high, medium and low).

3.5.7 Empirical Research On Collaborative Governance Outcomes

Ovseiko *et al.*, (2014) studied the implementation of collaborative governance arrangements in cross-sector health networks; this was in response to calls in England for health policymakers and managers to find alternative forms of organisation and governance to add value and quality to health systems. They employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data from a national survey of directors, a group discussion with seven directors, and fifteen in-depth interviews with directors and chairs.

In their study of EU employment policy, Sørensen *et al.*, (2015) make a distinction between co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration in their study of the implementation of employment policy in the European Union. Relevant stakeholders were involved in a collaborative effort to formulate and implement shared policy objectives so that outcomes were achieved. They determined that collaborative working is more demanding than co-operation or co-ordination but can be more beneficial for all stakeholders involved. In this, there is a tacit link between the collaborative process and outcomes. Also, their distinction between co-

operation, co-ordination and collaboration among the stakeholders is relevant to the thesis study of YWCs, when collaboration is more valuable to those who take part.

Bryson *et al.*'s (2015) literature review of theoretical frameworks and key empirical results demonstrates the value of engaging in collaborative inter-organisational efforts to effectively address challenging public issues. Their review compared their earlier 2006 study with those frameworks and empirical studies of Thomson and Perry (2006), Ansell and Gash (2008), Agranoff (2007 and 2012), Proven and Kenis (2008), Emerson *et al.*, (2012) and Koschmann, Kuhn and Pfarrer (2012). They find that those reviewed, draw on a range of theories from organisational studies, public administration, leadership, strategic management, conflict management, collective action, policy studies, planning and environmental managements, network theory and communication theory. These findings concerning the varied theoretical bases of collaborative governance are helpful in the thesis study of YWCs, particularly for the classification, operationalisation and analysis of the key concepts connecting the collaborative space to actions and outcomes. They advise that academics should use these theories and assumptions appropriately, and in an integrated discerning way to 'uncover the precise causal mechanisms that can advance or undermine effective collaboration' (p. 12) of 'what is causing what' (p.13). In empirical research the assessment of power, leadership, and environmental factors are key. They acknowledge the progress made on understanding collaborative outcomes, but highlight the complex nature of accountability between power dynamics and policy outcomes.

In their case study, of Integrated Youth Care (IYC), Voets *et al.*, (2015) adapt the *Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance* (Emerson *et al.*, 2012) by conceptualising metagovernance as an additional layer outside of the system context of the collaboration. Their study is primarily focused on the empirical analysis of metagovernance. The framework is used to map and discuss the case empirically, not to develop or test it theoretically. Voets *et al.*, (2015) posit that smart metagovernance by central government is imperative. Using a single case study of IYC in Flanders (Belgium), the importance of and difficulties with metagovernance is shown (Voets *et al.*, 2015). It is found that metagovernors need to know when to allow for autonomy, and when to use the 'shadow of hierarchy' (Voets *et al.*, 2015, p 984). These findings are beneficial, as metagovernors may discern between allowing autonomy and dialogue, or not. Firstly, Voets *et al.* (2015) is useful for the thesis study of YWCs as it illustrates how the *Integrative Framework* can be employed to investigate collaboration in youth services. Secondly, Voets *et al.* (2015) study of how the coordination

between semi-autonomous actors requires autonomy and dialogue at times, and a 'shadow of hierarchy' at other times. The implication of this learning for the YWC thesis study is how actors work together at times, and how a sense of hierarchy can emerge at other times, where funded agencies feel rank is being pulled by funders.

3.5.8 Enablers And Barriers Shaping Actions And Impacts

In their empirical qualitative research of collaborative governance systems in non-profit sport, O'Boyle and Shilbury (2018) identified enablers and barriers shaping collaborative governance. Their approaches are possibly the most significant influence from the literature, on the research questions and design of the YWC thesis study. They employed an empirical qualitative approach to focus on the behaviours and actions of those governing federated sports in Australia. They studied interpersonal dynamics in collaborative governance, using in-depth interviews in reaction to appeals by Ansell and Gash (2008) to conduct more qualitative research. They decided that semi-structured interviews foster a greater understanding of the enablers and barriers in collaborative governance settings (O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018). This distinction is particularly helpful to thesis study of YWCs being conducted here, as they believed that information gained from participants during interviews, provides insight into, and understanding of, pertinent issues. To classify and operationalise their data, they initially set 21 broad themes. These were reconsidered as too broad and requiring of refinement, so they sifted through transcripts to piece together similar sentences and phrases to identify ten major themes: the current state of collaborative governance, including issues, incentives and leverage; evidence of a prehistory of conflict; the model type (federated or unitary), which was specific to their case study; board structure; strategic planning; leadership; trust; small wins/ intermediate outcomes; return on investment; and evidence of collaborative processes. This approach of using 'major' themes rather than broad ones was considered useful in the YWC thesis study.

These ten major themes were collapsed and further refined, and the three key themes that emerged from their study included: (i) the impact these behaviours have on future collaboration; (ii) the design of the model including board composition and leadership; and (iii) the effectiveness of the strategic planning process. O'Boyle and Shilbury (2018) suggest that while empirical research exploring issues of trust has previously been examined, little empirical insight has been gained to understand exactly how collaborative governance theory could be applied to the sporting context in a practical way. On quality interactions across networks, use of a strategic planning process to develop a shared direction could facilitate high-level

collaborative governance within a network. They propose that little empirical work exists to fully uncover these issues (O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018).

3.5.9 Collaborative Governance Theory And Practice, Recent Developments In Empirical Research

Additional language used in the discussion in Chapter 6 is grounded in more recent empirical research. In their scoping literature review of 35 academic papers in the Web of Knowledge database, Tonelli *et al.* (2018) remarked that there is a noticeable gap in the literature, expressing 'the need of better understanding how to analyse the setting and how to assess the essential elements in each scenario' (Tonelli *et al.*, 2018, p 2). This further evidences a need for a comprehensive analysis tool to understand what is going on in collaborative governance settings. Such an analysis tool could be used to relate each of the 'essential elements' in that setting so that there is a better understanding of what is going on there.

In their study of public health in low- and middle-income countries, Emerson (2018) advances the use of a design approach when studying the impact of collaborative governance, where a series of questions are used to examine the origins, design and resulting actions. It is proposed that 'all collaborative governance regimes start with an itch, a tension, a challenge' or opportunity (Emerson, 2018, p. 6). This design approach studying the impact of collaborative governance, where a series of questions are used to examine the origins, design and resulting actions is very applicable to the thesis study of YWCs. This inspired the design of the analysis and operationalisation tool which could be a useful addition to the armoury of collaborative governance students.

A case study was used by Nohrstedt (2018) to examine the impact of networking by a number of collaboration partners in Swedish municipalities across organizational boundaries, to prepare for and respond to extreme events. They focussed on the outcomes associated with collaboration in crisis management. They concluded that empirical research may offer insight into the relationship between collaboration and the management of crises (Nohrstedt, 2018). Of particular interest, is their use of the O'Toole-Meir model where performance is considered in terms of policy outputs and outcomes (O'Toole and Meier, 2011). Nohrstedt (2018) identifies that environmental factors, namely resources and risk, are the primary linkages in the relationship between networking and performance or goal attainment. It is suggested that when more resources are made available to the collaboration, then there are better actions and outcomes, as interviewees confirmed that inter-organisation collaboration is important. While

describing them as neither ‘novel nor unique’, their study unveiled a set of mechanisms conducive to collaboration including: stable interpersonal relationships, clarification of the terms of the collaboration, shared problem perceptions, and co-ordination of joint decision-making (Nohrstedt, 2018, p. 242).

Collaboration is often framed as one size fits all, but does not address all governance situations, particularly when decision-makers face uncertainty (Ulibarri, 2019). In their single case study of a collaborative process used to develop an operating licence for a hydropower dam, Ulibarri (2019) found that, although it was challenging, collaborative processes and structures for stakeholder interaction provided a model for addressing uncertainties and risks. In the thesis study of YWCs, a single case study of one regional YWC was considered, but after consideration, it was decided that a national study of 16 ETB areas was more appropriate, given the potential interview data available to the researcher, his interests, and his own professional experiences in youth work, governance and policy implementation. There is some merit in a detailed case study of a single research site, and a single case study of a YWC features as a recommendation for a future study, in Chapter 7.

In their work on enabling collaborative governance using systems modelling methods, Bianchi *et al.*, (2020) propose the use of dynamic performance management tools in the study of collaborative governance. They focus on performance management, presenting different approaches to public management problem-solving, and examine how public sector organisations adopt system modelling methods. Highlighting the need to foster collaborative governance and the design of consistent and robust policies, they posit that it is possible to enable collaborative governance through such systems modelling methods to study the explicit connection between resources and outcomes (Bianchi, *et al.*, 2020), which is worthy of consideration in the thesis study of YWCs. Their discussion of ‘enablers’ is also supportive of the decision to use this phrase in the conceptual framework.

Waardenburg *et al.*, (2020) investigate the real-life dynamics of multi-agency collaborations, using a quasi-experimental action research approach. By studying eight multi-agency crime-fighting collaborations in the Netherlands, they observed that challenges present collaborations with a set of paradoxical demands. Collaborations that succeeded adopted a ‘both/and’ rather than an ‘either/or’ mindset (p. 401). This principle of inclusivity is helpful in the thesis study. Also, they found a paradox that may be useful when trying to understand the experiences of public servants ‘with one foot in the known bureaucratic way of working and

one foot in the still novel networked governance’ (Waardenburg *et al.*, 2020, p 403). They give an example of how professionals exercised caution when sharing sensitive information, while trying to engage in collaboration, and establish trust. Such findings are of relevance to the thesis study, as while YWC practitioners work in confidential spaces and sensitive contexts, it is accepted in YWCs, that sensitive and confidential information is not shared. YWC discussions about regional themes in youth work, social trends and emerging issues do not present a challenge in terms of sensitive information.

If the desired policy outcome is tied to the implementation process, it is more likely to be measured (Koontz *et al.*, 2020). In their case survey of output, outcome, and impact measures used in the empirical literature of collaborative conservation processes, Koontz *et al.*, explain the results that such processes yield and map variables that researchers are including in analyses. Patterns in outputs, outcomes and impacts of collaborative conservation are revealed. They uncover significant differences across variable types. Specifically, they observe that variables appear more often when they are more proximate to process in a logic chain (Koontz *et al.*, 2020). It is concerning, however, that significant outcomes that are not explicit in a logic model may be left unnoticed.

Gatchair (2016) studied the implementation of fiscal policy reforms in local authorities in Jamaica and examined the relationships and partnerships in the context of collaborative governance, focussing on the actors, structure and processes. Interestingly, they found that intentional efforts must be made to manage overlapping networks of actors where unclear boundaries in participation and leadership may exist. Most importantly, their study finds that successful implementation cannot be achieved solely by ministerial efforts, but requires the input of other actors such as central government, local authorities, the private sector and civil society groups.

3.5.10 The Collaborative Governance Case Database

Douglas, *et al.*, (2020) was introduced earlier in this literature review when defining collaborative governance. They developed a database to provide a free common pool resource of collaborative governance case studies for researchers. They examine the elements and sub-elements of collaborative governance. Of particular interest to the YWC thesis study is their contention that outputs and outcomes can be determined by the ‘degree to which intended and unintended outcomes were generated, degree of trust and legitimacy among partners’ (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020, p. 498). In addition, they posit that the sub-elements of the collaborative process

include 'Face-to-face contact, nature of meetings, investment in knowledge sharing, joint fact-finding and quick wins' (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020, p. 498). These sub-elements are useful in the thesis study of YWCs, as leadership is detailed as 'number and background of leaders, leadership role in convening, stewarding, mediating, and taking action' (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020, p. 498). The rating scale is also useful, where contributors to the databank are asked to rate their cases across the elements ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 represents low levels of trust and 5 represents high levels of trust, for example. While Douglas *et al.*, (2020) describe their databank as an 'imperfect instrument' (p. 506), the methods and questions connecting the elements with outputs and outcomes are noteworthy and both inform and influence the design of the thesis study of YWCs.

3.5.11 Discussion And Synthesis Of The Empirical Literature

The literature suggests that key factors can explain collaborative governance. Whilst collaborative governance has been defined in earlier studies (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bevir, 2010), where collaborations contribute to outcomes and accountabilities (Bryson *et al.*, 2006), a number of studies detail a gap in the literature, with a need to 'disentangle process and productivity performance' (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 741). In particular, the extent of the relationship between collaborative actions and impacts requires more empirical research (Papadopoulos, 2012; Howlett and Ramesh, 2016; Howlett, 2019; Douglas, *et al.*, 2020).

The collaborative dynamics of power, trust and leadership appear to be consistent across the literature. For example, Bryson *et al.*, (2015) detail the complexities in achieving collaborative outcomes that address challenging public issues, when connecting collaborative spaces to actions and policy impacts. These connections can include power, trust and leadership. Douglas *et al.* (2020) linked outcomes to the degree of trust in a collaboration. Cornforth *et al.*, (2018) support this notion of power dynamics, including institutional interests of collaborative partners. Purdy (2012) offered a framework for assessing this power in collaborative governance processes. Overall, it was found that productive collaborative governance settings include these dynamics (Purdy, 2012; Shilbury *et al.*, 2016).

Authors offer differing insights into approaches and methodologies to study collaborative governance. For example, case studies have been used to explore these concepts (Ansell and Gash (2008); Purdy (2012); Cheng *et al.*, (2015); Vodden (2015); Ulibarri, 2015; Kossman *et al.*, (2016); Voets *et al.*, (2015); O'Boyle and Shilbury (2018); and Nohrstedt (2018). Secondly, collaborative governance can be evaluated in a number of ways (Ovseiko,

2014; Sørensen, *et al.*, 2015; Vodden, 2015; Biddle, 2017). These studies influence the thesis study's agenda, design and methodologies.

The literature review also provides the YWC thesis study with insights into the language, concepts and definitions required to explore the function and outcomes of collaborative governance settings. An extensive range of authors have been considered, offering various perspectives of collaborative governance, models, frameworks and interpretations of concepts A to E. For example, O'Boyle and Shilbury (2018) use of enablers and barriers is particularly relevant when considering dynamics (Concept C). This language was also found in Vodden (2015), Avoyan *et al.*, (2017) and Bianchi *et al.*, (2020) strengthening the justification of its usage in the YWC thesis study. Other examples include discussions in Emerson *et al.*, (2012), Innes and Booher (1999) and Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) on actions (Concept D), resulting in collaborative outcomes and impacts (Concept E).

Differences have emerged in the focus that authors place on the factors in collaborative governance settings. On this, it is important to be mindful of the overarching debate on process or product, and issue discussed in the context of the YWC thesis study which sought to address a gap in literature on stakeholders' views on evaluating outcomes. There is a problem, where the current literature 'struggles to' connect actions and impacts (Douglas, *et al.*, 2020, p. 495). On the one hand, there is agreement that collaborative governance is valuable for those involved, with process impacts for members (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bevir, 2010; Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2005). On the other hand, data is needed to 'disentangle process and productivity performance' (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 741) to understand how collaborative actions relate to policy impacts. Other authors appear to place more importance on productivity, impacts, efficiency and effectiveness (Voets, *et al.*, 2015; Ulibarri, 2015; Biddle, 2017; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018; Emerson, 2018; Douglas, *et al.*, 2020; Waardenburg, *et al.*, 2020). So, while there is a degree of consensus on the merits of being involved in collaborative governance settings, performance continues to be the focus for some, with a model needed to allow for the separation of the process from the impacts. Section 2.6 considers a framework with potential to do this.

3.5.12 Power Dynamics – A Synthesis of the Literature

It would appear that relationships of power are critical in understanding YWCs and other organisations. As Bryson *et al.* (2006, p. 50) argue: 'Power imbalances' threaten effective collaborations as they are a source of mistrust. According to Ansell and Gash (2008, p. 551),

power imbalances between stakeholders are a common problem in collaborative governance, if parties are not ‘on an equal footing’ then there will be manipulation by the stronger. These imbalances lead to tension and conflict (Bryson *et al.*, 2015).

A common theme across the collaborative governance literature seems to suggest that there is a ceding of power, in favour of collaboration, networking, sharing of power and partnership. Power can be overt and visible on the surface, including particular stakeholders in the process, or deployed more subtly (Purdy, 2012). Purdy’s (2012) *Framework for Assessing Power in Collaborative Governance Processes* can be employed to examine how authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy influences stakeholders in a collaborative process. According to Cornforth *et al.*, (2018, p. 1), power dynamics between non-profits and public authorities are ‘fraught with institutional interests’. Power sharing is often a feature of well-developed collaboration (Shilbury *et al.*, 2016; O’Boyle and Shilbury, 2018). These power dynamics are discussed later in Chapter 6 where these frameworks act as lenses to provide a greater understanding of YWC stakeholder experiences.

3.6 Integrative Framework For Collaborative Governance

In synthesising the literature, a decision was made to focus on Emmerson *et al.*’s (2012) *Integrative Framework For Collaborative Governance* for the purpose of the YWC thesis study. The *Integrative Framework* provides a ‘new mechanism’ for collective action determined by collaboration partners in accordance with their expressed or implied theory of action for accomplishing their preferred outcomes’ (Emmerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 18). This effectiveness is demonstrated in research by Emerson and Nabatchi (2015); O’Boyle and Shilbury (2018) and Voets *et al.*, (2015). While not directly related to youth work, their adoption of Emerson’s 2012 framework in the examination of intergovernmental regimes, not for profit sports organisations and youth care settings are useful and transferrable to the thesis study, which has been enhanced by following the proven methods of their prior work.

It has been argued that ‘the purpose of collaboration is to generate desired outcomes together that could not have been accomplished separately’ (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012, p. 14). Emerson *et al.*, (2012) have developed a suite of conceptual frameworks, findings and practice-based knowledge into an *Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance*, to develop theory, test it and improve practice (Figure 3.4). This *Integrative Framework* is the primary theory influencing the conceptual framework (see Figure 1.3) of the thesis study of YWCs.

3.6.1 The Framework

The *Integrative Framework* comprises three interrelated and nested dimensions including the system context, the collaborative governance regime (CGR), its dynamics and actions, and their respective components. Figure 3.4 describes the outermost box giving the system context including the legal, socio-economic, environmental and other influences that affect and are affected by the regime. In this context, energy, impetus and early direction set the drivers of leadership, incentives, interdependence and uncertainty. Also, this system context presents opportunities and limitations shaping the dynamics and process performance of the regime both initially and over time (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015).

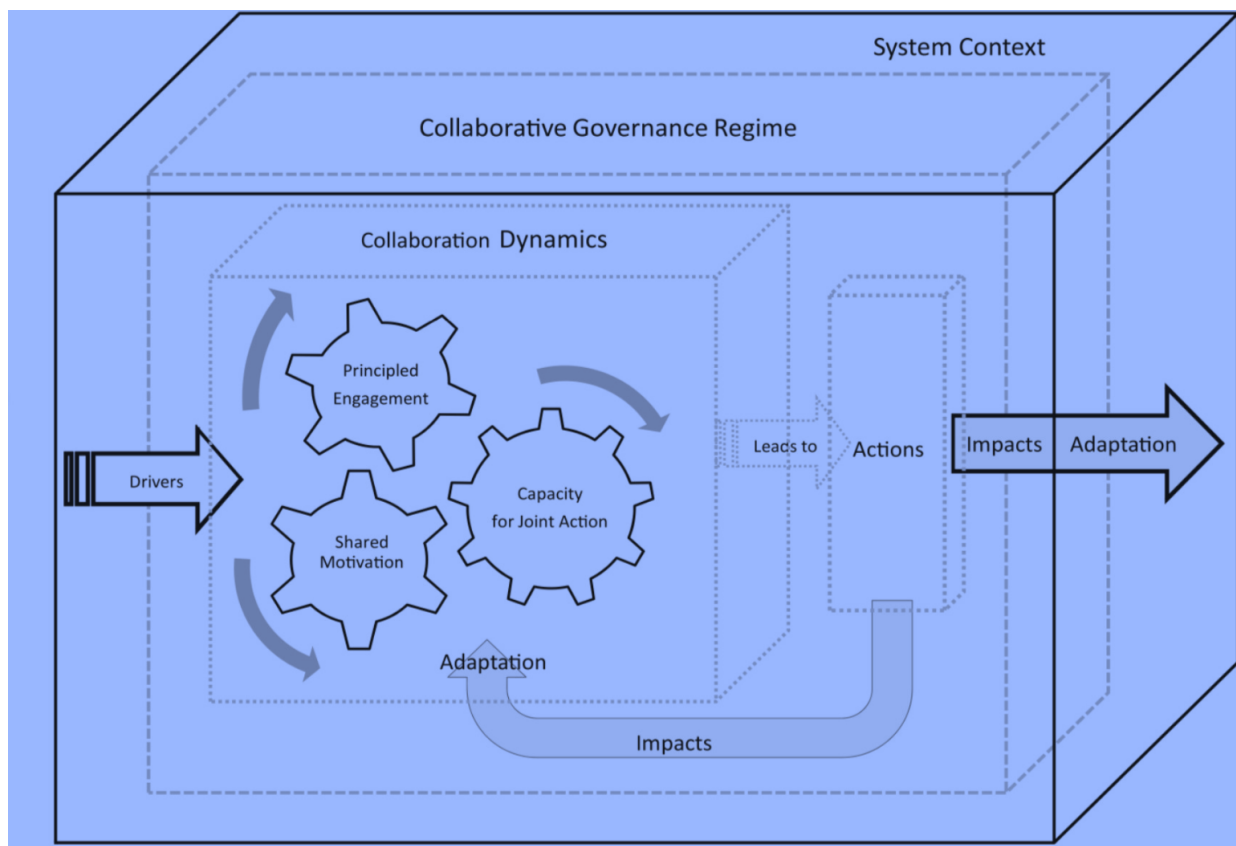


Figure 3.4: Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance

(Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 6)

3.6.2 Rationale For Choosing The Integrative Framework

A key rationale for choosing this framework is the ability to distinguish perceptions of performance from the those of process. The three nested dynamics examine what is occurring in the collaboration, and these ‘lead to’ actions that have impacts. This differs from other, more linear models, as there is some reflexivity within the dynamics and with actions impacting back on dynamics (the backwards arrow at the bottom). The opportunity to examine regional

collaboration with non-governmental stakeholders is of particular relevance to the thesis study. The application of the framework to ‘co-management regimes’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 2), ‘multi-partner governance’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 3) and ‘community-based collaboratives involved in collective resource management’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 3) is also of particular interest. The framework may be used to analyse different policy arenas at various levels of complexity which benefits theory, research, evaluation and practice (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 2). It enables the study of collaborative governance as a whole, or a focus on certain elements, facilitating interdisciplinary research on multi-level systems. The *Integrative Framework* introduces the concept of a CGR, which is defined as ‘the particular mode of, or system for, public decision-making in which cross-boundary collaboration represents the prevailing pattern of behaviour and activity’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 6). Emerson *et al.*, (2012) interprets the concepts of actions, impacts and dynamics relating to collaboration governance settings. As these concepts significantly inform the conceptual framework of the thesis study, they were each examined in detail as detailed below.

3.6.3 Actions In A Collaborative Governance Setting

As indicated in Figure 3.4, actions link collaboration dynamics and impacts. They may be carried out collectively, by an individual party, or an external agent, however they should be attributable to the collaboration to be recognised as an indicator. Emerson *et al.*, (2012) warn that, while actions can sometimes be ‘conflated with impacts’, they suggest that actions should be defined more clearly so as to achieve desired policy outcomes. They offer valuable examples including: securing endorsements; educating stakeholders; enacting policy measures; marshalling external resources; deploying staff; additional facilities; new management practices; monitoring of policy implementation; and enforcing compliance. The actions of the collaboration ‘shape the overall quality and extent to which a CGR is developed and effective’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 6) and ‘should be at the heart of any collaborative governance framework’ (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012, p. 17). Most significantly, the innermost box of their framework demonstrates how collaborative actions relate to impacts.

3.6.4 Impacts In A Collaborative Governance Setting

Emerson *et al.*, (2012) describe *impacts* as ‘results on the ground’, citing the classification by Innes and Booher (1999, p. 419). They explain how these impacts result from the actions spurred by collaborative dynamics (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 18) as depicted in the innermost box in Figure 3.4 which include ‘the added value of a new social good’ (p. 18) as

developed by the collaborative action. They propose, that ‘the impacts resulting from collaborative action are likely to be closer to the targeted outcomes with fewer unintended negative consequences when they are specified and derived from a shared theory of action during collaborative dynamics.’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 18). When the collaborative partners deem that accountability for collaborative outcomes is important, the impacts are likely to be more explicit. In summary, the actions of a CGR generates outputs that produce outcomes which may lead to adaptation (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 723). This perspective of actions and impacts in the collaborative governance setting is useful in answering RQ 1 and RQ2 which seek to understand the functioning of YWCs, their dynamics, and if their actions have policy impacts on the ground for young people.

According to Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) the term ‘impacts’ has a particular meaning in the performance literature, where experimental methods are used to verify the ‘added value of the program’ (p. 742). They are ‘the resulting outcomes of collaborative actions’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 720). This distinction is important to the thesis study where YWCs facilitate additional interventions for young people, support services and youth work programmes. The policy impacts of these YWC actions are manifested through their added value for youth populations on the ground, to determine if the situation for young people is better as a result of the YWC actions. This is the change in the conditions effected by YWC actions, relative to the intention of the youth work policy. Additionally, qualitative indicators include the perceived changes in circumstances for young people in response to the intentions of youth work policy. More examples of these are introduced later in the discussion on youth work outcomes in Section 2.8.2. The thesis study’s interpretation of ‘policy impacts’ are the changes that result from the collaboration’s actions, relative to the intentions of youth work policy. They are the enhanced facilities and resources that alter conditions for the intended population, or the changes achieving positive outcomes for young people, that resulted from YWC actions.

3.6.5 Collaboration Dynamics In A Collaborative Governance Setting

According to Emerson *et al.*, (2012), actions are achieved through three collaboration dynamics, illustrated as interdependent cogs, in Figure 3.4. There is a correlation between the dynamics of the collaborative governance setting and the actions that have impacts on the intended policy outcomes. The three collaboration dynamics of principled engagement, shared motivation and capacity for joint action are discussed in this section, as they offer an opportunity for data analysis relating to collaborative actions and impacts. The first illustrated cog is

‘Principled Engagement’ which develops the shared theory of change, defining and determining a strategy for collective purpose and target goals (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). The second cog is ‘Shared Motivation’ consisting of trust, understanding and shared commitment (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). The third cog represents ‘Capacity for Joint Action’ consisting of the setting of procedures, knowledge, leadership and resources (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). The elements within each cog work together to sustain each other, which is reinforced by the three cogs working together to ‘propel collaborative actions’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 722).

Principled engagement involves various stakeholders solving problems, resolving conflicts and creating value through discourse and inclusive communications, giving voice on who will benefit or be harmed by collaborative actions, over a period of time through an iterative process of:

- Discovery of common and different interests
- Definition of the problem or challenge being faced.
- Deliberation about shared interests and how these are achieved.
- Determination of the decisions that are made.

(Emerson, 2018)

Examples of the factors that may be present in principled engagement include: skilful communication; individual and group learning; reduction of conflict; and consensus in decision-making (Emerson, 2018). These factors are useful, and are included in the analysis and interpretation of this YWC thesis study’s research data.

Shared motivation, sometimes referred to as social capital or ‘interpersonal dynamics’ (Emerson, 2018, p. 3), is defined by Emerson *et al.* (2012) as the self-reinforcing cycle of internal legitimacy and by Ansell and Gash’s (2008) three elements of trust, mutual understanding and commitment. These are developed as follows:

- Trust is the degree to which actors prove to each other that they are reasonable, predictable and dependable which generates mutual understanding, legitimacy and commitment. It is recognised by the willingness of parties to go beyond their own personal and institutional interests towards understanding those of others.
- Mutual understanding is a product of trust, enabling parties to see and appreciate the perspectives of others who are willing to reveal.
- Internal legitimacy is where parties are recognised as trustworthy and

credible which then legitimises and motivates ongoing collaboration.

- Shared commitment to the process is described as the key factor in collaborative dynamics (Ansell and Gash, 2008).

Capacity for joint action is conceptualised by the four elements of: procedural and institutional arrangements; leadership; knowledge; and resources which generate desired outcomes together that could not be accomplished separately. Donahue (2004) refers to this as ‘the collaboration to outperform feasible alternative arrangements in the creation of value for the citizenry as a whole’ (Donahue, 2004, p. 6). This is understood to mean that action by the whole collaboration, is greater than the sum of the individual actions. These four elements are developed as:

- The functional elements of procedural and institutional arrangements where procedural norms, operating rules, protocols and formal institutional arrangements are in place (Emerson, 2018).
- Leadership, such as facilitators, managers and actors.
- Knowledge is the ‘currency of collaboration’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015) and is essential for partners to ‘assemble and share to inform their determinations and produce effective collaborative outcomes’ (Emerson, 2018, p. 4).
- Resources include: financial; in-kind; logistical; staffing; and technical expertise that results from the collaboration. These are *additional* to those that actions would have been achieved independently of the collaboration. The resources of the whole are greater than the sum of the individual parts.

Collaborative governance settings have the ‘potential to transform the context of a complex situation or issue’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 18). This transformative change is described as ‘adaptation’ (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p. 19) where CGRs adapt to the nature and impacts of their joint actions. Emerson *et al.* (2012) propose that CGRs are a central feature of any integrative framework for collaborative governance. The framework incorporates nested dimensions and their respective components (Emerson *et al.*, 2012) including the system context, the CGR and collaboration dynamics. The system context includes the drivers of the collaboration who engage in the collaborative dynamics of principled engagement, shared motivation and capacity for joint action. These dynamics influence actions that can result in policy impacts.

3.7 Models Evaluating Performance in Collaborative Governance Settings

The literature implies that ‘productivity’ can be interpreted in the context of collaborative governance settings, as distinct from business or economic uses of the term. Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) argue that, while there is considerable academic literature advocating for collaborative governance, less is known of effectiveness. They use the *Integrative Framework* (Emerson *et al.*, 2012) to address this concern, by studying the performance of a collaboration operating on the U.S.-Mexico border. Recognising that collaborative governance settings evolve over a period of time, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) use a summative evaluation approach to assess performance at the end of an operating cycle. In their approach, they rely on the need to measure performance at three different units of analysis: the community, the network itself, and participating organisations (Provan and Milward, 2001). Their approach also considers the performance of collaborations using logic models, where outputs are expressly distinguished from outcomes. It is useful to repeat here that logic models are used by designated youth work organisations in receipt of government funding.

This builds on Emerson *et al.*’s previous (2012) research by developing a performance matrix that assesses collaborative governance outcomes. Three levels of performance ‘actions, outcomes and adaptation’, (p. 718), were set against three units of analysis including the participant organisations, the CGR itself, and target goals that relate to broader policy objectives / outcomes and improvements in service quality. This results in nine dimensions of productivity, (three levels X three units = nine dimensions). Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) resolve that collaborative situations transform the business of public administration and the construct a multidimensional framework to evaluate CGR’s, focussing on the extent to which they produce results.

The units of analysis employed in Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) includes: participant organisations, the performance of the collaborative system, and target goals. On participant organisations, they describe the assessment of the extent to which the collaboration adds value to the organisation as ‘a critical unit of analysis for measuring productivity performance’ (p. 726). Organisations are motivated to participate in the collaborative governance structure by some expected future gain, protection from harm or from risk. These self-interests include the adherence to an administrative command in a mandated collaboration, reputational benefits or

the resolution of conflict, producing a 'collective good' (p. 726). Participating organisations' perspectives are used to assess performance by considering the efficiency of actions (outputs), the quality of outcomes and adaptation to the collaboration. They consider if there are 'net benefits' for their organisation relating to their investment in collaborative actions, enabling the reallocation or expansion of resources (p. 727). Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) suggest that researchers could find efficiencies of actions in: (i) records providing information on budgeting, finances and resource sharing; and (ii) testimonies evidencing this. They highlight that, as fewer efficiencies are expected at the start of the collaboration, indicators of net gains during the period of the collaboration include cost-savings, additional resources and information gains.

In terms of performance, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) suggest two indicators of impacts including: (i) direct proof that organisational improvements were a result of the collaboration; and (ii) increased capacity and enhanced organisational performance as perceived by the participant organisations. These indicators are achieved through a variety of subjective assessments directly connecting improvements to the collective actions of the collaborative governance setting, including qualitative descriptions and quantitative counts and ratings.

Interactions evolve over time through collaboration dynamics that influence collective productivity. The second unit of analysis refers to the 'the performance of the collaborative system as a dynamic entity' (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 726) which results in structured interactions for stakeholders involved in collaborative governance. Here a system-based performance approach is used to determine the extent of *the interorganisational system*. Krasner (1983) is referenced by Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) where the principles, rules, norms and decision-making procedures are used to assess the viability of the system. On legitimacy of outcomes, the reputation of the collaboration is known by the perception of external stakeholders including funders, leaders or the public where their observations detail if it can be classified as a worthwhile or valuable endeavour.

Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) present target goals as the third unit of analysis with respect to problems, conditions, service or resource allocation. Of particular relevance to the thesis study, was their focus on the analysis of public service conditions including the quality, extent and distribution of services. Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) argue that any assessment of a collaboration is incomplete without a unit of analysis, such as how collaborative actions lead to improvements in services, expansion of provision or allocation of resources. Suggested indicators include the capturing of data relating to increased access to, or availability of,

additional services. Indicators of success are based on the enhanced benefits, or the improved perceptions by beneficiaries, of the equitable distribution of benefits associated with the collaborative actions. Effectiveness is described here as the primary performance dimension for outcomes, when assessing target policy goals and the indicator is ‘the extent to which the desired change in the targeted public condition, good, service or product is achieved’ (p. 732). These indicators are expanded upon later in Chapter 4 of the thesis study, when describing research data analysis.

As outlined in Table 3.1 below, Emerson and Nabatchi, (2015) plot this performance at different units of analysis with the distinctions between outcomes and outputs and use a logic model to develop a 3 x 3 matrix of productivity performance dimensions:

			Units of Analysis		
			Participant Organisation	Collaborative Governance Regime	Target Goals
Performance Level	Level 1	Actions and Outputs	Efficiency	Efficacy	Equity
	Level 2	Outcomes	Effectiveness	External Legitimacy	Effectiveness
	Level 3	Adaptation	Equilibrium	Viability	Sustainability

Table 3.1: Matrix of Productivity Performance Dimensions

(Emerson Nabatchi, 2015, p. 720)

Performance Level 1 in Table 3.1 is particularly relevant to the thesis study as it concerns the ‘efficacy’ of actions in collaborative governance settings. Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) argue that efficacy refers to ‘the capacity of the actions to produce effects that are consistent and aligned with the shared expectations, prior agreements, and strategy’ of the collaboration (p. 729). Emerson and Nabatchi’s (2015) suggested list of meeting minutes, working principles, prioritized tasks, and more formal work plans, is particularly valuable. They also see the primary indicator for efficacy of actions as the ‘extent to which implemented actions

are consistent with the recorded intentions of the CGR and its shared theory of change' (p. 729), which is again useful and is being used in the thesis study.

The *Integrative Framework* allows for the separation of the process from the productivity of the CGR. The establishment of the CGR is considered a success, but the resulting outcomes may be more difficult to determine. As such, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) focus on performance, which they define as 'encompassing the actions, outcomes and adaptation resulting from collaboration' (p. 720). They clarify their use of the terms productivity and productivity performance rather than using the more familiar terms of outcome performance and performance results to avoid confusion with the terminology of logic models. They also note that the term 'performance results' avoids any suggestion that process results are not valuable (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 741). In particular, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) note that process performance must not be conflated with productivity performance. For the YWC, the process performance of the collaboration between members is regarded as different to the impacts on the ground of their joint actions. So, while the building of the collaboration can be regarded as a success, the resulting actions of this collaboration are the focus of this YWC thesis study. These are the 'results on the ground' (Innes and Booher, 1999, p. 419).

3.8 Chapter Conclusion

As the thesis study is situated in governance and policy implementation theory, and more specifically in Collaborative Governance theory, a comprehensive review of this literature has been conducted. This literature review grounds this YWC thesis study in theory, establishes the need by demonstrating a literature gap, and informs the research methodology from approaches taken in previous empirical studies (Jesson *et al.*, 2011). The literature findings help to operationalise the concepts, and suggest three important developments which shape and guide the YWC thesis study: (i) there is a gap in the literature on how stakeholders perceive collaborative governance outcomes; (ii) there are models available to explore this gap; and (iii) to examine the YWC setting, some adaptations of these frameworks are warranted.

3.8.1 Perceived Gap In The Literature

There is a gap in the literature on the evaluation of collaborative governance settings. The findings of this review focus on collaborative governance, policy implementation theories and youth work theories. While the merits of collaborative governance settings are well debated, evaluating collaborative governance setting was found to be a problem, with a perceived gap in

the literature. Therefore, data is needed to ‘disentangle process and productivity performance’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 741) to understand how collaborative actions relate to policy impacts on the ground.

3.8.2 Model To Explore This Gap

There are models available to researchers to address such gaps. It is argued that theoretical frameworks can be used to explore how YWC actions relate to policy impacts on the ground for young people. It was found in the literature that collaborative governance performance can be studied in a number of ways. Most significantly the *Integrative Framework* and the adaptation of this framework by subsequent studies informs the conceptual framework adopted in the thesis study. The *Integrative Framework* was helpful in data analysis, but not determining in the way in which the YWC themes emerged. The literature also offers insight into appropriate research approaches and methodologies. Case studies have been used in a number of studies and while the present research is not a case study, some case study techniques are useful (Yin, 2018). The literature review also suggests language on the functioning and outcomes of collaborative governance settings, strengthening the justification of its usage in the thesis study.

3.8.3 Adaptations And Conceptual Framework

On critical reflection of prior research, models and frameworks carried out to date, these may have some shortcomings when studying YWCs. As such, four adaptations to the *Integrative Framework* are suggested.

- Firstly, Emerson *et al.*’s use of the phrase ‘leads to’ was considered to suggest inconclusive causation, so it is suggested that the phrase is replaced with the word ‘enables’, as employed in studies by O’Boyle and Shilbury (2018), Avoyan *et al.*, (2017), Vodden (2015) and Bianchi *et al.*, (2020).
- Secondly, to facilitate more comprehensively the answering of RQ2, the word ‘produce’ is suggested, as a way of explaining the relationship between YWC actions and policy impacts. This word was inspired by Emerson and Nabatchi’s (2015) work on the evaluation of collaborative governance settings.
- Thirdly, distinctions in the literature between collaborative actions and policy impacts are inconclusive. It is accepted as difficult to distinguish between actions and impacts and from the outset, Emerson *et al.* (2012) warns against conflating these issues. While some attempts have been made in subsequent studies, it is suggested that the labelling of concepts A to E facilitates a more comprehensive examination of RQ1 and RQ2.

- Finally, to apply theory more effectively to practice, it is suggested that when operationalising concepts, real-world manifestations are useful. This approach has been taken in the thesis study, where Emerson *et al.*'s Logic Model Approach to Collaborative Governance, was adapted to include YWC manifestations as presented in Table 4.5 of Chapter 4.

The conceptual framework helps identify the factors of the core concepts and variables, to simplify and clarify the research agenda, and to identify data sources that address the research questions. The relationships between the five core concepts of system context drivers, collaboration dynamics, actions and policy impacts are drawn from the findings in the literature review, the policy analysis, the YWC document review and the digital interviews.

These findings in the literature have contributed to the operationalisation of Concepts A to E being explored, and inform the approaches and methodology adopted in the thesis study. As presented in the methodology in Chapter 4, data is collected, operationalised and analysed, to contribute to the perceived literature gap. The thesis study makes a contribution to addressing this gap.

3.8.4 In Search Of A Model To Understand Collaborative Governance In YWCs

My bespoke conceptual framework introduced in Figure 1.3 has been drawn from the best of these models and frameworks discussed here in Chapter 3. To address the two research questions on the functioning of YWCs (RQ1) and stakeholder perceptions of the policy impacts of YWC dynamics and actions (RQ2), a model is needed that separates process from productivity. In reality however, they would appear to be very much connected, so the *Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance* (Emerson, 2012) has been adapted to explore experiences of how YWCs function inform an understanding of processes and perceptions of impacts and outcomes. Qualitative and interpretive research designs facilitate such an exploration of experience and perception, and this is developed further in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Methodology – Interpretive Approaches

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 describes and discusses how the thesis study gathered collaborative governance data on the functioning and performance of YWCs in Ireland. Interviews were designed to explore YWC stakeholder experiences of the policy impacts of collaborative actions, and their enabling factors. Interview data were then analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to answer the two research questions exploring YWC functioning and outcomes. The chapter will also highlight issues of researcher personal and professional status, which were important to explain in the context of the data analysis process.

Chapter 4 explains the methods used to gather and analyse this data using interpretivist methodologies (Silverman, 2020). While the research agenda and design were briefly introduced in Chapter 1, this Chapter 4 provides further details, based on *Maxwell’s Interactive Model of Research Design* (Maxwell, 2012). It describes the steps taken to collect, critically analyse and interpret data, as ‘researchers must consider the kinds and methods that might be used most efficiently to inform questions’ (Roulston, 2010, p. 80). Interviews were used to gather the data needed to answer the two research questions, and the sampling strategy for how and why research participants were selected is detailed. Specifically, online personal interviews (Bryman, 2012, p. 668) were used to gather primary data from YWC stakeholders’ views for the thesis study, and Figure 4.1 below introduces the process taken.

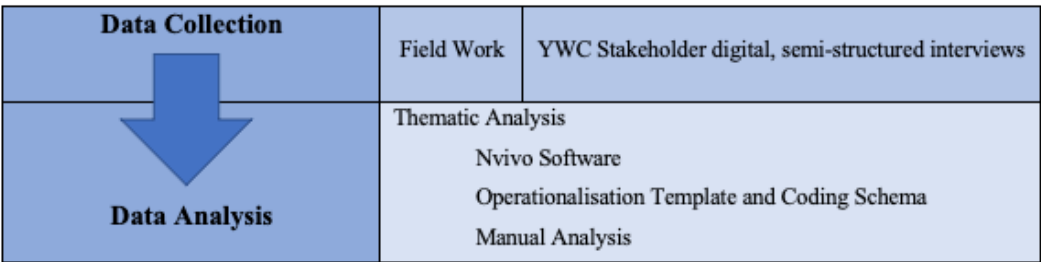


Figure 4.1: Data Collection and Analysis

The conceptual framework guides how the thesis study was used to collect, analyse and interpret data on stakeholder perspectives, relative to the practical and theoretical contexts detailed in Chapters 2 and 3. The interview data was interpreted using a thematic analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Gray, 2018; Bazeley and Jackson 2013), facilitated by the NVivo software (to generate a Coding Schema (Appendix G)). The iterative nature of this analysis is explained later in the chapter. These interpretations discovered new knowledge, leading to a better understanding of views on YWC functions and outcomes.

The rationale for choosing this interpretive method is outlined and justified, and study limitations and ethical considerations are highlighted (Creswell and Poth, 2018). As a professional, working in the youth work sector, I intended to get to the heart of what YWCs do, and what they can achieve. Collaborative governance is important to me, where all stakeholders involved in the local youth work process are involved in planning, agreeing and implementing strategies to achieve positive outcomes for young people. I view YWCs as a mode of collaborative governance and feel that interviews with stakeholders, was the best way to gain perspective on what is happening and what is working well. They have a wealth of knowledge and experiences, and as reflective practice is used widely by those working in youth work, I felt that a reflective interview approach was appropriate. I then explored their stories, to interpret the meanings behind their frustrations, concerns, perceived barriers, and enablers.

4.2 Thesis Study Aims, Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

The aim of the thesis study is to examine stakeholder experiences of how YWCs function, and to explore how collaboration dynamics may enable YWC actions to produce policy impacts for young people. The aim is also to contribute to the development of collaborative governance theory by evaluating stakeholder experiences of such a setting. These aims inform two research questions on the functioning and outcomes of these committees. Research Question 1 (RQ1) asks how YWCs in Ireland function, while Research Question 2 (RQ2) asks how stakeholders perceive the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts. These RQs are summarised in Table 4.1 below:

Research Question 1:	How do YWCs in Ireland function? (RQ1)
Research Question 2:	How do stakeholders perceive the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts? (RQ2)

Table 4.1: Summary of Research Questions

Figure 4.2 below aligns these two research questions with the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 1, and the literature reviewed in Chapter 3. RQ1 explores Concepts A to C, including the systems context (Concept A), drivers (Concept B) and collaboration dynamics (Concept C), and concerns the environment in which YWCs operate, the motivation for YWC membership and interrelationships between YWC actors. RQ1 relates to systems contexts including youth work legislation, youth work policy frameworks, and the status of the target young people, and this context was considered in Chapter 2. For RQ1, the drivers include YWC member incentives to join, opportunities for YWC members and their organisations, and fear of uncertainty.

RQ2 considers how stakeholders perceive the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts, labelled in the conceptual framework as Concepts C, D and E. It is noted here that collaboration dynamics (Concept C), are key to answering both RQ1 and RQ2 as they aid the interpretation of the relationship between the other four concepts (A, B, D, E). It is therefore being acknowledged that the thesis study is committed to interpreting stakeholders' views of how dynamics enable actions and impacts, but that causation is not being definitively established. For the purposes of the thesis study, actions (Concept D) include enabling young people's voices, garnering decision-maker support to act on their local youth interests, and identifying the resources needed to realise young people's interests.

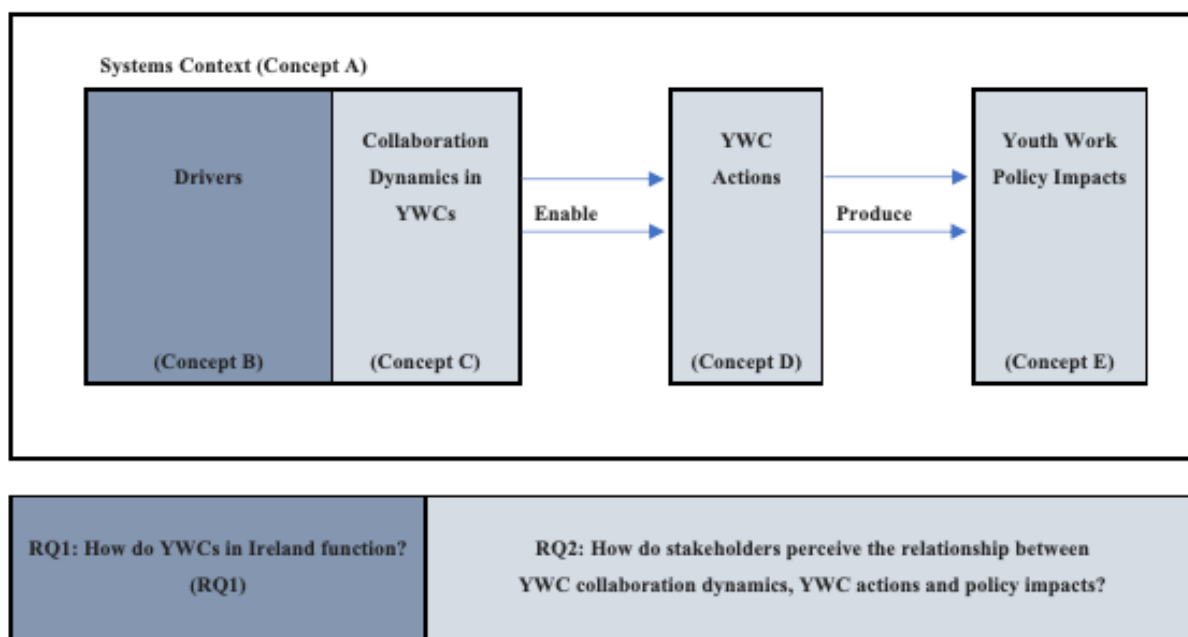


Figure 4.2. Conceptual Framework Aligned To The Two Research Questions

4.3 Paradigm

‘Interviews are replete with stories’ (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015, p. 80), and narrative interviews were used to hear ‘the stories the subjects tell’ (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 178). The concepts outlined in the conceptual framework were used to make sense of the YWC-world, by focusing attention on stakeholders’ views of how they function, and whether they were productive. From an epistemological concern, interviewee narratives were viewed as ‘essential aspects of human knowledge’ or as opinion (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 55). This data was gathered and analysed as stakeholders’ ‘understanding’ (Bryman, 2012, p. 30) of YWC dynamics, actions and policy impacts. Figure 4.3 introduces the chosen paradigms, starting as an exploration of the social world, using qualitative methods to gather data as part of a heuristic inquiry. Interpretivist approaches are used to understand the meaning of the YWC stakeholders’ stories and experiences. The rationale for choosing these is explained in this section.

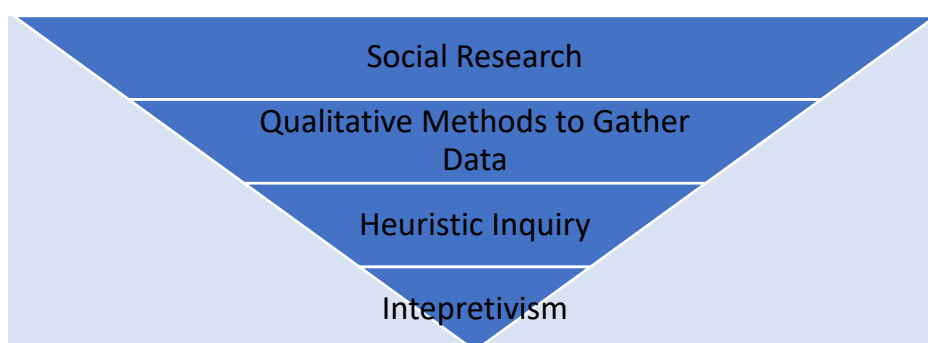


Figure 4.3: Thesis Study Paradigms

4.3.1 Justification and Rationale For Choosing these Qualitative Research Methods

For this piece of social research (Crotty, 1998), qualitative methods were chosen to address the perceived research problem, focussing on the gap in the literature (Barbour, 2014; Aurini *et al.*, 2016). This approach appreciates the nuances in my interactions with the YWC stakeholders, where narrative data is gathered by employing a variety of interpersonal techniques and reflective engagement. I have prior experience of using qualitative methods for my Master's degree. Also, more recently as part of Doctor of Governance studies, my thesis on the economics of youth work included the use of qualitative approaches and techniques.

The subject matter of youth work has also informed the qualitative research method used. According to Spence and Wood (2011), for example, in professions where the interpersonal is integral to the method, it is 'hardly surprising that the scientism of positivism is problematic', so qualitative approaches are more favoured. In particular, the qualitative approach has been used extensively in youth work settings. For example, in their systematic review of youth work literature Dickson, *et al.*, (2013, p. 22) suggest that 'studies evaluating delivery mechanisms and potential factors influencing impact were more likely to use qualitative methods, particularly those studies interested in the views of children and young people.' They expand more specifically to conclude that in their comprehensive analysis of youth work materials 'studies of concepts used qualitative data analysis techniques, using interview or survey data.' (Dickson, *et al.*, 2013, p. 37). This supports the use of qualitative methods for youth work-related research.

According to Bryman (2012), the main steps of qualitative research include: general research questions; the selection of a site and subject; the collection of relevant data; the interpretation of that data; 'the conceptual and theoretical work' including tighter specification of the research questions; and the writing up of findings and conclusions (Bryman, 2012, p. 384). These suggested steps to qualitative research summarise the approach taken, and have broadly informed the sequencing of the thesis study's chapters.

4.3.2 Heuristic Inquiry Approach

The thesis study takes a heuristic inquiry approach (Moustakas, 1990; Gray, 2018) and is positioned within the interpretivist paradigm as a way of exploring stakeholder experiences of YWC dynamics, actions and policy impacts. Heuristic Inquiry is defined as "a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience. It requires a subjective process of reflecting, exploring, sifting, and elucidating the nature of the phenomenon

under investigation. Its ultimate purpose is to cast light on a focused problem, question or theme.” (Douglas and Moustakas, 1985, p. 40). So, the thesis study seeks to discover the meaning of stakeholder experiences, using research question to understand more clearly collaborative governance in YWC settings.

According to Moustakas (1990), heuristic research can take six phases: initial engagement; immersion; incubation; illumination; explication and creative synthesis. In the thesis study, the illumination phase is where the interviews inform awareness about YWCs, and new insights emerge. These are the themes and attributes that become apparent, relating to the two research questions being asked. My role as the researcher is to examine this emerging data, in what Moustakas refers to as the explication stage, where I tease out the meaning of this data. Using my intuition, experiences, and professional knowledge, I use the emerging data to answer the two research questions. My involvement in this process, contributes to the synthesis and new learning. The stories emerging in the interviews provide insights and experiences, and my role as a researcher is to use my own experiences to interpret and understand what these experiences mean in relation to the two research questions being asked.

YWC stakeholders have something to contribute, given their combined years of experience. Interviews were chosen to gather this valuable data, so that they could tell their story and inform the gap in the literature on how collaborative governance works in YWC settings. Stories from practice (Davies, 2011) can contribute to these narrative research designs (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000; Elliott, 2005; Kohler Riessman, 2008). So, I decided to listen in to those involved in YWCs, to hear their descriptions of their experiences, and then to use this information to answer the two research questions.

4.3.3 Interpretivism

Interpretivism, in this context, infers meaning from stakeholder perceptions of events and their experiences. It is acknowledged that it is not necessarily objective, as the interpretation of the meaning of experiences can be subjective, including the experiences of the researcher. These assumptions are not generalisable, they offer an explanation of a particular context, in the view of the subject. Bryman (2012, p. 712) defines interpretivism as ‘an epistemological position that requires the grasping of ‘the subjective meaning of social action.’ They also explain that qualitative data is interpretation-based and ‘concerned with words rather than numbers’ in the collection and analysis of data, and is ‘broadly inductivist, constructionist and interpretivist’ (Bryman, 2012, p 380). In the thesis study, the conceptual framework (Figure 1.3) and the

operationalisation template (Table 4.5) afforded opportunities to interpret what was being said by YWC stakeholders in the interviews.

During the analysis of the interview data, I enjoyed the ‘Dance of Interpretation’ (Crabtree and Miller, 1993), where I was considering the meanings behind what was being said by the YWC stakeholders. This gave insight on an individual, and as a group of stakeholders from regions across the country. Researchers are embedded in the subjective social process of the world that they study (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011). The interview data remains verbatim what was recorded in my video clips and the transcripts, however the way in which I used this data to understand is subjective. I regularly checked my ‘sense making’ of the data through reflexivity (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011, p 99). I understand that my own academic and professional experiences have something valuable to contribute. The recording of the interview data is intact, what this data means is my own. In the thesis study, reflexivity is about acknowledging my role in the research (Koch and Harrington, 1998), where I am an important part of the research process, and my prior experiences, assumptions and beliefs influence the research process.

4.4 Data Collection

4.4.1 YWC Thesis Study Setting

The YWC was chosen as an exciting new prospect for youth participation in decision-making powers, and the collaborative governance framework was selected as the lens to understand what is happening in YWCs (RQ1) and how their actions produce policy impacts (RQ2). I considered a number of potential sites that might meet the collaborative governance criteria including YWCs, CYPSCs, Traveller Interagency Groups (TIG), Regional Drug Task Forces (RDTF), and Youth Work Ireland (YWI), as a federation of youth work organisations. I decided YWCs were the best option because they meet a number of criteria for a ‘realistic site’ for research (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p. 106). Firstly, access to the locations was possible, using digital and online means. Secondly, YWCs were feasible research sites as they facilitated valuable connections with the research population through networks of youth work organisations, such as Youth Work Ireland and Foróige, and ETBs. Thirdly, I considered that in my role it would be possible to gather documentation and to arrange a cross section of views from YWC stakeholders. Also, I declare my personal interest in seeing YWCs as a potential space for development.

The thesis study takes place in a setting of youth work policy reform, with the youth work sector in Ireland in a state of flux, creating challenges and opportunities. The YWC research sites are placed within the ETB structures in sixteen regions, spread across the twenty-six counties of the Republic of Ireland. ETBs are statutory authorities with responsibility for youth work, education and training, and a range of other statutory functions (ETBI, 2022a). These YWCs are located in Cavan and Monaghan ETB, Cork ETB, City of Dublin ETB, Donegal ETB, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, Galway and Roscommon ETB, Kerry ETB, Kildare and Wicklow ETB, Kilkenny and Carlow ETB, Laois and Offaly ETB, Limerick and Clare ETB, Longford and Westmeath ETB, Louth and Meath ETB, Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB, Tipperary ETB and Waterford and Wexford ETB. Each of these ETBs has the facility to establish a YWC, and regions were found to have either active or inactive YWCs. For comparison two regions without a YWC were included in the sample. The representative body for these ETBs is the Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) and an invitation for participation in the thesis study was sent to the ETBI to include insight from a national perspective.

4.4.2 Justification And Rationale For Choosing Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual interviews were chosen as the key method of data collection (Bryman, 2012). This approach enables a depth of understanding of respondents' experiences and the problems they face. Creswell (2003) explains the advantages and limitations of this method of data collection. The options considered for interviews included face-to-face, one on one, in person interviews, telephone interviews and group interviews. Given the Covid-19 restrictions, one to one digital interviews were chosen, involving 'unstructured and generally open-ended questions', that were 'intended to elicit views and opinions' from the research participants (Creswell, 2003, p188). Interviews were conducted to explore the thoughts, ideas and meanings to answer the two RQs, and provided the perspective of stakeholders' vision of their understanding of YWCs, providing rich data to describe their points of view on the factors involved. Participants were encouraged to freely disclose their experiences.

Interviews presented an opportunity to listen to how research participants construct their ideas in response to the questions asked. YWC experiences vary across the regions, so it was important to create interview spaces that facilitated reflection and conversation about their view of the world around them. All sixteen participants were enthusiastic to share their perceptions and views, and semi-structured interviews were chosen as they are 'often used' in qualitative studies, and 'allow for probing of views and opinions' (Gray, 2018, p. 381). These

semi-structured interviews facilitated flexibility (Denscombe, 2003), giving the scope to adapt the flow of the interaction with interviewees, dependent upon how the conversation emerged. While a series of questions were prepared in the general form of an interview schedule (see Appendix F), they were used as a guide to the interviews and the sequence of the questioning evolved to facilitate natural flow (Bryman, 2012). For example, when appropriate, some questions were omitted, some re-sequenced and at other times there was 'latitude to ask further questions' (Bryman, 2012, p. 212). In these instances, as the interviewee was speaking, the interviewer prepared a question to facilitate the flow of the discussion. Also, when an important point addressing the research aims was being made, the research participant was given ample space and time to develop their reflections and thoughts (Denscombe, 2003), without interruption. Only when the participant clearly finished their point, did the researcher step in with the next question or area of interest. There are advantages associated with this type of data collection when participants cannot be observed directly and allowing the researcher more 'control' over the line of questioning (Creswell, 2003, p 186). The researcher facilitated interview sessions that balanced freedom to elucidate on areas of interest, and control to keep the subject matter centred around the concepts of interest.

4.4.3 Purposive Sampling Approach

'Most sampling in qualitative research entails purposive sampling of some kind' (Bryman, 2012, p 418). The research population for the sixteen interviews comprised stakeholders from within the YWC network, and those from outside of it who may have a view. These included existing and former YWC stakeholders such as YWC members, non-members, former members and those who were involved in, or affected by, that collaboration. This included a diverse membership of YWCs such as ETB officials, Youth Officers, young people, designated voluntary youth work organisations, community representatives, local councillors, national youth organisations, Children and Young People's Services Committee members (CYPSC), youth workers and academics. Additionally, the population included those from regions without a YWC, or who have not held YWC membership, as there was an expectation that these respondents have a different perspective to more active members.

It was estimated that each committee had a minimum of 10 members, giving a potential pool of 160 respondents. It was assumed that: some ETBs may have been without a functioning YWC; that some members may have served more than one term (or on more than one YWC); or that some members were no longer involved in the youth sector, so a 10% target of 16 digital interviews was set as the sample. In two of the regions sampled, two participants

were interviewed from those areas, so that a comparison and contrast of perspectives was facilitated.

Based on findings from the YWC desk research presented in Chapter 2, a decision was made to use a purposive sampling approach ‘to capture the major variations between the strata’ (Gray, 2018, p. 216). This include a variety of YWC actors, so efforts were made to strategically sample participants from each strata that could inform the research questions and address the research goals (Bryman, 2012). No assumption was made that this non-probability sampling approach could produce generalisations (Bryman, 2012; Gray, 2018).

Participants were directly approached at their places of work, and invited to take part in the thesis study. This direct-recruitment approach ensured a broad cross-section of YWC stakeholders, including those from different ETB regions, professions, genders and experiences. As illustrated in Table 4.2 below, this enabled a sample of YWC stakeholders including a variety of funders, young people (<25 years at time of YWC involvement), designated voluntary youth work organisations and Youth Officers. This sampling strategy proved to be effective as it produced a variety of respondents to enable comparisons of areas of practice, and Table 4.2 highlights the range who participated in the thesis study.

		Sample of 16 Research Participants Includes
Sampling Basis	Research Participant Role in Youth Work	Young Person, Employee of Youth Work Organisation (incl. Youth Work Ireland, Foróige, Crosscare), ETB Youth Officer (Various regions), Political Representative, National Organisation (various), Key Decision-Maker, ETB Board Member (Various regions), Youth Work Consultant/ Expert. Non-members with a stake-holding or experience were also included (see below)
	Participant Role in YWC	Youth Representative, Chairperson, CYPSC Representative, Youth Work Representative, CYPSC Representative, CNN Representative
	Gender Balance	Male, female
	Participant Level of Experience	New to Role, Experienced, Very Experienced
	Geographic Spread	Munster, Ulster, Leinster, Connaught, Dublin Region
	Urbanisation	Urban, Rural. Also Dublin City, Dublin County.
	Remit	Local, regional, national
	YWC Status	Current Member, past member, non-member (to give a perspective from outside YWCs)
	YWC Present in Region?	Those with/ those without a YWC in their region
	Organisations included	ETBs; local youth work organisations; national organisations with an interest in YWCs; Comhairle na N'Óg; a youth work governance consultancy firm; Child and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC); and a County Council.

Table 4.2: Purposive Sampling Approach

This purposive sampling approach ensured a diversity of perspectives from a number of stakeholder experiences, as summarised in Table 4.3 below. For example, one participant had experience of YWC membership in two separate ETB regions. Another had the experience of acting as an ETB executive and as a member, over two different periods of time. The sample also included some first timers, some with experience of more than one term, and those with experience of Local Voluntary Youth Councils (LVYCs), the precursor of YWCs. The sample also ensured a degree of gender balance, with nine males and seven females participating.

Varied Interests and Experiences of Stakeholders in Sample	
Managers of Youth Work Organisations	5
ETB Board Member	2
Youth Officers	4
YWC Chairperson role	1
National Organisation	3
Experience of Previous YWCs (So could compare current to previous iterations of YWCs)	10
Experience of Voluntary Youth Councils (regarded by some as the precursor to YWCs)	4
Those working outside of YWC, but with an interest in active YWCs	5
Regions without a YWC	2

Table 4.3: Varied Interests and Experiences of Stakeholders in Sample

It was decided that young people were critical to the sample, given the subject matter, and the national policy commitments to hear young voices (DCYA, 2015b). Also, Dickson *et al.*, (2015) called for ‘evaluations that consult with and/or include young people as research partners’ (p. 2). The *Youth Work Act (2001)* defines a young person as those aged 11-25 years, so a decision was made to recruit at least one participant in the age range 18 to 25 years, as they still fell within the ‘youth’ parameters of the *Youth Work Act (2001)*, but were classified as an adult for ethical interviewing reasons. While 18 years at the time of interview, they were less than 18 years of age at the time of their YWC membership. This young person also offered valuable insight as they were speaking on behalf of many from their region, as a Comhairle na nÓg (CNN) representative. During this interview, particular care was taken to create a *natural* youth friendly environment, considering potential developmental issues, where sensitivity was exercised to prevent power imbalances (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p. 161) between the young interviewee and the older interviewer.

4.5 Preparing for Fieldwork

The interviews were conducted in June and July 2021. During Covid-19 Government pandemic movement restrictions limited travel and accessibility, so alternative online and digital methods were used. While it was originally intended for interviews to happen face to face, interviews and meetings were subsequently scheduled by digital means and/or telephone. As it transpired in all cases, Microsoft Teams was chosen over telephone interviewing as the platform, to facilitate the noting of body language and gestures through video imaging. Online interviews defy geographic boundaries (Salmons, 2014) and can be used in studies subject to online research ethics (Hooley, *et al.*, 2012). Additional key advantages of online interviewing include cost savings, geography, travel, flexibility, venue, engagement in the online interview and speed (James and Busher, 2016, p. 249). However, limitations include potential time lags in the online conversation, language use, technical competence, failing technology, access to technology, identity verification and absence of verbal cues (James and Busher, 2016), including gestures and body language. As research participants were invited to participate in their professional capacity at a time when practically everything had moved online, a competence for engagement with digital interviewing was anticipated. However, this process worked very well, facilitating quality interaction with the research population and is highly recommended for future research of this type.

4.5.1 Interview Invitations And Consent

Each interviewee received information in advance to confirm the date, time and method of the interview. A clear and simple set of instructions and agenda were included. Each prospective research participant was contacted in advance by telephone to determine their level of interest in taking part in the thesis study. If agreeable, an invitation (See Appendix C) was emailed which provided: (i) a participant sheet which outlined the aims, objectives, conditions of the interview and details of their rights and safeguards (See Appendix D); (ii) a consent form (see Appendix E) to be signed, dated and returned; (iii) schedule details of the interview including date and time; and (iv) a hyperlink to the scheduled MS Teams meeting. Follow up contact was made with the research participants to ensure that they understood their commitments, rights and responsibilities.

4.5.2 The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule (Appendix F) guided the semi-structured interviews and designed to illicit data by prompting research participants to reflect on their experiences connecting collaborative actions to policy impacts. These semi-structured interviews enabled

participants to reflect upon and explain their practice experiences (Magnusson and Marecek, 2015, p. 47; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018). Interview questions raised in the interview schedule were informed by the research aims (to address RQ1 and RQ2), the literature review, the YWC context provided in Chapter 2, the Conceptual Framework and the Operationalisation of Concepts introduced in Table 4.5. In keeping with semi-structured interviews, questions were designed to be open so that they could allow for the 'probing of views' and opinions across the list of concepts to be covered (Gray, 2018, p. 381). These open questions we used to evoke thought and reflection. The concepts listed in the conceptual framework as A to E, informed the topics to be probed by the interview questions. For example, interview questions centred around the YWC dynamics, YWC actions and the perceived policy impacts of these actions.

To provide a space for reflection, non-specific questions were included creating a space for the interviewee to raise their own areas of interest. Participants were asked to reflect upon their role in a collaborative context, their relationships with other stakeholders and the resulting policy impacts of their collaborative actions. These interviews enriched, cross-checked and built on the review of policy material and YWC documentation in Chapter 2. According to the qualitative research literature, by interviewing a number of participants, each experience is connected, and cross checked against each other (Seidman, 1998) providing a range of perspectives and viewpoints (Bryson and McConville, 2014). The full interview schedule is available in Appendix F and summarised in Table 4.4.

Link to Conceptual Framework (NVivo Code)	Agenda Item
	Preliminaries
	Rapport/ Trust
	Demographics (YWC role)
A. System Context	YWC Context (Why invited onto the YWC)
	Experiences of how the YWC operates?
B. Drivers	Why participate in YWC?
C. Collaboration Dynamics	Relationship between YWC members? How do they work together in their meetings or with each other? Experiences of relationship with YWC peers.
What are the Youth Work Policy Impacts of YWC Actions?	
D. Actions	YWC Actions and the implementation of youth work policy
E. Impacts	YWC actions and policy impact Experiences of YWC success directly attributable to YWC collaboration
	Closing Interview/ Thanks/ Opportunity for Participant Questions

Table 4.4: Summary of Interview Schedule Agenda For Semi-Structured Interviews

Each interview started with preliminaries, including a general welcome and discussion about the research participant's role on the YWC. In terms of Concept A, open-ended questions were then asked about the formation of the local YWC, how members were invited onto the committee, and their experiences of how the YWC operates in their local region. On Concept B, respondents were asked about their motivation for initially joining the YWC and continuing to attend. In relation to Concept C, questions included reference to how YWC members work together at, or outside YWC meetings. Open-ended questions were also asked about the relationships between YWC members. For Concept D, participants were asked to consider YWC actions and the resulting policy impacts of those actions. They were asked to focus on impacts that were directly attributable to the YWC collaboration (Concept E). Interviews closed with a general word of thanks, and an opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

4.5.3 Recording of Interviews

In their signed consent, participants agreed to the recording of their interviews. At the start of each MS Teams meeting, this was repeated so that continuous informed consent was assured. Automatically, when the record button was pressed in MS Team, all parties in the

interview received a message to say that the meeting was being recorded. Transcripts of these recordings were transcribed, and drafted to reflect what was said, without embellishment (Schostak, 2006). MS Teams was deemed to be beneficial, as interviews could be saved as a recording and backed-up by the researcher's cloud facilities, for safe keeping, where access is doubly password protected. In addition to the recordings, the researcher decided to keep handwritten notes during the interviews, to act as an aid memoire of key themes and issues that appeared to be important for the participant. These were later used alongside the transcribed data to develop the Coding Schema (Appendix G) that is described below.

There were some limitations to this digital form of data collection when technical issues occurred. As with all research, some significant technical glitches were experienced. For example, not all digital recordings went according to plan, and for a short period a digital file of one valuable interview was unavailable. IT support was sought, colleagues double checked, and contact was made with the Microsoft support-line, but initially nothing could be done to retrieve the file. This was a tense time in the research, as there was a potential loss to the thesis study, of valuable data. As it turned out, the missing file was located, and a full transcript was prepared at a later stage in time for analysis. While handwritten notes of the interview we kept, and could have been used, the relocation of the missing file was more valuable to the thesis study.

4.6 Thematic Data Analysis

I started out by considering the issues that I set out to explore, names the functions (RQ1) and impacts (RQ2) of YWCs. I read through the transcripts to first 'absorb the essence of the interviews and discussions' (Moore, 2006, p. 155), and then to immerse myself in this data to try and understand what was going on for the interviewee at the time. This first read through gave the bigger picture for individuals. To get a sense of how these individual experiences were shared across YWCs, it was then necessary to set about imposing some order on the data, through the use of coding, themes (Moore, 2006). These categories evolved, and were modified to take account of emerging data trends. Figure 4.4 below summarises the three methods of interview data analysis used. A coding schema (Appendix G) was specially created to enable this, so that data extracts were ordered, and 'major themes' emerged (O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018) from stakeholder perceptions.

Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews	
1	Nvivo Software
2	Operationalisation Template and Coding Schema
3	Manual Analysis

Figure 4.4: Steps in Thematic Analysis

4.6.1 Thematic Analysis Of The Semi-Structured Interview Transcripts

The interviews produced valuable data on YWCs, and thematic analysis was used to give both an overall story of what was going on (RQ1) and the more specifically perceptions of how YWC actions relate to policy impacts. It is important for researchers to immerse themselves in data to understand the issues raised by participants (Denscombe, 2003). Gray (2018) suggests that Bazeley and Jackson (2013) offer a ‘helpful’ step by step approach including the collection, transcription, reading and reflecting on the data. This information was then explored and ‘played’ with for provisional emerging themes, as introduced in the *Operationalisation of Concepts and Data Analysis Coding Themes Template* (Table 4.5). These emerging themes were then linked back the Nvivo Concept codes A, B, C, D, E, to explore if patterns were apparent in the relationships between them. While not predetermining the patterns, the concept codes were helpful in interpreting (Crabtree and Miller, 1999) what appeared to be occurring in YWCs, and if research participants could envisage connections between YWC actions, dynamics and policy impacts. The final step was where emerging data was refined and recorded so that an audit trail is available for ‘the story was emerging’ (Gray, 2018, p 686). Such an approach is broadly reflective of the six thematic analysis phases in Braun and Clarke (2006) which included: (i) familiarisation with data; (ii) generation of initial codes; (iii) searching for themes; (iv) reviewing themes; (v) definition of the themes; and (vi) production of the report. In conclusion, it was intended that these interpretive approaches taken in analysing the qualitative data, where initial codes were used to guide the interpretation and search for themes, that could be used to answer the research questions.

Operationalisation of Concepts & Data Analysis Coding Themes							
Concept	System Context	Drivers	Collaboration Dynamics			Actions	Policy Impacts
	“influences the general parameters” (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p. 8)	‘essential drivers’ (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p. 9)	‘Propel collaborative actions’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 722) ‘Foster desired actions and outcomes’ (Emerson, 2018, p. 3) Enable the actions of the collaboration (O’Boyle and Shilbury, 2018)			Attributable to collaboration (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012)	‘Results on the ground’ (Innes and Booher, 1999, p. 419)
Nvivo Code	A	B	C			D	E
Concepts per the Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Resource Conditions- Policy- Legal – Frameworks- Prior Failure to Address Issues- Political Dynamics/ Power Relations- Network Connectedness- Levels of Conflict/Trust- Socio- economic/ Cultural Health & Diversity. (Emerson, <i>et al.</i>, 2012, p. 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Leadership- Consequential Incentives- Interdependence- Uncertainty (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p. 7)	Principled Engagement	Shared Motivation	Capacity for Joint Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Securing endorsements- Educating stakeholders- Enacting policy measures- Marshalling external resources- Deploying staff- Siting facilities- new management practices- monitoring of policy implementation- enforcing compliance (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p. 17)	‘aim is to alter pre-existing or projected conditions in System Context’ (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p. 7) They are ‘ alterations ’ (Emerson <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p 18) in conditions on the ground , progressing change in relation to policy objectives.
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Discovery- Definition- Deliberation- Determination (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p. 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Trust- Mutual Understanding- Internal Legitimacy (recognised as trustworthy and credible)- Shared commitment (Emerson, <i>et al.</i>, 2012, p. 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Procedural and institutional arrangements- Leadership- Knowledge- Resources. (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p. 7)		
Discussed in Chapter 2							
Real World Manifestations in Youth Work Committees (YWCs)	Classifications include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Legislation- Policy- Socioeconomic Use PESTEL Analysis (Aguilar, 1967).	Classifications include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Incentives- Interdependence- Leadership- Opportunities- Fear of uncertainty	Classifications include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Discovery of YWC common and different interests;- Definition of local problems or challenges;- Agree shared interests- Agree planned change (Shared theory of change)- Strategy for collective YWC purpose (Example: Local Youth Work Plans, LYWPs) (Emerson, 2018)	Classifications include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mutual understanding- Shared commitment or bond- Trust	Classifications include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The sharing of knowledge- Networking- Leadership- Setting of procedures (Example: Terms of Reference, TORs)- Resources (Donahue, 2004, Emerson& Nabatchi, 2015, Emerson, 2018)	Classifications include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Enabling young people’s interests- Garnering decision-maker support for local youth interests- Identifying resources- Siting/Permitting youth facilities.- Heightening awareness/ Educating stakeholders- Local Adaptation of Youth Work Policy Action by the whole may be more effective than acting alone.	Impacts are the product of YWC actions, the alterations in conditions for youth populations manifesting as changes on the ground that respond to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Local Youth Work Plans (YWC Strategies)- Youth Work Act (2001)- Policy Framework for Children and Youth (BOBF)- The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020- VFMPR- National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making
Operationalised for this study							
Logic Model Approach (Emerson, <i>et al.</i> , 2012, p. 7)	Components					Outputs	Collaborative Outcomes

Table 4.5: Operationalisation of Concepts and Data Analysis Coding Themes template

YWC stakeholders were interviewed for their perception of the relationship between YWC actions and policy impacts. The data from these interviews was analysed in the following way. Conversation analysis of transcripts was used, where ‘the talk is recorded and transcribed so that detailed analyses can be carried out’ (Bryman, 2012, p 522). Referring to Crowe *et al.* (2015), Gray (2018) describes thematic analysis of qualitative data as ‘an interpretation of participant’s meanings’ (p. 692), where a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, representing a patterned meaning within the data. This approach was used extensively in the two-step analysis of the semi-structured interview data:

Step 1 – The schema based on the hand written notes.

A specially designed tool referred to as the Coding Schema based on the five concepts (A to E) in the conceptual framework, as included in Appendix G, facilitated the first step of the interview transcript analysis.

Step 2 – The transcripts based on MS Teams recordings were then typed based on the MS Teams video recordings, and these transcripts were uploaded to Nvivo. The transcripts and the coding scheme were analysed using the ‘constant comparative method’ to identify similarities, differences and relationships between them. (Harding, 2019). Here, quality was achieved through the ‘process of examining an interview transcript for regular patterns that construct a subject position that can be considered to express authenticity’ (Schostak, 2006, p. 147).

4.6.2. Coding Frame

These two sets of data were coded for themes. When coding, it is important to transform raw data from the various data sources into a standardised format so that it could be analysed (Gray, 2018) in a meaningful way to draw conclusions and make logical assumptions. The following coding frame (Gray, 2018) in Table 4.6 explains how this analysis was carried out:

Concept	NVivo Classification
Context (A)	From list of classifications including Legislation, policy and socioeconomic factors.
Drivers (B)	From list of classifications including incentives, interdependence, leadership, opportunities, fear of uncertainty.
Dynamics (C)	Action by the whole is proven to be more effective than acting alone. From list of Principled Engagement classifications including communications, conflict resolution, consensus in decision-making, learning as a group or individually, shared theory of change, and strategy for collective purpose. From list of Shared Motivation classifications including mutual understanding, shared commitment or bond, and trust. From list of Capacity for Joint including the sharing of knowledge, networking, leadership, setting of procedures, and resources.
Actions (D)	From list of classifications including enabling young people's interests, garnering decision-maker support for local youth interests, identifying resources, producing additional youth facilities, heightening awareness/ educating stakeholders, local adaptation of youth work policy.
Impacts (E)	YWC impacts manifest in the data as changes on the ground that respond to policy calls in: Youth Work Act (2001); The National Policy Framework for Children and Youth (BOBF); The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020; Value for Money and Policy Review; National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015 – 2020. Impacts are <i>alterations in conditions for the youth population</i> that resulted from YWC actions.

Table 4.6: Coding Frame

A specially designed Nvivo Analysis sheet referred to as the Coding Schema (Appendix G) was designed, so that the conceptual framework could be used to recognise any apparent patterns in the data. This template was used as a 'coding schema' to highlight data themes and to understand the phenomena (Rapley, 2016), matching YWC data to corresponding collaborative governance theory and youth work outcomes theory, marked with Nvivo Nodes A, B, C, D and E. This schema supported the process, and was uploaded as such to NVivo.

These coding practices remained provisional throughout the thesis study, so that they could be modified where additional themes emerged, searching for themes through repetition, similarities, differences, typologies and categories (Rapley, 2016). This flexibility facilitated the design of the Nvivo Analysis Tool (Moore, 2006) referred to as the Coding Schema (Appendix G) which was critical to the coding practices of the thesis study. The process started with line-by-line coding to highlight terms and phrases, and then label them. It was critical at this point not to lose the participant voice in the coding process.

The data gathered in the semi-structured interviews was coded into related groups so that emerging themes were identified (Crabtree and Miller, 1999; Creswell, 2014). The independent variables were associated with behaviours and interactions. Dillman (2000) identifies three types of data variables, namely, opinion, behaviour and attribute. Variables

associated with opinion record how respondents feel and what they believe or think. Behaviour records what the respondents do, so the above variables considered the respondents’ reactions to the regulatory and policy changes that were taking place at the time of youth work policy reform, or while the YWC structures were changing. The attribute variables were the respondents’ characteristics including role, paid/voluntary and funder/grantee.

The process involved an iterative cycle, where I returned many times to manually reassess the data. This interactive approach (Maxwell, 2012) facilitated the emergence of themes at later stages of the research process. For example, in some instances data originally classified as one concept was re-classified into another, or found to be associated with more than one concept. One reason for this might be that, while an extract was recorded as a response to one interview question, it was later reconsidered to address a question relating to a different concept. This re-classification approach has strengthened the quality of the major themes (O’Boyle and Shilbury, 2018), as the findings were not merely a record of what has been said in chronological order by each interviewer, but rather a collation of emerging themes. These were grouped as demonstrated in the NVivo Treemap in Figure 4.5 below so that these themes were more manageable and connected to Concepts A to E.

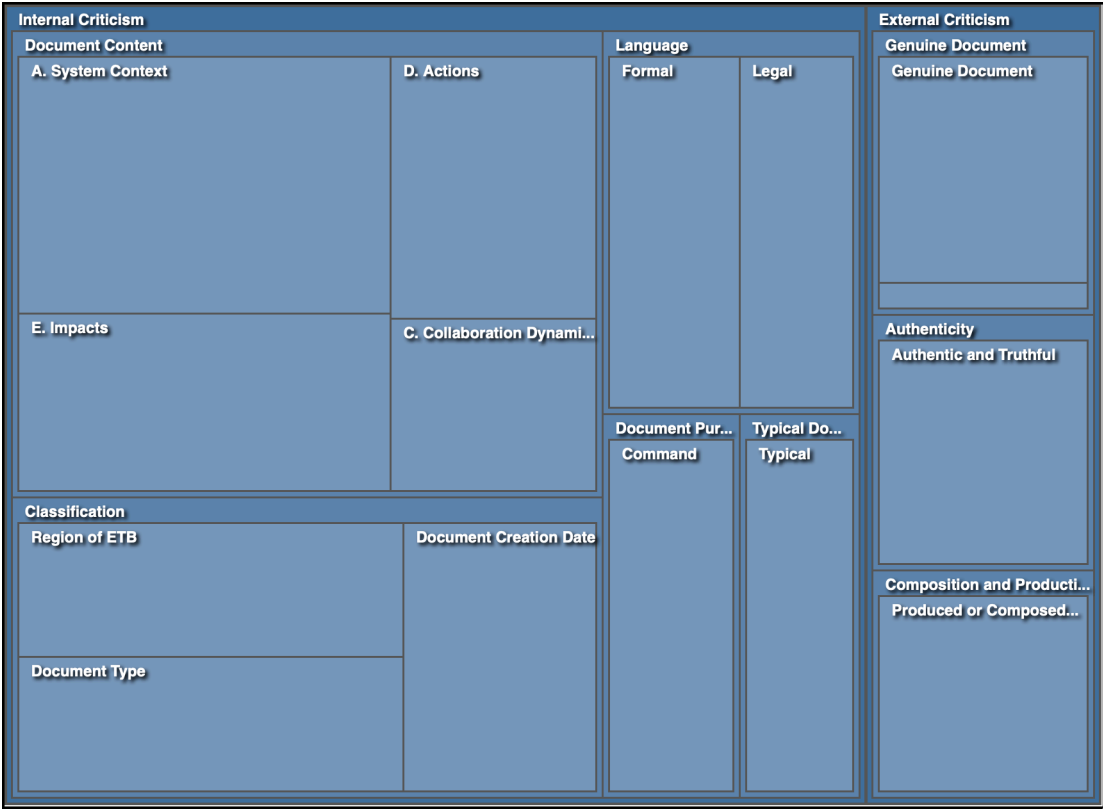


Figure 4.5: Nvivo Nodes Treemap Grouping Themes

4.6.3 Electronic Versions Of Interview Transcripts

Electronic versions of interview transcripts were each uploaded individually into the Nvivo Software. They were stored under file names that connected the interviews to the source so that they were more easily recognisable. For example, the file name ‘YWC Interviews I/v 8 Waterford Wexford Area [interviewee name] Transcript’ was used to denote that this file was a YWC interview, the code number, sourced in the Waterford Wexford region, interviewee name, and that the file was classified as a transcript. Their thematic structure was particularly informative and included a number of relevant themes including the current state of collaborative governance (issues, incentives and leverage), the prehistory of conflict, board structure, strategic planning, leadership, trust, small wins / intermediate outcomes, return on investment and collaborative processes. Refined focus themes (Moore, 2006) included the current state of collaborative governance (enabler or barrier), institutional design (board composition and leadership) and strategic planning (a catalyst for collaboration). This method and the themes for data analysis had valuable learning for the thesis study being undertaken here.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

The thesis study was carried out in accordance with the Code of Good Practice in Research (University College Dublin, 2016). This code highlights that standards of integrity are: explicitly stated as honesty; openness; leadership and cooperation; supervision and training; guidance from professional bodies; best practice in managing research and conflict of interest; documenting results; storing primary data samples; and best practice in publication (University College Dublin, 2016).

‘The role of the ethical analyst is to speak the truth as he or she sees it’ (Cox, *et al.*, 2020, p. 151). Every attempt was made to identify potential ethical issues that could arise (Bryman, 2012). UCD researchers have a duty of care for their human (or animal) subjects and researchers are responsible for how they manage their research. The essential prerequisite for ethical research is the integrity of the researcher (UCD, 2016). An application was made to the UCD Office of Research Ethics using the *Human Subjects Low Risk Projects Review Form* seeking an exemption from a full Ethics Committee review. This application was made on the basis that the thesis study was low risk and met the following criteria for exemption: anonymous interviews with non-vulnerable participants; people speaking in their professional capacity; and involves a non-sensitive topic. The exception was granted. Following consultation with the

research supervision team, an amendment and extension form was submitted and granted (Appendix H).

Purposive rather than random data samples were drawn from those working with young people, and during the sampling process there was a genuine willingness by participants to be involved in the thesis study. This goodwill extended to instances where potential candidates, who were deemed to have a conflict of interest with the thesis study, or the researcher, suggested alternative research candidates from other regions. For example, the researcher works closely with two CYPSC co-ordinators in his local region, so those CYPSC co-ordinators ‘contacted someone who contacted someone else’ who fulfilled the sample criteria, but were based in an unrelated region in another part of the country.

A decision was made to recruit research participants who were at least 18 years and who were furnished in advance in writing with details of the thesis study so that an informed decision was made concerning participation. Signed consent forms were a condition for all concerned. From an ethical viewpoint, where informed consent (Flick, 2018c) to take part in the thesis study was an issue, it was decided to focus particularly on consultation with the professionals, not the young people they work with. Young people were welcome to interview, but recorded in the context of general youth work outcomes, not outcomes personal to the individual young person. In addition, no direct quotations are attributed to a named individual, to ensure that the person or their service is not identified (Creswell, 2014).

4.8 Thesis Study Limitations And Mitigating Factors

My own status in the youth work sector, my manager role in a youth service and my own subjectivity was understood when analysing the interview data. In his critique of qualitative research, Bryman (2012) suggests that it can be too subjective, is difficult to replicate, is hard to generalise to other settings, and lacks transparency. Steps to mitigate design limitations were built into every stage of the research design, are discussed later in this Chapter 4.

4.8.1 Limitations

Interviews provide ‘indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees’ (Creswell, 2003, p. 186), so special care was taken in both the collection and analysis of the interview data. This interview data was treated as the research participants’ perception of

situations, so care was taken to report findings as views and opinions of those in the sample, and conclusions were drawn on interpretations of this data.

According to Creswell (2003), the researcher's presence may influence the research participants performance in interview. For example, sometimes the meaning of a participant's reflection can be a function of the interaction with the interviewer (Seidman, 1998). This includes the 'reflexivity' problem, where the interviewee may be tempted to give the interviewer what they want to hear (Gray, 2018, p. 273). As there was a chance that I may be known by some of the respondents, this was a particular challenge for me, and the following steps were taken to mitigate these risks. Firstly, I was familiar with the setting and may have struggled with closeness, so in the interviews I switched from the familiar role to the researcher role (Alvesson, 2003). Secondly, it was recognised that getting close to subjects could actually make qualitative data better (Toma, 2000), providing the potential to improve the process of data collection and analysis. This is developed further in 4.7.2 below, in the discussion of insider status. Thirdly, as there was a potential risk of the uncovering confidential information about the practices of those involved in the thesis study, such findings were noted and stored securely. As it transpired, nothing was noted or recorded on this. Fourthly, according to Seidman (1998), interview designs in qualitative research allow the interviewee to make sense to themselves as well as the interviewer. During the interviews, steps were taken to minimise the distortion of the intended meanings, such as direct quotes from the research participants and verbatim transcripts of their experiences.

Another limitation in qualitative research is that respondents may not be equally 'articulate and perceptive' (Creswell, 2003, p 186). The sampling process was used to identify a cross-section of interests to try and balance levels of experience and professionalism, with those with valuable lived experiences of YWC actions and impacts. In the main, participants were professionals, so this may not have been a concern. However, I took particular care when speaking with the young person, and those with limited youth work practice experience.

4.8.2 Insider Status

While Section 4.3 introduced the interpretivist paradigm in the thesis study, there are limitations of this approach. Interpretivism strengthens research through the lived experiences of the researcher, however attempts are made to ensure that the researcher's pre-conceived ideas do not overly influence the research findings. From the outset, I acknowledge that my interpretation was subjective (see 1.4.1). In qualitative studies, the identity and positionality of

the researcher should be made transparent (see 4.3.3). I am employed as a senior youth work manager in the south-east of Ireland, and whilst it was important to seek to be impartial during interviews and the data analysis, the issue of insider status is important to recognise. As someone with extensive knowledge and experience of working within the system I was able to engage readily with potential participants. Examining YWCs across the country allowed me to focus on localised understandings (Edwards and Talbot, 1994) and perceptions of the relationships in collaborative governance settings, which is expected to enhance my professional development. As I work within the youth work sector, care was taken to remain neutral in interviews, prevent distortion, or influence the collection and/or analysis of the research data.

Throughout the interview process I engaged in active listening and in particular listened out for the inner voice of the interviewee. To avoid the distortion of natural flow, leading questions were avoided, and I wore my specialised knowledge ‘lightly’ (Bryson and McConville, 2014), so that open ended questions allowed the interviewee to take any directions without interruption (Seidman, 1998). For example, a cross-section of views was sought by the diversity and selection of respondents in the research population sample, and a coding schema was specially designed to collect data consistently, so that qualitative data could be analysed in a uniform and standardised way. Thirdly, I was very conscious of the importance of identifying alternative and dissenting points of view, which were reflected in the research population sample, the transcripts and the findings in Chapter 5.

I tried not to dominate in interviews so that I could hear what my research participants were saying. This facilitated a space where they opened up, told their stories and provided a real insight into YWC functioning and potential. These were lived experiences. My insider status added value, as I was able to interpret what these stories mean, and how they might be used to answer the two research questions.

4.8.3 Validation in qualitative research

As introduced in Chapter 1, Maxwell’s model was selected to guide the design of the thesis study. Maxwell’s Typology of Validity was maintained throughout where: descriptive validity ensured the accuracy of the reporting of what was viewed or heard in interviews; interpretive validity ensured that recorded data or observations reflected the research participants view; theoretical validity ensured that these observations could be theorised; evaluative validity ensured the adequacy of the evaluative framework to reflect the intended statement or observation (Maxwell, 1992).

A number of characteristics of good design in qualitative research were considered (Flick, 2018b). Firstly, the design had a clear focus to gather data relating YWC actions and policy impacts on the ground for young people. Secondly, this data is specific to answering the research question as presented. Thirdly, the design is based on the resources and the time available to the researcher who is studying part time and is responding to the emerging challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic Government restrictions in place at the time. Fourthly, the rationale for choosing these methods is linked to the data that answers, or not, the research questions. Fifthly, as presented in the literature review of Chapter 3, the *Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance* (Emerson, 2012) may be used to understand relationships between collaborative actions and policy impacts. The *Integrative Framework* was helpful in this analysis, but was not determining in the way in which the themes emerged. Sixthly, the researcher is clear that while this work is conducted as part of doctoral studies, the audience for the thesis study also includes youth work practitioners, policymakers, academics and those interested in collaborative governance theories.

4.8.4 Quality Of The Chosen Qualitative Research Methods

There is a strategy for managing the quality of the chosen qualitative research methods (Flick, 2018a; Roulston, 2010). Reliability pertains to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Creswell and Poth, 2018; Silverman, 2017) and steps were taken to ensure that findings are reproducible later by other researchers. That is to say, if the thesis study was to be repeated, the same results would be produced (Flick, 2018c). The adopted data analysis methods related YWC actions to intended outcomes for young people and the methods used to interpret the data were explained. On qualitative research interviewing, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), p. 283 suggest a seven-stage process including:

1. thematising, where the research questions are logically related to collaborative governance theory as demonstrated in the literature review of (Chapter 3);
2. valid research design (Chapter 4);
3. quality interviewing of YWC stakeholders, where transcripts carefully reflect interviewee's intended meaning;
4. transcribing valid translation from oral to written language;
5. sound interpretation in data analysis (Chapter 4);
6. concrete procedures of validation (Chapter 4);
7. and valid reporting on findings (Chapters 5).

(Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 283).

4.9 Resources

The thesis study was conducted exclusively using the resources of a part-time doctoral student completing the Doctorate in Governance (DGov) offered jointly by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) and University College Dublin (UCD), supported by two appointed academic supervisors. The researcher's employer, FDYS, is favourable to the pursuit of the thesis study and offers a professional support structure. Other than the time mentioned above, there is no financial budget available and basic administration costs were covered by the employer mentioned. The academic resources available to the thesis study include the following: UCD Library, IPA resources, IT/web access, Nvivo Software, UCD Writing Centre, best practice documents of the organisation and participants in the selected data samples.

4.10 Chapter Conclusion

Chapter 4 has presented the methodology, including how data was gathered and critically analysed, so that the two Research Questions on perceptions of YWC functions and outcomes are addressed. It explained the steps taken to collect, critically analyse and interpret data expanding on the two final components of *Maxwell's Interactive Model of Research Design* (Maxwell, 2012), including a thematic analysis of sixteen semi-structured interviews. Study limitations and the steps taken to address insider status were also considered in the context of the interpretivist approach.

Chapter 5

Findings

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter 5 presents the research findings gleaned from the interview data. As detailed in Chapter 4, sixteen interviews were employed to gather data to support this investigation into enabling factors in the functioning (RQ1) and outcomes (RQ2) of YWCs. The analysis of this interview data is guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six thematic analysis phases including familiarisation with data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, definition of the themes and production of a set of findings. A conceptual Framework (Figure 4.2) was used to guide the analysis, and my Operationalisation of Concepts and Data Analysis Coding Themes template (Table 4.5) later helped to group emerging themes. This was not a definitive process, but patterns emerged and re-emerged over time, with a return to the interview transcripts on a number of occasions. This interactive approach (Maxwell, 2012) provided a certain degree of latitude, where some unanticipated patterns emerged, others emerged but not as expected, and some expected concepts did not occur.

This findings Chapter 5 begins by presenting findings on the roles and experiences of participants and then presents an overview of the themes that emerged in the interview data, as guided by the framework and coding template. Five themes (A to E) include: The State and the governance of youth work; decision-making powers; YWC structures and collaboration dynamics; hearing and acting on the voices of young people; and policy impacts. Two tables 5.3 and 5.4 summarise the frequency with which participants mention the themes. These provide valuable information on the factors contributing to the impacts of actions in three key areas: (i) understanding the structure and dynamics of YWCs; (ii) hearing and acting on the voices of young people; and (iii) the concept of power in such a collaborative governance setting.

5.2 Characteristics Of The Participants

The study participants had a range of professional and practice experiences which informed their responses. Table 5.1 below summarises their position, their role in relation to the YWC, and their length of time as a YWC member. For example: Participant 1 is a local youth work organisation employee, representing youth work interests on the YWC, with many years' experience, with a local, regional and national remit; Participant 14 is a CYPSC representative, and a YWC member with 3 years membership. Knowing this information when reading the transcripts, puts the views in perspective, and links to the context explained in Chapter 2, which detailed the various YWC member organisations and the relationships between them.

		Experiences and Roles of Participants	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10	Participant 11	Participant 12	Participant 13	Participant 14	Participant 15	Participant 16
YWC Experiences	Research Participant Role in Youth Work (specific to youth work)	Young Person								✓								
		Local Youth Work Organisation Employee	✓					✓	✓			✓			✓			
		ETB Youth Officer		✓	✓		✓										✓	
		Political Representative/ Local Authority												✓				✓
		National Organisation				✓					✓					✓		
		ETB Board member												✓				
		Consultant/ Expert											✓					
	Research Participant Role in YWC	Youth Representative								✓								
		Chairperson												✓				
		Youth Work Representative	✓					✓	✓			✓						
		CYPSC Representative														✓		
		Non-member in attendance		✓	✓												✓	
		Non-Member/ with a stake-holding				✓	✓			✓	✓							✓
		Past Member											✓					
	YWC Experience	Relatively New to YWC								✓		✓		✓		✓		
		Experienced							✓									
		Very Experienced	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓		✓				✓	
	Remit/ area	Local	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
		Regional	✓	✓	✓		✓										✓	✓
		National	✓			✓					✓							
	YWC in Region?	Yes	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
		No					✓								✓			

Table 5.1 Factors Influencing a Participant's Experience or Perception

These backgrounds helped reveal the varying perspectives of the research participants as reflected in the thesis study findings. For example, when examining the interview transcripts, the view of a youth work funder could be quite different to that of a funded organisation. Being aware of participants' backgrounds, experiences, or years of service in the youth work sector

helps to put transcript comments into perspective. For example, someone with prior experience of previous YWCs or its predecessor, Local Voluntary Youth Councils (LVYCs), could have a different understanding of a situation to someone who is new to YWCs.

5.2.1 Perceptions About The Role Of The ETB Youth Officer

The ETB Youth Officer role in YWCs was evident in many of the interviews. As explained in Chapter 2, ETBs employ Youth Officers to support designated local youth work organisations with grant funding applications, to monitor reporting, and to assess the quality of youth work, using the NQSF against a set of identified goals. Following youth work policy reform, changing the Youth Officer's role from one of support to that of assessor or evaluator is significant in the thesis study, affecting power relations and dynamics between YWC actors.

Four ETB Youth Officers are included in the interview sample, so their perspective may be different to those employed by a collaborative partner, or a funded organisation, particularly when considering collaboration dynamics or power relations. The contrasting experiences was particularly interesting in relation to power relations, leadership roles, and trust, and this Chapter 5 examines these, in turn.

5.3 Thematic Analysis – Overview Of Patterns And Recurrent Themes

My Conceptual Framework (Figure 4.2) was designed to guide the analysis and coding of the interview data, to make sense of the data, while not being prescriptive. My Operationalisation of Concepts and Data Analysis Coding Themes template (Table 4.5) later helped to group emerging themes. Interviews quotations are presented verbatim, as they offer real nuggets of insight into what is going on in YWCs across Ireland.

The patterns and recurrent themes that emerged from the interview data are interesting in terms of answering the two research questions. An analysis of the interview data found emerging patterns across the YWC regions, and while there were some local nuances, these patterns were broadly experienced across the country. Passages of the interview transcripts detailing the participants own words are presented in their original form, and classified as the prevalent themes emerged.

Table 5.2 below summarises the themes. This format draws on the operationalisation of concepts and data analysis coding themes, presented in Table 4.5 linking the emerging themes to Concepts A to E. Real world experiences of YWC stakeholders emerged across the data. These included: impacts of reformed youth work policy (Concept A); interdependence, leadership, opportunities and decision-making powers (Concept B); regional collaboration, local youth work plans, APNASR, trust, relationship building, information exchange, and TORs (Concept C); hearing and acting on young people's voices, and resourcing of these actions (Concept D); and the policy impacts of these in terms of young people being involved in decision-making, youth mental health facilities, unemployment facilities, sports and recreation facilities, rural youth work, and LGBTI+ youth work. These collaborative governance themes highlighted interesting findings in the functioning and impacts of YWCs, and are presented in this Chapter 5. The implications of these findings in the YWC context explained in Chapter 2, in the academic literature explored in Chapter 3, and in the research questions introduced in Chapter 1 are further discussed in Chapter 6.

Data Analysis Coding Themes and Findings							
Concept	System Context	Drivers	Collaboration Dynamics			Actions	Policy Impacts
Nvivo Code	A	B	C			D	E
<p>Real World Manifestations in Stakeholder Experiences of YWCs</p> <p>Operationalised for this study</p>	<p>Actions and Impacts are based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation - Youth Work Policy - Socioeconomic circumstances 	<p>Essential Drivers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incentives - Interdependence - Leadership - Decision-Making - Opportunities 	<p>Principled Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional Collaboration - Local Youth Work Plans Prioritise Needs and YWC Actions - UBU Assessment Tool APNASR 	<p>Shared Motivation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mutual understanding - Enabling Trust - Building Relationships 	<p>Capacity for Joint Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Networking - Enabling Knowledge and Information Exchange - TORs are consistent across the regions 	<p>Collaborative Actions attributable to YWC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involvement of young people - Garnering local decision-maker support for local youth interests (Local Political Representatives; CYPSCs; and ETBs) - Effective Use of Existing Resources - Securing Additional Resources 	<p>Impacts as alterations in conditions for youth populations manifesting as changes on the ground:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young People Participate in Decision-Making - Youth Mental Health Facilities - Youth Unemployment Facilities - Sports and Recreation Facilities - Rural Youth Work - LGBTI+ Youth Work

Table 5.2: Data Analysis Coding Themes and Findings

5.4 Theme A: The State And The Governance Of Youth Work

The effects of Government youth work policy reforms were considerable, as reported by participants in a number of ways including: enhanced governance roles for ETBs; potential side-lining by Youth Work Co-Ordinating Committees; leaderships roles; the emerging role of the ETB Youth Officer.

5.4.1 Local ETBs And Enhanced Governance Roles

An important contribution by Participant 9, a non-YWC member with a national organisation, was their explanation of the mechanics of how YWCs fit into the greater governance scheme of youth work. They explained how the authority of ETB boards had been strengthened by growing executive and reserved functions, with ‘quite a lot of power’ resting with the ETB executive. This change, it was argued, left YWCs with less power and broadly advisory roles. It appeared that YWCs now tend to be subcommittees of ETBs, reporting to the Board and fulfilling an ‘advisory’ function. Significantly, Participant 9 suggested that YWCs ‘have no statutory role’, leaving decision-making on grants as an executive function of the ETB executive. They explained that while YWCs may be consulted on matters, there was no legal compulsion to do so.

A number of examples emerged in the analysis of the data about how local ETBs supported the work of YWCs or considered issues raised by YWC members. For example, as cited later, Participant 9 explained how, during the Covid-19 pandemic, one ETB area had experienced a drop off in youth club volunteers, and the local YWC was concerned with how volunteer activity could be reignited. As a response, the YWC approached the local ETB Board, whose Executive wrote to ETBI requesting that the matter be raised as a youth work matter, nationally. The 16 members of the ETBI supported the proposal and ‘an approach was made to the Department’ so that the concern could be progressed by policy. This demonstrates how an ETB can support the work of their YWC to bring youth work matters to the national policy agenda through the ETBI and DCEDIY.

These findings suggest that the issue of volunteering was viewed to be critical for this respondent and that concerns raised by the local youth work organisation was taken seriously by the local YWC. It was placed on the ETB agenda, who raised it with their representative

organisation ETBI, who in turn brought it to national policy level. A very local issue raised at local level through the YWC was found to be a common concern replicated across the country.

5.4.2 Youth Work Co-Ordination Committees

A significant erosion of YWCs' autonomy appeared to coincide with the emergence of Youth Work Co-Ordination Committees. Participant 3 offered some explanation as to where the decision-making powers may lie:

'The youth work coordination group, that is the real kind of power. That's where the decisions are made.'
(Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

Despite having no statutory grounding, these in-house committees appeared to take on oversight roles. Some regions suggested that oversight would be better placed outside the ETB structures, with external input from YWC stakeholders.

5.4.3 Providing YWC Leadership – Chairperson, Youth Officer Or Members

In the Chapter 2 context review, youth work organisations appear to have taken the lead in the development and progression of the youth work agenda nationally. In the interview data, Youth Officers appear to provide this leadership in YWCs and, ETBs and, as well as their national body, ETBI. Emerson *et al.*, (2012, p. 9) describe leadership as the 'first essential driver' responsible for the initiation or support of collaboration. This role seemed to be important in the way that TORs were delivered. An analysis of the interview transcripts suggests a de facto joint leadership relationship between YWC chairpersons and ETB Youth Officers. Interview data suggests that the leading role of the chairperson, through the TORs, and the emergent leadership support provided by ETB Youth Officers were important factors in the organisations. One Youth Officer clarified that 'Technically, we're not members' (Participant 3), this role was expanded upon by another Youth Officer:

'The role of the Youth Officer is to act as secretariat, simply recording minutes and sending out notification. The rest is bringing information. I think the main thing would be bringing information about what's happening to the committee for their information.' (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

A number of participants highlighting the leadership role required to create a culture of listening and participation:

'I think the group / committee works reasonably well. People feel comfortable to speak. We would be conscious of working with the chairperson to try and ensure everybody gets a turn, and that everyone's opinion is asked for'. (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

However, in one region, there seems to be dismay at the lack of an emergent leader since the arrival of new YWC TORs:

‘It always requires leadership. If you have a paid person on a committee or a board, the paid person tends to lead what happens ... But if you were to say who is leading the YWC at the moment, I would find it hard to answer a question. Because I know that myself and X took a leadership role in it with the original committee and the establishment, and took quite a strong leadership role ... Who is the leader of the committee? I can tell you who the chair is, I can tell you who the secretariat is. I can tell you who is attending it, and providing information or reports to it. But I couldn't tell you who the leader is.’
(Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

5.4.4 The Emerging Role Of The ETB Youth Officer

Chapter 2 was dedicated to providing YWC context and critique, including roles, responsibilities and professional relationships. In particular, the role of the ETB Youth Officer emerged as a key connector for YWC members where they develop and monitor, support and guide youth work activities of local youth services. The ETB Youth Officer also use the Area Profile Needs Assessment and Service Requirements Tool (APNASR) to identify gaps in youth service provision in their functional area, and use this data to inform service provision by local youth services. While interview participants described how alliances, relationships and interdependence emerged between YWC members, they recounted how they focussed on forging relationships with those where potential conflicts might arise, specifying the emerging role of Youth Officers. For example, a CYPSC co-ordinator talked about building relationships with the ETB Youth Officer, where overlap or duplication of effort could be a risk. They appear in this statement to be clearer on who is doing what:

‘So, it's in the nature of collaboration, and the essence of what we're about working to support children and youth through CYPSP and youth through the ETB youth work. That there should be a natural overlap in certain areas, and a complementary working relationships. That's essentially it. I mean it's also people and personalities at the end of the day. We're just fortunate that we work well together.’ (Participant 14, CYPSC Co-Ordinator, YWC member for 3 years)

Members of youth work organisations imply that rivalries are being addressed and that the importance of addressing the needs of young people encouraged forms of collaboration and the development of ‘interest groups’. Youth work issues are often dealt with on a regional, rather than county, basis. So, this is potentially new learning, that YWCs could concentrate on themes, rather than geography, that deal with the needs of different regions.

5.5 Theme B: Decision-Making Powers In A Collaborative Governance Setting

Participant 6, a youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions noted, with disappointment, that there was ‘no high-level decision-making’ on their YWC; of the two YWCs where they sat, obligations were fulfilled in line with ETB rules, but “don’t tend to go beyond that”. For example, it was suggested that there was little conversation about issues or crises, at times meetings were often ‘tick box’ exercises, and while members need to be there, ‘time could be better spent’. Participant 6 was not sure if the YWC would “set the world on fire” and the word “perfunctory” was used in their interview.

While not a member of a YWC, Participant 4, from a national organisation was critical of such processes:

‘Collaborative governance, yeah? I mean that would be an ideal. And something that they should strive for, but it wouldn't be my experience from listening to member services. I think they tend to be used for consultation to some extent, but ultimately the buck stops with the with the Department and the ETB. I don't think it would tick all the boxes in terms of being that kind of co-decision-making body or anything like that.’ (Participant 4, non YWC member with a national organisation)

This frustration did not appear to be so evident when these restricted powers were made clear. In the view of Participant 2, the YWC was described from the start as having no decision-making powers, as it is not a Board, it’s role was “advisory”:

‘It doesn't have decision-making powers. It's not a board, it's an advisory group and its role is to advise the ETB on carrying out the ETB's youth work functions. So, from the word go we were kind of clear about that. We felt it wouldn't be fair to let people get a false expectation, that they were going to get on this committee, and it was going to be loads of ETB money or whatever. And, that they'd have power to make calls on what should be funded, where the money should go and the rest of it.’ (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

These varying perspectives can be attributed to, on the one hand the histories of YWCs and on the other, the differing experiences of YWC members. Interestingly, for those that experienced YWC prior to the *ETB Act (2013)* and the new TORs, they felt that they perceived a loss of decision-making, those without this prior experience were more content with arrangements. There were limitations and criticisms which emerged for example, research participants who served on previous iterations of the YWC (or Voluntary Youth Council) expressed some frustrations with a perceived loss of power or influence, particularly around

there being no YWC-specific budget lines available. While no instance of oppressive behaviour were explicitly suggested, a nuance of funding agencies having ‘power over’ (Foucault, 1982) funded organisations, were a distinct undertone of some interviews. Parity of esteem was not felt, in these instances. Others explicitly questioned YWC effectiveness with the emerging governance roles of ETBs, particularly in relation to over-bureaucratic new funding streams.

5.5.1 Historical Context – YWC Lost The Decision-Making Powers Of LVYCs

Participant 1, a youth work organisation manager with YWC and LVYC membership experience explained that, while historically their YWC role was to assess applications and to distribute grants, the situation had changed since the issuing of the new TORs. Up to this point the grant was generally divided between, for example, summer camps for youth work organisations including Scouts, Foróige and Youth Work Ireland. This function moved to the ETB Executive, which was regarded as a significant loss in power. He was very clear that he saw no decision-making role in this area for the reformed YWC:

‘The fact that it doesn't have a dedicated budget, the fact it doesn't have very clear kind of administration roles. That means that it's just basically an information exchange group’. (Participant 1, youth work organisation manager with YWC and LVYC experience)

Participant 3 also perceived this in terms of a more curtailed role following the reformed YWC TORs:

‘Historically the establishment of the YWC in the ETB has an effect on how it's operating today. I think that we were quite unique in X area, in that we were replacing a long-standing legacy committee that existed in X when we started out.’ (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience))

They used an interesting phrase to describe the muted role of the new YWC, since May 2020, the role of the committee was ‘to receive information’. Up until this point, previous iterations of their YWC had oversight of NQSF reports and youth club grants, but this had stopped. Interestingly, they questioned why no YWC member objected to this role change, given that ‘a lot of the original power of the committee is gone’. They argued that the new TORs heralded a diminished role of YWCs, regarding it as information giving, not information sharing:

‘It is very much information giving. Not even information sharing, its information given by XETB to the groups that are there ... There was no need to bring people together really ... People are there as watch dogs and probably more likely rubber-stamping things that are happening.’ (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

This observation of ‘rubber-stamping’ helps to understand some of the challenges that collaborative working presents. The suggestion that the level of communication was

‘information-giving’ rather than open dialogue, suggests top-down one-way flow from officials to those present at YWC meetings. In fact, the need for meetings was questioned. Reflecting on the synthesis of governance and oversight of youth work policy in Figure 2.1 for example, the role of the ETB is to oversee local youth work implementation, through working collaboratively with stakeholders. YWCs offer significant opportunity to do this, where information is shared, and stakeholders participate more fully in decision-making, resource-sharing and problem -solving.

Some YWC members appeared to suffer from an identity crisis which followed from this change in role and decision-making function:

‘The Department were of the opinion, and you talk about national policy, that these YWCs weren't to be established, because they hadn't commenced the *Youth Work Act*. And their response was that they're not being started under the *Youth Work Act*, they were being started under the *ETB Act*. Which meant that the DCYA had no input into that ... The Department don't communicate with YWCs of the ETBs. They deal directly with senior management in each ETB, and ETBs then decide where that information goes and it's primarily going to the Youth Officers.’ (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

5.6 Theme C: YWC Structures And Collaboration Dynamics

Participant 1 explained how their local YWC ‘works well’ and when asked about working together, they described the environment as ‘fairly cordial’. Participant 2 felt that their YWC works ‘reasonably’ well, using this phrase twice in the course of their interview. The use of qualifying terms such as ‘fairly’ and ‘reasonably’ suggests that for some participants there was room for improving how their YWC works. Participant 3 acknowledged that the general YWC dynamic was one of ‘basic co-operation’ and that the ‘culture is notable’ where ‘people are comfortable to speak’, as the chair works to ensure that all opinions are sought. Overall, the atmosphere was ‘cordial’, a repeat of the phrase used by Participant 1, and ‘a softer space, not for controversy’ that was ‘comfortable’ as suggested by Participant 6.

5.6.1 Towards Consistency And Standardisation - YWC Terms Of Reference

The existence of TORs was confirmed by almost all those interviewed. For example Participant 5, a Youth Officer without a YWC in their region, confirmed that a predecessor ‘had set up terms of reference for a YWC before she left’, Participant 6 referred to ‘a formal Terms of Reference’, and Participants 2 and 7 confirmed that they could make available copies of their TORs. Participant 11, a former YWC member and youth work expert, viewed the TOR as an ‘important document’, explaining that ‘when ETBI was formed... TORs for YWCs had to be set up’. These ETBI origins were also reflected as follows:

‘The terms of reference were drawn up by ETBI, and distributed to each ETB. Each ETB can choose to accept or reject what is in it. They were accepted and slightly revised and clarified’ (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

Further context confirmed that the TOR template was issued by ETBI as part of governance training for ETB Boards and senior management. They were issued as part of a suite of materials:

‘Governance training workshops for all ETB board members [and] senior executives ... was highlighting how you worked in accordance with the 2013 Act...[The TOR template}... wasn't something done in isolation.’ (Details withheld)⁴

Participant 15, an ETB Youth Officer with extensive YWC experience, suggests that the TORs provided clarity of purpose on the role of YWCs. In their view: ‘you’ve seen the Terms of Reference, it really is a meeting place for discussion and so on, and information sharing’, demonstrating a rationale for the YWC in that region. Participant 3 went a little further and detailed how the TOR and LYWP were used to maintain a youth work focus:

‘...to try and get the committee to focus on youth work. The youth work plan, and the development of the plan was a piece of work that I would have felt was really important to make sure that the committee was focusing on the core functions under the terms of reference.’ (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

The role was developed elsewhere:

‘that's what the terms of reference are trying to say, is that to try and gather the input of the people that are directly affected in an area, and it's the potential for the ETB to actually utilize and bring in key stakeholders... and to give advice. YWCs don't have an actual statutory role in the governance of youth work within the ETB. That's probably something that maybe [the TOR template] was trying to clarify.’ (Details withheld)⁵

Participant 4 felt that the TORs were largely ignored in some regions:

‘When you looked around the country, my sense is that ETBs ignored those TORs. They either wrote their own, or didn’t bother writing them at all. A lot of the more pragmatic ones, who already had youth work committees established and functioning well, said why would I fix it, if they aren’t broken. They just continued... they just said, look we continue as we as we always did.’ (Participant 4, non YWC member with a national organisation)

⁴ Details of contributor withheld, as the contribution could be identifiable

⁵ Details of contributor withheld, as the contribution could be identifiable

Participant 11 explained that the composition of YWC membership ‘caused a lot of consternation’, when revised TORs questioned the continued membership of some long-serving stakeholders. They also detailed their difficulty in implementing the suggested TORs:

‘Trying to adapt [YWCs] into a set of TORs that didn't suit. ... The TORs and the composition that ETBI put out [were] very difficult to translate into [our region], to be quite honest’ (Participant 11, a former YWC member and youth work consultant)

Therefore, the interviews confirmed that TORs were present across the regions, and that there was a high degree of consistency. An ETBI template appeared to be the source of this consistency. One region referred to an openness to a review of priorities, where we see that some YWC structures appear flexible enough to respond quickly to emerging needs, where barriers and blockages can be removed, and new opportunities realised through the collaboration:

‘At the last couple of meetings, the conversations around the table are now that the needs have changed, particularly with Covid. The areas of need have changed, and they're open to looking at that and doing a review.’ (Participant 7, youth work organisation manager and YWC member)

5.6.2 Achieving Consensus - Local Youth Work Plans Prioritise Needs And Actions

The development and delivery of a LYWP was viewed by some as crucial to funding opportunities:

‘One of the main things strategically we had to do was our Youth Work Plan 2020 to 2022. We are at the point of where we need to start looking at the next iteration. Supported by the Youth Work Officers, we identified the gaps in service delivery, and nearly to rank them. So that, when there's opportunities, we have this evidenced-based way of saying there's a real gap here providing youth work services in an area, or a particular theme, or a particular group of young people, and that's where we need to focus on delivering. It has informed, I can't talk about the specifics, it has informed opportunities for funding. We're able to present that evidence, it's accepted by DCEDIY.

In dealing with the Department, we have the groundwork done in terms of opportunities to progress and actually deliver these services ... It's looking like there's going to be follow-on opportunities there for geographically based youth services, or thematic ones, or groups of people that we can provide services to.’ (Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

Such initiatives ensure that this region was more prepared when funding streams are announced. In terms of process, the YWC action involves the agreeing of the priorities in the LYWP, and the policy impact occurs when youth work resources are shared according to areas of need as highlighted by this participant:

‘There's very much the idea of sharing the resources between the two counties. I'm not on just shouting and rallying for resources for [County A]. Through the Youth Work Plan, we're looking at where the needs are. If they're identified in [County A], then we're all for [County A], or vice versa. If it's for [County B], so it's identified through that. The two-county dynamic works really well on that one committee.’ (Participant 7, youth work organisation manager and YWC member)

Importantly, LYWPs were found to focus YWCs on youth work agendas rather than straying into other, sometimes unrelated areas, as discussed by this Youth Officer:

‘The other strategy, I suppose was for us to try and get that committee to focus on youth work. The youth work plan, and the development of the plan was a piece of work that I would have felt was really important to make sure that the committee was focusing on the core functions under the terms of reference as laid down at that stage.’ (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

They explained that the role of the YWC was:

‘To advise the [ETB] board on its youth work function. But also, to link back into things like *BOBF*, the *NYS*, the *Youth Participation Strategy*, and so on. So that was a big piece of work to develop that plan.’ (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

The issue about focusing on the needs of youth work was reiterated by this respondent in another YWC region:

‘We tend to try and stick to youth work. Obviously ETBI in the whole is very much youth, if you take the further education and training (FET) side and the whole area of developing an alternative career processes and that for people. We see youth in a much broader sense, but specifically we have a YWC, and see that we have responsibility for youth work under the *Youth Work Act*, so we try to keep youth work very much distinct ... I suppose ETBs are making the case that we see youth work as being very much a distinct branch’ (Participant 9, non YWC member with a national organisation)

One ETB used their YWC as a sounding board and heavily involved them in the LYWP consultation process:

‘We brought it [LYWP] to a meeting, saying this is something that we're going to be doing. We did give an outline of the plan that we had for the consultation. We did identify and we did set aside a significant part of one meeting where the whole committee in the facilitated session looked at what they feel were the issues: the things that were important that the ETB youth work could do something about, given the remit of the ETB. We did feedback to them at different stages as the consultation process went on, and they did have a role in that. It's the nature of it, but some members of the committee would have a more knowledgeable input perhaps than others, because it's their daily bread and butter.

Yeah in fairness to the ETB we did try and be as again as honest as possible but also as consultative as possible in terms of listening to the opinions, and the opinions of the committee as well as others’. (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

One Youth Officer described the effectiveness of the LYWPs in the following way:

‘I think that the first plan did result in a number of things:

- One of them would have been the certified training for youth workers, both volunteer and paid people. So, it was a benefit for the people that attended. I think as a long-term project it didn't really work out.
- The knowledge exchange on LGBTI+ work
- The criteria for the grant scheme, that was merged in with the local youth club grant took a fair bit of time of the first committee.
- There was a number of presentations to the to the YWC like from NYCI on child safeguarding.
- There was some information sharing.
- There were progress reports on the youth work plan. I could send you those if they were useful.’
(Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

Although most respondents recognised the importance of the LYWP, some had concerns about their usefulness:

‘The amount of input was light, to be honest from the members, and even as a as a potential stakeholder in terms of a service provider, the consultation was light ... it was brought to the committee for sign off’
(Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

5.6.3 Evidence-Informed Decisions - UBU Assessment Tool APNASR

A local politician, who was a YWC member, provided interesting perspective on their evidence-informed decision-making process, using the UBU APNASR assessment tool as follows:

‘APNASR was obviously used in our Youth Work Plan, in identifying those different gaps in youth services delivery across [the region]. Again, the themes, the geography, the different groups of people.’
(Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

Two respondents were positive about how decision-making in this area had led to good outcomes:

‘When it came to that greenfield site decision, our youth work committee had to 100% sign off on it ... I think we have made the right decision. We are possibly going to benefit from further opportunities because of that ... So, if anything, I like the objectivity of the APNASR tool when it comes to that. The members of the committee, having scrutinised it, can stand over that.’ (Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

‘Once all the funding changed, and the needs were identified through the APNASR. They need to do it again. It gave that committee and a better structure to be able to identify the areas of need. Instead of us, as a committee sitting looking at the whole of the two counties, we're focused on the areas of need and where resources need to go in if and when funding comes around.’ (Participant 7, youth work organisation manager and YWC member)

Later in the interview, this opportunity was reiterated:

‘At our last meeting it seemed like the ETBs that benefitted from the greenfield sites, that there may be opportunities from that. That was something that we had to discuss and something the Youth Officers are going back to the APNASR tool. To see what’s next on our list, and what has changed there. Without saying too much’. (Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

Although there were many positive views about the UBU processes, some respondents were less favourable. One region reported how the APNASR tool was used, but acknowledged the limited role of their YWC in the UBU greenfield site process:

‘There’s a new UBU, an additional Greenfield project, so that’s obviously under the microscope.’
(Participant 14, CYPSC Co-Ordinator, YWC member for 3 years)

However, this participant was cautious in relation to a potential role for YWC:

‘I guess they couldn’t really ask the youth work committee because there’s vested interest.’
(Participant 14, CYPSC Co-Ordinator, YWC member for 3 years)

In this, it is assumed that, because some of the YWC members may be tendering for the greenfield site, it might be inappropriate for them to be involved in the process. This included an apparent commitment to achieving outcomes-focused youth work policies, working to agreed local youth work plans and basing resource decisions on need, using tools such as APNASR.

5.6.4 Towards Regional Collaboration

Early in the interview process, a participant made the distinction between the function of the YWC as it currently stands, or ‘the historical’ form (Participant 3). This suggests that, in this case, there was a sense of organisational change over time. For example, in ETBs that were formed through a combination of earlier VECs, YWCs seem to have contributed to a sense of consensus across new ETB regions and potential geographic rivalries are avoided. One ETB Youth Officer described how they amended protocols to enhance and balance participation at the YWC:

‘We have consciously tried to balance the representation between both counties. We have taken leeway to involve all the uniformed (youth groups) and all the organisations. I’m going to say all of them, X Youth Services, Scouting Ireland, and the Irish Girl Guides all have a representative that sits on the committee, even though the max representation was three. So, we kind of took a little bit of latitude on size and said we’re going to make room for everybody because we want to have everybody’s voice at the table. The quid pro quo for that is that if the five groups must nominate three votes, so that was left to themselves to kind of hash out. It was done in five minutes. But as I said, we we’ve never come to a vote

on stuff, so it really it's not an issue that has arisen.' (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

This issue was also raised by another respondent:

'It's all about young people, so we try not to talk about my region, your region, or your particular area whether it's CYPSC or justice.' (Participant 7, youth work organisation manager and YWC member)

In response to an emerging need across the two-county region, one area brought a number of youth work providers together for a knowledge exchange, which was the first time that this happened. The participant suggested that coming together to promote such common youth issues across the region, affirmed the need for YWCs:

'So, I think there's potential if you can bring people to a space, where there's new people. I think the knowledge exchange was interesting because it brought [together] people who wouldn't necessarily normally be mixing. I don't think they would anyway. I think that it brought an added dimension to it, so I think there's potential for the YWC to promote common things. For instance, when we were doing the UBU research the level of similarity [of local needs] stood out more than the difference. So, I think there is a lot in common across' (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

One youth worker appreciated how their YWC remained focussed on youth work, and found the environment to be conducive to discussing quality outcomes for young people. They offered an interesting perspective about the impact this had in practice:

'There would never be any animosity or anything like that. Everybody seems to be there for the same purpose, which is to ensure that the youth work in the area is brought to the forefront, and we can do whatever we can to ensure the best services for young people. So, there is a good working relationship between everyone on the committee, definitely.' (Participant 10, youth work practitioner and YWC member for three years)

Some regions continued to work along more traditional county boundaries, and failed to embrace the opportunities of collaboration across the regions.:

'At the last ETB meeting I was asked for a county breakdown of the allocation of the grants. It's roughly you know, 55/45, but I think people do go back to that parochial, localized thinking at times. I think that it's part legacy, that there are still people on the committee who tend to think in their old VEC area. I think it's also sometimes informed by the politicians.' (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

Another did not view such collaboration as a way of dealing with problems:

'If there are issues or problems, I'm not sure that anybody, in terms of the service providers, would bring it to that [YWC] table. Essentially, your competitors and others, are at that table, you know? Anything that would happen in terms of needing conversation, debate or resolution would happen more on a 1:1

basis with the Youth Officer, to be fair.’ (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

5.6.5 Local Support For Youth Interests

The next theme to emerge focused on the garnering of support for local youth work initiatives. Being local to youth issues and to their proposed solutions emerged as a pattern in the interviews. This proximity to the issues and solutions tended to encourage YWC members to collaborate to deal with local concerns and youth needs. When a YWC was in a position to identify needs, it strengthened their ability to garner the support of local decision-makers.

5.6.6 Local Political Representatives

Access to local politicians was viewed as an important issue for many respondents. In some cases ETBs appointed up to three local councillors to YWCs. Participant 14 regarded this process as unique to YWCs, and a positive way of keeping meetings grounded through a ‘word on the street perspective’. Another, who was a local political representative expressed a genuine willingness to learn the technicalities of youth work practice, how the youth work funding systems worked and appeared passionate about hearing the direct voices of young people.

Another research participant valued the community connections that politician members could bring to the YWC in terms of opening opportunities for young people. Participant 11 described how councillors used their political networks and parties to inform decision-making, with some evidence of cross-party partnering. Thus, youth work matters were sometimes discussed within committees to inform councillors, so that they could influence policy and practice. An example was given where a ministerial meeting was arranged, so that additional money could be secured for a project. A second benefit was that local councillors ‘brought something from their area’, and issues of need could be addressed. Participant 11 deemed that this ‘brought perspective’ and ensured that ‘issues, topics and experiences’ were ‘brought from the ground’, and they considered that ‘this worked very well’.

A local political representative viewed their role as one of signposting people in the direction of grants, and connecting volunteers on the ground:

‘A lot of the time, you’re dealing with people or groups of people who need a little bit of help. Be it a grant, some type of support or information or whatever else. I can’t think of specific examples of it, but being able to turn around to someone who wants to set up a club in their locality, and say ‘Look, go talk

to X in XETB⁶, get that information, get that support, get the paperwork done. Having that information is a good thing to have.

A lot of what you are doing as a politician, is you are pointing people in the right direction. [Humour] That oracle of knowledge, being able to say to somebody who wants to set up a club in their area, don't know how to start it, can you give me a couple of quid. You can say, 'yeah, I can give you a couple of quid, but go talk to this guy. Get that support, and find out how to do it properly. Get the right insurances, get the bank accounts, the governance, everything.' Being able to point people to XETB, and our Youth Officers is brilliant.' (Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

It appeared that YWC membership informed this participant's decision about who needed signposting and directing in those areas most in need of youth work supports.

5.6.7 Collaborating With Local CYPSCs

The role of CYPSCs in the work of YWCs was found to be important for some participants. One, a CYPSC co-ordinator, offered unique insights into potential synergies between the YWCs and CYPSCs:

'So, it's in the nature of collaboration, and the essence of what we're about working to support children and youth through CYPSC and youth through the ETB youth work. That there should be a natural overlap in certain areas, and a complementary working relationships. That's essentially it.' (Participant 14, CYPSC Co-Ordinator and YWC member for 3 years)

They emphasised that there were also important distinctions:

'I think when you understand the role of the YWC, and Youth Officer's role, then they're very distinct pieces. Because the YWC focuses on the UBU funding stream, that's coming and the quality standards for youth work, so it is a very specific role in what it has to deliver on. There's a lot of metrics, and a lot of data connected to the two-youth work, so it's very specific and needs its own place, completely, given its mandate and given its legal stature.

CYPSC is broader, much broader. It can be more thematic, you know. What could be big issues for CYPSC for three years, could change for the next CYPSC plan. Whereas the UBU projects and disadvantaged youth is going to be front and central to youth work committees for the next 10 years.

Now obviously universal youth work is extremely important. We won't get into that, disadvantaged youth work versus universal of work [HUMOUR]. So yes there's synergies around certain topics that come up in both areas, certain themes that can be worked on through CYPSC subgroups that could be 100% youth related, but we have two very different roles as committees, as I would see it.' (Participant 14, CYPSC Co-Ordinator and YWC member for 3 years)

⁶ The letter 'X' has been used in place of the county, to anonymise data source

It was argued that there were important benefits to ETB in having the CYPSC Co-ordinator present:

‘Well, I suppose from the ETB perspective, they would see CYPSC as having a lot of data, and so there is information-sharing around data. That's where they'd see a value to us. Obviously and to try and link with the CYPSC plan, because ours is just new. We put a lot of work into consultations around the CYPSC plan, which can feed into..... a lot of it is youth focused, for maybe the 10 to 24 years, you know?’ (Participant 14, CYPSC Co-Ordinator and YWC member for 3 years)

These were summarised as follows:

‘In terms of how YWC is benefit the CYPSC, it's really information sharing, and good networking, and relationships.’ (Participant 14, CYPSC Co-Ordinator and YWC member for 3 years)

5.6.8 Securing Resources To Produce Better Outcomes

YWCs were found to identify resources that produced better policy outcomes for young people. YWC members often focused on everyday-practice issues rather than aspiring to high level policy outcomes and impacts. This Youth Officer reflected this sense of pragmatism:

‘For me, it's the whole practicality of it, you know. That we're all sitting around a table, you know. Where people can discuss matters, issues, whatever you want, concerns and come forward. I would try not let any policies stop that sort of open discussion.’ (Participant 15, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

This ‘practical’ perspective was reiterated by another interviewee who said:

‘For the most part people sitting on those committees want practical change, they want to know ‘do I have enough money to keep a worker around for next year’ or ‘are we going to get the roof fixed on the building’? That's where people are at, I feel, sitting on committees. While in theory, it's the avenue for trying to effect policy, but I think people are in a very operations mode, more so than policy mode, at those tables.’ (Participant 14, CYPSC Co-Ordinator and YWC member for 3 years)

Another felt that the YWC was as a space where the ‘nitty gritty’ of youth clubs and projects are supported to access resources:

‘There's nitty gritty stuff, like dealing with youth club grants, and capital grants. The committee have really had an input in saying, especially in Covid times, we need flexibility here to make sure those groups had the opportunity to apply for funding, that nothing fell through the cracks, and anything we did in the last twelve months was dealing with that nitty gritty. Making sure the groups are there, that they're being supported financially with capital grants and everything else, that there is a leeway there. Ultimately it is about the trickle down to the young people that will benefit from those services being delivered in their locality. ‘ (Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

5.6.9 YWC Collaboration Dynamics: Effective Use Of Existing Resources

While housed within the ETB structures, YWC funding opportunities do not appear to be limited to the resources of ETBs alone. It appears that the YWC creates an environment where members agree on common areas of interest, and pool their resources, skills and experiences to create something new. For disparate organisations working on policy implementation, collaboration dynamics can potentially facilitate the pooling of resources between YWC members, a phenomenon reflected in the research literature (Emerson 2015, p 722). For example Participant 8 suggested that the benefit in their area was the:

‘coming together of professionals to pool resources and make decisions to benefit each other.’
(Participant 8, youth representative, two year’s YWC experience)

New services do not always require additional resources, the following account details how the need was highlighted, and local resources were redirected to fill that need:

‘We did a piece of research into what services were currently there and what gaps were there. That obviously identified certain areas in the ETB area that had no real youth service, you know? There were certain [areas] that would have been identified as not having any service to young people, apart from maybe volunteer-led services, and areas that were probably pinpointed as needing maybe more direct work.

I know from that piece of work that [named organisation] definitely extended their work into areas that needed direct work intervention.’ (Participant 10, youth work practitioner and YWC member for three years)

This could be regarded as a good example of collaboration dynamics in practice, where YWC partners joined in response to an identified need, using existing resources to fill that gap. The action of that YWC, and the reallocation of resources by the local voluntary youth work organisation, was an agreed policy impact of that YWC action. It was found here that YWC members worked in creative ways to identify additional resources or to use their own organisation’s resources more effectively. So rather than focussing on the lack of an independent budget-line for YWCs, additional resources were identified in response to evidenced needs.

5.6.10 YWC Collaboration Dynamics: Securing Additional Resources

An example of collaboration included the experience of a Youth Officer who brought YWC members together in a side meeting to discuss the operationalisation of Capital Grants in their region. This decision ensured that ETB officials in that region rolled out funding opportunities, in consultation with local designated youth work providers. It was suggested by

Participant 2 that this resulted in more efficient allocations of limited resources. Participant 6 provided a second example of where additional LGBTI+ grants were secured to support an inter-regional project working with LGBTI+ young people across two regions. YWC involvement in the new UBU greenfield sites is discussed under separate cover in section 4.1.3.

Participant 9 used a strong example of how a local area identified a real issue for the volunteers in their area during the pandemic:

‘For example, in XETB, the YWC in X⁷, one of their member youth organisations brought to the committee the idea that post COVID, there was a whole drop off on volunteerism, and some clubs that are depending on voluntary work asked how to reignite the whole thing. They had a suggestion, this needs to be a national program, they made that recommendation, which actually went to the Board of XETB and the Board in turn recommended or supported it. In that scenario then you had the Chief Executive of XETB would have written to ETBI and they were anxious that it would be actioned. ETBI would have taken it as a representative body.’ (Participant 9, non YWC member with a national organisation)

This illustrates a connection between an identified concern at grassroots level, progressing through the YWC, the local ETB Chief Executive, the ETB Board, ETBI to national government. The ‘reignite’ recommendation was accepted, and resources allocated.

5.6.11 YWC Collaboration Dynamics: Enabling Trust And Building Relationships

The building of relationships in YWCs emerged as a strong theme, and was detailed specifically in nine interviews. For example, Participant 10, a youth work practitioner and YWC member for at least three years, confirmed that ‘there is a good working relationship between everyone on the committee, definitely’. The potential intensity of these relationships was detailed by Participant 12, who is a political representative, ETB Board member and YWC Chairperson, spoke of ‘honesty there from hearing their views, or telling us where there are deficits’. The youth representative interviewed detailed how relationships between decision-making adults and the CNN developed to the extent that young people’s ideas were funded, and to where adults started to turn up at youth-led events. Participant 14, a CYPSC Co-Ordinator and YWC member for 3 years, aptly summarises these sentiments: ‘it’s really information sharing, and good networking, and relationships’. The relationship theme also appears to be captured nicely by Participant 6:

⁷ ‘X’ used to anonymise data source

‘These are kind of the intertwining of connections and relationships, we’re seeing each other a lot more frequently and meeting each other a lot more frequently than would normally be the case, because we are all sitting on these committees.’ (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

This demonstrates that existing relationships are enhanced, YWC are not just about building new relationships. They can develop deeper, more meaningful collaboration. Participant 6 went on to explain:

‘We’re the Reps from our individual organisations. So those kinds of things have evolved as well. We would have known each other through the Fed⁸, but then by working together on these committees we see opportunities to collaborate, and to do things together.’ (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

The analysis of the data suggests that the YWC structure was generally successful in clarifying roles and relationships between members and between their respective organisations. This appears to have removed some of the ambiguity, confusion or duplication in local areas, but there was still more work to be done:

‘We’re still needing to bed down these relationships and get clarity about who does what, and you know this notion of parity of esteem, we often hear our members saying it’s no longer there, but it is in some places.’ (Participant 4, non YWC member with a national organisation)

It appeared that YWC relationships, in some cases, involved more open, enhanced communication channels between the voluntary and the statutory sectors. For example, one participant explained that membership can strengthen existing formal relationships, enhancing the working relationships between community groups, voluntary youth work organisations and statutory agencies:

‘This has really evolved a lot deeper, I suppose, and we’ve been doing joint projects together, and that’s because we’re sitting at the same tables. We’re at the YWCs together, we sit at the CYPSCs, so all of a sudden those relationships have actually evolved.’ (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

This theme of relationship building was echoed in another part of the country:

‘I suppose for me, the one big thing would be networking, and being in there, and hearing what’s going on or not going on. And hopefully be able to add you know my penny ha’penny into it. Definitely, definitely networking ...in rounding up the usual suspects, that we would know each other, we would

⁸ The ‘Fed’ is a colloquial term used to refer to Youth Work Ireland. It was originally named National Youth Federation, so longer-serving members often refer to YWI in this way.

support one another in proposals or issues or gaps.’ (Participant 1, youth work organisation manager with YWC and LVYC experience)

It appears therefore, that there is a value to YWC members knowing and meeting each other and these relationships can help build trust:

‘I think it's back to that those relationships that already exist, and as I said that we're there for the young people. You never get the sense that anybody is there to promote themselves, or promote their own organisation, or promote their own work. It seems that the people who are on the committee are there for what the purpose of the committee is for the young people.’ (Participant 10, youth work practitioner and YWC member for three years)

In situations where YWC actions focused directly on young peoples’ needs, a sense of common interest can occur. Thus Participant 10 refers to the ‘purposes of committee’, where only committee interests are considered while on the committee. Another suggested that action orientated approaches were paramount:

‘The problem with a (target/number-based) reporting relationship is that the focus becomes desk-bound, rather than action orientated or relationship building in and of itself. Collaborative relationships (do not in the first instance focus on the reporting aspect) remove this reporting focus, and tend more towards actions’ (Participant 16, local authority official, non YWC member)

Where YWC relationships felt comfortable enough with each other to share knowledge and information then levels of trust were developed. However, one participant was a little more reserved when ‘trust’ was being discussed:

‘Trust is an interesting word, you know. If you look at the way organisations come together right, there can be levels of basic cooperation between people you know, where there's nothing to lose, right? Getting people up to other levels of collaboration, is another day's work.’ (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

A shared sense of trust was not shared by all, particularly for Youth Officers who remain guarded in front of their ETB Board Members:

‘Both Youth Officers are a little bit guarded about what they'll say in front of the chair, because they're on the [ETB] board.’ (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

Where there was cynicism at the start, for some, YWC membership appeared to create opportunities for change, as described by this participant:

‘It has a function; it serves its purpose. It does create that kind of familiarity and camaraderie. When you start talking about things, you realize actually that's where I met the development worker for the FAI,

that's how we got that contact back in the day, you know a few years ago. So those are the kind of connections that you tend to forget. That is actually an outcome of being at the table.' (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

5.6.12 YWC Collaboration Dynamics: Enabling Knowledge and Information Exchange

One participant explained:

'We met three times a year, you know. So, you've seen the Terms of Reference, it really is a meeting place for discussion and so on, and information sharing. It gives the youth organisation a chance to say where they feel issues, needs, whatever else is there, you know? It is a collaborative space, I would say.' (Participant 15, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

They went on to confirm that a special section of the YWC Agenda was reserved for the sharing of information:

'We do a section in the meetings where there's information sharing. I would share the information about all that sort of stuff, from NQSF [Quality Standards], *NYS* and so on. I would always send out information to the youth organisations.' (Participant 15, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

Participant 6 described this as 'a little bit of shining a light on your own corner', where there was 'some really good dialogue and conversations that we've had at the table'. They went on to concede that 'It does create a space to have a conversation':

'It's generally what happens outside of the meeting rather than inside, but the connection starts at the table'. (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

This information sharing extended to collective learning in some YWCs. For instance, one chairperson was described as 'curious', and tends to ask questions for clarification if there is a technical youth work term used:

'If we raise something and they don't know what it means, or what we're talking about they delve a little deeper, and ask for a bit more information. Which is good as well, because it generates a conversation, you know?' (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

This cross-pollination of ideas and best practice was echoed by a local representative in another part of the country:

'There is definitely people in the room that are more knowledgeable than others, let's put it like that. I probably learned a lot prior to 2019 as a member of the YWC. It was a learning curve for me going into it, as I certainly don't have a background in youth work, or youth services. There is definitely a willingness for people. People understand the importance of why youth work is important, or why supporting youth services is important for many different reasons.

I'm quite happy with it. I definitely have a better understanding of it, than I did. When you start as a Councillor, or in politics, there's a whole pile of jargon around it. To a certain extent, there is around youth work, as well. You nearly have to learn the jargon, as well. You're trying to explain to someone about UBU, or different things like that. There is that language there. A glossary of terms [would be helpful]. A willingness to learn, where people ask, 'what does that stand for, what does that mean?'

(Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

Two participants mentioned that the sharing of knowledge works both ways and extends to bringing information back to peers in their own organisation:

'If issues are being discussed about what issues are happening on the ground in youth work, we're able to inform people from our own organisation of what is happening. Not what they might perceive is happening.' (Participant 1, youth work organisation manager with YWC and LVYC experience)

These sentiments were mirrored in another area:

'Totally, you're in the know. Only yesterday actually, I was speaking to a group of colleagues, and something was said, and I said 'Oh, well there is a grant coming for that'. And, they were like 'how do you know that'? I said, 'oh we had a YWC only about three weeks ago, so it was mentioned'. It's one of those Covid Grants, do you know? I knew it was coming down the road, whereas the others didn't.

You're aware of grant funding, you're aware of what's happening. Back to what I said already, [the local Youth Officer] is excellent at that. They're really good at, you know, giving out the information and keeping you in the loop as to what is happening. I think it's really important you know what is happening. After the meetings, if there's anything relevant, I would pass it on.' (Participant 10, youth work practitioner and YWC member for three years)

Both the individual YWC member and their organisation can benefit from the way that knowledge is shared, as described by this youth worker:

'I'm a club worker, so it obviously benefits my clubs, for me to be there because I would know what's happening or if there's issues with applications or whatever. Do you know what you mean? I do see a huge benefit to say somebody who's more on the ground, if that makes sense, to you being on those committees ... The people who are on those committees should be people who are in living and working and involved in the areas where the committees exist.' (Participant 10, youth work practitioner and YWC member for three years)

This suggests that, if the individual accesses important information, with this knowledge, they can help deliver services and policy more effectively.

5.7 Theme D: Hearing And Acting On The Voices Of Young People

5.7.1 Hearing The Voices Of Young People

The following young person's experience suggests a very positive experience:

'It was a very welcoming space, I suppose I could say, especially as a young person walking into a room of adults who I don't know, and they don't know me..... At that time, everybody was so pleasant, and we just wanted to work together. That was the community ethos in the room, that I felt anyway.' (Participant 8, youth representative, two year's YWC experience)

This young person went on to confirm that they felt supported by those around the table. For example, when meetings became overly technical, adult members were keen to explain in respectful ways what was going on, to help them 'back onto the sidewalk' (Participant 8). These relationships developed to the extent that some adult members started to attend events being organised by the young people through the CNN network. He confirmed how:

'They became close allies of the CNN, which was definitely a massive positive from these meetings that we got to network. We were saying 'we're doing this project; do you have any advice, or do you know somebody that could help and or could you even help yourself'. (Participant 8, youth representative, two year's YWC experience)

It follows that being a YWC member often provided opportunities, connections and resources that would not otherwise have been available to this young person who experienced these colleagues 'as allies' of youth-led initiatives. This sense of engagement was also reflected in some of the views of adults:

'We also have young people sitting on our committee, I don't know if others have, which I think is good to have the voice of the young person at the table.' (Participant 10, , youth work practitioner and YWC member for three years)

and a local political representative sitting on the YWC confirmed:

'I don't want to use jargon like 'refreshing', but there is certainly an honesty there from hearing their views, or telling us where there are deficits, or what really needs to be supported or focused on.' (Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

5.7.2 Including Young People And Their Decision-Making Powers

Chapter 2 detailed the national strategy to include children and young people in decision-making (DCYA, 2015b; DCYA, 2014a). Participant 4 offered interesting views about

the need to hear the voice of children, explaining the value of agenda setting in the context of the Lundy Model of Participation⁹:

‘Youth services take youth participation much more seriously. We actually allow them [YP] to be setting agenda. Working within the Lundy model, as we do, we clearly would be very upfront with them saying where areas of decision-making within our services within their competency, and where there isn't.’
(Participant 4, non YWC member with a national organisation)

The value of youth services is acknowledged here, highlighting the need for their involvement in supporting and encouraging young people to attend, participate and contribute at YWC meetings. Participant 4 also considered the importance of ensuring young people are aware of the extent and limitations of their decision-making remit.

For one Youth Officer, every accommodation was made by the adult members to ensure that they listened to young voices:

‘I've always found that the chair and the Director of Schools and others are always interested in finding out the views of the young person. Obviously myself as well, and all those around the table. They are interested in the young people.’ (Participant 15, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

They went on to give an example of a YWC action in the building of a bus shelter, once it had been highlighted as an area of concern by young people. While a shelter might be regarded by some as a marginal issue, this was a real concern for a number of young people who needed shelter while awaiting transport from their large school, and therefore affected many. Such decision-making processes suggest how young people can seize the attention of decision-makers and affect real world issues that matter to them, and in doing so adhere to the *National Youth Participation Strategy*:

‘At one stage there were three Councillors. I always found they hear what young people were saying, you know? I noticed that. They always valued what the young people were saying. A few years ago, the YWC were trying to get a shelter at the school, at the bus stop, you know? One of the County Councillors took on board what they wanted, and took more information from them. He attended one of the YWC area meetings’ (Participant 15, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

One respondent, on the other hand, was more critical about such processes. As he first explained:

‘it’s about participation of young people on it. You know the policy, the principles and all the rest will be there, and everybody is supportive of that, but the structure of the YWC, I don't think it's very conducive to making young people feel comfortable. If it’s not contradictory, a lot of the structures that

⁹ The Lundy Model of Participation was introduced in the Literature Review (Section 2.2.4), and its relevance will be explored in the discussion in Chapter 6.

are focused on youth participation are only concerned with big ticket stuff. While they'll deny it's tokenistic, and to some extent it is tokenistic, it is the language, culture, and habits of a group of experienced paid people, who speak about their area of expertise or their area of work. That will have to be strange language for young people.' (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

But then acknowledged the potential of the YWC in affecting young people's lives:

Now having said that, we've been lucky. We've had very good young people who have been nominated to it, they're very capable, very able. One of them was elected by the YWC as vice chair, he went on to serve on the Board of Youth Work Ireland, the Board of X¹⁰ Youth Service, so he's a young man who has lots of ability anyway.' (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

This Youth Officer went on to explain how his region had an innovative idea to empower young people at their two-county YWC:

'We took an active decision that we would invite two people from each CNN to sit on the on the YWC. Because one person from [each area] who didn't know each other would feel very alone and isolated. At least if you came with somebody you have some knowledge or a relationship, you wouldn't feel as isolated, perhaps.' (Participant 2, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

Another region appeared to have made genuine attempts to be inclusive of young people, by limiting the use of technical terms in committees:

'We have our youth members there, they joined up with us in the last few months. Not overwhelming them with the technicalities, is important on any committee. They will zone out if they don't understand what you are talking about, if they don't understand why it's important.' (Participant 12, political representative, ETB Board member, YWC Chairperson)

In some cases, this attention to the needs of young people was translated to a general policy to encourage the use of laypersons' language for everyone, not just young people, to enable the flow of debate and discussion:

'What I would try to do, is distill it down, to lay man's or lay woman's language and try to present it. I mean, you have all the youth organisations sitting around the table ... but you don't want it discussed at a level where we're all using the acronyms and using the academic language. We try to keep it at a discussion level, you know? I would do a PowerPoint or whatever sometimes.' (Participant 15, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

5.8 Theme E: Policy Impacts

For a number of participants the experiences of hearing and acting upon these voices created a sense of optimism about how policy making could be used to change the lives of

¹⁰ 'X' used to anonymise data source

young people and children. These experiences of sharing decision-making powers with young people are significant and are considered in the following examples:

5.8.1 Youth Mental Health Facilities

The issue of youth mental health was an occurring theme for two regions at opposite ends of the country. In one, a young person explained how they brought their local CNN's concerns for youth mental health to the YWC, and this garnered interest, support and finally resources to make the proposed youth facility a reality. It was through:

‘Discussing and pooling together resources that would help accessing resources like funding for different projects. Letting each other know, like CYPSC would weigh-in, in terms of what CYPSC could do to provide support or resources to the [local voluntary youth services]. That was the main ethos that I found was going on in those meetings.’ (Participant 8, youth representative, two year's YWC experience)

So, in the experience of this young person, the YWC was a space where new ideas were warmly received, and the resources found to realise them. Another deduction that could be made here is that while the YWC had no independent budget of its own, the members around the table had discretionary budgets that could be used collaboratively to effect change. This research participant provided additional context:

‘Well, at the time what I found was most notable was the CNN topic was the prevention of self-harm and suicide. That was a very common theme among youth services at the time ... I just remember very clearly a topic in the meeting coming up about what services are available to young people, and even adults and those that work could be affected by the terrible effects of self-harm and suicide on everybody. I remember the CYPSC representative just discussing what CYPSC were willing to do in terms of putting in finance, or grants and subsidies and stuff like that for a service to be set up. We set up ‘Tea and Talk’ in CNN soon after that. [The other county in our YWC] set up a similar resource. The development of Tea and Talk from that meeting, stemmed from that conversation that we had in that YWC meeting, that came back to the CNN and was then developed within the CNN. It came from a conversation about self-harm and suicide, and what we could do as a collaborative, being in terms of pooling resources, money and grants and stuff like that.’ (Participant 8, youth representative, two year's YWC experience)

Such findings illustrate how young people brought their concerns to the YWC table, were listened to, and resources used in a different way and discussed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 above. This action went in a small way towards addressing young people's concerns about mental health needs and contributed towards a meaningful youth participation policy. The mental health initiative detailed above by Participant 8 illustrated an example of members pooling their resources, listening to young people, and achieving better outcomes for the limited resources. The issue of youth mental health was raised in another region of the country as described by this participant:

‘You know, mental health comes up. It has just come up, more recently ... Definitely in the last few meetings ... It's a priority this year with our YWC. So, they're hearing that, you know? There's a lot of views on mental health ... These young people are there, to let the Councillors know the views of the young people they're representing ... at least it's out there. And the young people reported it.’ (Participant 15, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

These youth mental health concerns are echoed in CNNs across the country, and appear to be making their way onto the YWC agendas. In many cases, young people appear to be heard, so that initiatives such as the Tea and Talk can be resourced to try and respond to local interests.

5.8.2 Youth Unemployment Facilities

In one urban area attempts were made to address youth unemployment, which influenced the development of national youth policy:

‘One example would have been the employability project. We decided to pilot two employability projects, and then using the results of that, we were able to go back to the Department with an evaluation and a proposal. [The Department] went to the Dormant Accounts Fund and then they set up the Employability Fund, nationally. That was based on a little piece of work that we did, so there was flexibility around that.

The board [YWC] would be central to taking on those proposals, that I would have brought from the staff teams.’ (Participant 11, a former YWC member and youth work consultant)

Most of the findings refer to the success or otherwise of local initiatives, in this unusual case, the impact on national policy suggests that, in some cases, local autonomous decision-making can have a wider impact.

5.8.3 Sports And Recreation Facilities

In another case, a youth work manager explained how collaboration at their local YWC led to a local sport and recreation action that continues each year. They detailed how relationships were formed between youth work organisations, the local Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and community representatives on the YWC. They pooled their financial and non-financial resources to roll out a sports programme in an area which had, hitherto, few facilities:

‘We've benefited from getting to know the development officer from the FAI, for example. They're running camps with our [youth] projects for the last number of summers. Because you know the person, you're putting people in contact with an individual, rather than an organisation. So those kinds of things do help.’ (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

They expanded on this by demonstrating some of the longer-term impacts of this initiative:

‘They’ve also done work with the older lads, who are big into their football, and got them coaching badges and did training with them. So, the benefit is that the lads are now trained coaches and referees so that they can manage their own team.’ (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

5.8.4 Rural Youth Work

For some respondents, the issue of rural youth work was important, particularly where urbanisation was taking place in their area:

‘We’re now getting what I would call, the urbanization of rural areas in the sense that you’re getting the same problems and issues that they’re getting in [cities] in rural areas. But you don’t have the infrastructure or the protocols in place to deal with those.’ (Participant 1, youth work organisation manager with YWC and LVYC experience)

A second participant suggested that YWCs could influence local policy implementation by using its statutory status, and rural youth work was suggested as a potential area of development for YWCs:

‘If a statutory subcommittee of the ETB comes in and says rural youth work should be the priority for everything for the next 10 years, and that’s fed up at the YWC, fed up to senior management team, and the minutes of the YWC to the [ETB] board, and it comes up at board level, then you have a discussion ... There is potential to get stuff onto the ETB agenda, if people were going to do that.’ (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

This participant later went on to reiterate this point:

‘There’s a certain level of bargaining, leverage, that youth organisations have that they’re not using. (Participant 3, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

In another region, a local rural youth work initiative was highlighted, providing a positive example of how a local YWC action can affect national policy change by following the established structures of communication:

‘For example, a letter went through our own ETB to ETBI, on rural counties like ourselves, and rural youth working. It came through on the youth organisations, and went to the ETB Board, actually, and then went on from there to ETBI. So, it’s going to be brought up again in September, when a workgroup is to be set up. Within ETBI, we have a Youth Officers’ forum, so we’re going to try to drive rural youth work through that, as well.’ (Participant 15, Youth Officer, extensive YWC experience)

Here, local issues are brought to the YWC, who elicited the support of the local ETB to contact the ETBI national executive. In turn, the ETBI Youth Officers Forum made it an agenda

item for discussion with the DCEDIY and other stakeholders. A local concern for rural youth work was to realise their potential to influence national policy, for example by collaborating with other counties who were experiencing similar challenges. The thesis study findings indicate that rural youth work was found to be a concern across other regions, often making its way onto the national policy agenda through the YWC, the ETB, the ETBI and then DCEDIY.

5.8.5 LGBTI+ Youth Work

The Thirty Fourth Amendment of the Constitution (Marriage Equality) Act 2015 amended the Constitution of Ireland to provide for marriage between two people, without distinction to their sexuality. The impact of this development was profound, liberalising approaches and attitudes to LGBTI+ youth work. The *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020* prioritised actions and resources in youth work, with one region detailing how YWC relationships facilitated a cohesive local implementation in their two-county region. The impact of these legal and policy imperatives was reflected upon by this participant:

‘What started around the LGBTI+ work was from the youth work side of the house, because of the [national] LGBTI+ strategy, and there was funding there. Then X saw an opportunity for a pot of money, through the CYPSC forum so he actually did the work, and got money for both services. So, we split the pot down the middle [between the two counties in that region]. There was work that he was doing in [County A], and we were mirroring in [County B]. As a consequence, for the last two years, we have been successful in getting the LGBTI+ grant.

These are kinds of the intertwining of connections and relationships. We're seeing each other a lot more frequently and meeting each other a lot more frequently than would normally be the case, because we are all sitting on these committees.’ (Participant 6, youth work organisation manager with YWC experience in two regions)

This collaboration demonstrates how an organisation in one area of the two-county YWC could act as lead, and apply for funding on behalf of both counties, and that a seamless pan-YWC approach could be co-delivered across the region. This experience also illustrates how an existing relationship can be enhanced in fora such as YWCs, it is not just about forming new relationships, it can be about deepening and strengthening existing ones.

5.9 Chapter Conclusion

5.9.1 Collaboration In YWCs

There is collaboration in YWCs. A number of key themes relating to collaboration dynamics emerged, and a summary of these with the frequency of participants who mentioned them is presented in Table 5.3.

		Participant Frequency of Experience of a Theme
	Key themes	(i.e. Number of participants who refer to the theme, gave examples or scenarios)
Conceptual Framework Theme – Dynamics (NVivo C)	Sharing of Knowledge	4
	Trust	2
	Setting of Procedures	10
	Communications	2
	Consensus in Decision-Making	5

Table 5.3: Frequency of Themes in YWC Dynamics

As illustrated in Table 5.3 many of the research participants could illustrate examples of positive dynamics (Concept D) within the YWCs, including enhanced co-operation, better communication, increased information sharing, interdependence, and increased knowledge. Ten of the participants who were currently engaged in YWCs referred to the importance of procedures, where they could see organised and scheduled meetings. Four of those interviewed highlighted the value of sharing of knowledge at YWCs, detailing how they learned more about youth work or how they were able to tell others of their own work. YWCs were named as places where members had the opportunity to both gain local knowledge and provide information to their local peers. For example, from an organisational point of view, Participant 1 saw value in sharing the issues that are ‘on the ground’ in YWCs, with colleagues back in the office. YWCs were also thought to be a space where member organisations could share information about their work.

On relationships between YWC members, Participant 6 described how meetings were an opportunity to ‘shine a light on your corner’, so information sharing and bringing your work to the attention of the committee was evident. Most significantly, YWCs appeared to be a space where information could be brought to the attention of the ETB, which is regarded as important as they are charged with responsibility for youth work in the *Education and Training Board Act (2013)*. Participant 6 spoke of ‘a lot of affirming of the work’ where the YWC Chairperson was keen to improve their knowledge and bring this information back to the main board of the ETB.

This point was further developed as the YWC report informing the ETB CEO report, who in turn informed the ETB Board. This sharing of knowledge, helped to build confidence for those involved in youth work for the first time, as referenced later in the section on knowledge and information exchange. It also appeared to contribute to enhanced levels of trust and communications, which were mentioned in two interviews.

Some regions identified examples of where YWCs could agree on priorities and commit to the identification of resources to meet these priorities. Of particular interest was the way Participant 7, a youth work organisation manager and YWC member, described how the focus was to discuss the needs of young people across the region, rather than focussing on very local needs in a town or village. This was viewed as a positive and detracted from the potential county divide. Participant 7 noticed a change over the last few YWC meetings, where areas of need were shifting and that those around the table were ‘open to the idea of a review’, although at one point Participant 7 used the phrase ‘tick box, rather than decision-making’. According to Participant 7 the meetings were mostly about ‘Youth Officers making presentations on youth clubs, youth projects, funding opportunities and youth service grants’. This demonstrates some scepticism about consensus in decision-making which would suggest that, while there is a move towards a collective purpose, there is scope for the deepening of mutual understanding and trust (Emerson, 2012). There was a shared commitment by those at the YWC that ‘when money comes, then it will be spent there’, suggesting a rational approach to the issuing of grants. While participants exhibited some frustration in YWCs, they appear to have influenced their *youth work plans*, involved in decision-making relating to new grants, additional resources, mutual understanding, and shared commitment joining members on a ‘shared path’ (Ansell and Gash, 2008).

5.9.2 Achieving Collaborative Actions

Collaborative actions are achieved in YWCs. In terms of Concept D (actions), as illustrated in Table 5.4 below, all research participants who are currently involved in YWCs were able to describe how they experienced actions that could be attributable to the collaboration. For example, according to Participant 6 YWCs were ‘one of the more effective committees’ on which they served. Ten participants detailed actions be attributable to collaboration that were firmly placed at the centre of YWC agendas. Eight spoke of how YWCs were connected to decision-makers and four detailed how resources were made available to youth-led initiatives. The impacts of these actions included opportunities for young people to be heard and listened to, and enhanced youth facilities and these are dealt with in Section 5.5.

		Participant Frequency of Experience of a Theme
	Key themes	(i.e. Number of participants who refer to the theme, gave examples or scenarios)
Conceptual Framework Theme - YWC Actions (NVivo D)	Actions attributable to the collaboration	10
	Connecting with Policy and Decision-Makers	8
	Resources	4
Conceptual Framework Theme - Impacts (NVivo E)	Opportunities to be Heard and Listened To	4
	Enhanced Youth Facilities	8

Table 5.4: Frequency of Themes in YWC Actions and Policy Impacts

Chapter 5 presented valuable interview data relating to the conceptual framework's Concepts A to E, and introduced the themes that emerged in the analysis of this data. It detailed in YWC stakeholder's own words their experiences of collaboration. There is some apparent learning in these experiences of YWCs. The conceptual framework gave rise to a number of additional themes, and there is clearly good practice in regions that can be shared and replicated by others.

The participants offered diverse experiences of power play, decision-making, and diminishing roles. These observations provide valuable information on the factors contributing to the impacts of actions in three key areas: (i) understanding the structure and dynamics of YWCs; (ii) hearing and acting on the voices of young people; and (iii) the concept of power in such a collaborative governance setting. These findings are next discussed in Chapter 6, in YWC context from Chapter 2, the literature review from Chapter 3, the research problem and the two research questions. These will be developed in the discussion in Chapter 6 and summarised in Chapter 7 in the recommendations for future practice by YWCs and other similar collaborative governance settings focussed on youth work and young people.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to interpret the meaning of the findings in Chapter 5, and to convey an insight into how that interview data answers the two research questions. This chapter discusses the significance of YWC stakeholders' views, providing an overview of what the interview data is saying, in the context of Chapter 2, and the literature review carried out in Chapters 3 (Bryman, 2012). While Chapter 5 detailed the participants' YWC stories, Chapter 6 develops these experiences to explain their significance. This new knowledge enhances the understanding of how YWCs function or not (RQ1). It also contributes to the understanding of collaborative governance in YWCs through the experiences of collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts (RQ2).

To 'disentangle process and productivity performance' (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 741), Chapter 6 is organised in two parts, each restating the RQs and addressing them through the policy literature (Chapter 2), academic literature (Chapter 3), and interview data (Chapter 5). Collaborative governance remains a fuzzy concept (Batory and Svenson, 2019). No suggestion is being made that a perfect separation is possible, but Tables 6.1 and 6.2 below suggest how process and performance can be viewed. Section 6.2 considers the process aspect of RQ1, focusing on the functioning of YWCs in Ireland, and broadly explores the systems context, the drivers and some of the collaboration dynamics. Section 6.3 concerns reflections on the performance aspect of RQ2 on participants' perception of the relationship between YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts. By 'unpacking the collaborative toolbox' (Scott and Thomas, 2017, p. 191), Chapter 6 explores and discusses 'collaboration processes inside the black box' (Thomas and Perry, 2006, p. 20).

6.1.1 Thematic Analysis And Synthesis Of Interview Data

This section describes a number of themes that emerged to provide important insights about: (i) understanding the structure and dynamics of YWCs; (ii) hearing and acting on the

voices of young people; (iii) and the concept of power in such a collaborative governance setting. Overall, a number of high-level themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the research data. Firstly, there is much to commend how YWCs function, with good experiences of how they are organised and operate. Secondly, it was found that they have achieved a number of policy outcomes for young people when certain collaborative governance conditions are met. Thirdly, the concept of power in such a collaborative governance setting merits attention in view of the contributions by research participants and the data gleaned from the review of YWC and youth work materials. In particular, several relationships of power were evident between YWC members, funders and fundees for example, and national policies and local needs. These findings are discussed now, under each of the two RQs in Sections 6.2 and 6.3, and for both RQs together in Section 6.4, when power relations are discussed.

6.2 RQ1: YWC Functioning And Structures

As outlined in Chapter 1, RQ1 focuses on the functioning of YWCs. The key findings in relation to RQ1 are summarised below in Table 6.1. For the purposes of the thesis study, system contexts are understood to involve youth legislation, youth work policies and the environments in which YWCs operate. The drivers from collaboration consist of the incentives, decision-making and opportunities for YWCs and their members. For RQ1, the three nested dynamics include principled engagement, shared motivation and capacity for joint action present in collaborative governance settings (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015).

YWCs and Process					
Concept	System Context	Drivers	Collaboration Dynamics		
Nvivo Code	A	B	C		
Real World Manifestations in Stakeholder Experiences of YWCs Operationalised for this study	Actions and Impacts are based on: - Youth Work Legislation - Youth Work Policy - Socioeconomic circumstances - Political Dynamics – State Governance Reform	Essential Drivers include: - Incentives - Interdependence - Leadership - Decision-Making Powers - Opportunities for collaboration	Principled Engagement: - Regional Collaboration - Local Youth Work Plans Prioritise Needs and YWC Actions - UBU Assessment Tool APNASR	Shared Motivation: - Mutual understanding - Enabling Trust - Building Relationships	Capacity for Joint Action: - Procedural/ Institutional Arrangements - Networking - Enabling Knowledge and Information Exchange - TORs are consistent across the regions
	Power Relations				

Table 6.1: RQ1: YWCs Functioning and Processes

Findings relating to the system context include youth work legislation and policy, and the socio-economic circumstances of YWC regions. Interviews detailed the essential drivers in the collaboration, including interdependence, and in particular leadership. The system context and drivers of YWCs are represented in the conceptual framework as concepts A and B. Chapter 2 was dedicated to what is already known of the YWC context and the driving forces.

6.2.1 Linking YWCs To Youth Work Legislation And Youth Work Policy

Interestingly, a number of participants viewed their experiences of YWCs in the context of legislation, particularly the *Youth Work Act (2001)* and *ETB Act (2013)*, and understood their YWC role in the context of youth work policy. Therefore, stakeholders clearly understood their YWC role and functions in terms of statutory responsibilities. Encouragingly, there is sufficient evidence in the interviews to conclude that the work of the YWCs were grounded in local and national youth policies including *BOBF*, the *NYS*, a *LYWP*, *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020* *UBU*, and the *National Youth Participation Strategy*.

6.2.2 The State And The Governance Of Youth Work

Political dynamics and power relations exist both within communities and across levels of government (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). These findings are also reflected in the literature, as discussed in Chapter 2. In the last twenty years, the State has increasingly intervened in the governance and oversight of the youth work sector (Forde, 2009; Kiely, 2009; Gaynor, 2011; Kiely and Meade, 2018; McMahon, 2018). These policy initiatives, in turn, reveal diverse aspects of power and relationships between stakeholders. To some extent the State and the youth work sector have at times had a symbiotic relationship, working in collaboration on policy design and implementation. At other times the Sector has tended to follow the lead of government policy, sometimes in contradiction to the sector aspirations. McMahon (2018) suggests that the emphasis on value for money and evaluations based on performance-related governance and output targets (DCYA, 2014b) reduce youth work to a neoliberal governmentality, shifting youth work's focus from being a human service to an economic one (Forde, 2009; McGimpsey, 2012; McGimpsey, 2017; McMahon, 2018). Such commercialisation enforces a business model of neoliberal commercialism focussed on measurable targets and devalues 'youth work as a site for neoliberal governmentality' (McMahon, 2018, p vii). The thesis study findings about the APNASR tool, UBU and the administrative burden of the reformed governance structures reflect some of these developments.

6.2.3 Essential Drivers in YWCs

6.2.3.1 Interdependence

There is a level of interdependence between YWC actors, presenting opportunities for those involved in collaboration. Funding relationships are present between ETBs and local designated voluntary youth work organisations, for example. Relationships of power often affect processes and opportunities for collaboration between stakeholders. For example ETBs provide their local YWCs with administrative support, Youth Officer resources, and information. At the same time, ETBs are also the primary intermediary for youth work funding, so some designated youth work organisations may act or interact differently, at YWC meetings, as their funders are present. Such processes underline the importance of understanding the significance and impact of power relations as ‘power is an emergent phenomenon that is shaped by interaction’ (Purdy, 2012, p. 416), between funders and funded organisations (fundees).

Relationships were viewed in a number of ways. Interdependence was apparent where YWCs managed to break up a *them and us* situation. YWCs were described as a communal working committee, rather than talking shops. On the matter of more effective working between YWC organisations, overall, youth workers on the ground have good relationships. Strong working relationships between CYPSC and ETBs also emerged in the data. YWC actions concentrated on pooling resources, information sharing and coming together on shared agenda items with networking opportunities, advice giving and a shared understanding of youth matters. The overall YWC experience was mostly constructive, where members demonstrated a strategy for collective purpose (Emerson, 2012), suggesting YWCs are spaces in which members want to participate and contribute.

6.2.3.2 Leadership

The concept of leadership recurs across the literature (Donahue, 2004; Emerson, *et al.*, 2012; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015; Emerson, 2018). For collaborative governance settings, Douglas *et al.*, (2020, p.498) suggests that leadership centres around ‘convening, stewarding, mediating, and taking action’, offering clues on how to assess the attributes of leaders in YWCs. Attitudes to leadership in the interviews appeared to differ from region to region. Some regions spoke of their strong chairpersons taking a lead on actions, while others attributed drive and focus to the actions of their ETB Youth Officers. While Youth Officers are not specifically named in TORs, the interview data suggests their pivotal role in supporting the achievement of YWCs, especially when working in concert with the chairperson.

The system context and the drivers created YWC environments that were responsive to youth work policies, emerging needs, diversity socio-economic circumstances, suggesting the adaptability (Cheng *et al.*, 2015) of collaborative governance to changes. The sections on LYWPs and UBU assessment tools, later in Sections 6.2.3.2 and 6.2.3.3, explain how YWC decisions and actions are made in the context of local socio-economic circumstances. It is therefore likely that interdependencies strengthened collaboration, and that joint leadership arrangements progressed this in many regions. On a point of learning for best practice, one region detailed how their Youth Officer and YWC chairperson discussed agenda items in advance, contributing to efficient and effective meetings.

6.2.3 Dynamics

An analysis of the transcripts reveals that most stakeholders had positive experiences and interactions with YWCs and fellow committee members, highlighting dynamic environments where collaborative governance enabled actions (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018). These dynamics included the setting of procedures, enhanced relationships, higher levels of trust, knowledge and information exchange, communications, networking and leadership. Details of information exchange, networking and a consistent set of TORs emerged across the regions, from an analysis of the interview data. Very few viewed their interactions with other YWC members negatively. Employing the language of Emerson and Nabatchi's (2015) matrix, these YWC experiences and interactions suggest an environment of equitable, effective and sustainable collaboration. The following experiences of principled engagement included regional collaboration, local youth work plans, and the APNASR assessment tool:

6.2.3.1 Regional Collaboration and Actions

A 'mutual understanding' (Emerson, 2018) of common youth themes, appears to have encouraged collaboration across a whole region, rather than individual members focussing on their own area, or organisational needs. Chapter 2's synthesis of the youth work documentation explained how some ETB regions comprise more than one county and hence share a YWC. Interview data suggests that YWCs in multi-county ETBs could progress their shared youth interests across an entire region. For example, in one region the YWC was viewed as a forum to raise issues across that region and pursue cross-regional work. It was suggested that a rural focus in YWCs could help tackle the urbanisation of rural areas including: youth mental health; lack of rural transport; LGBTI+; homelessness; substance misuse; crime; new communities (participant's language); and decentralisation of Dublin families to rural areas (researcher's

paraphrase of participant). Interestingly, a number of regions found that it was not possible to prioritise one issue over another, as in many cases problems were a mixture of issues. It was observed in another region that there was a need to move out of parochial thinking, looking at regional themes, rather than each YWC member looking after their own area or organisation.

There were a number of contradictory views expressed about YWC experiences. For example, in an ETB area of more than one county, it was suggested by one participant that there was a narrow mindedness about the parochial needs of young people, particularly when there is no natural affinity between the counties in that region. In another region, collaborative governance in YWCs was viewed as only aspirational, or an ideal that could be strived for. Others viewed YWCs as largely consultative, with a tick-boxing approach rather than co-decision-making. Reference was also made about power differentials caused by those who 'held the purse', where decisions being made by ETBs and DCEDIY rather than the YWCs, which reinforced experiences of powerlessness amongst stakeholders (Hofstede, 1980).

In terms of regional collaboration, one young person explained that a topic raised by CNN was common across their two-county ETB region, and received a memorable amount of YWC discussion time. Another detailed instances of shared youth worker training across their ETB region, a knowledge exchange for youth workers on LGBTI+ matters, and agreement-setting of criteria for grant schemes. These observations suggest a move by YWCs towards consensus, a strategy for a collective purpose and a mutual understanding of needs. There is potential here for ETB regions to unite on topics that are common across their regions, rather than to focus on geo-political issues than can divide regions, and result in disharmony. One voice across a region, centred on a shared issue of interest could unify YWCs, and strengthen the case for action.

6.2.3.2 LYWPs

Chapter 2 identified how YWCs focussed on assessing local needs and prioritising actions in response to these needs. There, it was found that the LYWP of all of those regions surveyed included a scope of existing facilities, a needs assessment and a prioritisation of actions. These were based on evidenced need set by the committees, providing a useful illustration of shared commitment (Emerson, 2018) to agreed actions, and focussing YWC energies and resources.

There were varying views of the value of YWC involvement in the development of LWYPs. One account, for example, suggests a certain degree of ambivalence, explaining how their local ETB commissioned an external consultant to write up the plan, describing the YWC input and consultation as light. It was perceived as minimal collaboration. In another example, the LYWP was brought to the YWC for sign off, which was regarded by this participant as a positive move. LYWPs were also described as largely descriptive and uncontroversial, clearly speaking to the national policy aims of *BOBF* and *NYS*. This suggests an opportunity for a more vibrant and insightful YWC role.

According to Emmerson (2018), collaborative governance starts ‘with an itch, a tension or a challenge’ (p. 16). On this, a number of regions referenced their involvement in the drafting of LYWPs to agree on these itches, tensions and challenges in the local regions. These are helpful illustrations of how collaboration dynamics stimulate action. For example, one region’s youth work plan was discussed at the YWC initially, with an entire facilitated YWC meeting set aside to inform it. In this case the YWC had a role in the design of this plan, indicating a significant YWC output. In another region, there was considerable YWC member input into the LYWP, with two consultants conducting a literature review and interviews with stakeholders. Here, the development of the LYWP was regarded by the YWC as a piece of work to focus on, providing their actions with direction. It was regarded as a success and there was unanimous agreement to extend the YWC Strategy Statement beyond the initial term. In another region YWC involvement in the design of the LYWPs was regarded as significant, with all future actions based on this work plan, explaining that the LYWP highlighted and ranked gaps in the area, so that when resources later became available, they had a focus for their actions. The value of an evidence-based rather than anecdotal way of working, was acknowledged here where the ranking established: the need; the theme; and the group of young people in need of support. This was a valuable achievement, with evidence informing opportunities for funding.

6.2.3.3 APNASR

The APNASR tool was used in a number of regions in their LYWPs, in UBU decisions, and to prioritise the allocation of additional funding. In one two-county ETB region, the YWC was spread across two areas, with one traditionally having more youth work activity than the other. That YWC decided to prioritise the areas with greater need using data from the APNASR tool, demonstrating how it could be used to design LYWPs, and facilitate understanding and decision-making in relation to gaps in youth work services. It was believed that YWCs would

possibly benefit again in the future, based on their appropriate use of this tool, claiming it as a great tool. Their experience was particularly valuable, as they sensed that YWC decisions were less political and more objective, based on such evidence. In another ETB region, where there were two counties, the APNASR tool was again used to prioritise one county first, with commitments made to the second when resources were next available. Significantly, these views indicated a settling of power relations, avoidance of conflict, and enhanced trust (Emerson, 2012) between YWC members, and their organisations.

6.2.3.4 Shared Motivation

In an analysis of the data themes, shared motivation included mutual understanding, enabling trust and building relationships. Shared motivation often occurs where social capital or interpersonal dynamics are achieved (Emerson, 2018). Trust, mutual understanding and commitment (Ansell and Gash, 2008) in enabling YWC collaborations was a common theme across the regions. An interesting phenomenon emerged from an analysis of the YWC data, where collaborative governance appeared to provide the ‘lubricant and the glue’ (Bryson, *et al.*, 2006, p. 47) that bonded members in common purposes. This was achieved through information sharing mechanisms, trust, vision and a set of shared values. These qualities are normally associated with teams working in the same organisation, but the dynamics in YWCs appear to facilitate the coming together of members from a number of organisations. They appeared to be committed to working together.

While a natural tension with competition was acknowledged, the environments experienced relationship-building, with opportunities to learn about who is doing what. For example, the FAI and smaller organisations were named as beneficiaries of these relationship-building opportunities. In such collaborative governance settings, trust is evidenced by the willingness of parties to go beyond their own personal and institutional interests towards an understanding of the interests of others. It is measured by the degree to which members prove to each other that they are reasonable, predictable, and dependable (Ansell and Gash, 2008).

There were different views of trust, with YWC members highlighting varying degrees depending on the region. One region experienced goodwill and positive relationships between members, but conceded that collaboration doesn’t happen without the investment of a serious amount of work. ‘The chicken and chips circuit’ was mentioned, where members of various committees talk at a personal level to each other, not just wearing official hats, but working together on practical shared issues. This appears to echo the sentiments of Ansell and Gash

(2008), where members move from personal or organisational interests towards those of others. In another region, a youth worker felt that there were good levels of trust at YWCs, as all members were there for young people, and not promoting themselves or their own work. Such experiences suggest that these cross-sectoral partnerships can deliver effectively and efficiently through networking (Andrews and Entwistle, 2010; Bryson *et al.*, 2006; Bryson *et al.*, 2015; Koschmann *et al.*, 2012; Ovseiko *et al.*, 2014) when collaboration dynamics are present.

6.2.3.5 Knowledge and Information Exchange

Knowledge is described in the literature as the ‘currency of collaboration’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015) and is deemed essential for partners to ‘produce effective collaborative outcomes’ (Emerson, 2018, p. 4). Being a member, and chair of YWC, empowered one local authority representative with information and knowledge to signpost constituents for support, or assistance. In this region, policies such as *BOBF* were distilled to lay person’s language, to be understood, where academic terms and acronyms were avoided at discussion level. Here, a YWC member felt informed enough on insurance, bank accounts and governance to assist in the establishment of a new youth club. It follows that, with the sharing of information and knowledge, YWC members felt empowered to act on policy matters. Another region experienced a number of communication opportunities including networking, the development of youth work themes, and information exchange. The use of the phrase *to add a penny’s worth*, at a regional level, was interesting, as this regional opportunity to inform others on their work does not present itself at other county-based fora.

Some reservations were expressed across the regions, however. A distinction between information giving and information sharing was made, reflecting Ansell and Gash’s (2008) concern that stakeholders should have ‘real responsibility for policy outcomes’ (p. 546). On this concern, that YWC was described as a ‘public service committee’ that was not interactive or pro-active. There were fears that YWCs were acting as watchdogs and rubber stamping. However, there was a hope that the situation could change with the return to face-to-face meetings following Covid-19 restrictions.

YWCs appeared to be a space where those not immediately familiar with youth work, soon learned of its benefits. It was acknowledged that it was a steep learning curve for some members, who were less knowledgeable in youth work than others. There was found to be a genuine willingness from people to learn, and to contribute, where members grew to understand

why youth work is important, and of the value of supporting youth services. This is regarded as valuable, and one of the most significant contributions of YWC dynamics.

6.2.3.6 Terms Of Reference

According to Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) the setting of procedures is an indicator of capacity for joint action. Set procedures facilitated greater co-operation, with operating procedures facilitating greater collaboration between the members. Nationwide, YWCs were structured around a consistent set of TORs, where meetings were held between three and four times a year. This consistency appears to reflect the findings of the YWC Document review in Chapter 2. Interview data confirmed that procedures were in place, with chairpersons keeping youth work at the centre of the agenda. As a result, those interviewed considered it worthwhile to attend meetings, finding them well organised, well-resourced and well attended with formal meeting structures, operating to TORs, and with documents circulated in advance.

Interview data suggests that TOR templates were drawn up by ETBI and distributed to ETBs nationwide. These TORs were also a feature of the YWC document review in Chapter 2, where they were found to be consistent across the regions, as guided by an ETBI template, to replace existing local arrangements. This suggested template formed a part of a series of ETBI workshops and briefings on the *Education and Training Boards Act (2013)* for ETBs. This may partly explain why TORs appear consistent across most areas, and why YWC structures appear to be similar. While this template ensured that YWCs operated in a coherent manner, those that had operated to previous iterations, expressed frustration with the perceived loss of decision-making powers that resulted from the new TORs.

Procedural and institutional arrangements are a feature of capacity for joint action according to Emerson *et al.*, (2012). TORs were found to clarify roles and functions, focussing YWCs on actions. This clarity limits incongruence between actors on their assigned roles and responsibilities (Biddle, 2007). There was little ambiguity for YWC members, who appeared clear on the roles and responsibilities of the YWC remit, and of the procedures to be followed. These procedural arrangements appeared to focus the attention of those around the YWC table on joint action (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). From a learning viewpoint, maturity appeared to emerge as a key factor in collaboration dynamics. Those regions who were established longer appeared to be at a further stage of development, yet younger YWCs appeared fresher, with fewer legacy issues of retrospection on their functioning in previous iterations.

6.2.4 Summary – Answering RQ1 – How YWC Function

Consensus in decision-making is a feature of principled engagement (Emerson, 2018). Having key people in youth work at the same table was recognised as significant. A value was attached to the engagement of those around the table as people, rather than as members. For example, region recognised huge potential in this space where the ETB could meet youth organisations together. They told of a situation where a YWC subgroup was formed as a focus group, had three meetings and wrote up their views which then went on to influence ETB thinking.

Since the new TORs, the revised format is for the Youth Officers to give an update on their activities, on recent grant schemes, and on youth policy developments per the YWC agenda. It was suggested that the culture had changed, and that members were unsure why they were meeting, perhaps suggesting that attendance was a waste of time. The role of the YWC was questioned, relative to a recently established in-house ETB Co-Ordinating Committee for the UBU scheme, stressing that key providers and those that know about youth work on YWCs, sit on the committee with less power (the YWC). A second interview confirmed that this ETB Youth Work Co-Ordinating Group held the real power, and that this is where the decisions are made. In balance, the YWC was regarded as a sounding board that could make recommendations to ETB. Therefore, ETB executives were not making decisions in isolation, but in consultation with stakeholders such as the members of the YWC. While it was not directly involved in decision-making, it influenced the process.

YWC agenda items across the country appeared to be about practical matters. YWCs were described as *agents for policy change*, ensuring that people on the ground are not too far removed from policy. It was believed that YWCs are in operations mode and want practical change, and explained that YWCs were action oriented and focussed on matters like project staffing levels or a new roof, but importantly these matters are aligned to policy, such as *BOBF*. It was detailed how the YWC refocussed its attention to the UBU programme, where metrics play a large part in accountability (DPER, 2014). The connection between policy, implementation and accountability was interesting here.

6.3 RQ2: Perceptions of YWC Collaboration Dynamics, YWC Actions and Policy Impacts

Themes C, D and E as summarised in Table 6.2 below, support the answering of RQ2. Theme C provided rich data on the experiences of YWC dynamics, and informs both RQ1 and RQ2. Theme D considered YWC actions and Theme E considered how these actions had policy impacts.

6.3.1 Experiences Of Collaboration Dynamics

Collaboration dynamics are the enablers and barriers (O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2018) that aid or block the achievement of actions and impacts (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). RQ2 considers if these collaboration dynamics can 'propel collaborative actions' (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 722) with policy impacts. In Chapter 5 participants provided many examples of how dynamics 'propel collaborative actions' (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 722). According to Emerson (2018, p.3) dynamics 'foster desired actions and outcomes' (Emerson, 2018, p.3), and the interview data was found to support this suggestion, as summarised below in Table 6.2. For the purposes of the thesis study, actions are those YWC activities enabling young people's interests that are directly attributable to the collaboration (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012) and include: the involvement of young people; garnering support of local decision-makers and the effective identification of resources to achieve impacts. Impacts are the 'alterations' (Emerson *et al.*, 2012, p 18) in conditions on the ground, progressing change in relation to policy objectives. From the perspective of those interviewed, young people participate in decision-making, there are additional youth facilities, and youth work is more inclusive of previously socially excluded young people.

YWCs Performance		
Concept	Actions	Policy Impacts
Nvivo Code	D	E
Real World Manifestations in Stakeholder Experiences of YWCs Operationalised for this study	Collaborative Actions attributable to YWC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hearing the voices of young people - Acting on the voices of young people - Influencing Local decision-maker support for local youth interests (Local Political Representatives; CYPSCs; and ETBs) - Effective Use of Existing Resources - Securing Additional Resources 	Impacts as alterations in conditions for youth populations manifesting as changes on the ground : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young People Participate in Decision-Making - Youth Mental Health Facilities - Youth Unemployment Facilities - Sports and Recreation Facilities - Tackling Rural Youth Isolation - Youth Club Facilities - LGBTI+ Youth Work
	Power Relations	

Table 6.2: RQ2: Perceptions of YWC Performance

6.3.2 Hearing The Voices Of Young People – Perceptions Of Youth Involvement

As discussed in Chapter 2, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12) proscribes that children and young people with the right to have their views heard and acted upon in matters affecting them. In children and young persons' services decision-makers have a responsibility to ensure an individual young person's right to be heard on matters directly affecting their lives through space, voice, audience and influence (Lundy, 2007). Power is the capacity or potential to influence (Northouse, 2021), and there were many examples in the data where young people influenced the decisions of those in YWCs. This included creating connections for young people to be involved with decision-makers including local authority representatives, CYPSC teams and ETB teams. Some YWCs decided to fund initiatives, where the experiences of the young person appeared to be heard (Hart, 1992; Arnstein, 1969). These YWCs achieved change in their areas, informed and influenced by power-sharing with young people.

YWCs act as the mechanism to involve young people in decision-making that affects them. Power sharing on youth work affairs has potential here, where YWCs could offer a platform to bring young people and their services together. State agencies need to partner with the non-profit and community sector as a 'way of connecting to and learning from different voices within civil society' (Andrews and Entwistle, 2010, p. 684). It is acknowledged that it is extremely difficult to develop a system to hear the views of young people (Forde, 1995), and in particular, care must be taken on safeguarding their welfare while engaged. There seems to be a relatively unified view across the interview data on how YWCs successfully created spaces for young people to be heard, directly addressing youth work policy sentiments. As explained in Chapter 2, government youth policy is committed to including young people in decisions that affect their lives. The goal of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (DCYA, 2015b) is to ensure that children and young people have a voice across the five *BOBF* outcome areas.

The interview data also revealed how YWCs facilitated quality youth participation in decision-making. For example, it was highlighted that YWCs created a listening space which made young people feel more comfortable, and tokenistic approaches were avoided. In addition, there was an acknowledgement that experienced, paid people could lead to language, culture and habits that were strange for young people, but YWCs were found to be spaces that countered this. In one region, the YWC Vice-chair met regularly with young members, to seek a better, more meaningful understanding of their interests. A second success related to the

challenge of operating in an ETB area of two counties. That YWC decided to bring two young people from each county, so that they were not on their own. While no additional votes were allocated, these four young people acted as one voice and agreed on how the two assigned votes would be cast. It was encouraging to hear that when young people were not present at YWC meetings during the Covid-19 crisis, they were conspicuous by their absence and missed.

6.3.3 Acting On The Voices Of Young People – Influencing Local Decision-Makers

Young people are the experts in their own lives, and there was some evidence in the data that this principle was being followed by a number of YWCs in the way decisions were being made.. Effective communications give voice to those who will benefit or will be harmed by collaborative actions (Emerson, 2018). The most significant YWC impact for one region is way that they manage to get first-hand information from young people. In that region, there are two youth members, who join the YWC through the local CNN. They did not find meetings to be overwhelming in terms of formality or technical aspects, and as a result, people do not zone out, as they sometimes do at other types of meetings. They considered that the CNN youth representatives keep a fresh dynamic at the YWC table, allowing discussions to probe and understand further. The experience of trying to get young people onto the committee was slow, but in their opinion, they have succeeded in engaging young people who have adapted well to the digital circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. This sentiment was echoed by another region who claimed that hearing young people's views was significant for YWCs, and their YWC chair was particularly interested in this, suggesting that most young people are articulate and can express their point of view. On best practice learning, they proposed that in possible future models, there should be more than two young people on each YWC, mirroring what was reported in other ETB regions.

One region received information from young people about local projects, while at the same time took the opportunity to deliver YWC information to young people. The young voice was mentioned a number of times, where experiences of adult members listening to young people were recounted. Young people felt respected and informed on YWC decision-making. YWC spaces were described as welcoming of young people by adults, where young people instantly connected in the 'room of adults and strangers', and where every accommodation was made to avoid *us and them*. This sentiment was reenforced by the phrase that 'it was not the young people and the adults, just the committee', implying that collaboration was experienced, in the eyes of the young person. The voice of young people is at this table: the work of the

local Comhairle na nÓg (CNN) is presented on a regular basis; and YWC membership generated a genuine interest by adult YWC members in attending and valuing the local CNN.

6.3.4 Experiences of Actions And Impacts - Identifying Resources To Produce Better Policy Outcomes

In the literature, resources featured across a number of the concepts being studied (Donahue, 2004; Emerson, *et al.*, 2012; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015; Emerson, 2018). Overall, the interview data suggests that more collaborative YWC actions resulted in the effective use of limited resources in local areas, presenting ‘value for money’ (Howlett, *et al.*, 2009, p. 185) for state investment (DCYA, 2014b). Significantly, instances where perceived gaps were resourced in creative ways suggest that the YWC facilitates fiscal responsibility (Gatchair, 2016) by effectively pooling resources. The building of strong YWC member relationships is key and it was suggested that when these relationships were established, resources for new youth facilities followed. Substantiated examples of YWCs securing additional resources for their local area are described below, which is regarded as vital.

6.3.4.1 Additional Youth Mental Health Facilities

In one region, young people raised the issue of youth mental health with their YWC, and wanted to pilot a project to address this issue. Here YWC members warmly received the idea and small pieces of funding emerged from the various YWC agencies to support the pilot. This YWC youth member directly attributed the growth of this pilot to the support received from YWC peers.

6.3.4.2 Additional Youth Work Facilities

YWC involvement in the establishment of new UBU greenfield sites, was referenced. While acknowledging that UBU decision-making was an ETB executive function, some expressed the opinion that the YWC was part of the decision-making process. One region outlined how interesting consultation and conversations happened around the roll out of UBU. Here the perspective of providers identified that they were all on the same page, and shared similar experiences of the process. So, in this instance the YWC provided members with a space to discuss commonality during the change from former grant schemes to the new UBU scheme. Local oversight arrangements for a UBU greenfield site were placed ‘under the microscope’ at YWC meetings, where regular progress updates were given. Here the proposed budget of €120,000 would just be enough to pay for two new youth workers, so their YWC set about advocating for additional funds for the region. Again, this point was countered by the

acceptance that UBU was not of interest to all YWC members, and there was an effort not to take meetings hostage. Interestingly, no direct YWC role in UBU decisions were apparent in two regions, instead referring to the responsibility of their local ETB Youth Work Co-ordinating Group.

6.3.4.3 Additional Sports Facilities

One youth work organisation detailed their joint piece of work with the FAI. They detailed deeper consensus had evolved between different youth work organisations, who were sitting around the same YWC table, and facilitated youth work organisations to get to know each other better. A joint project resulted in a weeklong summer programme being co-delivered by the members of the YWC, where they pooled resources, staff teams, and targeted young people in collaboration. This positive action for young people would not have happened without the YWC collaboration, it was felt. They described as a ‘significant impact’ the oversight provided by YWCs, where more youth clubs benefitted from YWC sourced resources, including Youth Work Ireland, Scouts, FAI and Foróige. This demonstrates joined up thinking and sharing of resources (Emerson, 2012). These sentiments were supported by another youth work manager who also illustrated the intertwining of connections and relationships, resulting in additional LGBTI+ resources for an area. They concluded that the connections are the outcome, and while ‘they are not earthshattering, they serve a purpose’.

6.3.4.4 Tackling Rural Isolation

Rural transport and rural problems were highlighted in one region, which piqued the interest of a DCEDIY Principal Officer, again suggesting how YWC can directly influence national policy thinking. A forensic description of how the issue worked itself through the system was presented. The youth organisation raised its concern at the YWC meeting, who brought to the attention of the local ETB board, who contacted the ETBI and had it raised on the national policy agenda. It is interesting to note that this experience was shared in another region, where they ‘take everyone’s views, it’s not perfect but it works’. This suggests that national policy is not always top-down, but can be bottom-up through regional YWCs.

Another region sensed that they operated a good committee that impacted on local policy. From a practical aspect, they were involved in the grant process and other actions. It was also explained how during the Covid-19 crisis, discussions were held around specific conditions to facilitate the ‘nitty gritty’ of youth work, so that resources could trickle down to areas where they were most needed in youth work settings. A practical resource example, that

may seem small but was regarded as a significant impact was the installation of a shelter at a bus stop. A Youth Officer described how councillors took the young people's views on board, and effected change. Mental health was described as a priority in 2021 for young people, and one that they would focus resources and effort on in the future.

6.3.4.5 Youth Club Grants

A very powerful action for region concerned the agreement by YWC members to a local ETB process on the distribution of Youth Clubs Grants. Here, five local youth work organisations were invited to meet outside of the full YWC meetings, and to suggest the mechanics of how the grant process could best work. This process 'worked reasonably well' and was regarded as a good example of how YWCs worked collaboratively to achieve better outcomes for youth resource allocation. The learning for this ETB is that their local YWC has agreed to use a similar approach for future grant allocations, which gives purpose to the YWC. Using the conceptual framework more specifically to analyse this example, this process reduces conflict between the competing youth work organisations, addresses power relations, ensures that stakeholders influence policy, and promotes joined up thinking. Additionally, it demonstrates how YWC members build trust and work towards the best use of resources. The value of this example cannot be underestimated.

6.3.5 Summary – Answering RQ2 – Perceptions Of Dynamics, Actions And Policy Impacts

Blockages to resource allocation were addressed by YWCs. One Youth Officer recounted an example of how the administrative burden of short turn-around times on the processing of grant applications was addressed locally. Their YWC took the view that this practice was putting an unnecessary strain on ETBs, and youth work organisations, so they requested the ETBI to contact government officials about streamlining the grant application process. It is felt this is a good example of proactivity, where the YWC attempted to address a policy issue, and succeeded.

In the opinion of another, round table discussions give a chance to hear at a practical level issues and concerns in the region. They likened collaborative governance to 'inclusive democracy' and also to 'participative democracy' where efforts are made to hear everyone in the forum if the right people are there. Nohrstedt (2018) suggested that when more resources are made available to collaboration, then there are better actions and outcomes. It follows from the experiences of those interviewed that when new or existing resources are identified, youth

issues are progressed (Bianchi, *et al.*, 2020). These YWC actions have direct policy impacts, as when all stakeholders are given a voice, those voices move towards a shared understanding, which in turn leads to better outcomes and impacts on the ground.

In summary, actions and impacts appear to be related across the themes. Collaborative actions attributable to YWCs include: enabling young people's interests; garnering decision-maker support for local youth interests; effective use of existing resources; and securing additional resources. Impacts are classified as alterations in conditions for youth populations, and were found to manifest as changes on the ground including: young people's participation in decision-making; youth mental health facilities; youth unemployment facilities; sports and recreation facilities; rural youth work; and LGBTI+ youth work. Overall, it was found that YWC actions supported ETBs on their implementation of local policy, by collectively contributing to the identification of enhanced facilities, additional resources and better working between the youth work organisations.

These findings illustrate YWCs contribution to the national youth work policy agenda by facilitating spaces where young people and adults work collaboratively to raise young people's interests locally. In many cases, young people are found to be valued and heard, which is important given the principles of the *NYS* and the *National Youth Participation Strategy*. This finding was consistent across all regions. The findings and themes suggest that YWCs appear to bring local decision-makers together to identify resources and create spaces where volunteers and professional youth workers are respected, valued and supported. It was also found that when Government and stakeholders have an opportunity to work collaboratively, they achieve services and supports that are outcomes focussed, and informed by evidence.

6.4. RQ 1 and RQ2: Perceptions Of Power Relations

There was a significant unanticipated finding in relation to 'power'. While power relations were originally nested under the systems context (Concept A) of Emerson *et al.*, (2012) *Integrative Framework*, my thematic analysis of the YWC interview data placed it under each of the five concepts (Concepts A to E). It was not restricted to one concept, but actually present in all five. As such, it is represented in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 as a navy-coloured band across all the concepts. This finding was not anticipated, but is welcomed with interest, as discussed here.

As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 3, power is a feature of collaborative governance frameworks, and the YWC stakeholder experiences are considered through the lens

of this literature. Power imbalances between stakeholders are a commonly noted problem in collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008). In some cases, the data suggests that study participants were, to a degree, aware of such power issues. In functioning collaborative governance settings, trusting relationships are described as ‘both the lubricant and the glue’ (Bryson, *et al.*, 2006, p. 47) facilitating and holding the collaboration together where partners build trust by ‘sharing information and knowledge and demonstrating competency, good intentions, and follow through’ (Bryson, *et al.*, 2006, p. 48). Conversely, power imbalances threaten effective collaborations leading to mistrust. For example, funding relationships exist between some YWC members, where trust and power imbalances appear to be affecting these key relationships.

In functioning collaborative governance settings, a ceding of power is expected where classic hierarchical and managerial systems of governance give way to collaboration, partnership and networking. ‘Productive’ collaborative governance includes power and resource sharing (Shilbury *et al.*, 2016, p. 331). However, power dynamics are ‘fraught with institutional interests’, (Cornforth, *et al.*, 2018, p. 1) of collaborations between non-profit organisations and public authorities. This experience appears to be reflected in the interview data detailed earlier in Chapter 5.

The power of stakeholders, and their potential for exclusion or domination is a key concern in the data transcripts. Purdy (2012) offers a *Framework for Assessing Power in Collaborative Governance Processes* to examine how authority, resources, and discursive legitimacy can be used to influence stakeholders, design and the content of a collaborative process. Power can be overt and visible on the surface, including particular stakeholders in the process, or deployed more subtly such as the language used to present issues for discussion (Purdy, 2012). Using this framework, the data in the transcripts points to people being critical of power at work in some YWCs. The data reveals a number of interesting observations in relation to power relations in YWCs:

- YWCs in some regions have limited decision-making capacity. Power appears to be invested in the reformed governance structure, where ETBs act as local agents of DCEDIY;
- Power is associated by YWC members with decision-making and the allocation of resources. As YWCs have no dedicated budget or control over any resources, there

was a concern that power is invested elsewhere (e.g. ETB Co-Ordinating Committee);

- There is a concern that potential YWCs functions and roles are vested in the new ETB-controlled Co-Ordinating Committee. There was a concern over the appropriateness of this in-house committee overseeing its own work, and a missed opportunity for YWCs to holding local administration to account. The interview data indicates a certain degree of criticism of how YWCs are now regarded in some ETB areas. While there are examples of good practice, there is strong criticism of power at work. It is recognised that YWCs can achieve outcomes, however, there is a genuine concern that they are becoming side-lined by in-house ETB mechanisms that do not have the statutory footing of YWCs;
- ETBs appear to have emerged as the dominant power (Foucault, 1976) by default rather than by design. There is little evidence to suggest that the ETB seized such power, rather that it was invested in them by the *ETB Act (2013)*;
- There is a sense that YWCs have huge potential, as they have proven to produce outcomes for young people. There is a sense that they have little power to build on this potential, representing a perception of a lost opportunity of true collaborative governance practices;
- YWC TORs are not set locally. They appeared to have been provided by ETBI. As such, it was felt that local YWCs are not setting their own agenda, and are at times just going through the motions. This was not necessarily the experience in all regions, as there was clear evidence of local issues making their way on the YWC agenda;
- The powers of the former LVYCs have appeared not to have transferred to YWCs. In particular, decisions on the allocation of grants were the remit of LVYCs, but did not migrate with the formation of YWCs. There was a concern that such grant-making powers are invested elsewhere. Some regions sensed a degree of power distance (Hofstede, 1980) when LVYCs were replaced with YWCs;
- In many of the regions, leadership is provided by ETBs either through the appointment of the YWC Chairperson or through Youth Officer support. This is not necessarily regarded as a problem, as the ETB support is generally regarded as positive and valuable. The point worth noting is if leadership is ETB-led, where is the power to hold ETB to account, if needed;
- Most importantly, most regions recognised the potential at YWCs to cede power in favour of young people at the table. This was recognised as a true collaborative

governance benefit, including the voices of young people and, more significantly acting on those voices. In the experiences of those interviewed, YWC have proven to be productive, and effective, producing better policy outcomes in the context of enhanced facilities;

- Youth work professionals appear to have ceded power (Sercombe, 1998), in order to retain funding relationships. They do not question accountability to funders, and accept light-handed governance;

Overall, there is a fear that policy decisions are being controlled by those with a relatively limited understanding of youth work. Some participants complained that that power was moving away from practitioners on the ground, in favour of administration-laden, top-down bureaucratic mechanisms.

6.5 Chapter Conclusion

These key findings help to understand the ‘promise and challenge of collaborative governance’ (Vodden, 2015, p. 167), when considering YWC stakeholders' perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of such settings. The literature suggests that collaborative governance systems context (Concept A), drivers (Concept B), and dynamics (Concept C) stimulate conditions for actions (Concept D) and policy impacts (Concept E) (Donahue, 2004; Emerson, *et al.*, 2012; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015; Emerson, 2018). These concepts (A to E), in the thesis study’s conceptual framework, were employed in this chapter to interpret the participants’ lived experiences, and to understand the ‘anatomy of collaborative governance’ (Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2005, p 496), to see the links between dynamics, actions and policy impacts.

The analysis of the data suggests evidence of collaborative governance stimulating actions and policy impacts in YWCs when there was a marked sharing of power by those who historically held it, for example, funders and ETB Youth Officers. At the same time, others around the table, (including young people and youth work organisations) were able to actively participate in collaborative decision-making. This was not the case in all regions, with some referring to their role as tokenistic, and questioning whether the ceding of power had gone far enough in the direction of power-sharing. This experience appeared to depend on the personalities around the YWC table, the collaboration dynamics, and the stakes of the issues being decided upon.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The aim of the thesis study was to explore the nature of collaborative governance by enabling YWC stakeholders to discuss their experiences of function and decision-making processes, and how these might affect policy and policy development in the field of youth work in Ireland. This responds to a perceived gap in the body of knowledge about understanding ‘what is causing what’ (Bryson *et al.*, 2015, p. 13) in collaborative governance settings, and strives to ‘disentangle process and productivity performance’ (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015, p. 741). Youth Work Committees (YWC) can be viewed as a mode of collaborative governance. Two research questions were used to investigate how YWCs in Ireland function (RQ1) and how their collaborative actions produce local youth work policy impacts on the ground (RQ2). Sixteen interviews yielded valuable data on stakeholder perceptions of YWC dynamics, actions and policy impacts. The findings were presented in Chapter 5, and discussed in Chapter 6. This Chapter 7 presents: the conclusions drawn from to discussion of the interview findings to address the two research questions; the adaptations to the conceptual framework; the contribution to the literature; the recommendations for practice; and future research.

It is hoped that the thesis study findings have contributed to an increased understanding of youth work governance in Ireland, collaborative governance literature and practical learning for collaborative governance in a variety of settings beyond youth work. Collaborative governance is increasingly a feature of service provision in a range of different public and social services, not just in Ireland but internationally. The findings show that for those involved in the thesis study: Broadly speaking, YWCs function in an effective and efficient manner; collaboration dynamics create spaces where young people are heard, and acted upon; and collaborative governance in YWCs enables actions that produce policy impacts. Limitations were found in some regions however, where power was not equally shared among the YWC stakeholders, with some regions citing instances of inequitable funder-fundee power relationships. These findings contribute to the body of knowledge on collaborative governance

process and performance. My conceptual framework and coding templates have potential for a diverse academic and practice-based audience, and can be further adapted to suit a wide range of sites and sectors.

7.2 Collaborative Governance in YWCs

Figure 7.1 below illustrates how the finding themes align with my conceptual framework. This figure also demonstrates how these themes can be used to inform the two research questions. Themes A, B and C help to explain how YWCs function in Ireland (RQ1). Themes C, D and E provide valuable data to answer RQ2 concerning stakeholder perceptions of YWC dynamics, actions and policy impacts. It is important to note that Theme C (collaboration dynamics) acted as a bridge between the two research questions.

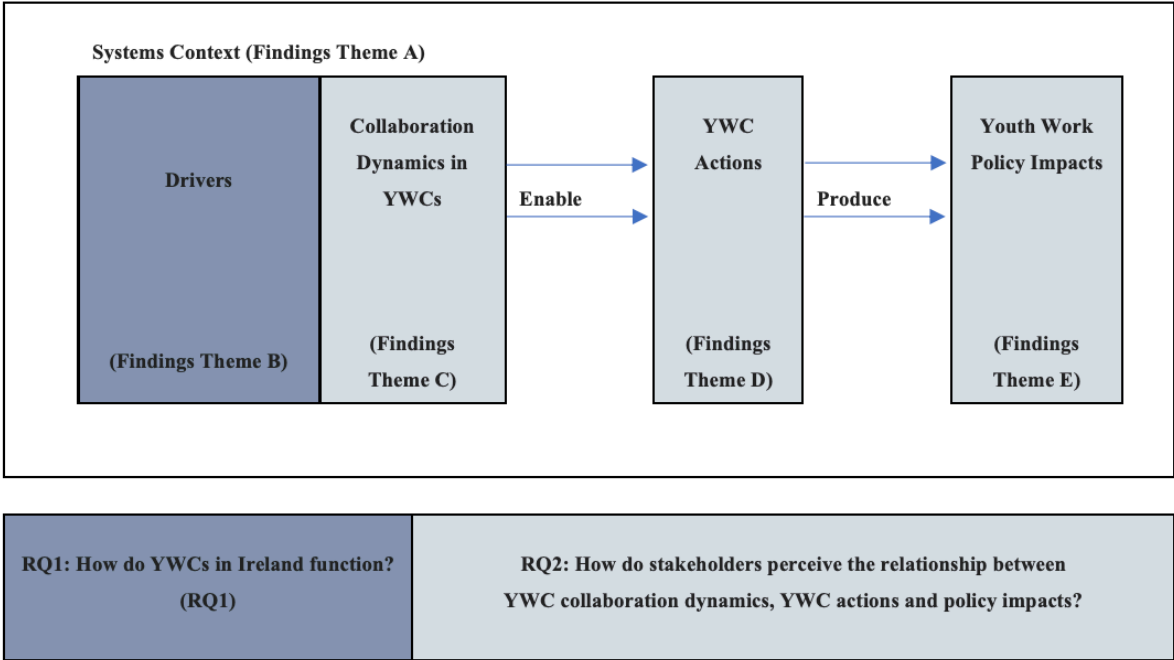


Figure 7.1: Alignment of Findings Themes To Conceptual Framework and RQs

These finding themes are discussed in the following sections under each question, in an order consistent with Chapters 5 and 6. The five themes A-E comprised interesting findings in relation to: The State and the governance of youth work; decision-making powers; YWC structures and collaboration dynamics; hearing and acting on the voices of young people; and policy impacts. Each of these five themes are expanded upon in the next two sections, furthering the understanding of: the structure and dynamics of YWCs; hearing and acting on the voices of young people; and the concept of power in such a collaborative governance setting.

7.3 RQ1: How YWCs Function

In the experiences of those interviewed, YWC were found to function in an efficient and effective manner. They were found to be well structured and operated in a professional way, largely through well-balanced leadership from YWC Chairpersons and ETB Youth Officers. There were a variety of opinions on the role of the State in the governance of Youth Work and decision-making powers in YWCs. These are considered in turn, under their corresponding theme.

7.3.1 The State And The Governance of Youth Work

There is evidence in the YWC interview data to support Gaynor's (2011) suggestion that the youth work sector has built an over-reliance on the State, and in particular State funding. The impact of Government's youth work policy reform was, not surprisingly, felt across the youth work sector, including YWC members who experienced its impending influence on their practices. These top-down policy reforms provide critical context for the significant changes in how ETBs, Youth Officers, and YWCs operate. Participant interviews detail how power relations and working relationships between YWC actors have changed as a result of these reforms. The roles, responsibilities and remits of these actors have altered, in response to a governance and oversight overhaul.

The data suggested that participants were often concerned about how the DCEDIY used the VFMPR to rationalise, reform and improve programmes and areas of policy responsibility. The effects of these reforms were at times viewed in negative terms. For example, in the past, youth work organisations had more discretion in how their funding was used in response to local youth needs. The enhanced ETBs roles for oversight of regional youth work, led to a sense of a loss of stakeholder autonomy in youth work organisations, in some regions.

The introduction of Youth Work Co-Ordination Committees in some regions suggests significant implications for the role of YWCs, undermining its impact and limiting its potential role in the regions. Participants in a number of regions reported a potential side-lining of the YWC with the sudden emergence of ETB Youth Work Co-Ordinating Committees, leaving little if no scope for YWCs. These in-house ETB structures are not provided for under statute, yet appear to have undue decision-making powers in regions. Some experiences of YWCs were viewed in the context of how the *Youth Work Act (2001)* and *ETB Act (2013)* defined their YWC role in the implementation youth work policy. They were clear that YWCs have a statutory

responsibility to keep ETBs informed of youth work affairs and to provide oversight of the youth work function in regions. The emergence of Youth Co-ordination Committees may jeopardise these statutory functions. There is an apparent risk to governance, transparency and accountability if the oversight function is made an internal function of ETBs. YWCs include all stakeholders in regional youth work, and have an important statutory oversight function that cannot be fulfilled by a *de-facto* internal ETB structure.

In the interview data, youth work policy reform appears to have led to a top-down approach to the governance of youth work. Policy emanates at government level, with commercial arrangements inviting youth work organisations to fulfil service requirements. In some cases, needs appear to be determined at ETB level, with little if no, input from YWCs. Again, this limits YWC potential and undermines grassroots input from the bottom-up. Critically, the wealth of shared youth work experiences around the YWC table is side-lined, with regional decisions being made by in-house Co-Ordination Committees.

7.3.2 YWC Structures and Function

The majority of research participants spoke positively of their YWC, but described their experiences in a variety of ways. Chapter 2's review of TORs, found a surprising level of consistency across the regions, with some areas effectively having the same document. On investigation, an ETBI template was found as the common source. Stakeholder experiences echoed these sentiments in interviews, detailing a high degree of consistency, yet flexibility in how TORs were interpreted locally. The interviews also suggest some tailoring of their priorities and agendas in response to local need, reflecting an encouraging degree of adaptability of these TORs, where regions were flexible in their response to emerging needs. The data and findings suggest that, on balance, TORs appeared to achieve consistency and standardisation, but with apparent costs to the regions: years of Local Voluntary Youth Committee (LVYC) experience seem to have been side-lined and local structures that had benefitted regions for many years, lost their autonomy. Power seemed to have moved from the stakeholders to ETBs.

The involvement of YWCs in the production of LYWPs appeared to vary from region to region. Some areas were found to have consulted extensively with YWCs, while YWCs in other regions were presented with a draft LYWP 'for comment'. The interview data chronicled a range of decision-making processes used to identify local need, prioritising areas of interest, joint efforts to resource youth initiatives and the policy impacts of these efforts. Generally, such LYWPs were found to foster an equality of opportunity for groups of young people, minorities

or those experiencing exclusion due to the rural / urban divide. The findings suggest that being local was a significant factor in these successes where regional YWC agendas and plans, based on local personalities and local needs. Such bottom-up approaches, including YWCs, benefitted regions by adding a local perspective to youth work policies that emanated from national government.

A YWC action that was discussed by a number of research participants relates to UBU greenfield sites. Initially, youth work projects migrated from existing funding schemes into UBU sites. These projects were well established and embedded in the community. Additional funding was announced, and ETBs initiated Calls for Service in new locations. These are referred to as the UBU greenfield site programme and was regarded in a number of regions as successful. Research participants described how a specifically designed APNASR tool was used to assess and rank the needs of ETB areas. Generally, this information was then used to prioritise needs in a transparent way.

YWCs' statutory functions and the ETB Boards' advisory role appears to be consistent. The majority of ETB areas in the research sample had well-functioning YWCs, where members genuinely acknowledged the benefits of enhanced trust, collaboration, information sharing and knowledge exchange. In relation to dynamics (Concept C), most research participants spoke positively of their experiences, with some regions establishing innovative, creative and entrepreneurial spaces for discussion, debate and mutual support. Regions that focussed on the needs of young people, rather than individual member needs or those of their organisation, tended to demonstrate collaborative growth. For example, in multi-county regions, working across the region on common interests such as LGBTI+ youth work, or rural youth work, added to this sense of collaboration, drawing regions away from geography-based decisions.

There was some consistency between the findings in Chapter 5 and the existing literature on YWCs, discussed in Chapter 2. This suggests that ETBI tended to minimise the role of YWCs, through the issuing of a standardised TOR template. Participants also suggested that a series of ETB Youth Work Co-ordinating Committees are emerging, which are taking up the role that are best fulfilled by YWCs. One suggestion was for YWCs to become more energised, to recover some lost power and influence. While it is acknowledged that a certain degree of autonomy is ceded when buying into a collaborative governance setting, the benefits of working on youth work actions collaboratively and in harmony with other actors warrant or justify it.

7.3.3 RQ1: In Summary

In summary, an analysis of the interview data found overall that YWCs tended to focus on achieving better policy outcomes for young people. Participant experiences detailed how YWCs produced comprehensive local youth work plans which were based on identified needs in their areas, and which prioritised YWC actions for a set period of time. In some regions, these actions appeared to be informed by evidence gleaned from assessment tools (APNASR). Most regions experienced good degrees of collaboration between members, and with external agencies such as CYPSC and local political representative. The YWC working environment was found to be positive, with leadership provided by chairpersons and a high quality of administrative support from skilled ETB Youth Officers.

Recommendation: YWC are recommended as positive, efficient and effective modes of collaborative governance with the potential to act as valuable pools of youth work experience and skillsets. (i) At times of great sectoral change, such settings can be used to build trust, remove fear and doubt, and enhance intelligence exchange. (ii) Stakeholders can be supported to unite on topics that are common across their regions, moving away from parochialism and focussing on inter-regional needs of young people. (iii) YWCs collaborative focus should be promoted, as their inclusion of seldom heard voices places them in a unique position in future governance arrangements. These findings are transferrable to other youth work settings and beyond.

7.4 RQ2: Stakeholder perceptions of YWC collaboration dynamics, YWC actions and policy impacts

7.4.1 Collaboration Dynamics

Collaboration dynamics appeared as a strong, concurrent theme across the regions where collaborative governance was working well. Overall, it enabled trust and lasting relationship-building between YWC members. An interesting phenomenon that emerged from the analysis of the data was how collaborative governance appeared to provide the ‘lubricant and the glue’ (Bryson, *et al.*, 2006, p. 47) that bonded YWC team members in common purposes. This was achieved by the way in which YWCs used information sharing mechanisms, the drive, trust, vision and a set of shared values from which to operate. These qualities are normally associated with teams working in the same organisation, but the dynamics in YWCs appear to facilitate the

coming together of members from a number of organisations, who are committed to working together. Another key role of YWCs was to share information with stakeholders, creating a space for members to exchange knowledge and ideas between themselves, and with their peers. Almost all regions suggested how collaboration dynamics led to more effective use of existing resource and secured additional resources for their local area, including Capital Grants, Covid-19 Grants and LGBTI+ Grants.

Recommendation: As the findings suggest that YWCs produce quality outcomes for young people when youth work organisations work together, this approach is recommended as a mode of collaborative governance for similar youth work settings. Research participants offered in great detail their experiences of the virtues of how collaboration dynamics stimulated environments that enabled adults and young people to achieve policy outcomes collaboratively.

7.4.2 Hearing The Voices Of Young People

Importantly, many YWCs were found to be examples of good practice of power sharing with young people. This included examples where young people benefitted from access to the decision-making processes which affected service provision in this field. Young people often felt welcome, heard, and listened to. In some contexts, YWC structures encouraged the engagement of young people to increase their participation in decision-making. Where this happened, a space of mutual respect was created with a healthy intergenerational exchange of views.

In some cases research participants suggested that more articulate, confident or privileged young people found it easier to participate. To ensure the inclusion of the views of less skilled young people, special steps were taken in one region to pair young people to support each other at these YWC meetings. This learning is valuable, and could be adopted universally across YWCs. Another region made YWCs more inclusive by removing barriers and blockages, for example, technical language was avoided to facilitate more youth-friendly spaces. Again, this learning could be used nationally across YWCs. There is some evidence that participation at times is adult controlled, tokenistic and tick box consultation. There is also some suggestion that agendas are limited to what adults think is appropriate in terms of young people's participation. The learning here is for discussions to be youth-led, perhaps adopting the suggestion that agendas be agreed in advance between chairs/ co-chairs, Youth Officers, and young people.

Overall however, these processes tended to create a space where young people and decision-makers met in a safe, transparent and meaningful way. While a balance of power with young people can be difficult to achieve, the collaboration in YWCs often created dynamics where adults listened to the views of young people, and equally where young people heard what adults were saying.

Recommendation: As national and international best practice calls for young people to be involved in decisions that affect them, collaborative governance approaches adopted by YWCs are recommended. Learning from regions included, but is not limited to: Chairpersons and Youth Officers meeting and agreeing agendas with young people in advance of meetings; pairing young people, rather than expecting them to attend with adults only; youth-friendly, non-technical language; youth-appropriate induction; accompanying young people with youth workers (who would not have a vote) with a supportive role for the young person.

7.4.3 Acting On The Voices Of Young People - Experiences And Policy Impacts

In the field of youth work, listening is important, but acting on what is heard is more important. Research participants identified a number of situations that explain how collaborative efforts resulted in a number of policy impacts relating to young people's participation in decision-making, mental health facilities, sport and recreation facilities, youth unemployment facilities, rural youth work, and services for LGBTI+ youth work. These resulted in enhanced facilities for young people, and were perceived as 'attributable to collaboration' (Emerson, 2012) leading to 'results on the ground' (Innes and Booher, 1999, p. 419), where more optimum youth work policy outcomes occur from the collaboration, than if there was individual working.

Recommendation: As actions speak louder than words, particular efforts must be made at YWC meetings and other youth-related for a to ensure that hearing youth voices translates to collaborative action.

7.4.4 Achieving Additional Resources And Facilities

Some regions used discretionary organisational budgets to progress collaborative priorities. Members jointly agreed on priority actions when the YWC did not have its own specific budget line. This demonstrated considerable learning in relation to the literature gap, as regions who focussed on funding-led decisions did not appear to be as effective as those who identified actions first, and then tried to identify resources to meet these. Those regions stuck

in the past notion of having a separate YWC budget, remained frustrated. Conversely, those collaborative environments that identified needs, and then concentrated on identifying resources appeared to enable actions and policy impacts.

Recommendation: Despite having no resources or budgets of their own, YWCs who first started with youth-identified needs propelled collaborative actions through the marshalling of existing member resources. Such modes of collaborative governance are recommended to achieve Value For Money (VFM), where resources and energies are pooled. VFM measurement tools with huge administrative burden contribute nothing to such efficacies or efficiencies.

7.4.5 Perceptions of Power in YWCs

The literature has highlighted how the Irish State has become a more dominant player in the forming and design of youth work policy, with a sense in some regions that there was little consultation with those providing youth work on the ground. The interview findings suggest frustration and ambiguity about YWC decision-making powers. There was a distinct sense of futility amongst those perceiving their loss of power in the policy reform process, compared to those who could be perceived as being in positions of power. A number of interview passages suggest a significant change in YWC decision-making powers. Whilst some of the challenges of power status are understandable as historically the organisational roles would have been hierarchical and operating collaboratively has proven to be a challenge for some stakeholders.

Some ETBs interpreted their new governance roles in a top-down way, further distancing YWC stakeholders from decision-making powers. The interviews suggest a growing power distance (Hofstede, 1980) in each of regions. Managerialism and top-down approaches ‘privilege evidence-based practice, value for money approaches and the delivery of prescribed outcomes’ (Kiely and Meade, 2018, p. 17), and are an unnatural fit for those in youth work. Such approaches run the risk of focussing youth work organisations on ‘the master’s bidding’ (Mackie and McGinley (2012), leaving less latitude for emerging youth-identified needs. Different types of commissioning and tendering of youth services has introduced a sense of competition and mistrust, and there are significant untapped opportunities for YWCs to progress policy agendas for youth work, to offset this commercialism. These windows of collaborative opportunity (Cornforth *et al.*, 2015; Lober, 1997) could be opened by YWCs to place youth work at the centre of local and national policy agendas (Kingdon, 1995).

Recommendation: YWC are found to be effective modes of collaborative governance and are recommended in situations where decision-making powers are to be shared between dominant parties, and marginalised stakeholders.

7.4.6 RQ2: In Summary

In summary, YWCs facilitate the localisation of national youth work policies. In the policy review in Chapter 2, youth work policies were broadly directed by national strategies and frameworks. For example, funding streams and opportunities centred around meeting the policy objectives of the *NYS* or *BOBF*. YWCs provided the opportunity to localise national policy, and tailor it to a regional need. YWCs have been shown to be an excellent mechanism for working out ways of pooling local resources, and participants' experiences reflect this. For example, one region actioned an LGBTI+ agenda, in response to local need. Another region highlighted rural isolation, and in another, traveller specific responses were highlighted as a specific need in the that region. Therefore, while national policy was about targeted or universal implementation, YWC could respond with regionally tailored resources for a more defined equality of opportunity.

7.5 My Conceptual Framework and Methodology

My conceptual framework demonstrates how the *Integrative Framework* can be adapted for collaborative governance settings such as the YWC. It is argued that theories of collaborative governance can be applied to a range of settings to better understand how they operate, and if their actions can have policy impacts. Gaps were identified in the theory, and the *Integrative Framework* was adapted to inform my thesis study's conceptual framework, so it could act as a lens to understand complex collaborative governance concepts in the YWC setting. It was also used to interpret stakeholder's perceptions of these.

In light of the findings presented in Chapter 5, and discussed in Chapter 6, an adapted version of my conceptual framework is presented below in Figure 7.2. The thesis study analysed how YWC actions produce policy impacts, and the conceptual framework in Chapter 1 proposed an adaptation of Emerson, *et al.*, (2012) that could be used to explore this. The conceptual framework was examined in the context of YWC documentation (Chapter 2) and the research findings (Chapter 5). This process helped identify what aspects of the concepts are supported by this evidence, or where they are hidden and more nuanced.

7.5.1 Adaptations To The Conceptual Framework

An adapted version of the concepts can be re-imagined, as illustrated in Figure 7.2 below. The original version is in black, grey and blue, with suggested adaptations in light of the thesis study findings in green:

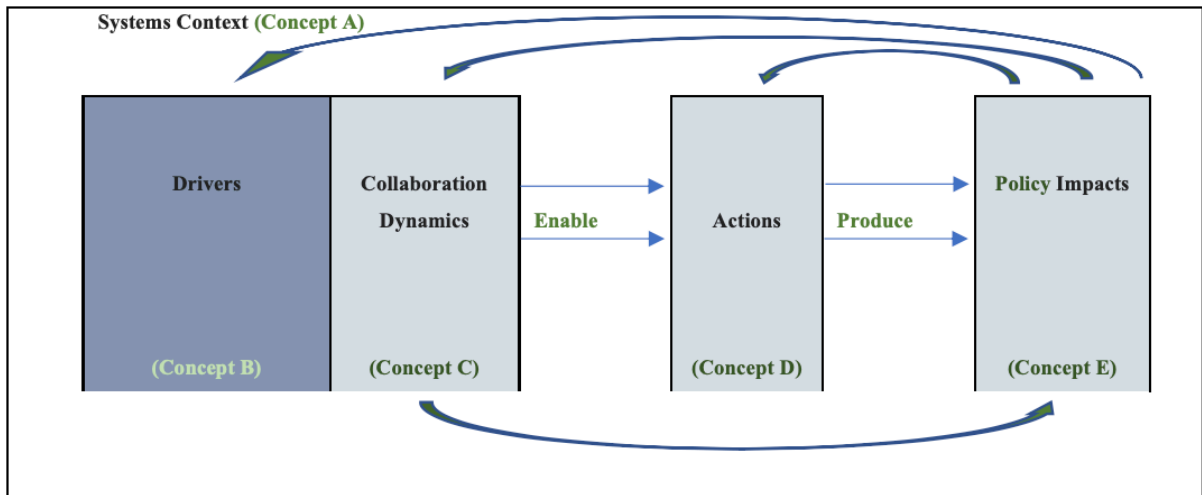


Figure 7.2: Conceptual Framework with Adaptations Shown in Green

The adapted framework presented in above in Figure 7.2 is re-designed to take account of the thesis study findings, suggesting a degree of consensus on the key issues in collaborative governance. The application of the model in the YWC setting highlighted the scale of work required to determine system context (Concept A), as detailed in the YWC document review of Chapter 2. The investment of time in a comprehensive review of the literature was worth it. The model also assessed the significance of factors such as leadership and interdependence, as key drivers (Concept B). The three collaboration dynamics highlighted the significance of regional collaboration, strategic planning, the use of assessment tools, trust, relationships, networking and procedures (Concept C). Identifying collaborative actions (Concept D) and impacts (Concept E) in tandem rather than in sequence, was found to be useful. Based on this learning, the following adaptations are suggested for future studies employing this framework:

1. The terms used to explain the relationship between the concepts are enable and produce, where:
 - dynamics detail what is occurring in the collaboration and include enablers and barriers; and
 - produce is the term used to explain the relationship between actions and impacts.

While these adaptations may at first appear modest, there is a rationale for the continued use of the terms *enable* and *produce* by students of collaborative governance in future

qualitative research. Emerson's use of the phrase "leads to" is considered to suggest emphatic causation, so it has been replaced with the word 'enables', as employed in studies such as O'Boyle and Shilbury (2018). The use of the word 'produce' is introduced as a way of connecting to Emerson and Nabatchi's (2015) work on the evaluation of collaborative governance settings. It is suggested that future studies adapt their models to include *enables* as an expression of the relationship between the Concepts C and D, and *produces* as an expression of the relationship between the Concepts D and E.

2. Replacing the term 'impacts' with the term 'policy impacts' is explained in terms of the change in circumstances that occurred on the ground for the target population, relative to the intended policy. For example, in the thesis study these are changes that resulted from YWC actions for the youth population, relative to *BOBF*, the *NYS*, or a *LYWP*. It was the change created by the YWC actions that had an impact for young people. The rationale for this adaptation is related to challenges experienced during the thesis study to distinguish between *actions* and *impacts*. Viewing policy impacts of actions, in terms of change, alteration, improvement, or value added was a critical development in the final stages of the thesis study.
3. Labelling the concepts with letters, as suggested in Nagel and Neef (1979) was helpful in the discussion, and text. A to E was used throughout, which was valuable when discussing relationships.
4. Stronger relationships between concepts than those credited originally were found. Examples of these are identified with green arrows in the adapted model above, where dynamics have direct policy impacts. A link between C and E is suggested, as the dynamics themselves were found to fulfil some policy outcomes. For example, youth work policy is committed to collaboration between youth organisations and to youth participation in decision-making, and both were present in YWC dynamics.
5. A cyclical and reinforcing nature in the relationship was found between policy impacts and the other four concepts. Here, as policy developed over time, the relationship between the other concepts changed too. It is suggested that inflection be introduced to show how learning and developments feed into policy implementation. Elements of a continuous improvement cycle such as the *Plan, Do, Check, Act Framework* (Deming, 1982) or *Plan, Do, Review Model* (HighScope, 2020) may have something to contribute here.
6. The conceptual framework cannot be viewed in isolation, it should be placed in the real-world context of the thesis study site. This requires operationalisation of the

concepts of interest, where expected manifestations are listed relative to those concepts. A significant development in the thesis study was the creation and design of the *Coding Schema Tool for NVivo Analysis* (Appendix G) and the *Operationalisation of Concepts and Data Analysis Coding Theme Template* (presented in Chapter 4, Table 4.5). While the conceptual framework was closely informed by the Emerson *et al.*, (2012) *Integrative Framework*, these new analysis tools contribute to the literature, as they demonstrate how theory can be set in the realm of practice. These two bespoke tools compliment the conceptual framework, as they are used to suggest real world manifestations of how Concepts A to E might appear in the collaborative governance setting being explored. Future researchers are welcome to adapt these two new tools to their own collaborative governance setting.

These adaptations flag areas for future research, as presented in Section 7.8. The conceptual framework was an effective model in the exploration of relationships between the concepts of interest (A to E), but in light of the findings some adaptations are suggested. These would help with the interpretation of interview data, where perceptions of the linkages between concepts were found to be complex.

7.5.2 Retrospective on the Research Method

A heuristic approach has significantly contributed to my understanding of this field of policy and practice. Reflective practice is used continuously in youth work, so qualitative research methods were particularly appropriate, and became second nature as the thesis study developed. At the outset, both theoretical and professional problems were identified, and the research process has resolved some of these.

At a time of pandemic, there was considerable knowledge gained in the use of digital research methods using Zoom, MS Teams and Skype which can be more readily considered for this type of research. The digital interviewing process worked well, facilitating quality interaction with the research population. The opportunity to watch back video footage of interviews enhanced the quality of the transcripts and their analysis. In face-to-face interviews there are opportunities to read non-verbal communications, and it was initially feared that these nuances could be lost using digital methods. However, in digital meetings, professionals have recently grown used to staring directly into the camera, which presented the researcher with unique face-on recordings to interpret gestures and facial expressions. Standard recordings in

‘live’ interviews may not facilitate this. So, while Covid-19 restrictions initially presented research challenges, the use of digital interviewing should be viewed positively.

7.6 Contribution To The Literature And Implications For Theory

While this study focussed on YWCs in Ireland, the findings, methodologies and conceptual framework may be relevant to a more diverse audience. The review of the literature highlighted a range of theory on collaborative governance theory that can be applied to the thesis study of localised policy implementation. There is evidence to support collaborative governance in decision-making implementation at national and local policy levels (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). It is argued that successful implementation cannot be achieved solely through ministerial or departmental efforts, but requires the input of other actors such as central government, local authorities, the private sector, civil society groups (Gatchair, 2016) and community and voluntary groups, which is particularly noteworthy in this YWC thesis study.

7.6.1 Themes Addressing RQ1 On The Functioning Of YWCs

The findings present insight for the wider knowledge base, where collaborative governance models were useful in the examination of processes. The dynamics between members contributed to effectiveness. Themes included that: TORs are generally consistent across regions; regional collaboration is present in YWCs; YWCs enable relationships and trust; YWCs enable knowledge and information exchange; and YWCs require leadership. The findings suggested that services are outcomes-focussed, informed by evidence, and act in young people's best interest to meet the intended principles of the NYS. The systems and processes in place to facilitate these dynamics included the use of TORs and regional collaboration. Trust, as mentioned by Shilbury *et al.*, 2016, Ansell and Gash (2008), Bryson *et al.*, (2006) and Emerson *et al.*, (2012), tends to contribute to stronger relationships. Knowledge (Bryson, *et al.*, 2006; Primmer, *et al.*, 2015; Douglas, *et al.*, 2020) and information exchange (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015) were regular themes in the thesis study, indicating their significant contribution to collaborative working. Where there was genuine information and knowledge exchange, there was a greater sense of collaboration, conversely in some regions YWC members were merely presented with information, and no input, there was a feeling of less participation in decision-making.

The importance of leadership was highlighted in a number of studies by Kossman *et al.*, (2016), Bryson *et al.* (2015) and O’Boyle and Shilbury (2018), and again in the YWC thesis study. The concept of leadership in YWCs appeared more ambiguous as a theme, both in terms

of the strength of the leader and style employed. Some findings suggest that leadership was embedded in the role of the chairperson, while others identified Youth Officers as the driving force. One participant was despondent, suggesting that there was little leadership at times. This range of views in part reflects the YWC's stage of development, and in part illustrates the challenge that collaboration governance poses, consistent with the experiences of knowledge exchange, and decision-making.

The findings suggest that YWCs tended to focus on achieving better policy outcomes for young people through LYWPs and needs assessments, such as the UBU APNASR tool. These strongly reflect the dynamics of collaborative governance. YWCs generally concentrate on achieving better policy outcomes for young people, where services are outcomes-focussed and informed by evidence to meet the intended principles of the *NYS*. These shared commitments and shared theories of change (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012) contribute heavily to the direction of the YWCs sampled.

7.6.2 Themes Addressing RQ2 On Perceptions of YWCs' Performance:

There are some parallels between the findings of empirical research reviewed in Chapter 3, and experiences where stakeholders were 'directly engaged in decision-making' (Ansell and Gash, 2008, p. 546). There was strong evidence that young people are valued and heard at YWCs and that members act in the best interest of young people, again reflecting the principles of national youth work policy agendas. Hearing young people directly, through their CNN youth representatives or through their youth work organisation, meets at least two policy outcomes where young people are valued and heard, and where services act in young people's best interest. If young people are electing youth representatives to their CNN, and those youth representatives are being listened to, then youth work resources can be targeted in an evidence-informed way. As reviewed in the literature, stakeholder interaction and engagement is viewed to be important by Ulibarri (2019) and (Emerson, 2018); this was also found to be the case in the thesis study. Ansell and Gash (2008) view stakeholder participation as comprising citizens as individuals, organised groups, public agencies and NGOs. YWCs were found generally to engage young people across the country, and there was considerable learning in these findings, which are reflected later in the implications for governance in youth work section 7.5.2.

The findings highlighted that there was local decision-maker support for youth interests highlighted by young people at YWCs, reflecting Nohrstedt (2018) sentiments of joint decision-making. Local decision-makers such as local government and other stakeholders

generally worked collaboratively in YWCs to achieve positive levels of services and supports, affirming that government and stakeholders work collaboratively to achieve impacts. Professionals and volunteers are also found to be respected, valued and supported. However, based on experiences in some of the regions studied, some stakeholders felt quite disconnected from the decision-making processes. While a strong connection was felt in some regions, this was not the case in all regions.

Some experiences focused on identifying resources, both those internal and external to the YWC, particularly capital grants, Covid-19 grants, LGBTI+ grants and UBU funding streams. YWCs often identified resources to produce better policy outcomes around the identification of new and existing funding resources that produce better policy outcomes for young people. While YWCs had no independent budget lines, additional resources were identified either through discretionary spends of YWC members, or from other sources. Here, it was established that additional supports are produced in response to demonstrated need and that government and stakeholders work collaboratively to achieve more effective services and supports. The review of the youth work policies in Chapter 2 identified government commitment to additional resources for young people, and these funding streams confirmed this. This reflected Emerson *et al.*'s (2012) discussion about the importance of accessing external resources in these contexts. More interestingly, research participants spoke of novel ways in which existing resources were used and reallocated. These resources were found to be redirected in response to needs identified at YWCs. These windows of opportunity enabled YWC actors to co-ordinate and allocate resources for the collaboration as a whole (Cornforth, *et al.*, 2018).

Stakeholder experiences contradict some of the arguments made in the wider literature research on the use of the framework to evaluate collaborative governance settings. The literature review identifies evaluating a collaborative governance setting as problematic. It is suggested that these YWC findings contribute to the knowledge base of collaborative governance literature, as it illustrated examples of actions and policy impacts in response to national youth work policy agendas. Research participants detailed examples of how YWC actions produced policy impacts, adding to the productivity debate (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015; Douglas, *et al.*, 2020). Firstly, youth participation in decision-making, meeting the inclusion strategies of national policy. Secondly, collaborative efforts often produced enhanced facilities for young people with examples in the area of mental health, unemployment, sports and recreation, rural youth work and LGBTI+ youth work. The data suggests that these actions

had policy impacts in line with the *NYS*, *BOBF*, *UBU* and other youth related policies. Hence it was found that YWC actions (Concept D) are linked to youth work policy impacts (Concept E) including: that services are outcomes-focussed and informed by evidence; government and stakeholders work collaboratively to achieve more effective services; and an integration of equality in youth facilities. This provides some data on experiences directly linking collaborative governance processes to performance. Successes in the regions studied can be scaled up (Sørensen *et al.*, 2015) and replicated across the country.

The thesis study makes both theoretical and practical contributions in addressing the perceived gap in the literature. It informs the debate on collaborative governance process, performance, and the enabling factors. Collaboration dynamics enable actions that are likely to alter conditions on the ground in response to intended policy outcomes. According to Flick (2018a) external validity in qualitative research concerns whether the study results apply to situations outside of the situation being researched. While the findings of the thesis study cannot be extrapolated to other contexts given the qualitative design, they add to the empirical research base providing stakeholder experiences of actions that produce outcomes. The thesis study suggests that under collaborative governance conditions, as suggested above, actions produce policy impacts (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012) on the ground (Innes and Booher, 1999). The contribution is therefore that such an adapted model can be used to evaluate other collaborative governance settings.

7.7 Implications For Youth Work Governance Practice

On a very practical level, the findings of this research have supported the researcher in his professional practice. The findings of the thesis study have already yielded a significant win in supporting me to have rural youth work named as a strategic theme of our local regional YWC. The issue of Rural Youth Work was discussed in a number of the interviews, and it was recounted how the matter was progressed at both regional and national level. This learning has supported the researcher to further the policy development of Rural Youth Work in his WWETB region. Firstly, the local YWC has adopted rural youth work as a strategic development in the area. Secondly, a local action team has been established as a working group of the YWC. There is now local commitment. While these are localised impacts of the thesis study, they suggest how it can be used to support the development of YWCs on a practical level.

According to McMahon (2018), the emphasis on value for money and the evaluation of youth programmes based on performance-related governance and output targets locates youth

work as a site of ‘neoliberal governmentality’ (McMahon, 2018, p vii) through the production of various problematic representations of youth work, attempting to shift youth work from one of a human service, into a newer economic and market domain. McMahon makes worthy observations about the direction of youth work policy. This VFM policy agenda puts at risk fundamental youth work principles, forcing business models into a practice realm that has been historically committed to the pursuit of social justice through universal social and youth services. YWCs can potentially protect youth work values, defend principles and influence youth work policy. For example, YWC collaborative governance settings were generally found to realise policy impacts, particularly in relation to the *NYS*. YWCs created spaces where young people and adults could meet safely, to exchange views and ideas. Young people were found to be valued and heard. On working relationships, professionals and volunteers on YWCs reported feeling respected, valued and supported while at meetings, and outside of meetings. YWC actions were shown to act in the best interest of young people across a range of initiatives providing opportunities for government, state agencies, community groups and voluntary youth work organisations to work in a culture of trust, mutual understanding and shared commitment (Emerson, 2018).

Some participants were found to be cautious about their involvement in genuine levels of decision-making. The findings exposed a degree of irritation on decision-making, with long-established YWCs members lamenting the loss of previously held decision-making functions. They question their role beyond improved communications, information sharing, report giving and trust building. There is no suggestion that these are not worthy attributes of a well-functioning YWC, just that a decision-making function is associated with power and influence in the area of resource allocation. Those ETB areas with ‘younger’ YWCs that were established more recently, may not have experienced such loss of power issues.

It is my view that the full potential of YWCs has not yet been recognised:

- (1) they offer a unique cross-sectoral, multi-agency, and inter-generational space that truly reflects the views and interests of stakeholders;
- (2) they can be employed as a sounding board for the identification of future youth needs and resources;
- (3) collaboration tends to be a default principle in youth work practice. It is almost second nature to those on the ground in youth work, but the sharing of power by those previously at the decision-making level was found to be challenging;

- (4) placing young people at the centre of YWC actions was found to produce effective policy impacts, where member organisations achieve ‘better’ policy outcomes by working together than they would if acting independently;
- (5) YWC mechanisms to engage young people in decision-making offer unique opportunities to meet participation policies (for example through the Lundy model). These include the pairing of young people to support each other at YWC meetings, avoidance of technical language to facilitate more youth-friendly spaces, and for agendas to be agreed in advance between chairs/ co-chairs, Youth Officers, and young people;
- (6) there is an opportunity for power to be more equitably shared at YWCs, where stakeholders have the potential to participate more fully in decision-making, resource-sharing and problem-solving;
- (7) there is an opportunity for YWCs to take a more leading role in the governance and oversight of youth work in Ireland. It was identified in Chapter 2 that YWCs are in a particularly strong position to assume this leadership role, as they are established under statute in the *ETB Act (2013)*. This statutory footing offers ETBs significant opportunities in the areas of collaborative governance, partnership, power-sharing and networking for the greater good of young people in their regions;
- (8) YWCs are youth work specific and offer potential to protect youth work values and defend youth work principles.

In summary, the significance of these findings support the learning at a time of youth work policy reform. The thesis study concludes that collaborative governance builds resilience in relationships between actors, so that they have a robust model of practice to work through such changes in context and reform. While the youth work sector is experiencing a period of policy, legislative and socio-economic change, potential opportunities for YWCs may exist given that there is a clearer understanding of how collaborative governance enables actions and policy impacts.

7.8 Recommendations for Further Study

The findings of the thesis study have revealed a number of opportunities for future study of collaborative governance in youth work, and similar settings:

7.8.1 A Study of Collaborative Policymaking

The thesis study examined stakeholders' experiences of process and performance in collaborative governance settings, and a contribution to the body of knowledge has been made in this regard. The review in Chapter 3 identified literature on collaborative governance at the policy design stage (Ansell and Torfing, 2014) and it is recommended that further study of collaborative policymaking (Ansell, *et al.*, 2017), could be the focus of future research. From the findings of the YWC thesis study, stakeholder engagement was identified as key. However, the thesis study was conducted in the context of legislation that was already enacted, and policy that had been set. For collaborative governance settings, it is recommended that a greater understanding of stakeholder involvement at earlier stages of policy development would benefit from further research. The thesis study has considered the role of YWCs in the local implementation of youth work policy, and it is recommended that further research is required to provide a greater understanding of how stakeholders can contribute to policymaking and policy design.

7.8.2 The Collaborative Governance Case Databank

The findings of the thesis study could be developed further to meet the criteria for *The Collaborative Governance Case Databank* (Douglas *et al.*, 2020). While interviews were used in the thesis study, there is potential to employ other methods in future research on collaborative governance in the youth sector.

7.8.3 A Case Study

A case study or mixed methods approach could be employed to provide a broader understanding of a YWC or a CYPSC in one particular region. There is learning from the literature review in Chapter 3 where such an approach was used by Purdy (2012), Vodden (2015), Kossman (2016), Ulibarri (2015) Voets (2015) and Ulibarri (2019). Building on the finding of the YWC thesis study, one YWC region, could be chosen for more in depth case study, having the potential to compliment and develop some of the findings of this YWC thesis study.

7.8.4 Development of Chapter 2 of the Thesis Study

The YWC documentation and materials gathered from across the country informed the context of the thesis study, presented in Chapter 2. This learning was used to inform the interview schedule and the direction of interviews in particular regions. These materials proved to be valuable in their own right, and have the potential to be developed as a data source in a further study.

7.9 Dissemination

As dissemination is the writing up and publication of the research (Harding, 2019), the findings will be published, and recommendations shared with academic peers, and the youth work sector. These will be made available to stakeholders, youth work bodies and those with an interest in collaborative governance. As a token of appreciation for supporting the thesis study, copies will be presented to the researcher's employer, Ferns Diocesan Youth Service CLG (FDYS), ETBs, YWC members, Youth Work Ireland, ETBI and the DCEDIY. During interview it was encouraging to hear YWC stakeholders request copies of the thesis study, suggesting there is established interest in the findings and/or recommendations.

7.10 Thesis Study Reflections and Conclusions

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first qualitative research involving YWCs. As such, it is the first time that a collaborative governance framework has been used as a lens to understand YWCs as a mode of collaborative governance. The thesis study set out to contribute to the literature on the functioning and performance of collaborative governance settings, using a conceptual framework designed to explore the relationships between core Concepts A to E. Concepts A, B and C can stimulate a collaborative governance environment for Concepts D and E to happen. Therefore, when dominant stakeholders agree to cede individual power, collaboration dynamics enable marginalised voices, build mutual trust, identify actions and achieve policy outcomes.

The literature review in Chapter 3 is a systematic review of collaborative governance theory at present. It stands on its own merits, and is valuable for future study. My conceptual framework has aided the exploration of collaborative governance in a real-world scenario. It can be adopted and adapted to other similar settings. The synthesis of YWC materials offers valuable background and for those seeking to develop and promote YWCs as a mode of collaborative governance.

While some regional differences existed in the data, it is concluded that YWCs function in a consistent and effective manner, addressing RQ1. It is also concluded that collaboration dynamics enabled actions that produced policy impacts on the ground for young people (RQ2). The thesis study makes both theoretical and practical contributions that address the perceived gap in the literature. Studying YWC processes inside the black box of youth work policy implementation informs the debate on collaborative governance process and

performance, and identifies enabling factors. The patterns in the data appear unified on how, under certain circumstances, collaborative actions produce policy impacts. YWCs have effected local change, related to the national youth work policies such as *BOBF*, the *NYS*, *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making*, or the *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020*. Young people's interests were enabled by YWCs and decision-makers. Resources were identified to produce better outcomes for young people, producing enhanced facilities for young people in the areas of youth mental health, unemployment, sports and recreation, rural youth work and LGBTI+ youth work. These were 'attributable' to the actions of the collaboration (Emerson, *et al.*, 2012). A rational culture of policy implementation has generally emerged in YWCs across the regions, with decisions based on identifying local interests, agreeing priorities, identifying resources, extending youth facilities and more effective working relationships. It is perhaps unsurprising that such an approach has emerged in YWCs given the emphasis on logic modelling across the youth work sector (DCYA, 2019).

The thesis study has traced collaborative governance from process to performance (Ulibarri, 2015). The collaborative toolbox has been unpacked (Scott and Thomas, 2017). It was found that YWCs facilitated meeting peers, working with peers and collaborating with peers. YWCs were described as spaces where there were valuable opportunities to interact with other youth work organisations, young people, ETB officials and local representatives. While system context was largely discussed in Chapter 2, additional context was provided in the interviews relating to youth work legislation and policy and the socio-economic circumstances across the regions. Leadership was highlighted as the key driver that emerged in the interview data. Data relating to the three collaboration dynamics of principled engagement, shared motivation and capacity for joint action were presented. LYWPs, APNASRs, the enabling of trust, information exchange and consistent TORs all emerged as important dynamic themes.

Process has been disentangled from performance (Thomas and Perry, 2006), with the identification of YWC actions and policy impacts. Collaborative actions attributable to the YWC included the involvement of young people, the garnering of local support for young people's interests, and resources. Impacts are interpreted in the thesis study as the alterations in conditions for youth populations manifesting as changes on the ground. Here stakeholders reflected experiences of situations where young people were empowered by YWCs to participate in decision-making. The interviews also detailed examples of YWC actions producing facilities relating to youth mental health, youth unemployment, sports and recreation,

rural youth work and LGBTI+ work, meeting needs identified by young people, and addressing wicked problems (Weymouth and Hatz-Karp (1995) experienced by them.

From a youth work governance perspective, the thesis study also concludes that collaboration enhances effective oversight of limited resources, producing value for money. It suggests that collaborative governance settings' actions produce policy impacts, however this is enhanced when there is clarity in decision-making roles, genuine information and knowledge exchange, and an evidence-based approach to resource allocation. The thesis study bases these conclusions on qualitative data, at a time when sectoral focus and pressures continue to centre around gathering quantitative data. It is further concluded that at present the YWC potential is not fully appreciated, and it is recommended that the thesis study's learning on how collaborative governance can propel actions and impacts, is replicated in other youth work governance settings.

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Appendix A - List of Concepts and Symbols

Symbol (Nvivo Code)	Concept
A	System Context
B	Drivers
C	Collaboration Dynamics
D	YWC Actions
E	Policy Impacts

Adapted from Nagel and Neef (1979)

Appendix B - Literature Research Log

Source	Search Term	Result	Research Note
Google Scholar	Policy Implementation AND Process OR Theory OR Framework	3.6 million	Regarded as too general.
‘Related Searches’ in Google Scholar	Policy Implementation AND Bureaucracy OR Sabatier OR Street Level OR Top-down Approach	6 relevant sources identified	Van Meter (1975) Matland (1995) TB Smith (1973) O’Toole Junior (2000) Mazmanian and Sabatier (1980)
Snowballing of these identified sources			
Scopus	‘Policy Implementation’ AND ‘Collaborative Governance’	28	Broad studies relating to forests, estuaries, environmental and pollution. However, three were examined in detail. Vento (2019) re Finland; Mali (2018) re mental health
Scopus	‘Youth Work’ AND policy	163	Relevant finds included: De St Croix (2018)
Scopus	‘Youth Work’ AND policy AND Ireland	6	Brady <i>et al.</i> , (2018), Kiely and Meade (2018), Brady (2016) Bradford (2010), Gibson (2010)
One Search (UCD)	Policy Implementation Theory Refined to last 3 years. Refined to Journals	708,168 138,485 124,130	Discounted as unrealistic research terms. However, did identify <u>recent</u> material including Howlett (2019), Fernandez <i>et</i>

			<i>al.</i> , (2019), various references to Implementation Black Box, Theory of Change and collaborative governance, Moullin <i>et al.</i> , (2019)
One Search (UCD)	Policy Implementation AND Collaboration	325, 076	Discounted as unrealistic research terms. However, did identify Hill and Hupe (2014).
Scopus	Collaborative Policy Making AND Implementation	36	All full text reviewed and 3 used.
Scopus	'Collaborative Governance' Restricted to Articles Restricted to Social Sciences	539	
Scopus	'Collaborative Governance' AND Policy Restricted to Articles Restricted to Social Sciences	261	
Scopus	'Collaborative Governance' AND Policy AND Implementation Restricted to Articles Restricted to Social Sciences	143	
Scopus	'Collaborative Governance' AND Implementation Restricted to Articles Restricted to Social Sciences	27	
One Search (UCD)	'Collaborative Governance'		4 particularly relevant journals by Bingham, Purdy & Jones, Howlet, Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh
Web of Science	'Collaborative Governance'	984	5 relevant and used

Web of Science	‘Collaborative Governance’ AND Policy Implementation	99	8 relevant and used
Google Scholar UCD One Search	‘Collaborative Governance’ AND ‘Youth’	4	1 relevant empirical study of Integrated Youth Care, Belgium (Voets, <i>et al.</i> , 2015)
Google Scholar UCD One Search	‘Collaborative Governance Regime’ OR ‘CGR’	3319	2 additional studies found Ulibarri and Stout
Google Scholar UCD One Search	‘Collaborative Governance Regime’ OR ‘CGR’ AND ‘Empirical’ Refined to last 5 years	2210/ 6 used	Empirical Studies reviewed detailed and considered for Research Approach here: (Shilbury <i>et al.</i> , 2016) (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015) (Biddle, 2017) (Avoyan <i>et al.</i> , 2017) (Tonelli <i>et al.</i> , 2018) (O’Boyle & Shilbury, 2018)
Google Scholar UCD One Search	‘Policy Analysis’ or ‘Policy Implementation Analysis’	4 reviewed 2 used	(Nagel & Neef, 1979) (Palumbo & Calista, 1990)
Google Scholar UCD One Search Scopus IPA Research Data Bases	‘Measurement’ OR ‘Performance’ and ‘Policy’ OR ‘Policy Implementation’ ‘Research Design’ or ‘Mixed Methods Design’ ‘Case Study’ OR ‘Case Study Design’ ‘Interviewing’	32 Reviewed Used to inform research agenda and case study research design	(Maxwell, 2009) (Yin, 2018) (Mertens, 2018) (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015) (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) (Matthews & Ross, 2010)

			(Flick, 2018a) (Flick, 2018b) (Flick, 2018c)
	Concept mapping (Novak & Cañas, 2006, p. 2), and mind mapping (Buzan, 2002) relating actions and policy impacts in cg settings to measurement and productivity		(Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015) (O'Boyle & Shilbury, 2018) (Voets, <i>et al.</i> , 2015) and other empirical studies on productivity
Google Scholar	'Governance Theory' + Ireland, Governance + 'Stakeholder Theory', 'Conformance and Performance'		(Brennan, 2010) (Tricker, 1984)
Google Scholar	'Qualitative Inquiry' or 'Qualitative Research'		(Creswell and Poth, 2018; Silverman, 2017; Flick, 2009; Barbour, 2014; Aurini, <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Patton, 2002)
UCD One Search			
Scopus	'Interpretivism' or 'interpretive approach'		(Crabtree and Miller, 1993; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2011; Crotty, 1998; Denscombe, 2003; Silverman, 2020)
	'Dance of Interpretation' (Crabtree and Miller, 1993)		
	'Heuristic Inquiry'		(Douglas and Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990)
	'Reflexivity'		(Koch & Harrington, 1998)
	'Naturalistic Inquiry'		(Lincoln and Guba, 1985)
Google Scholar	'Narrative Methods'		Kohler Riessman, (2008)
UCD One Search			
Google Scholar	'Thematic Analysis'		(Braun and Clarke, 2006).
UCD One Search			

Appendix C - Research Participant Invitation

Thank you for supporting my research on Youth Work Committee actions in the local implementation of youth work policy, I am happy to provide you with the following:

- A Research Participant Information Sheet to inform you of the purpose of my research so that you can reflect in advance on your experiences of Youth Work Committee actions. It also details the steps being taken to protect your rights and your information, so that you are informed to give your consent.
- A written consent form
- The digital interview will take place 25 June (1130)

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

[Learn more](#) | [Meeting options](#)

I ask you to review this documentation and please sign and return the consent form to me. I look forward to chatting with you tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Kieran Donohoe,

087 236 8831,

kieran.donohoe@ucdconnect.ie

Appendix D - Research Participant Sheet



Research Participant Information Sheet

Youth Work Committee actions in the local implementation of youth work policy	
Principal Investigator:	Kieran James Donohoe BA (Hons) MA DBS (IT)
UCD Supervisor/ IPA Supervisor	Professor Jim Campbell/ Dr Mark Callanan
UCD School/Department:	CSSL Graduate School / Doctor of Governance
Date of Study Completion	November 2021
Academic Qualification to be granted	Doctor of Governance
Introduction	
<p>My name is Kieran Donohoe and I am conducting this research as part of my Doctorate in Governance with the Institute of Public Administration and University College Dublin.</p> <p>Thank you for agreeing to participate. This research participant information sheet has been prepared to inform you of the purpose of my research so that you can reflect on <u>your experiences of Youth Work Committee actions</u>, in advance of our interview. It also details the steps being taken to protect your rights and your information, so that you are informed to give your consent. If additional information would be useful, please contact me and I would be happy to discuss further:</p> <p>Kieran Donohoe, 087 236 8831. Kieran.donohoe@ucdconnect.ie</p>	
What is the Purpose of this research?	
<p>The aim of my research is to contribute to the development of <i>Collaborative Governance</i> theory, by examining <i>Actions, Impacts</i> and Productivity of Youth Work Committees (YWC) in Education and Training Boards in the Republic of Ireland.</p> <p>I want to understand how YWC members <u>work together to facilitate local conditions to enable the implementation of youth work policy</u></p>	
Why have you been invited to participate in this interview?	
<p>You have been invited to take part in this 50 - 60 minutes interview because you have valuable experiences that may help me better understand collaborative governance in Youth Work Committees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In your experience, what is going on in YWCs? How can YWC actions enable or inhibit the local implementation of youth work policy? 	
How will your information and data be managed during this research?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Your data will be stored digitally and will be password protected, per my Data Management Plan (DMP). As the principal investigator, I am the custodian of the research data and am responsible for its management, including security, storage and retention. It is intended that you will provide data relating to YWC Actions, not personal data. However, while I will not be asking any questions that require or would likely result in personal data being provided, if you do provide personal data, I will ensure that it is handled correctly and not identify you in any public materials (including my thesis). Your permission to record the digital session (i.e. Microsoft Teams) is included in the enclosed Consent Form. The recording and the storage of materials is in accordance with the UCD Research Data Management Policy. It is noted that data relates to YWC actions, not to personal data. After our interview, notes will be transcribed, your experiences will be coded and the data analysed. This remains anonymous and confidential and your participation in the research should not be discernible, unless you expressly request so. Every effort is made to anonymise data, but it may still be possible to identify participants. As such, there is a tick box on the informed consent form to show that participants understand this. While every effort is made to anonymise data, due to the public roles of some research participants it may be possible to identify you from contextual data. Therefore, you have the option to waive your anonymity. 	



The Interview?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the start of the interview, I will confirm that I hold a copy of your signed consent. 2. I will ask for your oral consent, as part of my commitment to continuous informed consent. 3. For context, I will ask some demographic details including your qualifications, years of YWC experience, relevant skills as identified by you etc. 4. I will ask you to reflect on your experiences of the local YWC. I will ask you how YWCs work, and what they do (see 'Actions' list below). 5. I will ask you to describe in detail particular situations where YWCs may have enabled the local implementation of youth work policy (see 'Impacts' list below). 6. I will explore what enabled your YWC to take these actions and what barriers may have been in place. 7. You will have opportunities to ask questions throughout the interview, as the format is semi-structured.
Change of Mind
<p>I am committed to continuous informed consent, and I confirm that you have the right to change your mind and withdraw your consent at any time. This may be done at recruitment or in the course of the interview. Should you become uncomfortable at any stage, you can choose to pause, stop and reschedule or withdraw at any stage.</p>

RESEARCH CONCEPTS AND TERMS

What is Collaborative Governance?
<p>Collaborative Governance generally refers to public/state and non-state actors working to achieve common goals or tasks (Shilbury <i>et al.</i>, 2016, p. 331) and is based on a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-orientated and deliberate (Ansell & Gash, 2008). In the case of YWCs, members work to achieve goals relating to the implementation of youth work policy.</p>
What <i>Actions</i> are being examined?
<p>Collaborative governance leads to <i>actions</i> that shape the overall quality and extent to which the setting is developed and effective (Emerson <i>et al.</i>, 2012). In the case of YWCs, these actions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting to the region additional youth work funding or resources. • Facilitating additional youth facilities in the region. • Addressing a resource gap or challenge in the local region. • Garnering support from communities, government departments or other partners for youth work initiatives in the region. • Heightening awareness of youth work initiatives in the community and the region. • Staff teams of YWC members working together more effectively. • Management teams in YWC members working together more effectively. • Contributing to the enactment of youth work policy including the Youth Work Act (2001), National Youth Strategy and Better Outcomes Brighter Future (BOBF) etc. • Monitoring the implementation of Youth Work Act (2001), National Youth Strategy, BOBF etc. • Enforcing compliance with Youth Work Act (2001), National Youth Strategy, BOBF etc.
What <i>Impacts</i> are being examined?
<p>The above listed Actions have Impacts on the ground. In the case of YWCs, these impacts may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of barriers or blockages, resulting in the facilitation of youth work on the ground. • Reduced conflict between members of YWCs, that facilitate youth work on the ground • Enhanced dynamics and power balances in YWCs, that facilitate youth work on the ground. • Enhanced frameworks between YWC members, that facilitate the delivery of youth work on the ground. • More joined up thinking among members the YWCs, that facilitate youth work on the ground. • Additional youth work resources on the ground. • Improvements to the socio-economic or cultural health & diversity of young people in the region. • Enhanced trust between members of YWCs, that facilitate youth work on the ground.

Appendix E - Participant Consent Form



Research Participant Consent Form for Digital Interviews

Research Participant Name: _____

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Research Participant Information Sheet provided. ☐
2. I have considered the information, and have asked and received answers to any questions asked. ☐
3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. ☐
4. I am free to withdraw, without giving any reason, and without prejudice or sanction, up until the point at which my interview will be included in the data analysis. ☐
5. I understand that the researcher, Kieran Donohoe, will hold securely all information and data collected. ☐
6. I understand that I will not be identified as a participant in the study. ☐
7. I understand that while every effort has been made to anonymise data, it may still be possible to identify me from contextual information. ☐
8. I give Kieran Donohoe permission to hold relevant personal data relating to this study. ☐
9. I understand that my interview will be audio-recorded, transcribed and noted. I give my express consent for this. ☐

I consent to taking part in Kieran Donohoe's research. ☐

Research Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Kieran Donohoe Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F - Semi-structured interview



Semi Structured Interview Schedule

Youth Work Committee actions in the local implementation of youth work policy	
Principal Investigator:	Kieran James Donohoe BA (Hons) MA DBS
UCD Supervisor/ IPA Supervisor	Professor Jim Campbell/ Dr Mark Callanan
UCD School/Department:	CSSL Graduate School / Doctor of Governance
Date of Study Completion	November 2021
Academic Qualification to be granted	Doctor of Governance

This is a guide containing open and closed questions where “cluster groups of questions” (Gray, 2018, p391) are used to explore the main themes of the conceptual framework.

Their sequencing will be ordered depending on the flow of the semi structured interview. As such, I will improvise (Arksey and Knight, 1999) using my judgment.

Conceptual Framework	Q No.	Interview Questions	Data or Evidence to address RQ (NVivo Analysis Node)
	1	Preliminaries	
		<p>The aim of my research is to contribute to the development of Collaborative Governance theory, by examining Actions, Impacts and Productivity of Youth Work Committees (YWC) in Education and Training Boards in the Republic of Ireland.</p> <p>The purpose of this interview is to get information/ data to answer my Research Questions on <u>Youth Work Committee actions in the local implementation of youth work policy.</u></p> <p>The data will be analysed to better understand how collaborative governance works in Youth Work Committees (YWCs). In particular, I am exploring the relationship between what is going on in YWCs and how their actions may relate (or not) to the local implementation of Youth Work Policy.</p> <p>I want to understand how YWC members work together to facilitate local conditions for effective actions relating to youth work policy.</p> <p>This data is for my personal use, in my UCD research.</p>	
	1.1	May I confirm your permission to record this interview?	



A. System Context	1.2	All data is managed in accordance with UCD policies. Ethical approval has been granted. Comfort: Can you see/ hear me ok? Are you comfortable? Are there any distractions, or do you need a few minutes before we start?	
	2	Building rapport/ Trust	
		My aim is to “remain objective, professional and detached yet relaxed and friendly” (Gray, 2018, p388) during this interview. It will take about 1 hour. You may stop or withdraw at any time, although I do not expect this will be necessary as questions are not personal. They are your views and opinions of how the YWC operates. Your details are confidential, but please remember that particulars may identify you so it is hard to guarantee anonymity.	
	2.1	Do you have any questions for me, at this stage?	
	3	Demographics	
	3.1	In which ETB region is your YWC?	From list of regions
	3.2	Relating to Youth Work, what is your overall role in the region?	From list of classifications
	3.3	Please describe this.	From list of classifications
	3.4	What is your role in the YWC?	From a list of classifications including Chair, Secretary, ETB Official, member.
	3.5	Why were you invited onto the YWC?	From a list of classifications including: Political Nominee, Youth Work Organisation Rep, Youth Rep, Official etc
	3.6	For how long have you been a YWC member?	Answer in number of years
	4	YWC Context	
	4.1	Do you have any info on the forming of YWC's in your area?	From list of classifications including Legislation, policy, socioeconomic etc.

		Question specific to this region from Document Analysis:	
	4.2	Where an ETB has more than one county of focus, do you recognise any change in dynamic in your YWC? If so, how?	Yes/ No
	4.3	Is there a difference between rural and urban areas?	Yes/ No
	5	What is Going on in your YWC?	
	5.1	What is your experience of how the YWC operates?	Open question, with probing to get discussion going.
B. Drivers	5.2	Why do you participate in YWC?	From list of classifications including <u>incentives</u> , <u>interdependence</u> , <u>leadership</u> , <u>opportunities</u> , <u>fear of uncertainty</u> etc
C. Collaboration Dynamics	5.3	Please describe the relationship between YWC members.	Action by the whole is proven to be more effective than acting alone.
	5.4	How do YWC members work together in their meetings or in their dealings with each other?	<p>From list of (CJA) classifications including <u>the sharing of knowledge</u>, <u>leadership</u>, <u>setting of procedures</u>, <u>resources</u> etc.</p> <p>From list of (PE) classifications including <u>communications</u>, <u>conflict resolution</u>, <u>consensus in decision making</u>, <u>learning as a group or individually</u>, <u>shared theory of change</u>, <u>strategy for collective purpose</u> etc.</p> <p>From list of (SM) classifications including <u>mutual understanding</u>, <u>shared commitment or bond</u>, <u>trust</u> etc.</p> <p>Trust? Motivation?</p>

	6	What are the Youth Work Policy Impacts of YWC?	
D. Actions	6.1	Can you think of any examples of <u>YWC actions</u> that have had an impact on the implementation of youth work policy? Prompt suggestion from this list => => => =>	From list of classifications including <u>additional resources</u> , <u>facilities</u> , <u>gaps</u> , <u>garnering support</u> , <u>heightening awareness</u> , <u>more effective working between YWC orgs</u> , <u>Youth Work Policy</u> etc.
E. Impacts	6.2	How have these actions had an impact on the implementation of youth work policy? Is there a relationship between YWC actions and youth work policy impacts?	From list of classifications including <u>impacts on barriers and blockages</u> , <u>conflict</u> , <u>dynamics</u> , <u>power balances</u> , <u>frameworks between YWC Members</u> , <u>joined up thinking</u> , <u>resources</u> , <u>socio-economic or cultural health</u> , <u>trust</u> , (USE BOBF or Nat Youth Strategy here).
	6.3	In the YWC, what enabled these impacts?	
	6.4	In the YWC, were there gaps, barriers or blockages to achieving better policy impacts?	
	6.5	Have you experienced a YWC success that is directly attributable to collaboration between YWC members?	
	6.6	Would this have happened without the YWC? For example, could a YWC member have achieved this on their own? Prompt suggestion from this list => => => =>	
	7	Closing Interview	
	7.1.	Check that all Questions are addressed.	
	7.2	Check if additional data is required to address the Research Questions	
	7.3	Restate that the aim of the research. Is there any further data that may evidence a relationship?	
	7.4	Do you have any questions for me?	
	7.5	Do you have any further comments?	
	7.6	Thank you for your valuable observations today	
	7.7	My next steps: - Finish interviewing other research participants - Analyse the data - Submit Thesis by November 2021	
	8	Noting of Casual Remarks	
		The interview is closing, the research participant may note valuable points.	

Appendix G - Coding Schema - NVivo Analysis

Coding Schema*

Code: I/v _____

Interview YWC _____ ETB Area (name) Transcript

(Notes taken during interview)

Emergent Theme	NVivo Classification	Data Gathered
Context	A. From list of classifications including Legislation, policy, socioeconomic etc.	
Drivers	B. From list of classifications including incentives, interdependence, leadership, opportunities, fear of uncertainty etc	
Dynamics	C. Action by the whole is proven to be more effective than acting alone. From list of (CJA) classifications including the sharing of knowledge, leadership, setting of procedures, resources etc. From list of (PE) classifications including communications, conflict resolution, consensus in decision making, learning as a group or individually, shared theory of change, strategy for collective purpose etc. From list of (SM) classifications including mutual understanding,	<u>General Dynamic</u> <u>Setting of Procedures</u> <u>Agenda</u> <u>Membership</u> <u>The Role</u>

	<p>shared commitment or bond, trust etc.</p> <p>Trust? Motivation?</p>	
Actions	<p>D. Classifications include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enabling young people's interests - Garnering decision-maker support for local youth interests - Identifying resources - Producing additional youth facilities. - Heightening awareness/ - Educating stakeholders - Local Adaptation of Youth Work Policy <p>Action by the whole may be more effective than acting alone.</p>	<p><u>Resources</u></p> <p><u>Enhanced Services</u></p> <p><u>Meeting Policy Outcomes</u></p>
Impacts	<p>E.</p> <p>YWC impacts manifest as changes on the ground that respond to policy calls in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth Work Act (2001) - The National Policy Framework for Children and Youth (BOBF) - The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020 - Value for Money and Policy Review - National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015 – 2020 <p>Impacts are alterations in conditions for the youth population</p>	

	that resulted from YWC actions.	
	Compare and contrast	
Potential for YWC		
Other Data of Note		

* This 'coding schema' highlights data themes to understand the phenomena (Rapley, 2016)

Appendix H - HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT/ EXTENSION

v :January 2021

HR4: Amendment/Extension Request Form

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE AMENDMENT/EXTENSION REQUEST FORM

If you wish to make an amendment, request an extension or notify the committee of a new researcher for an approved study you will need to complete this form and submit to the relevant Human Research Ethics Committee

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION								
1) Research Ethics Reference Number:		HS-E-21-60-Donohoe-Donoghue Exemption						
2) Title of study:	Youth Work Committee actions in the local implementation of youth work policy							
3) Name (s) of Principal Investigator/ Applicant:		Kieran James Donohoe BA (Hons) MA DBS (IT)						
4) Name of UCD Supervisor (if applicable)		Professor Jim Campbell						
5) UCD School/Department:		CSSL Graduate School / Doctor of Governance Programme						
6) Date UCD Ethics Approval Granted:		15 April 2021						
7) Date of Study Completion		November 2021						
8) Academic Qualification Granted/to be granted (if applicable)		Doctor of Governance						
9) Have you requested any amendments or extensions before from UCD HREC?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes please provide details below</i>						
a)	Please confirm how many amendments and extensions you have requested	0						
b)	Please provide the dates of each amendment and/or extension approval you have received	N/A						
10) What is this request for?		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Amendment?</td> <td>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section B below</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Extension?</td> <td>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section C below</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>New Researcher?</td> <td>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section D below</i></td> </tr> </table>	Amendment?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section B below</i>	Extension?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section C below</i>	New Researcher?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section D below</i>
Amendment?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section B below</i>							
Extension?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section C below</i>							
New Researcher?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please complete Section D below</i>							
11) Does your study involve face-to-face interactions with participants? If yes, then please complete the Human Research Ethics Risk Assessment and follow the instructions in the template: https://www.ucd.ie/sirc/coronavirus/returntocampusworking/		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						



Office of Research Ethics, Roebuck Castle, Belfield Dublin 4 / hrec@ucd.ie

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SECTION B: PROPOSED AMENDMENT	
1)	<p>Please provide details of the amendment you wish to make</p> <p>At my supervision meeting 11 May 2021, Professor Jim Campbell suggested that I contact you to advise of the following in relation to my ethics exemption:</p> <p>That my mixed methods research approach should include additional in-depth interviews (e.g. increased from 8 to 15 in the sample), and that I not continue with the planned survey. The element relating to my document analysis of YWC material, remains unchanged.</p> <p>I hope that this meets with your approval.</p>
2)	<p>Does this amendment alter the original approved study?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>If yes, please provide details below</i></p>
3)	<p>Were there any unexpected adverse events during your study?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Please provide brief details but note you will need to submit an Unexpected-Adverse Events Report (HR5) with this form.</p> <p><i>If yes, please provide details below</i></p>
4)	<p>Are you revising your supporting documents to reflect this amendment?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><i>If yes, please provide a revised original supporting document template for this study, that is, you should use the version that was originally approved. All revisions must be made clear in red ink.</i></p> <p>Please do not use track changes in any supporting documents</p>	

SECTION C: PROPOSED EXTENSION	
1)	<p>Please provide details of the proposed extension and why it is necessary</p> <p>While I am making the above application in Section B, I feel it prudent and efficient to make an application for a proposed extension at the same time. The rationale includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may now be 15 interviews instead of the original 8 • I had originally planned on my mixed methods happening concurrently, my supervisors recommended that I switch to sequential (i.e. Doc Review First, then interviews)
2)	<p>Please provide a proposed end date for the study</p> <p>Completion of Data Collection to end on 31 August 2021</p> <p><i>Please note that there is a limit as to how many extensions any one study can have</i></p>
3)	<p>Any Other Comments?</p> <p>N/A</p>

SECTION D: NEW RESEARCHER	
1)	<p>Please provide the name of the new researcher (s) and provide any comments for noting</p> <p>N/A</p>

Please ensure that you submit this Report as a word doc **by email only** to hrec@ucd.ie



Office of Research Ethics, Roebuck Castle, Belfield Dublin 4 / hrec@ucd.ie

Appendix I - National Youth Strategy Principles



National Youth Strategy 2015–2020 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015)

Appendix J - YWC Documentation Sources

YWC Documentation was source from the following different ETB areas:

Donegal ETB Area

Kildare & Wicklow ETB Area

Kilkenny & Carlow ETB Area

Laois & Offaly ETB Area

Limerick & Clare ETB Area

Longford and Westmeath ETB Area

Louth & Monaghan ETB Area

Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim ETB Area

Waterford & Wexford ETB Area.

Appendix K - Dedication

The thesis study is dedicated to the two Mary Donohoes in my life, who supported me throughout, and cut the cake celebrating the Viva Voce award of my DGov.



(Celebrating Viva Voce award of my DGov on 19 July 2022)