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Australian youth work education: Curriculum renewal and a model for sustainability for niche professions

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Australian youth work education: Curriculum renewal and a model for sustainability for niche professions

Final Report 2014

Edith Cowan University (ECU)

Australian Catholic University (ACU), Royal Melbourne Institution of
Technology University (RMIT) and Victoria University (VU)

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www.altc-youthwork.org

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List of acronyms commonly used

- ACU - Australian Catholic University
- ALTC - Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd.
- AYAC - Australian Youth Affairs Coalition
- ATAR - Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
- AYWEN - Australian Youth Workers Education Network
- CAE - College of Advanced Education
- ECU - Edith Cowan University
- HE - Higher education
- OLT - Office for Learning and Teaching
- RPL - Recognition of Prior Learning
- SAYW - South Australia Youth Workers
- VET - Vocational Education and Training
- VU - Victoria University
- YW - Youth work

Executive summary

The four main purposes of this project were to:

- Renew the curriculum for Australian youth work professional education, applying the approach to curriculum outlined by Barnett and Coate (2005)
- Investigate the potential for cross-institutional sharing of courseware and educational materials that will facilitate future benchmarking, inter-sectoral and inter-professional pathways, and international qualification recognition
- Promote long-term change through the establishment of a cross-sectoral youth work educators network
- Suggest starting points for a sustainability model for other niche professions.

The project used Barnett and Coate's (2005) curriculum framework to guide curriculum renewal and used information gathered from multiple stakeholders, including employers, students, professional associations, youth work peak policy organisations, youth work staff, course leaders and leaders in international youth work education, to anticipate future needs and inform the curriculum re-development process. The project team included representatives of all Australian youth work professional degree programmes in public universities.

The main outcomes of the project were:

- Curriculum renewal in youth work at the partner institutions. The speed and extent of change varied between institutions, influenced in part by other dynamics within and beyond each institution, and in part by the perceived need to change.
- Shared resources available in the project's website www.altc-youthwork.org that can be used to support and continue renewal processes.
- Formation of an international youth work educators' forum to share resources internationally, to discuss international trends in youth work and youth work education, and to collaborate on youth work education projects across national boundaries, (see website).
- Acknowledgement that the partner institutions in this project had well-established, centrally-supported Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways, but that transition between VET and Higher Education (HE) requires students to transfer between different conceptual learning paradigms, and this can be very challenging, (see discussion in chapter 3).
- Determination that Barnett and Coate's framework has an excellent alignment with epistemological assumptions of youth work practice (about what it means to learn) and that this also provides a useful theoretical counter to over-reliance on techno-rational approaches to curriculum and assessment.
- Recognition that Barnett and Coate's conceptual framework provided a useful epistemological framework to explain how youth work in higher education differs from youth work in vocational education and implications for how youth work educators need to support youth work students' transition between the two systems.
- Realisation that Barnett and Coate's framework epistemological approach to curriculum needs to be supplemented by other mid-range curriculum planning methodologies that can translate an epistemological framework into useful course materials (Edith Cowan University has been using Threshold Concepts). A methodology developed by Swartz & Sharpe, (2010) provides a possible 'helper' methodology, and was examined by one

member of the project team but has not been implemented.

Project deliverables include:

- **A renewed curriculum for Australian university youth work education.** This report documents findings about stakeholder perceptions of current youth work higher education curriculum and indications for future requirements for the education of youth work professionals, and especially the relationship with the VET youth work educational curriculum, and considerations for transition between VET and HE youth work education and examines cross-institutional pathways.
- **A detailed mapping of existing curriculum for Australian youth work in higher education.** The mapping compared course content and identified: gaps; consistency and diversity; similarities and differences between Australian and international youth work; and unique Australian conditions and requirements.
- **Sub-reports and discussion papers** were developed during the project to aid discussion. The substantive content of these discussion papers is included in this report.
- **Progress towards generic model(s) for sustainability in niche professions.** This report includes the findings of the online survey to identify niche professional courses, and strategies used to improve sustainability. From the data gathered in the survey, supplemented by the documented experience of project partners, two vignettes have been developed to illustrate how sustainability pressures affects institutions differently, and how different strategies have been used to increase sustainability in niche areas of profession education.
- **An international youth work educator's forum.** The original plan was to develop an Australian youth work educators' network and a website with e-space for youth work educators to post courseware and share materials, and a forum to discuss pedagogy and youth work (for 3 years after the project). This has now been extended to include an international network.

The project deliverables can also be found on the project website at www.altc-youthwork.org

The project identified some starting points for a sustainability model for other niche professions. Four factors emerged as especially important:

- **A supportive and flexible institutional environment** including effective institutional support for strategies that promote cross-institutional collaboration despite the competitive norms of the Australian higher education environment
- **Appropriate institutional placement in Schools or Departments** with compatible professional disciplines
- **Informal cross-institutional communication and collaboration** networks
- **Strong connections with all stakeholders groups** –students, employers, peak bodies, and professional associations

The next paragraphs discuss each of these factors in the context of youth work courses.

A supportive and flexible institutional environment was found to be important to the continuity and growth of small courses. Where institutions have provided a supportive and flexible institutional environment, youth work programmes have been able to grow steadily. In particular, Niche professional courses need active institutional support to facilitate cross-institutional collaboration. There is a tension between higher education policies that promote competition between institutions and the need for collaboration between institutions, including sharing curriculum and other resources. For some small courses the effectiveness of cross-institutional collaboration is crucial. This will require

flexibility and creative support of senior management. There are several strategies forms of cross-institutional collaboration were identified as being possible and beneficial including:

- Formal institutional agreements to share courseware. This may involve franchising.
- Formal institutional agreements to develop courses that make use of cross-institutional enrolment and/or double badged awards, especially for on-line students
- Agreement at course level to accept cross-institutional unit substitution, for example where no on-line units are offered, to enable students who need to study on-line to enrol in similar units at other institutions and substitute these into their degree
- Combined cross-institutional overseas study tours and study tours within Australia, for example, Indigenous study tours

It is noted that these strategies require active institutional support to maximise effectiveness.

There are benefits to niche professions of being part of a School where there is broad agreement about underpinning intellectual assumptions and values, and a commitment to professional education. Niche professional programmes are never large enough to be considered viable as stand-alone administrative units within modern universities. Youth work teaching, like other niche professions, has been located in schools with others disciplines. This study indicated that the 'intellectual and ethical fit' between youth work and the dominant disciplines within the School (or Faculty) can either assist or hinder support for the discipline within the university. Youth work values include a strong commitment to social justice, social equality, democratic leadership and inclusive decision-making. Youth work is a professional practice discipline closely aligned to education, human rights, community services, social sciences especially politics, sociology, philosophy; and social pedagogy. Cognate disciplines might include: education; community studies; community/ adult/ popular education; social sciences; or justice studies and human rights. In the two cases where youth work was located as a minority discipline in the Schools of Education, coordinators perceived there was a good fit between youth work and education as the dominant discipline in the school. In one case where youth work was located in a school of social science there was a good alignment of values and a commitment to practicum. In the other case where youth work and social science were minority disciplines in a school dominated by clinical disciplines, the lack of disciplinary fit caused some difficulties. The dominant disciplines within the school assumed clinical models of analysis, practice and intervention provided an appropriate norm. Discussion about support needs in the school tacitly assumed that student placements would occur in clinical settings, and decision-making structures within the school tacitly normalised hierarchical roles, relationships and decision-making normalised in clinical professions. We concluded youth work seemed to be best located in either an education school, where there is also commitment to informal education; or in a social science school where there is commitment to practical placements and professional education. The significance of congruence of intellectual and ethical values in multi-disciplinary Schools emerged as an issue that warrants further investigation.

Informal communication and collaboration was considered to be important for disciplinary development, for moral support, for mentoring, and to prevent stagnation of the discipline. Stagnation can be a greater risk in small disciplines, especially if there are weak cross-institutional connections. The project has facilitated on-going connections between youth work higher education staff in different institutions. It would be useful if future initiatives could formalise and strengthen informal collaboration and communication, perhaps through benchmarking arrangements.

Engagement with external stakeholders provided many benefits to university courses. All youth work courses had strong connections with stakeholders. The surveys showed that students and employers showed strong stakeholder support for youth work degree

courses, and benefits identified included improved employability of graduates, and that stakeholder engagement enhanced relevance of degree programs and research. It is therefore important that these links are nurtured. The research found that most institutions used a combination of methods, (all of these are evidenced in this research in different combinations in each institution). Methods identified included:

- establishment of active youth work consultative committee, where stakeholders (employers, peak bodies, students, professional association) have input into youth work course development and decisions on strategic direction research development in the discipline
- appointment of academic staff who are qualified, and experienced youth workers and who are respected in the field
- placement coordination by academic staff who have appropriate qualifications and expertise in youth work, and the ability to use student placements to benefit all parties, such that: students gain; the agency gains; and the course gains useful feedback about emerging trends in practice
- university staff contribution to on-going professional development courses for qualified youth workers, possible in conjunction with other youth work advisory organisations, for example, the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) and practitioner conferences
- academic staff serve on Boards of key community-managed youth services, or in other supportive capacities, for example, as research advisors
- academic staff contribution to youth work practitioner conferences and sponsorship by universities of these events
- research programs that are responsive to the needs of the professional field, including youth work evaluation research
- strong relationships with accreditation bodies (for example the Western Australian Association of Youth Workers (WAAYW) and the Association of Youth Workers (AYW) in Victoria, including staff membership, where appropriate
- formation of student consultative committees to supplement feedback provided by formal unit reviews and to discuss course development

The main recommendations of this report are:

- **Embed change:** The project has been a catalyst for change at some institutions and for the formation of connections between some individuals within the project team, which might be formalised through benchmarking relationships, where feasible.
- **Internationalisation:** International contacts are useful in most disciplines and for youth work education they are essential because there are very few youth work academics in Australia. International support is necessary to facilitate and maintain these contacts.
- **Further investigation on niche professions:** in particular, in relation to facilitating cross-institutional collaboration in a competitive institutional environment, and exploring the importance of different dimensions of disciplinary fit within administrative units.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

A purpose of this project was to assist in renewing the curriculum for Australian youth work professional education, applying the approach to curriculum outlined by Barnett and Coate (2005). The project was intended to:

- anticipate future education and training requirements for the youth work professionals
- articulate the aspirations, common content, pedagogy, values and guiding principles of Australian university youth work professional education
- articulate its relationship with the VET youth worker-training curriculum.

In addition, the project was intended to investigate potential for cross-institutional sharing of courseware and educational materials and will facilitate future benchmarking, inter-sectoral and inter-professional pathways, and international qualification recognition. The intention was to promote long-term change through the establishment of a cross-sectoral Youth Work Educators Network.

A secondary purpose of the project was to understand the challenges niche professional courses face and provide a sustainability model. From this preliminary work, it was hoped that it would be possible to suggest some starting points for a sustainability model for other 'niche' professions.

The initial project team included representatives of all Australian youth work professional degree programmes in public universities. An additional representative from a youth work professional degree programme at a private higher education provider subsequently joined the team.

Terminology

There is no standard Australian or international usage of terms to describe degree structures or roles of staff. This is true within Australia and internationally in higher education. The purpose of this section is to explain how the terms are used in this report.

Programme: a cluster of courses in the discipline and may include several awards, for example, bachelor's degrees, certificates, diplomas, masters, PhDs.

Course: this is the award (for example, Bachelor of Youth Work).

Major: a sequence of units within a course that relate to a single body of knowledge and form a main component of the degree (usually at least half, but sometime three quarters of the degree).

Minor: a shorter sequence of units within a course that relate to a single body of knowledge and form a smaller component of the degree (typically 6 units).

Unit: The unit is the subject that students enrol in. Youth work degrees in all partner institutions comprised of 24 units.

Course Leader: person who leads the bachelor's degree course. (Sometime called the programme leader, or course coordinator or discipline leader).

Peak body: a non-government body that advises government on policy. In the context of this report, a non-government body that advises government on youth policy or youth work policy.

Practicum: period of supervised practical placement with a youth work agency that forms part of the course and is assessed by the university that awards the degree. The university supervisor and a supervisor who is an employee of the youth work

agency conduct supervision jointly.

Placement coordinator: university academic staff member who has responsibility for coordinating practicum placements and liaising with field supervisors.

Field supervisor: a staff member employed by the youth work agency that manages the student on placement and contributes to the assessment of their learning. They collaborate with the university supervisor in supervision of students on placement.

University supervisor: university academic staff member who collaborates with the field supervisor to supervise the student and ensure that the student meets the university's assessment requirements. This may be the placement coordinator or another member of academic staff who is a qualified youth worker.

Background

Prior to this project, the youth work curriculum in Australian higher education developed independently in each state and institution. Like a number of professions, youth work education grew out of the CAE (College of Advanced Education) sector in the 1980s, and exhibits some diversity (Bessant, 2012, Corney, 2004). Prior to this Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC, now Office for Learning and Teaching, OLT) project, curriculum content, pedagogy and educational standards were not monitored by any professional accreditation body and each course had developed its own consultation mechanisms, within the framework of government and institutional policy requirements. There were, however, no formalised cross-institutional linkages that compared standards, shared examples of good practice, or benchmarked performance.

At the commencement of the project, Australian youth work did not have a national professional organisation, like psychology or social work. In some countries a government sponsored state or national body monitors professional standards, (National Youth Agency, 2010), but this does not occur in Australia. At the commencement of the project in 2010, state-based professional youth work organisations had formed in Western Australia (Western Australia Association of Youth Workers) and in Victoria (Australian Youth Work Victoria) with the support of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), but they did not monitor standards of professional education. For this reason, academics in youth work in Australia have taken leadership roles in the movement towards development of graduate professional standards of practice. By late 2013, at the time of writing this project report, both professional associations endorsed higher education courses, and were moving towards full accreditation of professional standards.

Before the project began, youth work had not been subject to a national curriculum review. There was however a state ministerial review of youth work training in Victoria in 1995 (Chew, 1995). In 1997, there was also an investigation of practicum offerings by Martin (1997) that included one youth work programme but there has been no previous comprehensive study of Australian youth work education in universities. Youth work has a professional identity that is discrete and separate from human services and social work. On this point it is noted that the ALTC project, (2007) "Developing an integrated national curriculum for the education of social work and human services workforce" did not include youth work education courses.

At the beginning of the project, both local and international links between academics in youth work professional education depended upon informal personal networks of individual academics. There had been no forum for discussion about pedagogy in Australian or international youth work professional education. Changes in educational practice and technologies since the 1990s have far-reaching implications for pedagogy in youth work. One purpose of this project was to foster links between youth work educators, to provide discussion forums, and to commence discussion about how a

renewed youth work curriculum should embrace pedagogical and technical developments.

Changing requirements for youth work graduates

Changes in funding arrangements and policy for the youth work sector that commenced with the ascendancy of neo-liberal policy and associated economic deregulation in the 1980s, have had an impact on employment and organisational structures in which youth work graduates operate (Bessant, 2009a; Jeffs, 2005).

Contemporary youth workers, like many other community and public service workers find themselves employed in workplaces that have been transformed since the 1980s (Clarke, 2012; Hall, 2011). It has changed the identities of professional youth workers, volunteers, managers and citizens who need resources and services (Connell, 2013).

Changes to the structure and organisation of youth work provision, have implications for youth work education. Given this context, the skills and knowledge base required for youth work practice have changed in the last twenty years, in response to changes in:

- new funding models (for example, competitive tendering has displaced recurrent 'funding for service' models);
- employment of youth workers, (for example, increased local government involvement in youth work in Australia, increased employment of youth workers in schools in Australia and 'virtual' detached youth work both in Australia and overseas (Davies, 2008)
- the policy environment for youth work, (for example targeted service provision, outcomes-focused evaluation, rather than outputs focused, and new sensibilities relating to safety and risk)
- the social and cultural changes in Australian society, including longer transitions to independence, greater and more extended reliance on family support for longer periods of time, increased cultural diversity, more precarious transitions from education to the workforce, delayed partnering and delayed child-bearing, increased youth debt and social inequality (White & Wyn, 2013)
- individualisation as a process of developing identity (White & Wyn, 2013)
- the widespread use of digital media and electronic modes of communication
- the growing inequality between young people whose parents pay for private health and private education and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who rely upon public education, and public health care system (Stiglitz, 2013; Howker, 2013) .

Youth work requires the capacity to make good judgements, to design and engage in complex and often diverse social interventions (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). It is multi-faceted, dynamic, often messy, unpredictable work that requires expertise that cannot be rote learned by following rules or formulaic recipes (Jeffs & Smith, 2005). Youth work cannot successfully be divided up into distinct subsets of prescriptive behaviours, or discrete competencies (Davies & Durkin, cited in Cooper, 1992). While it is critical for practitioners to be able to perform certain specified skills, such as building relationships, informal counselling, or making referrals, good professional practice depends upon the ability to make complex judgements (Jeffs & Smith, 2005) which demand that youth workers develop wisdom rather than conditioned responses.

In short, youth work education needs to prepare graduates who have a good understanding of the complexities of socio-cultural changes taking place, the policy environment as well as ethical capacity for good judgement. Only with such capacities will graduates be able to build and sustain youth work as a professional practice.

The youth work profession already requires degree level entry qualifications in some countries. In 2010, the National Youth Agency¹ (NYA) revised its basic entry-level professional youth work qualification from a two-year diploma of higher education (equivalent to an Australian advanced diploma, Australian Qualifications Framework level 6) to three-year degree or postgraduate qualification (National Youth Agency, 2010). This has implications for Australian youth work degree courses in the international education market and globalising education policy (Rizvi, 2010). The project has examined the benefits and disadvantages of Australian youth work degree courses, aligning with the directions being taken of youth work in the international education market.

This project was also intended to facilitate pathways within the tertiary education sector (including the dual sector) and inter-professionally. There has been no review of the relationship between youth work professional degrees and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) national competency standards for youth work (which were agreed in 1993 and recently revised) and no review of how degree level professional education in youth work contributes to the youth work profession. Davies and Durkin, cited by Cooper (1992), argued the inadequacy of a competency-based approach to youth work professional education in higher education. (Cooper, 1992) argued that higher professional skills in youth work were not assessable within a competency based assessment framework. The nature and extent of the value adding of degree level youth work education has not yet been systematically documented. This project addresses this deficiency.

Trends toward inter-professional working mean that youth workers are employed in more diverse contexts than previously. In many of these contexts, inter-professional working is required. With respect to health professions, Bell (2009) argued that inter-professional working has profound implications for the curriculum in higher education. Inter-professional collaboration requires youth workers to develop a very good understanding of the purposes and methods of their own profession and of boundaries between youth work and other professions.

Rationale for youth work curriculum renewal

Curriculum renewal was required to help ensure that the Australian graduate youth work professional qualifications offered in higher education equips graduates to operate as professional practitioners in contemporary settings. In the higher education sector contemporary concerns include:

- standards and quality (Anderson, Johnson & Milligan, 2000; Harman & Meek, 2000)
- internationalisation (Back et al., 1997)
- cross-sectoral and inter-professional pathways (DETYA, 2000; Ramsey, Tranter & Sumner, 1996)
- cross-professional transferability including graduate attributes (Barrie, 2009)
- pedagogy that supports individual difference and enhances student engagement and student directed learning (Biggs & Tang, 2007)
- curriculum that supports the acquisition of life-long learning skills and, fiscal sustainability
- 'Vertical integration of tertiary education' (seamless VET/HE transfer) was a policy supported by the Bradley Review that refers to a "...major step towards an interconnected tertiary education sector" (Australian Government, 2009, p.8).

¹ NYA accredits youth work qualifications in England

This project articulates with previous ALTC/OLT projects on standards and aligns with the perspective of Australian government policy that states 'discipline communities will own and take responsibility for implementing academic standards (working with professional bodies and other stakeholders where appropriate) within the academic traditions of collegiality, peer review, pre-eminence of disciplines and, importantly, academic autonomy' (Australian Government, 2009). The work undertaken by researchers in this project was directed towards identifying and defining common core curricula and in establishing a youth work educators network, all of which contribute to debates about standards. Recommendations are made about setting youth work standards as a discipline.

Youth work as a niche profession

Historically, youth work programmes in universities have had relatively small enrolments, and have been niche professional courses. Sustainability is a concern for such niche professional courses in the current Australian higher education policy environment. It is a context that has seen the proportion of income universities received from Commonwealth Government funding decline during 1996-2005 (Universities Australia, 2007) whilst the number of Commonwealth supported places increased during the same period (Myers, 2012; Nelson, 2004). Students' contributions rose over this period, but the real value of per capita student funding reduced. Typically small courses and small units are scrutinised during cost cutting exercises, even when income exceeds cost, because they are less profitable than some larger courses. This tendency is a risk because it can lead to unplanned sector-wide reduction of places in niche professional courses like youth work. A clear challenge exists for some niche professional courses, even when there is a high student demand, simply because they are less profitable than larger courses.

Definition of niche profession

For the purposes of this project, a niche profession was defined as one that was offered at less than 25 per cent of higher education institutions in Australia, and/or had average enrolment in the lowest quartile for undergraduate enrolments. Youth work is an example of such a niche profession. In 2013, youth work specialist degrees were offered at only four of Australia's 39 universities (Australian Catholic University, Edith Cowan University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Victoria University) and by one non self-accrediting higher education private provider (Tabor, Adelaide).

Higher education policy and sustainability

From the perspective of critics of neo-liberal market-based funding models (Connell, 2013; Marginson, 2013), a weakness of these models for higher education planning is that they do not take sufficient account of societal needs, social good, or the issue of supply - namely, graduate employability. Under the current policy and funding regime, the course mix at individual universities is relatively insensitive to either public good, or to employability considerations. Many courses continue to be popular despite poor employment outcomes, and other courses fail to attract students despite excellent employment prospects. This can be seen in the difference in graduate employment rates between disciplines identified in the Graduate Destinations Surveys (Graduate Careers Australia, 2014). Graduate employability rates are highly variable between disciplines, and Australia still has graduate skill shortages in some disciplines that are not met by Australian graduates and can only be met through overseas recruitment and skilled migration (Graduate Careers Australian, 2014). During this project, youth work was a priority occupation for skilled migration for some periods of time.

Sustainability has become a central issue for niche professional courses. Professional youth work is one such discipline. Degrees in youth work in Australia are only offered in four public universities, and one private higher education provider. There are insufficient youth work graduates to meet local demand, as evidenced by students gaining pre-graduation employment and the recent priority status of graduate youth work for skilled migration. Youth work professional education will be used as a case study to develop and investigate sustainability decision making by course leaders and institutions. This investigation will begin to identify other niche professions that may be similarly vulnerable, especially emergent professions without national professional accreditation. The report will identify the pre-requisites, benefits and disadvantages of possible strategies that increase efficiency, and will identify emergent issues. The project report has identified strategic responses, perceptions of issues and options.

Synergy of values

The Barnett and Coate (2005) curriculum framework was selected because there is a synergy of values between their framework and values inherent in youth work as a discipline. A central purpose of youth work is to work holistically with young people to enable them to flourish intellectually, socially, physically, materially and spiritually (Jefferis & Smith, 2005), in other words, to support their development as whole human beings able to reach their fullest potential. Youth work is unlike many other social professions because relationships between youth workers and young people are often voluntary (Jefferis & Smith), or have a voluntary component. Where this is the case, young people choose to interact with youth workers, and youth workers have no direct power to compel young people towards particular choices or actions, or to mandate their attendance, or compliance. This is illustrated most clearly in detached youth work where youth workers have no formal authority over young people (Jefferis & Smith). The relationship depends upon trust and this requires youth workers to act ethically and authentically from their own being (Jefferis & Smith) to avoid abuse of the trust placed in them by young people. High quality youth work is therefore premised upon the importance of honest and respectful relationships between youth workers and young people (Jefferis & Smith). Decision-making is often highly complex and youth work education for advanced practitioners cannot rely on teaching formulaic responses, or training only in competencies (Jefferis & Smith).

Practice wisdom and good practice relies upon knowledge-in-action to facilitate good decisions, but knowledge by itself is not sufficient (Swartz, 2010). It can be summed up as doing the best we can do for the best reasons we can offer. Practical wisdom requires knowledge and skills, plus other attributes of being, including good judgement, awareness, perceptiveness and sensitivity, and self-knowledge. Youth workers need skills to enable intervention at the right time, in the right way and for the right reasons.

The act or skill of intervention on its own does not ensure effectiveness of practice. Effectiveness requires feedback through on-going formative and summative evaluation strategies (Jefferis & Smith, 2005), good judgement about appropriateness of different strategies, as well as sensitivity to the perceptions of young people, and accurate knowledge of one's own strengths, capabilities and limitations. Knowledge and skills are therefore necessary but insufficient by themselves. The best youth workers need to be able to operate from their whole being. To do this requires them to integrate knowledge and skills into their being, into who they are as a person, to enable good judgement, sensitivity, awareness, self-knowledge, and ultimately wisdom.

Based upon these assumptions, a high quality youth work education programme must support development of students in all three domains, because youth work degree programmes should aim, in the long term, to support students to become knowledgeable, skilled and wise youth workers and human beings. Barnett & Coate's

(2005) approach to curriculum therefore fits very well with this aspiration because it explicitly acknowledges the need for integration between the three domains, and the central importance of the domain of being.

Tensions between curriculum framework and practices in Australian higher education

Whilst Barnett and Coate's (2005) framework accords very well with the aspirations of professional youth work educators, there are some potential tensions between Barnett and Coate's concept of curriculum and the current practices in Australian higher education. Firstly, in many institutions, there is a very strong focus placed upon the curriculum-as-designed, which is the curriculum as recorded in documentation, and very little attention is paid to the curriculum-in-action, and still less to the curriculum ecology. According to Barnett & Coate, the curriculum-in-action, is the curriculum as delivered in the classroom, or online, and experienced by students. The curriculum-as-designed forms one part of the curriculum-in-action, but it is mediated by the decisions and teaching and relational skills of the lecturer, and choices about how to adapt materials to particular groups of learners. The curriculum ecology is the whole environment in which learning takes place, and includes, infrastructure, such as classroom design, and technology, availability of student support, and the culture of learning that is dominant at the university.

The final tension concerns assessment. Assessment is important to curriculum because it has been argued that for the majority of students, learning is assessment driven. A techno-rational approach to assessment contends that within a discipline, it is possible to measure standards accurately and the easiest domains of knowledge to assess performatively are knowing and acting. However, Bloxham (2013) in her study of standards, observed that there is a mismatch between the aspirations of a techno-rational approach to assessment and its practice, even in the relatively uncontentious domains of knowing/knowledge and action/skills. From a techno-rational perspective, the domain of being is much harder to assess equitably than either the domain of knowing, or the domain of action. Indeed, a case might be made that there is no place for formal assessment in the 'being' domain. This is a serious problem because research indicates that many students are assessment driven (only put effort into tasks that are assessed, (Boud, 2010) and if so, this promotes a performative response to every assessment task (Government, 2014). Indirect assessment of the being domain is usually attempted through reflective tasks and portfolios, but portfolios risk becoming purely performative tasks for some, perhaps many, students, if tackled in a performative manner. To mitigate this risk would require courses to educate students about the value of being as a component of education in and of itself, and the importance of the being component in their lives as youth work professionals. This value is currently only weakly supported in the university environment (because of commitment to operational outcomes), and is not supported by assessment approaches in the VET training packages (Government, 2014).

The first task in the curriculum review was to compare the existing youth work curriculum in each institution to identify commonalities and differences. We found many commonalities in curriculum approach between programmes, as well as some differences in individual institutions. A summary of the initial curriculum mapping document is included in Appendix A. Changes made in response to the curriculum mapping are reported in the discussion that follows, and a summary of the present curriculum mapping is also included in Appendix A.

Chapter 2: Project Design

Summary

This project used Barnett and Coate's (2005) curriculum framework to guide the curriculum renewal. The project used information gathered from multiple stakeholders, including employers, students, professional associations, youth work peak policy organisations, and youth work staff, course leaders and leaders in international youth work education, to inform the curriculum re-development process. During the project, one of the partners also began to use Threshold Concepts to bridge between Barnett and Coate's framework, and the content and processes within individual units within the degree.

Rationale

The assumptions that informed the design of this project were that:

- intentional curriculum design can improve the quality and coherence of a course
- communication between courses in the same discipline can promote sharing of innovation and resources
- cross-institutional collaboration between courses in the same discipline may provide a possible strategy to enhance course delivery, especially in small disciplines
- youth work professional associations are in the earliest stages of development, which means that university courses professional associations are only just beginning to establish processes to monitor standards
- until the professional associations are able to develop greater responsibility for accreditation courses will need to develop mechanisms to meet professional changing needs of graduates.

Intended project outcomes

There were four distinct intended outcomes of this project:

- **Quality and standards:** Comprehensive national curriculum for youth work including renewal of curriculum and pedagogy, and strategies for comparability
- **Internationalisation:** Improved articulation with international youth work professional standards and identification of unique Australian requirements
- **Pathways:** Improved pathways, VET, inter-professional and cross institutional
- **Sustainability:** Improved sustainability for youth work professional courses and progress towards a generic model.

Intended project deliverables

There were five types of intended project deliverables:

- **A renewed curriculum for Australian university youth work education:** curriculum that anticipates future requirements for the education of youth work professionals. This will articulate the aspirations, common content, pedagogy, values and guiding principles of Australian university youth work professional education and its relationship with the

VET youth work educational curriculum.

- **A detailed mapping of existing curriculum for Australian youth work in higher education.** The mapping was used to compare course content and to identify opportunities for sharing and to compare approaches to course management such as cross-institutional pathways, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), consultation with external stakeholders and students. The mapping enabled the individual course leaders and the project partners to:
 - identify gaps
 - identify consistency
 - identify diversity
 - develop cross-institutional pathways between the youth work higher education providers and provided a basis for coherent decision-making about VET pathways
 - identify similarities and differences between Australian and international youth work and
 - identify any unique Australian conditions and requirements.
- **Sub-reports and discussion papers.** To aid the process of development of blueprint, including: “Implications of Barnett and Coate (2005) approach to curriculum for youth work Curriculum in Australian universities”; ‘Trends and future directions in youth work Education’; ‘Sustainability for niche professions discussion paper’; The content of these discussion papers is included in this report. The term ‘blue print’ needs clarification in this context. The blue print document identifies core required attributes of graduate youth work professionals and a shared commitment to a common curriculum framework but allows diversity in how Barnett and Coate’s framework is used to develop units within courses at different institutions. This balances requirements for curriculum commonality with the need to accommodate differences in institutional and situational purpose and aspiration.
- **Progress towards generic model(s) for sustainability in niche professions.** The original plan was to gather data about perceptions of sustainability and strategies that have been used to address sustainability issues, including a decision-making tree to aid decision-making for sustainability in niche professions. Two contrasting case studies to illustrate how curriculum renewal can be used to increase sustainability in specialist or niche areas of professional education. A decision-making tree would be premature at this stage.
- **Establishment of an Australian youth work educators’ network.** VET, Higher Education (HE) and a website with e-space for youth work educators to post courseware and share materials, and a forum to discuss pedagogy and youth work for three years. This is in the process of being opened up as an international forum for youth work educators.

Curriculum frameworks

This project draws upon the literature on curriculum design in higher education, especially the approach outlined by Barnett and Coate (2005). The use of an explicit curriculum framework was recommended in 2009 by (Hicks). This section outlines the Barnett and Coate framework and explains how the framework has been used to shape an Australian university curriculum for professional youth work. The resulting framework needed to be consistent with the aspirations of university education and the future needs of the youth work profession. This report also evaluates the strengths and limitations of the Barnett and Coate framework. Barnett and Coate’s vision of the purposes of higher education is that universities should support learners to become accomplished human beings. This aspiration extends beyond the current competency-based and purely performative aspirations of the VET national curriculum for youth

work. The report illustrates how the Barnett and Coate framework can be used in the context of youth work professional education to support learners to become accomplished human beings, as well as people who are skilled professionals, and who are knowledgeable about their discipline. The framework will consider curriculum in the context of internationalisation and globalisation of education policy; social and societal change; trends in the youth work profession; and development of leadership for the profession. It is intended that the framework will be useful to other universities planning to offer youth work degrees in the future.

Barnett and Coate's Framework

This project used the concept of curriculum elaborated by Barnett and Coates (2005). This concept of curriculum fits well with the aspirations of youth work professional education within higher education. Barnett and Coate's (2005) approach to curriculum in higher education is especially relevant to youth work professional education because of a congruence between pedagogic values that underpin their framework and the pedagogic values that inform youth work. Barnett and Coate's approach to curriculum is grounded in a research project they conducted to try to develop a cross-disciplinary concept of curriculum for higher education. They interviewed academics in different disciplines and different types of university in the UK, and from this developed a cross-disciplinary 'language' for curriculum in higher education.

Barnett and Coate (2005) argue that the curriculum has three components, knowing, acting and being, and that different disciplines typically have characteristically different balances of relative importance of each of the three domains. Barnett and Coate claim that typically within many degrees the knowledge content can often appear over-dominant (p.74). They argue that:

For too long curricula in higher education have been drawn overly narrowly as projects of knowledge...It is time to open up the curriculum to other forms of human development...Evidently we can see that students are being encouraged towards forms of practical achievements. The curriculum has already become a site of acting as well as knowing. Less evident but emerging, is the curriculum manifestly as a site of being (p.118).

When they examined different disciplines they found that compared with other disciplines professional degrees typically aspired to a better balance between knowing, acting and being within their curricula. They found that the key factor about curricula patterns in professional subjects is integration of the self-and the action domains (p.78). Professional degrees typically have more equal balance and integration between the three domains than arts (which is typically deficient in action) or science (which is typically deficient in being).

Barnett and Coate (2005) also argue that it is important to distinguish between the curriculum-as- designed, the curriculum-in-action and the curriculum ecology. They propose that curriculum-as-designed (which is usually the focus of university curriculum quality control projects) forms only one (minor) part of the curriculum ecology. Curriculum-in-action includes curriculum-as-designed, pedagogy, pedagogic relations, and assessment. The curriculum ecology includes all factors within the curriculum-in-action, plus other factors such as student-student relationships and institutional infrastructure (p.131). The university infrastructure is in turn shaped by many other forces. Barnett and Coate identify nine zones of influence that act upon patterns of curriculum change, (p.71) and hence shape curriculum discourses.

In the final strand of their argument, Barnett and Coate (2005) propose that a successful curriculum must actually engage the student in curriculum space. By this they mean that the student must engage fully and willingly with the task in hand as they align themselves with it completely and wholeheartedly. Engagement, they claim, speaks to

matters of the student self or the student as a human being, and even of the students' being, (p.116). A curriculum for engagement requires the use of pedagogies that engage students (p.128). For this reason, of the three domains, they place greatest emphasis on curriculum that will develop the students' being, because, "it is the students' being that give strength, colour, courage, imagination and indeed energy to the other two domains of knowing and acting...it is her unfolding being that will determine whether intention of the curriculum will be realised" (p.134).

Barnett and Coate (2005) caution against many of the practices that are common within Australian universities, including outcomes-based models of curriculum and associated quality management methods, where curriculum is defined in terms of behavioural outcomes, and generic skills. Of quality management methods implemented by the UK Quality Assurance Agency, (similar methods have been adopted in Australia) the authors observe:

Whilst the approach of an outcomes-based model of curricula has been one of simplifying and making transparent the curricula of a diverse and mass higher education system, an unintended consequence has been the introduction of greater administrative complexities. Course leaders must adapt to a language of outputs and outcomes and specifying course objectives, and in the process produce endless reams of documentation about their course. The resulting 'programme specification' may satisfy administrators, but are they enhancing the students' learning experiences? (2005, p.29).

The authors' implicit answer to this question is that, even at its best, the outcomes-based model of curriculum only examines the curriculum-as-designed, which is a very small part of the curriculum-in-action, and an even smaller part of the curriculum ecology.

Placed against this concept of curriculum ecology, it is readily apparent that our fundamental schema –knowing, acting, being –runs against the idea of curricula as a vehicle for producing behaviour changes of the kind reflected in lists of 'can-do' statements (2005, p.133).

Barnett and Coates further argue that the knowledge, skills and attitudes approach is too accepting of a checklist approach, which pays insufficient attention to the need to integrate the learning in the three domains. They argue that the starting point for this integration has to be development of being. They are also critical of 'performative' approaches to graduate attributes, as implemented. In a review of Leicester University's graduate attribute "developing student-centred learning and life-long learning", they found only lists of tasks outcomes and skills. They commented:

In the rare moment where we might sense an orientation towards large educational ends, where ideas such as facing complexity and criticality in the world of uncertainty might have had an airing, we find ourselves confined again to a skills/outcomes conception of curriculum (2005, p.23).

Similar approaches can be found at an institutional level in Australian universities, and where this is the case, their critiques apply.

Finally, on 'generic skills' the authors make the following observations:

There is a discourse in favour of such [trans-disciplinary] generic skills. But we suggest caution is in order: it by no means follows from there being a present discourse in favour of generic skills that such skills are actually available (2005, p.58).

They argue that there is insufficient evidence for generic skills, and that many so-called

generic skills are, in reality, heavily context dependent skills. They argue, for example, that many of the communication skills are highly context dependent because communication styles vary between disciplines and professions, and the required communication skills may be very different. This is a sentiment echoed in debate about Threshold Concepts. Youth work, for example, requires the ability to communicate respectfully with young people and other marginalised people, in young people’s environment and in the absence of a power relationship. This skill may not be valued or required in business, or even some dominant forms of mainstream social work.

Threshold Concepts

During the project, Threshold Concepts were adopted at ECU as a linking curriculum methodology between the framework provided by Barnett and Coate (2005), and organisational decision at unit level about content and focus within the unit. Epistemologically, the two approaches are compatible because the Barnett and Coate framework guides decisions about the balance between aspects of the curriculum (knowing, acting and being), whereas a Threshold Concepts approach prioritises how content within each of these domains should be selected and presented in units within the course.

Project methods

Theoretical Assumptions

This project is premised upon the following assumptions:

- Curriculum encompasses both content and pedagogy and should actively engage the learner through knowing, acting and being to become an accomplished human being (Barnett & Coate, 2005, pp.2-4). This approach aligns very well with personal and social development goals implicit in youth work as a profession, and with curriculum and methods in youth work education, especially the influence of critical pedagogy and informal education on youth worker education (Jefferies & Smith, 2002a).
- Quality maintenance and improvement depend upon a whole of system approach (Senge, 2003). This perspective implies that high quality curriculum, pedagogy and teaching are pre-requisites for quality education but these need to be supported by institutional arrangements that facilitate programme implementation and processes that support quality.
- That a comprehensive higher education system should include a mix of courses, including niche professions that meet social needs as well as courses for which there is mass demand.
- That the findings from this project will be pertinent to sustainability strategies in other niche professions.

The project design explains how project processes will derive information that will address the key issues and outcomes (see Table 1). Case studies for the revised curriculum synthesise findings from each area.

Table 1
Project design

Deliverable	Purpose	How will it be achieved
Blueprint for youth work curriculum renewal	Renewal of curriculum for youth work; Renewal of pedagogy for youth work; quality and standards for	This will be developed collaboratively by the project team and external stakeholders. Central to this process will be their analysis of project findings

	Australian graduate qualifications in youth work; sustainability; international comparability; Future platform for benchmarking	on from the mapping exercise, from the 'Trends and future directions' sub-report and from the two discussion papers. Discussion will occur face-to-face and through e-discussions. Decisions will be recorded as they are made. A draft will be developed by the project team after consultation with stakeholders and presented back to stakeholders for further discussion and ratification.
Mapping of youth work curriculum and Examples of good practice	Sub-report to establish baseline, and facilitate consultation process to develop blueprint for youth Work curriculum renewal; Examples of good practice will be used to identify existing practices to be disseminated.	See Table 2
Sub-report on 'Trends and future directions'	Sub-report to facilitate informed consultation with project team and external stakeholders.	See Table 3
Project discussion paper 1. 'Implications of Barnett and Coate (2005) approach for Youth Work Curriculum in Australian universities'	To facilitate informed consultation and discussion with project team and external stakeholders. This process will culminate in agreement on principles to inform Youth Work curriculum development in higher education (HE).	Summary by project leader and project officer of the main points made by Barnett and Coate for a non-specialist audience. Draw out its implications for the youth work university curriculum, and identify issues for discussion.
Project discussion paper 2. 'Sustainability for niche professions'	To facilitate informed consultation and discussion with project team and external stakeholders, to support dissemination to other discipline.	Summary of relevant policy trends in higher education and data collected about sustainability in this project for a non-specialist audience.
Case studies and foundations for generic model(s) for sustainability for niche professions	To facilitate transfer of learning from this project to other disciplines.	Distil generic learning from different approaches developed in this project and use this to develop a 'decision-making tree' for sustainability strategies in niche professions; Use contrasting case studies to illustrate strategies.
Australian Youth Work Educators' Network and e-space for discussion	To sustain the project outcomes beyond the life of the project.	There is an existing commitment to the usefulness of this outcome. Collaborative processes the project will build relationships between youth work educators and extend the network; the website and e-space will facilitate communication

Curriculum mapping

The curriculum mapping exercise was used at the beginning of the project to identify areas of similarities and differences between courses in different institutions. The method used was to:

- collate the structure and content of each of the courses from the official course documentation
- cluster common themes and content
- initiate discussion about the epistemological foundation of youth work
- return the findings from the curriculum mapping exercise to coordinators for discussion to identify changes needed to address gaps and improve national consistency, and better align with the curriculum framework
- enable course coordinator to make changes to the curriculum of their courses and report changes back to the project, see appendix 1 for a summary of changes that have been made.

Future needs of youth work profession

It is not easy to determine the future needs of a profession because most people can identify changes only after they occur. On reviewing the literature on youth work, excellent accounts of historical change were found, but much less on how youth work might change in the next ten to fifteen years. The original intention was to gather perceptions of future needs of the youth work profession from multiple stakeholders. Stakeholders consulted included youth work educators, youth work university managers, youth work professional bodies, youth work peak bodies, graduate youth work employers and youth work students who have completed at least half of their course. Just before the start of the data collection for this part of the project, it was discovered that the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition was about to survey youth work practitioners about future youth work trends and workforce needs. The project team proposed to incorporate this survey into this projects findings. However, when the report appeared it documented recent trends rather than future trends. Ultimately, the most useful discussions occurred at the inaugural meeting of the international youth work educators group. This will be discussed in the section that details results.

Pathways

A purpose of this project was to document how different youth work courses managed VET/HE pathways, cross-institutional transfer, and cross-professional transfer, to compare approaches and identify learning. Information about pathways and advanced standing/recognition of prior learning (RPL) arrangements was gathered in the course leaders' interviews.

Internationalisation

A further purpose of the project was to compare Australian youth work professional degree courses with international youth work professional standards, to maximise international recognition whilst maintaining fidelity to any unique Australian professional youth work requirements. The report summarises the current international youth work requirements, and likely future developments through the literature research and discussions held with international colleagues.

Sustainability

Perceptions of sustainability issues were gained from interviews with youth work course coordinators/discipline leaders, with university managers and from a more general survey of senior managers at university. Each partner has developed a brief case study of factors that help and factors that hamper sustainability of youth work in their institution. Information from these case studies has been used to identify common problems and how they have been resolved. Discussion is included about the generalisability of findings to other niche professions. This aligns with Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC, now Office for Learning and Teaching, OLT) objective d) (Council, 2010) which is concerned with mechanisms to identify, develop, disseminate and embed good individual and institutional practice in learning and teaching. Consideration of how the case studies might inform generic model(s) for sustainability in niche professions will assist knowledge transfer from this project to other discipline areas, which is an aim of the Curriculum Renewal programme (Hicks, 2009) and also included in ALTC objective d).

Timeline and emergent changes to research design

The overall outcomes of the project have remained constant, but there have been changes to how some of the deliverables have been achieved. In particular, external factors beyond the control of the project partners extended the duration of the project. Dissemination also became a more important priority, following the recommendations of a “D-cubed” seminar (Hinton, Gannaway, Berry & Moore, 2011).

Timeline for activities and deliverables

Table 2
Timeline for activities and deliverables

Activities	Deliverables (in bold) and dissemination	Timeline
<p>Desk research on sustainability and collate findings on emergent future trends;</p> <p>Data collection: Surveys and interviews as outlined in the proposal.</p> <p>Data analysis: as data is collected, begin mapping exercise, as outlined in the proposal. Begin to document ‘decision-making tree’</p>	<p>1. Webinar on emergent trends findings for stakeholders</p> <p>2. Webinar on sustainability findings for stakeholders</p> <p>3. Discussion paper on sustainability findings</p> <p>4. Discussion paper on future trends with Wiki on project website.</p> <p>5. Post findings on pedagogy for discussion</p> <p>6. Draft mapping of existing curriculum VET/HE</p>	<p>1. See note 1</p> <p>2. See Note 2</p> <p>3. See note 2</p> <p>4. See note 3</p> <p>5. See note 4</p> <p>6. ✓ (1st draft circulated Sept 2012)</p> <p>7. Data collection: PVCs T&L ✓</p> <p>Peaks & Professional Associations ✓ Staff & students survey ✓</p> <p>Completed 2011-2012</p>
<p>Curriculum Development process: Various processes to discuss the project findings with stakeholders to draw out the curriculum implications. This will</p>	<p>1. Webinar on Curriculum mapping and future trends report with project stakeholders.</p> <p>2. Examples of good practice Post on website as they become available, for stakeholder discussion and</p>	<p>1. April 2012 see note 5</p> <p>2. Jan-Apr 2012 see note 6</p> <p>3. Jan 2012 (employers)</p> <p>3. Mar 2012 (students)</p> <p>4. Apr/ May 2012 (Course leaders) Individual discussions completed.</p> <p>5. Core components agreed</p>

<p>culminate in a workshop for course leaders to agree a draft curriculum for youth work in HE</p> <p>Sustainability: Case studies in development including discussion of generic findings.</p>	<p>comment.</p> <p>3. Post employers' expectations for discussion and comment; Post student expectations for stakeholder discussion and comment.</p> <p>4. Face-to-face workshop with course leaders.</p> <p>5. Draft curriculum for YW in HE</p>	
<p>Consolidation: Team leader to visit project team in Melbourne to discuss findings with stakeholders and for the project team to consolidate strategies for collaboration. Collate and write draft report</p>	<p>1. Circulate draft report to team members for discussion;</p> <p>2. Forums for stakeholders to share project achievements (one in WA and one in Victoria) and to plan strategies for action</p> <p>3. Post: Draft Sustainability Case studies and draft decision-making tree to website for comment</p> <p>4. Present preliminary findings at ECulture Teaching & Learning conference at ECU</p>	<p>1. Nov 2013 See note 7</p> <p>2. Oct 2013 See note 7</p> <p>3. Case studies completed Oct 2013. Not sufficient data for decision-making tree.</p> <p>4. Presentation at Society for Research into Higher Education (UK) 2013 and Teaching and Learning Forum (WA) 2014 and WAND forum 2013</p>
<p>Foundations for long-term change: Establishment of YW Educators' Network; Dissemination forum and conference; Possible establishment of YW students' network and/or e-group and annual staff- student e-forum to maintain student engagement (if this is supported by key stakeholders). Complete final project report</p>	<p>1. Conference in Melbourne to: form Australian YW Educators Network (AYWEN); to disseminate strategies for niche professions; to consolidate implementation strategies (to be held in Melbourne).</p> <p>2. E-group formed on a dedicated website, to share resources, maintain collaboration, and monitor future directions</p> <p>3. Ratified Curriculum for YW in HE Journal articles as specified under 'Dissemination'.</p> <p>4. Project final report</p>	<p>1. See note 8</p> <p>2. See note 8</p> <p>3. Future study leave application for chief investigator–see sustainability, see note 9</p> <p>4. February 2014</p>

Note 1. **Webinars** have not been a successful strategy for communication or discussion for a variety of reasons. Emergent trends have been discussed individually but not with the whole group together.

Note 2. **Dissemination to Stakeholders:** will occur within individual institutions through consultative committees. This is because consultative committees already have that function. Proposed forums will occur in conjunction with professional associations.

Note 3. **Discussion paper on sustainability:** The report will now include contrasting case studies of how sustainability issues are addressed both positively and negatively in different institutions.

Note 4. **Future trends:** The project had proposed to build on the 2012, Australian Youth Affairs

Coalition a report on future trends in youth work. This report surveyed practitioners and documented recent trends rather than future trends. The alternative method for gaining insight into future trends is through discussion with the international youth work educators group. This is important because of the significance of international recognition of qualifications.

Note 5. **Future trends:** An international youth work educators' forum that has been formed as a result of this project. This educators' group has prompted on-going global discussion on future trends in youth work and youth work education.

Note 6. **Good practice examples:** Good practice examples will be limited to curriculum, and will not include other procedural mechanisms because institutional procedural difference limits transferability. This may be retitled to "examples of curriculum innovation" to avoid the potentially inhibiting effect of the label "good practice" and because some innovations may not yet be fully developed, methods may still be evolving, and there may have been only limited opportunities to test innovations.

Note 7. **Forum and draft report:** The meetings/forum in October 2013 will be to agree principles and materials for inclusion in the draft report, and will be between project participants.

Note 8. **AYWEN:** As a result of this project, at the ISA conference in Buenos Aires (funded by ECU not this project). The need for an international youth work educators' group was discussed with youth work education colleagues from other countries. The first meeting was held in Maynooth, Ireland in July 2013. This has led to formal and informal initiatives to share curriculum and resources, to discuss innovations, and some joint publishing projects. An international group offers more potential, and an Australian sub-group within the international group will now be formed. The next meeting will occur during the ISA conference in Japan in (Australia July 2014).

Note 9. Sustainability issue: previous study leave application by the chief investigator was rejected because there was no one available to coordinate youth work programme during absence.

Chapter 3: Youth work education: starting points for curriculum renewal

Profile of youth work degrees in Australia

Data about the profile of youth work courses was gained from interviews with course leaders of all four youth work degrees. All course leaders were highly experienced youth work educators with at least eight years' experience (median 14 years) and all course leaders had been youth or community workers prior to their employment as youth work educators. From interviews with course coordinators we found that the longest established youth work higher education programmes commenced in Australia during the 1980s (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Edith Cowan University, also University of Western Sydney²). Other institutions commenced youth worker degrees during the 1990s (Australian Catholic University, Victoria University). At the time of the interviews, courses had between one and an half and three permanent staff. Coordinators estimated student numbers as between 45 and 200³ individual students, including part-time students, and those studying for joint awards. Coordinators indicated that youth work courses developed in different institutions for a variety of reasons, including employer demand, a response to a government review of youth worker training, and because staff members already employed at an institution believed there was demand for a youth work degree.

Interviews were conducted with nine staff that were not course leaders, (two of the interviews could not be transcribed). The information provided indicated that youth work staff who were interviewed had between three and 27 years experience in youth work education, (median 9.4 years). All except one staff member had youth work experience prior to employment in youth work education.

Pathways VET and other

Summary

The partner institutions in this project had well established centrally supported VET pathways. Transition between VET and HE requires students to transfer between different conceptual learning paradigms, and this can be very challenging. Students coming through non-ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) pathways may need support to understand expectations of university youth work courses, and to acquire foundational skills. Some curriculum renewal innovations (ECU) instigated in parallel to this project have integrated additional academic and university orientation support into re-developed first year units.

A comparison between the curriculum framework used in this project (Barnett & Coate, 2005), and the competency framework of the VET curriculum indicates some potential areas of tension. This is because Barnett and Coate's curriculum framework seeks to develop knowing and acting in a framework of personal development that emphasises the importance of being a holistic concept of personal development that includes

² UWS no longer offers a youth work degree

³ This is the number of unique individuals rather than either taught load or generated load. The figure included students in double major programmes. We did not ask directly about the taught in EFTSL (Equivalent full time student load) or the generated EFTSL. In hindsight it may have been useful to collect this data

development of wisdom and good judgement. By contrast, competency-based curriculum, as used in VET, gives priority to skills development. Being is replaced by values and value development is only one element of being. In competency-based learning, knowledge and commitment to values have a secondary purpose, as an instrumental support for skill development. Within such a schema there is no place for the development of knowledge independent of skill development, or of exploration of alternative values positions. This approach is difficult to reconcile with development of critical thinking skills. The differences are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Two approaches to curriculum

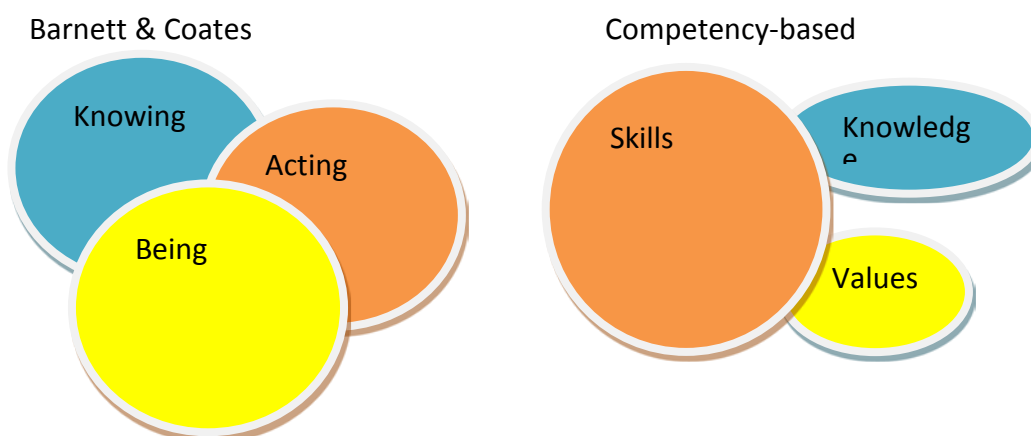


Table 3
Comparison of curriculum frameworks

	Competency-based	Barnett and Coate
What it means to learn	Gain demonstrable skills	Holistic integration of knowledge, action and being
Purpose of learning	Become skilful	Become wise
Learning processes	More emphasis on doing and being told and shown ; less emphasis on reading and research	Emphasis on personal integration of experience and knowledge , greater emphasis on reading, research, critical thinking and reflective practice
Where	Classroom and placement	Classroom, online and placement
Assessment processes	Assessed primarily by demonstration , less emphasis on written assessment	Primarily written assessments , practice skills requires supporting evidence of reflective practice
Assessment yardstick	competent, or not-competent and if competent, no further learning is required	Learning is graded in comparison to others, learning is never complete , always more to learn

The two approaches differ radically. Epistemologically, they differ in their conceptualisation of what it means to know, and hence to learn and teach, and in conceptualisation of the proper goals of education. Methodologically, the two

approaches differ in many aspects of learning and teaching, including curriculum structure and sequence, learning processes and materials, and assessment methods. Epistemological differences mean that VET students are encouraged to value learning instrumentally, only insofar as it increases their demonstrable skills. In Barnett and Coate's framework for HE, education is viewed as a form of personal development, where knowledge, wisdom and skill are combined to enable good judgements to be made about how to **be** in the world, **how and why** to act, and well as **skilful actions**.

Admissions

The original proposal included an intention to examine pathways into youth work from VET courses, and to identify areas for improvement. From interviews with course leaders, and consistent with the observations of (Watson et al., 2013, p. 31), this appeared to be something that the participating institutions already facilitate well. Of the four higher education institutions included in this project, two were dual sector institutions (RMIT and VU). Both RMIT and VU offered both the diploma in youth work (AQF 5), and a bachelors' degree in youth work (AQF 7). RMIT also offered the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth and Development, (Commonwealth Youth AQF 6). A recent NCVET (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) report (Watson et al, 2013, p. 14), which reviewed VET/HE pathways in public universities, found that RMIT, VU and ECU, were within, Cluster 1, which represented the institutions most likely to recruit students through a VET pathway, RMIT (21 per cent), VU (18 per cent), ECU (16 per cent), and figures for ACU (10 per cent) were only slightly lower. According to Watson et al., (2013) Cluster 1 institutions had strong and effective central institutional support for VET pathways.

Interviews with course leaders indicated that all institutions offered multiple and flexible admission pathways, including

- ATAR (all)
- Cert IV (3)
- Experience in the field (2)
- Mature entry/ STAT (all)
- Indigenous entry/indigenous bridging courses (1)
- Diploma (3)
- Industry programmes (1)
- University preparation course (1)
- Other degrees including post graduates (all)
- Portfolio (1)

Advanced standing and VET

Arrangements for advanced standing and credit for previous study were the same between all courses for the Diploma in Youth Work (equivalent to one year of study, sometimes this was given as electives). All institutions recognised credit from other universities, where units had equivalent content or where they could be credited as electives. Advance standing granted for the Certificate IV in Youth Work differed between institutions. Three course leaders indicated their institutions offered up to one semester of advanced standing for Certificate IV in Youth Work, whilst at other institutions, no advanced standing was granted. Instead, Certificate IV could be used to satisfy minimum entrance requirements. One dual sector VET provider reported that their academic skills expectations for 'in-house' Certificate IV and Diploma were higher than other RTOs (Registered Training Organisations), and they offered differential

credit, according to where the student gained their award. This anomaly remains, despite concerns expressed by several participants about the variability of standards required for Certificate IV and about very low level of achievement of graduates from (some) Certificate IV courses. Differences in policy about whether advanced standing is given for Certificate IV, seem to stem from differences in institutional policy with respect to the status of Certificate IV.

Support for VET entrants

According to youth work course leaders, the transition between the two systems (VET/HE) does not always go smoothly for students. Some expectations encouraged by competency-based learning limit the capacity to learn in HE, and previous expectations about learning may have to be extended (or unlearnt) to align with expectations of HE.

In higher education:

- demonstration of skills is only **one part** of the learning process, not the whole learning process
- learning may take place in the classroom and on placement but also by, **reading or formal study, reflection, and online.**
- **good standards of written presentation are essential** and students for whom writing is not their strength will not be offered alternative assessments in higher education, unlike VET.
- **critical thinking is valued more highly in higher education than rote learning** of guidelines about how to respond to each situation, which is sufficient in VET.
- the **role of the lecturer is to support students to maximise their learning** (and to exceed basic competence) rather than to tell students the correct response.

In particular, support may be required to explain:

- the different expectations of higher education (personal integration of learning, reflection, critical thinking, appropriate collaboration, and autonomous learning).
- the different learning methods (online, personal study, and preparation for class or online activities by prior reading).
- assessment expectations (importance of reading, writing, research, referencing, selection of sources, correct paraphrasing, and academic style).

Course leaders reported that some VET students initially chose the VET pathway as an alternative to ATAR, because they recognised they did not have strong literacy and numeracy skills, but as reported elsewhere (Watson, Hagel & Chesters, 2013), some VET training providers had not required them to develop these skills, even though good written skills are essential to youth work.

Course leaders also reported that VET students who have been assessed as competent in a skill or topic in a single module (even if this is only a small part of a certificate IV or diploma course), often request RPL for university subjects with similar titles, because they believed that being competent means they have learnt all that is required in that topic or skill area. This is a particular problem in many complex areas of learning such as ethics, youth work methods, and also in some narrower skill areas, such as group work, where a skilled practitioner requires many different skills and methods so they can select according to circumstances. Catterall and Davis (2012) also reported that VET students find that the university workload is heavier than what they expected, and this correlates with observations by youth work staff in this study. Watson et al. p. 29, identified some of these issues in a generic way when they stated:

There was evidence of an appreciation of these issues in one response to the survey:

‘Academic staff in faculties report that because of the ‘competencies’ emphasis in VET, students coming from VET may not have the more generic skills and abilities focused upon in the first year of a [university] programme, e.g. academic literacy, critical thinking, essay-writing, reflective practice. If students are given credit recognition for first year subjects when articulating from VET they can miss this generic skills focus at [university].’
(Respondent, Cluster 2).

Wheelahen (2008) argued that university learning and VET learning were based upon different curriculum epistemologies. Watson et al. (2013) however, do not explicitly link the differences they found to the variation in underlying concepts of the nature of knowledge.

Catterall and Davis (2012) summarised research that showed that graduation rates for VET award students were similar to those for school leavers. However, they noted that for VET entry students, attrition rates in first year were higher and, on average these students repeated units more frequently than school leavers. They also identified that VET entrants typically needed additional support during their transition to university in four key areas: academic literacy; numeracy; familiarisation with the university learning environment; and pastoral care (p.6). Catterall and Davis made several recommendations for support options, including information leaflets, special short bridging courses, and mentoring. Watson et al. (2012) suggested large courses might offer a separate first year pathway for VET students to ease the transition and offer academic support. A separate pathway is not an option for youth work degrees. Some additional transitional support strategies have been developed for youth work students at ECU, as part of the course redevelopment undertaken in conjunction with this project. A first unit has been re-developed to incorporate academic and learning support and to build learning communities for both on-campus and online students. Student feedback in 2013 indicated students valued these elements.

Inter-professional pathways

One part of the project was to examine whether, and how, youth work degrees related to other education, welfare and helping professions. Youth work lies at the intersection of education, human rights, and welfare, and related professions included any courses that might recruit from the same pool of students, for example, social work, teaching, community work, human services, counselling, and potentially psychology. The information provided by course leaders indicated diversity of practices. Two course leaders identified that there were strong inter-professional relationships (as indicated by ease of transfer of students between courses, and combined or double majors). All three smaller youth work degrees included some core units taught by other disciplines, and/or taught core units shared with other disciplines. One course leader expressed the view that there was natural hostility between related professions, acknowledging the competitive nature of contemporary Australian higher education.

Three course leaders indicated they were offering or contemplating, combined or double majors between: youth work and education; youth work and creative industries; youth work and criminal justice; youth work and social work; youth work and recreation; youth work and addiction studies; and youth work and psychology.

Chapter 4: Youth work curriculum renewal

This section describes the findings from the initial curriculum mapping, a collation of the perceptions of stakeholders, and changes made to courses as a consequence of the project.

Initial Curriculum mapping

The audit conducted prior to the project found the following knowledge domain areas were common to all programmes:

- **Theoretical orientation:** A sociological or socio-political orientation, including units on basic sociology, sociology of youth, and/or politics.
- **Practicum:** one or more supervised practicum placements.
- **Skill development units:** interpersonal skills, counselling, management, occupational health and safety, facilitation and social action.
- **Community work** most courses also included some content on community development.

The audit found the following differences:

- A varying **number and scope of practicum** units (2 or 3 practicum units seemed to be common, sometimes as a double unit across two semesters) and the number and diversity of placement experiences.
- Variation in the ways **practicum was managed**, including student choice, whether students are forbidden, permitted or required to find own placement and variation in the number of practicum hours.
- Variation in the **total number of required units**, the number of **specialist units**, and the numbers of **generic units** shared with other cogent disciplines.
- Variation in **content, emphasis** and choice of which units to teach as specialist and which to share with other disciplines.

A summary of the initial mapping can be found in Appendix A

Course Structures

There were many structural similarities between the different courses, despite their different origins and histories. All courses followed a similar basic pattern of four units per semester, with six semesters in the degree. All degrees were offered over three years. At the commencement of the project, only one institution offered all its units online (ECU). The diversity of the current structures reflects the different origins of the four courses, and their differing enrolments and circumstances. The two smallest courses (ACU & ECU) show some structural similarities. Both of these courses comprise a mix of youth work specialist units, generic social science units, and electives/ minors. The number of youth work specialist units varies (between 8, 10, and 11), the number of generic units varies (between 8 and 10), and the number of electives/minors varies (between 3 and 6). The diversity of specialist/generic structures invites further investigation about how to determine whether a degree has sufficient youth work specific content to adequately prepare students for professional youth work. The two

other courses (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, [RMIT] and Victoria University [VU]) were much larger. At the time of the initial curriculum mapping, the RMIT course had 18 youth or youth work specialist units and the VU course had 13 specialist units and five generic units. Both courses allowed six elective or minor units.

Course content

From the curriculum mapping, course documentation and interviews it was determined that there were sufficient similarities between youth work degrees to begin a process that would identify core content of Australian youth work degrees.

- All had a specialist unit on principles/practices of youth work/values in youth work.
- All taught ethics but there were differences between courses as to whether this occurred in a separate unit, and whether the unit was shared with other disciplines, or whether the teaching of ethics was embedded across multiple units.
- Sociology and politics provided the main theoretical foundation of all youth work degrees. The two smaller courses all contained a generic introductory sociology unit shared with other disciplines, whilst the two larger courses provided specialist youth sociology units.
- All youth work degrees taught social policy or youth policy. How courses included youth/social policy differed, but in most courses there was a specialist youth policy unit. At Edith Cowan University (ECU) youth policy was contained in a politics unit, and also taught as a generic unit.
- All courses included a group work unit.
- All courses included a helping skills/applied counselling skills unit.
- Most courses included content on youth work/services management sometimes offered as a generic unit.
- Most, but not all courses included a unit on research methods, sometimes offered as a specialist youth research unit, and sometimes offered as a generic unit on research in social science.
- All courses had one or more practicum units, but there was variation in the tasks students were required to complete, the number of placement agencies students experienced in their placement, the diversity of placement experiences required and the amount of student choice.
- All courses used a range of assessment methods, including essays, exams, portfolios or placement reports, group projects, reports, and oral presentations.
- All courses made use of a variety of teaching methods, including lectures, tutorials, role-play or simulation, group work, peer support, problem-based and experiential learning, and workplace practicum.

Practicum organisation

Course leaders discussed practicum arrangements. In all placements, students received supervision from both a nominated person in the placement agency and from the university supervisor. Most courses allowed students to undertake placements flexibly so they could accommodate their other life commitments. The two main differences were:

- Number of hours required (minimum hours 400, maximum 520 hours, one course did not specify hours on one placement because the task was project based);
- Responsibility for arranging placement (student responsible for finding placement;

university places student; placement coordinator negotiates with student). The most common arrangement was for the placement coordinator to negotiate with each student.

One person mentioned problems finding suitable placements, but this seemed be location dependent –a problem for some Melbourne courses, but not for courses in Perth.

Perceptions of stakeholders

Perceptions of youth work degrees

Course leaders' beliefs about the strengths of their courses were often specific to their context. Some of the shared beliefs included the benefits for students of a small programme where staff and students get to know each other personally (2⁴), a good balance between practical and theoretical learning (2), experienced staff (2) and the practicum experience and strong connections with the youth field (2). Employers expressed strong support for youth work degrees as the preferred pre-employment qualification. When asked their preferences for qualifications for commencing youth workers, the majority of the respondents (63 per cent) indicated a youth work degree (42 per cent) or a youth work diploma (21 per cent), while a minority (21 per cent) indicated that a social work graduate was their preference. The remaining 16 per cent was evenly split between a psychology degree (5 per cent), teaching degree (5 per cent) and a TAFE certificate in youth work (5 per cent).

Employers' expressed greatest agreement about the expected graduate knowledge with respect to youth work theory and practice; and about young people and youth issues. The need for theoretical and specialist knowledge, such as sociological perspectives, knowledge of indigenous and diversity issues, and knowledge of juvenile justice was also valued by most employers (see Appendix C for a detailed breakdown of preferences).

In response to the qualitative question about other knowledge, skills, values or capacities they expected of commencing graduates, employers mentioned personal attributes, encompassed by Barnett and Coate (2005) in the being domain of learning (knowing, acting, being). This represents integration of knowledge, skills, experience, and practice wisdom. Many of these are attributes that are not easily measured, and not directly assessed in most university courses, and included empathy, life experience, liking for young people, creativity, innovation and a strong sense of self. Other values and skills included demanding greatness from young people, being literate and numerate, and supporting harm minimisation approaches and good facilitation skills.

The most commonly nominated skills and abilities employers expected of commencing youth workers were the ability to maintain boundaries in relationships with young people and colleagues; ability to adapt youth work practice to the needs of young people; to work autonomously; to work as a team member; and to work inclusively with young people. The least important skills were in relation to sports, arts and crafts, suggesting that there is a greater emphasis on conceptual knowledge and soft-skills compared with practical skills. There was moderate agreement on skills such as analytical skills and critical thinking, leadership, time management, report writing, evaluation skills, counselling skills, group work, risk management and ability to prioritise work. Two qualitative answers demonstrate the importance of integration of knowledge into action:

⁴ n of responses

Adapt youth work practice to needs of young people - this is critical, as being familiar with theory does not automatically enable you to work with young people.

Ability to structure intervention (i.e. understand purpose of intervention and methods for responding, motivating, creating change etc.).

When asked about values and dispositions, employers' responses demonstrated that they sought values and dispositions that might be considered as wisdom or virtues rather than simply knowledge or skills. The four most highly valued dispositions included ethical practice (honesty, non-exploitative); ability to learn from mistakes; good judgment; and sense of responsibility. Highly sought-after values included "commitment to equity, rights and continuous improvement (young people's rights, organisational values, a more equitable society, equal opportunity, and improvement of youth work practice). Employers also indicated they valued commitments to life-long learning; being resourceful and having courage. The qualitative responses indicated that creativity was another desired disposition.

Student responses indicated that they prioritised class attendance/online study, and assignment submission. Fewer students had the same commitment to online discussions, and preparation for class, and even fewer to completion of required readings; and additional study that was not required. The quantitative data suggest that on average the students managed to balance study and other commitments well. However, qualitative comments suggest otherwise:

Personal life - good study/life balance can be hard to achieve!

I guess the commitment to post grad studies does interfere with my well being in that it leaves very little room to maintain relationships and social networks.

The results suggest that employment and family commitments often affect students' study. The fact that most did not seek additional materials to enhance their studies is open to many different interpretations. It may reflect time pressure; shallow rather than deep learning (Biggs, 2001, Marton et al., 1997); or a sense that the basic materials supported learning that was sufficient for their purposes. The aspects of the course that students valued most about their degree were that they learnt a lot about young people; gained skills relevant to youth work; were supported by their lecturers; that their studies supported their professional development; that the course was well integrated with the profession; and they felt that staff cared about their personal development. The next most frequently nominated responses were that the course challenged the way they thought; and that theoretical perspectives helped their learning. There was least support for the concept that working with other students supported their learning. Qualitative responses in regard to other valued aspects, revealed both professional and personal benefits:

The networking opportunities you receive and the connections with people in the field that you make.

[It]...has helped me be a better parent to my teenagers and am hoping in the future that youth works skills and principles might be incorporated into a parenting programme [sic].

I appreciate the room for discussion in the degree (and classroom activity) and how there are many different opinions or slight variations between students and theory that challenge my thinking and grow me [sic] personally and professionally.

When students were asked what they would do after graduation, the majority (69 per cent) expected to work in the youth work profession either as a youth worker (55 per cent) or to undertake further study in youth work (14 per cent). A sizable minority (43

per cent) intended to work overseas at some time.

Suggested Improvements

Areas of improvement identified by course leaders were often specific to the circumstances of particular courses. Staffing, however, was a concern for several course leaders, and the concerns arose from the vulnerability of small teams: lack of permanent staff; limits to staff diversity in small teams (gender, disciplinary, experience); and lack of succession planning. Employers identified a number of changes they would like to see, including:

[More lecturing] staff still working in the industry; better preparation of students to enable them to work individually with young people through case management; and better knowledge of drug, alcohol and mental health issues; students employed in youth work should to be able to undertake their placement at their place of work [this is permitted in some courses]. Some employers expressed concern about the workload for agency supervisors of placement students; and some suggested additional practical work placements.

Other suggestions included gaining a greater understanding of relevant legislation; better understanding of policy and its effects on youth work; and promotion of youth work as a valued career. In the qualitative section of the survey, one student indicated they wanted to see more practical classes. This comment related to their particular course, but illustrates the importance some students place upon strong connections between their studies and their future employment.

A field trip in third year to a youth organisation would be helpful, as we have learnt more and would be able to ask more informed questions. Having guest lecturers in also helps- i.e. people from the field.

In response to the question about how they thought the youth field would change in the next 10-15 years, all course leaders believed that youth work would professionalise. This perception was shared by youth work staff and other stakeholders including the professional associations and some youth work peak bodies. The other two areas where there was most agreement were that youth work will be delivered through larger organisations (3) and youth work will become more diverse (2).

In response to the question about how youth work degrees will need to change to maintain relevance, course leaders had a variety of suggestions including:

- professional identity would need to be strengthened
- that content would need to be continuously reviewed
- staff would need to maintain their credibility with respect to changes in youth work practice
- more online courses
- post-graduate courses
- a greater focus on internationalisation, including young people in a global context, and a global model of youth work.

According to course leaders, the methods youth work courses used to maintain relevance was through advisory boards/consultative committees that included field representatives; through active involvement in research and practice; through employment of sessional and adjunct staff with concurrent practice experience; and through university staff participation in practicum visits and supervision. Only one course leader did not believe that there was any mechanism to maintain relevance. The

impediments to maintaining relevance identified by course leaders were financial pressures (2); staffing (2); the public policy agenda for higher education; inappropriate growth without adequate resources; and difficulty attracting sufficient student numbers to survive.

The professional bodies and peak bodies made a number of suggestions, some of which were relevant only to a particular state. There was a clear division between states with youth work degrees and those without. Those with degrees in state strongly supported their contribution. States without access were more divided in their response. However, there was broad support for greater access to youth work degrees, including online. Most of the respondents from the peak bodies and professional associations considered that the low entry requirements, curriculum and variation in standards in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) awards meant that they were not adequate to meet the needs of the youth work profession. The peaks and professional associations broadly supported the concept that there should be similarity between core elements of the Australian youth work degrees.

Perceptions of practicum

Course leaders, youth work staff, students and employers agreed that student practicum was an important and valued part of the course that assisted students with career planning, and assisted youth work agencies with staff recruitment. Practicum often enabled students to find relevant employment before graduation and youth agencies used placement as a recruitment strategy, enabling them to see how a student fitted into their organisation. If there was a good fit, when a vacancy arose, students were frequently given priority for employment before graduation.

Time constraints imposed by some students' life commitments sometimes meant they had restricted time availability for practicum and consequently, less choice about placement agency. However, most students indicated they were satisfied with their placements. There was no support from students for the suggestion that placements should be longer. Because the survey collated aggregate results, and placements were of differing length, it is not possible to infer students' perceptions of the appropriate length. Two students provided comment on their practicum experience. Overall students were positive about their practicum experience, as typified by the following qualitative comment:

I felt well supported in doing practicum and both agencies gave me a lot of opportunity to do valuable work (i.e. work with young people and in programmes [sic], not just photocopying). I found practicum gave meaning to the other subjects I was doing and I learnt a lot from my supervisors, other workers at the agencies, and reflecting on my own practice.

According to youth work staff, some students find placement challenges their expectations, values and worldviews. This may be viewed either positively or negatively, depending on the student's expectations. A minority of students reported they did not find placement challenging enough and were bored. In some courses where students were expected to find their own placements, some students complained that they did not receive enough assistance.

Issues for consideration

The mapping raised three interesting issues for on-going discussion:

- How **uniformity and diversity** of curriculum between courses should be balanced?
- **Contextualisation of knowledge:** the presentation of specialist and generic content in youth work degrees.

- **Practicum** organisation, assessment and hours.

Uniformity and diversity: as a result of this project, courses have moved towards more uniformity in their overall goals and there has been some convergence in **core content**. There has been agreement on **what core content is essential to include** in three (ACU, ECU & VU) youth work degrees, whilst space has been maintained for institutions to develop a special focus in the youth work course they offer and for students to study electives as part of their degree. Greater convergence is only likely to occur if a national professional body accredits courses. There seems to be no demand for greater convergence from existing state-based professional bodies or employers, and it is not clear that greater convergence is needed or would be beneficial

Contextualisation of knowledge: Specialist youth work content is content designed specifically for youth work students and taught by youth work staff. Generic content is either content delivered by other disciplines, for example, sociology or community studies, and taught by staff from other disciplines; or, is content developed and taught by youth work staff but tailored to the needs of a broader cohort of students (for example, community studies students, or human services students). In the context of the VET youth work courses, this issue has raised some concern. In 2007, Broadbent and Corney, raised a concern that specialist youth work content had been removed from youth work qualification and had been replaced by de-contextualised generic community services content (Bessant, 2007, pp. 44-51). In the VET sector the trends identified by Broadbent and Corney have intensified in subsequent reviews and similar pressures have been experienced in higher education (HE). Prior to this review, the ECU youth work degree shared generic curriculum with cogent disciplines. As a result of this review, the course re-development at ECU has paid additional attention to the contextualisation of generic skills for the youth work context within youth work units. Curriculum based upon Threshold Concepts strongly supports contextualisation of knowledge (Meyer and Land, 2003).

Differences in **practicum** arrangements have been acknowledged by partners. A review of international requirements indicated that Australian youth work students completed less supervised practicum than students in equivalent awards in the UK and Ireland (Lifelong Learning, 2008). This will be discussed in more depth in the section on internationalisation.

Curriculum Change

This section describes the curriculum changes made as a result of the curriculum mapping process in this project at each site.

Australian Catholic University (ACU)

Summary:

The process of mapping and comparing course content was useful for ACU in identifying gaps and content to be included in subjects. These will be discussed and changes proposed in the 2014 youth work review.

The links that have developed between courses are extremely beneficial particularly in terms of benchmarking subjects. It is proposed that benchmarking occur regularly and some joint projects be undertaken.

Edith Cowan University (ECU)

Summary:

The project informed several changes made to the youth work degree at ECU. These included:

1. Restructured to create a Bachelor of Youth Work, with the first intake in mid 2013.
2. Funding by ECU Strategic Initiative Fund (SIF) to improve online delivery of the Bachelor of Youth Work.
3. Re-worked pedagogy and content of all units around Barnett and Coate's curriculum framework.
4. Used Threshold Concepts to link Barnett and Coate's (2005) framework to unit content (Table 3).
5. All online materials for youth work specialist units are being completely re-written to align with curriculum framework and the gaps identified in the curriculum comparison (2012-2014).
6. Trialled two new units YWK1220 Youth Issues and YWK1101 Principles of Youth work in 2013.
7. Changed the focus from knowledge and skill outcomes to integration between being, action/skills and knowledge, with teaching focus on the troublesome and transformative.

Bachelor of Youth Work: At the beginning of the project, the youth work degree was a major within the Bachelor of Social Science degree. This was out of line with other youth work degree programmes, and we also found it created problems for both students and future employers. Students were unhappy because youth work was not listed on their graduation parchment, whilst employers found it was difficult to distinguish between youth work graduates and graduates who had completed some of the youth work units as part of a different award (perhaps as a minor, or electives). The previous arrangement also created marketing problems, and reduced connection with the field because there was no youth work specific consultative committee. The re-designation has met with approval from employers and students.

ECU SIF: Shortly after the Office for Learning and Teaching project commenced, ECU supported the re-development of the Bachelor of Youth work through Special Initiative Funding (SIF) and the offer of additional support from learning designers in the Centre for Learning Development (CLD) at ECU. Youth work specialist units were reconceptualised to align with the Barnett and Coate's framework. This was used to conceptualise the relationship between units within the whole course, and to plan how each unit would contribute to development in each of the three domains. After this process was complete, Threshold Concepts were used to refocus the assessment and teaching, to identify what concepts required most attention within each unit.

Content gaps identified included:

- **inter-professional collaboration;** (added to YWK1101; YWK2113)
- Application to youth work of generic communication and helping skills; (bridging materials added to YWK1101)
- **digital media and youth work;** (added to YWK3231, CSV2116, in progress)
- **update** needed on social activism; (full re-work of YWK3231, not yet complete)
- Greater on **integration of personal experience** with sociological and psycho-sociological perspectives in unit on identity formation; (re-work YWK3211)
- **strengthen research skills** (re-work YWK1220, completed)
- **improved First Year Experience/ transition support** to first year (re-work YWK1220)

- Reflection on practice/ **Integration of three domains** (reflection already included but strengthen focus on integration of learning within all units but especially YWK1220, YWK1101, YWK2113, YWK3211, YWK3231)

These changes have necessitated complete re-development of all specialist units, to refocus, to add materials, to remove materials and to update online presentation. This task is in progress and has had additional support from ECU centrally, and is expected to be completed by the end of 2014.

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)

Summary:

This project coincided with changes to the youth work programme at RMIT including prospective closure of the undergraduate programme and loss of employment for staff. This created insecurity and major obstacles to pursuing the proposed curriculum renewal project. In short, since the commencement of the ALTC project in 2010, the major pre-occupation of staff in the RMIT youth work programme has been to simply secure the continuity of the youth work programme.

Whether there are any benefits to come out of this ALTC project, which can be used in the future to help staff and students recover and rebuild the programme, is a moot question. It depends in part on whether we will see changes in management personnel and whether RMIT decides once more to reinvest in youth work. If that is the case, it is likely that the prospect of sharing common courseware and inter professional collaboration will assist in justifying a renewal and in re-establishing youth specific courses.

If that is the case, it is likely that curriculum frames offered by Barnett and Coates (2005) combined with the work of other scholars like Swartz and Sharpe will be used to redesign curriculum aimed at graduating students equipped to exercise practical wisdom. The use of digital media will also assist in efforts to renew the youth work curriculum, a task that is likely to reap benefits for all programmes if it is done in partnership with programmes in other universities.

Staff in the RMIT undergraduate youth work degree programme, which began in 1979, undertook a major review in 2005-06 involving an extensive consultation process with the youth sector and government. This coincided with a commitment on the part of the university to build up and invest in youth work through the employment of new staff and the offering of new postgraduate youth work qualifications. Major curriculum changes were made and progressively implemented to give effect to the redesign of the programme. The 2005-06 review resulted in recommendations to strengthen the degree programme by more sustained attention to concepts like good practice, justice, and the careful use of specific ethical frameworks. Those changes also included a much stronger and intellectually rigorous youth specific curriculum emphasising a mixture of critical and analytic skills and practical competencies relying on an augmented field education programme. By 2008, this curriculum renewal project was complete and the focus turned to developing the new postgraduate offering.

With a change in the management of the school in which youth work was housed came an abrupt change to its status and future as a discipline area. The programme area faced a serious challenge in March 2010 when the youth work discipline leader was stood down. The new management took the view that the youth work area was too small, over staffed and too costly given its niche character. Around the same time, the

newly developed youth work postgraduate offering was rested and a review of the undergraduate programme foreshadowed.

Underpinning some of the events described above is Australia's increasingly managerial and neo-liberal higher education environment. In addition, and especially relevant to this project and report, is the particular nature of youth work as a higher education qualification. What happened at RMIT was coloured to some extent by the views of some in academia that youth work is a practical course of study and a soft offering not worthy of higher education status and which really belongs in TAFE, a view paradoxically echoed by some youth work practitioners who consider that the kinds of critical thinking, theory and sociological knowledge (for example), taught in youth work degrees are irrelevant to working with young people.

Following the events of 2010 one staff member elected not to return from a leave of absence and another took a voluntary redundancy. Two forced redundancies were made. In one case, the decision was reversed. During this difficult period, staff at the RMIT persevered as best they could under difficult circumstances.

These events led to a major case in the Australian Federal Court during 2012 and 2013 with a landmark judgement that found the university had taken unlawful adverse action when it terminated the employment of one member of staff. It was found that the university breached the Fair Work Act 2009 (Commonwealth) and contravened a section of the Fair Work Act 2009.

The foreshadowed review of the undergraduate programme did take place, but the changes recommended by the review panel were not adopted. Instead, smaller changes were made that led to the loss of some youth work specific courses, including a number of important youth work electives. The shrinking of the staff base of the youth work programme area, combined with casualisation in universities, generally has led to some courses (both youth work specific and generic) now being taught by casual staff. Finally, the decision taken in later 2009 to rest the newly developed post-graduate youth work (certificate, diploma and masters) programme was not reversed. This meant that an important income stream that would have directly enhanced the budget of the programme was lost. The opportunity to consolidate and build youth work as a discipline area was also lost.

Key lessons to be learned from the RMIT experience are:

- that niche courses are highly vulnerable in the context of an increasingly neoliberal and managerial higher education sector
- a need exists for more collaborative work within the youth work sector directed towards building and sustaining quality education of practitioners
- a need exists for greater cooperation and the exchange of resources across universities
- there is a need to identify and challenge prejudices that currently thwart the development of youth work programmes in the university sector
- there is a need for a public education - or a public awareness campaign- to communicate the purpose of youth work and the value of youth work

Victoria University (VU)

Summary:

The curriculum project engaged partners in robust conversations with colleagues across the country on the rationale for current choices in youth work degree programmes. Some of those choices will always be pragmatic in a university context; however, a number of choices were defended because of the experience of the staff and their connection to the industry. This has meant that the Victoria University (VU) youth work course emerged from an unusual context and as such, it is believed, is a good example of the content and pedagogy of a Bachelor of Youth Work.

This project was collecting and sharing curriculum information in the year that VU was writing a new course. Therefore, to have the opportunity to review other curriculum and consider the construction of youth work courses at other universities was very valuable. The material was shared, as were the conversations around course content and pedagogy. This informed the development of the VU course.

Content, such as that embedded in VU's current ethics subject, grew out of reviewing other curriculum in project partner universities. This opportunity also provided staff with the information to consider the scaffolding of content that was embedded in the other courses. So not only did the project inform decisions about essential content, but also the sequence of content delivery. This included both discussion about appropriate content at each year level, and discussion about complimentary content that needed to run concurrently. Up until this time the course at VU had been an articulated degree, meaning that the first two years were effectively in Technical and Further Education (TAFE). Therefore, staff at VU had to write all of the foundational content in the new course to develop the scaffolding of that content.

Conclusions

Curriculum achievements included:

- promotion of discussion about the concept of degree level professional youth work learning, and considerations when students transfer from VET
- agreement on important core graduate learning outcomes
- basis of a cross-institutional community of practice in youth work education
- project informed curriculum change at ACU, ECU and VU that has been implemented or is being implemented
- foundations from which annual benchmarking could be instigated between youth work courses involved in this project.

Where the project has not instigated curriculum change:

- Unforeseen external factors meant that the project had limited curriculum outcomes at RMIT. Forced curriculum change occurred at RMIT that was not informed by this project. This will be remedied if RMIT decides to reinvest in the development of the youth work programme.

Chapter 5: Sustainability and niche professions

This project provides an initial exploration of strategies developed by niche professional courses in Australian public universities. It examines the challenges faced by youth work courses and strategies used to address the challenges. This section also summarises the online survey to identify other potentially vulnerable niche courses, and strategies reported elsewhere.

Background

Since the 1980s, Australian Higher Education (HE) has moved away from a centrally planned, elite, model of education provision to a massified, market-driven model of provision. The reasons for these changes, and merits of the policies and their implementation strategies, have been discussed extensively elsewhere. The purpose of this part of the project was to begin to explore the consequences of systemic change for niche professions and some of the strategies adopted by courses in this position. When higher education was funded according to a centrally-planned funding model, government supported university places were capped at each institution, and the course mix at each institution was subject to government approval. Courses were funded for a specified maximum number of centrally supported places and although policy details varied over the years, over-enrolment was penalised by lower funding, and under-enrolment led to lower allocation of quotas in subsequent years. Under funding arrangements, introduced in 2012, university places are no longer capped, and Australian universities can offer whatever course mix they choose, and whatever number of places they choose. During the period between 1980 and 2012, per capita government funding has reduced, and a recent report by Universities Australia calculated that the net effect of policy changes from 2008-13 will be a reduction of base funding of 15 per cent per student by 2015 compared with the levels recommended by the Bradley review (Universities Australia, 2013, p. 3).

Changes to the funding model for higher education mean that universities operate more like commercial businesses, termed by Considine, Marginson, Sheehan and Kumnick, (2001) as enterprise universities. There are a number of intended consequences of this. Firstly, provision of university places has become driven by student demand. Secondly, universities have compared the real cost of provision of different types of courses and have experimented with ways to reduce the per capita cost of university education. This has been described as increasing efficiency. The cheapest courses to offer are those that can be mass-taught by lecturer or online (MOOC-style [Massive Open Online Course]), where no special facilities are required (no laboratories) and where no practicum supervision is needed. The most expensive courses to provide are those that cannot be taught to large groups, those that have a supervised practicum component, or those that require specialist facilities. Some disciplines with these characteristics, for example, medicine, nursing, engineering, attract a higher rate of per capita government support. Others (social work, teaching and youth work) do not.

An unintended consequence of the move toward the enterprise university has been a decoupling of graduate supply from economic and social needs. An acknowledged limitation of the market sensitive approach is that student demand for places is not closely aligned with either graduate employment opportunities in different disciplines, or the supply of graduates that will meet Australian economic and social needs. Niche professional courses, and especially those not funded at the higher rate per capita, are potentially vulnerable in such an environment. The changes to the funding model also allowed institutions more flexibility about how they allocate expenditure between teaching and research.

An online survey was sent to all Australian public universities. The purpose was to identify potentially vulnerable courses, and to gather information about strategies they had adopted to support sustainability of niche courses. This section reports what was discovered from the review of youth work courses and compares findings with the cross-sectoral survey to determine to what extent the challenges and strategies are similar across disciplines.

Youth work as a niche profession

Challenges

Course leaders identified economic vulnerability/sustainability (4⁵) and (relatively) low numbers (4) as the primary challenges to viability. Other challenges identified included competition between universities, lack of permanent staff, lack of marketing of the course, competing pressures of research and teaching, lack of professionalisation of the sector and pressure to maintain high Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) entry scores, as some of the factors that made it difficult to sustain the course. Youth work staff identified similar challenges (except for research), but were more likely to be critical of university management (above the course leaders). One staff member also stated that they felt that the constraints of the academic calendar were not helpful to the course. Some youth work staff also raised concerns that pressures to increase class size had decreased the number of specialist units and increased the contribution of generic and decontextualised units in the youth work curriculum. Other concerns were divisions within the youth sector, and the time taken to work with students who struggle academically, and the lack of academic preparedness of some students, which limited their capacity to engage with academic curriculum and complete the course. Heads of School who were interviewed were primarily focused on economic viability.

The strategies course leaders used to address these challenges included maintaining a tight budget; making units more attractive to other courses; double degrees; double-coding of units (although this was no longer possible because of AQF [Australian Qualification Framework]); online improvement; support for professionalisation of the sector; marketing; expansion; and ensuring the course meets students' needs. Youth work staff supported these strategies. The heads of school focussed upon cost saving, and support for expansion. During this project, preliminary discussions were held about sharing some courseware through a franchise arrangement. The practicalities of this are still being examined at an institutional level.

Course leaders recognised that many of the challenges to small courses came from pressures beyond their institutions, including higher education policy and funding. For courses trying to expand, lack of staff numbers to maintain growth was a challenge. One institution had a policy of trying to raise the ATAR minimum entry score across the university, and set the minimum entry requirement for youth work higher than other universities. At first sight this might seem to be a positive move, because it would mean that the student cohort would be better prepared for academic study. However, the minimum ATAR was primarily a public relations tool, used to promote the perception of excellence of the institution. The entry pathway through VET accepted students with less well-developed academic skills, and demonstrated that academic standards were not the primary concern. In a competitive environment, the higher ATAR was a barrier to recruitment and decreased the sustainability of the course.

The main strategies adopted by course leaders to maintain sustainability were expansion and marketing. There have been some discussions about sharing courseware but these require institutional agreements that have not been negotiated yet.

⁵ n of responses

Other Niche professions

An online survey was sent to each of the Vice Chancellors with responsibility for teaching and learning at all public universities in Australia with a request to pass the survey to the most appropriate person in their institution. Responses came from 25 per cent of institutions, which was a higher proportion than anticipated. In some institutions the survey was answered by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, in others it was passed on to staff at other levels. Responses provided information about a variety of disciplines including business; science, mathematics, engineering; health, medicine, veterinary, creative industries; social science; and education.

The survey is included in Appendix B and detailed responses in Appendix C.

Nine of the ten respondents indicated that they were aware of niche professional courses in their school/faculty or institution, and the respondents identified a total of 19 courses across five discipline areas, see Table 4.

Table 4
Disciplines in which niche professional courses are located

Discipline	Number of courses
Allied health	9
Welfare and community services	4
Languages other than English	1
Medical/veterinary	1
Creative industries	4

The informants reported that they used a number of strategies to enhance sustainability of courses, see Table 5.

Table 5
Strategies for enhancing sustainability of nice professional courses

Strategies applied	Number of responses
Double code units	5
Mixed mode units	6
Units shared with other courses	7
Flexible course structures to allow units to be offered in alternative years	4
Single cohort offerings	1
Other (please explain)	4*

*Double degrees; online units from other universities; use of partnerships with other organisations; industry partnerships

The informants provided nine strategies to support the sustainability of niche professional courses, including:

- Develop and maintain strong links with the industry.
- Develop and maintain potential partnerships between specific employers and the institution.
- Develop and maintain strong industry support for courses.
- Ensure marketing of courses with the ability to generate public interest.
- Provide the media with stories that make 'good press'.
- Ensure that the reputation of courses focuses on high quality.

- Ensure that courses are supported by high demand (from students and industry).
- Use multidisciplinary expertise for course delivery.
- Reduce competition and move to collaboration amongst institutions.

Five informants provided suggestions about policy changes that would support niche professional courses, some of the suggestions included:

- Ensure courses are connected to the institution's research strengths and industry links.
- Promote opportunities for flexible delivery for learning, such as short courses.
- Provide opportunities for international delivery of courses.
- Ensure admission standards for students are appropriate to facilitate a good fit with the requirements of the intended occupation.
- Provide appropriate timeframes for the establishment and consolidation of niche courses.
- Provide incentives for universities to collaborate in the areas of niche courses.

Respondents also indicated however, that implementation of these policies would be challenging, because existing systems (administrative systems; staff workload for units delivered flexibly; admissions) were not adapted to non-standard approaches to course delivery.

Case studies of youth work sustainability

Australian Catholic University (ACU)

Strengths

The youth work course has strong support from the university and aligns perfectly with the university mission statement. Students have excellent support (equity and disability, academic skills, early achievers programmes and support for high achieving students) within the university and School of Arts and Sciences. The youth work course has strong field and professional links across all key areas of the youth work sector. It has a committed number of sessional lecturers who are all practicing youth workers. It has an excellent reputation for producing high quality graduates and there is a very strong demand for students exiting the course. Within the university outstanding youth work students are recognised through the annual 'Halliday Award' for youth work excellence and ACU awards in community engagement. A graduate of the ACU youth work course is a permanent staff member who is also a practicing youth worker. A restructure of ACU means that the youth work course will now be situated within the Faculty of Education and Arts. Within the restructure there will be a new research institute in health that has a focus on young people and wellbeing. The youth work course is ideally placed within this. In addition, the youth work course has a strong connection with the ACU institute of child protection and is undertaking some joint projects. ACU is committed to employing staff in the youth work course with a strong body of practice experience, who are eligible for membership of the youth work association. A higher degree, whilst desirable, is not compulsory. ACU has a strong postgraduate research cohort coming through from the youth work course. The course is financially viable with an increasing number of students yearly. For instance the introductory youth work subject has grown from 25, eight years ago to, 120.

Weakness

There are only two staff members in the youth work course (one whom is .8 FTL [Full Time Load]). The full time and senior staff member is the course coordinator and has a high postgraduate load, two honours, four PhDs and two masters, is an active researcher and also teaches in sociology. This staff member has been teaching large first year classes for the past five years. The .8 staff member mainly coordinates field placements. This means that the course coordinator who has a PhD is situated at the beginning of the course and does not see most students again until they graduate. There is an over reliance on sessional lecturers to teach some core units. There are also some issues of subject sequencing and content inclusion which need to be examined next year in the youth work review. In addition, the new diploma of youth work was originally developed two years ago to encourage untrained youth workers to gain a qualification. Thus a placement was not inserted. This however has not occurred. Whilst there is a strong interest in the diploma, with high student numbers, most students are not working in the sector. Whilst 75 per cent transition to the degree, the inclusion of a placement in the diploma needs to be examined.

The growth in the youth work degree has meant that teaching has had to shift from small classes and group work focus to lecture/tutorial format. Whilst lecturers are creative within this situation, it has meant a shift in the way youth work subjects are taught and assessed.

Opportunity

With the development of the youth work/counselling sequence, there is now a strong potential to develop other sequences. The youth work course has a very strong relationship with exercise science and many students choose to do electives (especially in working with young people at risk in outdoor settings etc.) within exercise science. This relationship needs to be strengthened and a possible pathway developed. ACU has a strong relationship with the Indigenous community and there are opportunities for development of on-site intensive delivery and online subjects for remote students. ACU is also aiming to deliver the youth work degree in NSW within five years, through the Sydney campus. With the youth work course having a counselling major now, there are opportunities for collaborative work between the youth work degree and other degrees such as counselling.

Challenge

At this stage there are no major challenges to the youth work course. In fact with the university commitment to social justice and the development of research institutes with a focus on young people and wellbeing, the positioning of the youth work course is strong. The number of youth work graduates exiting with higher degrees ensures there will be succession pathways for teaching staff. However, there is a restructure in progress at ACU and it cannot be guaranteed that youth work students will receive scholarships for higher studies research, as there is a strong university focus on the health sciences and education. Whilst this does not put the youth work course under any threat, it does mean that opportunities for postgraduate study may diminish.

Edith Cowan University (ECU)

This case study uses a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis (Appendix E) to outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by the Bachelor of Youth Work course at ECU. ECU is considered a 'New University', (post 1990).

Strengths

The youth work course has strong support from different parts of the university and good alignment between the university mission and the youth work programme. Students have good support within the university.

Challenges

The location of the course in the Faculty of Health Engineering and Science means the informal education/social justice paradigm of youth work is in tension with the dominant medical/ scientific paradigm of the school and faculty. This has created tension between course requirements and faculty policies. Faculty requires permanent staff to have a PhD before appointment. The youth work field, the professional body, employers and the course curriculum require someone with strong practice experience. Practicing youth workers do not have PhDs. This makes succession planning very difficult. Compliance paperwork requirements focus on the curriculum-as-designed, whereas the Barnett and Coate (2005) curriculum approach prioritises curriculum ecology. This creates a tension for staff trying to manage two fundamentally different approaches to quality management, and complicates timely and creative response to change.

Strategies are:

- Teach the equivalent of eight specialist youth work/youth studies units.
- Share a minimum of four units up to ten units with community work course. Youth work staff teach one or two of the shared units to help maintain their disciplinary relevance.
- Flexible staffing arrangements whereby the coordinator supports experienced professionals to contribute extensively to the teaching programme.
- The development of double majors with other disciplines.
- Maintain a strong research profile that includes both teaching and learning research and discipline related research.
- Prioritise change that minimises changes to paperwork.

(See Appendix E for full SWOT Analysis).

RMIT

Due to the industrial action that RMIT staff have been involved in, it is prudent for there to be no input in this section.

VU

This project provided some of the necessary impetus to grow the course at VU. It came at a time when discussions about niche courses were in the context of their sustainability. VU was small and could have disappeared in the subsequent changes to Higher Education funding. The staff were better informed by these discussions which facilitated a greater understanding of the vulnerability of niche courses and supported the direction that we subsequently decided to go, that is grow our degree programmes. We have grown so much that as of 2013 the VU Youth work programme had a first year intake of over 200 students. This is a sustainable course that is no longer under any challenge with a curriculum that has been informed by a national project, industry stakeholders and peer academics.

Common themes

Some themes that emerge from this preliminary study are:

- **Niche courses need a good disciplinary fit.** Niche courses are always located as minor disciplines within schools dominated by more powerful disciplines. Attention needs to be given to the epistemological fit between the niche course and the dominant discipline. This includes the value placed upon professional knowledge, as well as what constitutes learning, the purpose of higher education and dominant ideas about the nature of knowledge.
- **For youth work the best fit seems to be with education.** Youth work assumes a social constructionist position on knowledge. Problems arise when youth work is

placed with disciplines that take a positivist perspective on knowledge, and with disciplines that do not value the importance of professional knowledge.

- **Flexibility of university procedures and processes.** Niche course may benefit from unconventional arrangement for course delivery, including blended learning, condense course delivery, 'nested' qualification pathways and courses materials shared cross-institutionally or cross-institutional enrolments.
- **Strengthen institutional policies and practices that actively value, foster and facilitate cross-institutional disciplinary collaboration.** Niche course require cross-institutional collaboration to maintain relevance because within small teams the diversity of knowledge, specialisation and experience is limited. Failure to support cross-institutional collaboration risks stagnation of curriculum. Recent higher education policy has strengthened competition between universities and made cross-institutional collaboration more difficult.
- **Support formation of cross-institutional professional and disciplinary networks for niche courses.** Where collaboration was successful, it often depended on personal relationships between colleagues at different institutions and relied upon their personal commitment to disciplinary excellence. Inter-personal connection and academic curiosity foster generosity and help staff overcome barriers to cross-intuitional collaboration.

Chapter 6: Future directions in Youth Work Education

Trends

Trends in youth work education

This project facilitated international contact between youth work educators, and led directly to the first meeting of the International Youth Work Educators Forum in Ireland in 2013. Discussions between various members of this project team showed that many of the team members' maintained active links with overseas youth work educators. Prior to the project, team members maintained active links with the National University of Ireland, Strathclyde University, Harold Washington College, Chicago, George Williams College, London, the University of Cumbria, Lancaster, Huddersfield University, University of Glamorgan, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Durham University. After discussions with the project team, Trudi Cooper met with a group of international youth work educators at the International Sociological Association Conference in 2012, to gauge support for strengthening international connections. The sentiment was supportive, and staff from the National University of Ireland, agreed to host the first International Youth Work Educators' Forum, in Maynooth in 2013.

Youth work educators attended the Maynooth conference from the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland, England, USA, Belgium, South Africa, Zambia, Finland, India, and New Zealand. Australia was represented by Robyn Broadbent and Trudi Cooper from this project team. The international group wanted a mechanism to share materials and resources electronically, and with the agreement of the OLT, the webpage set up by this project will be opened up to youth work educators internationally. As a result of the project and the international youth work educators forum, the project team have extended their international networks. Youth work educators in the United States have expressed interest in the curriculum approach adopted by this project and have indicated their interest in collaboration to build upon the work commenced by this project.

The International Youth Work Educators Forum provided an opportunity for youth work educators to discuss current issues and future directions. Internationally, youth work professional education differs considerably. A common theme of the forum was the issue of professionalisation of youth work. In many countries there had been recent moves towards formation of profession bodies for youth work that would ultimately accredit youth work professional qualifications. There was some discussion about the relationship between professional bodies and maintenance of standards in youth work professional education, and the majority view was that professionalisation was helpful in this respect.

The system of youth work education most highly developed in the UK and Ireland where standards are codified and monitored (Cooper, 2013). By contrast in the USA, youth work has not professionalised and is mostly unregulated. In this context, youth work is just beginning to emerge as a discipline that is separate from social work and social psychology. In Northern Europe, youth work exists as part of social pedagogy that provides support for informal learning and social and personal development, not differentiated by age. In the UK, qualification as a professional youth worker requires a youth and community work degree. Non-degree qualified workers are designated as youth support workers and work under the supervision and direction of professional youth workers. In England, the body that manages education standards in youth work courses at all levels (Lifelong Learning, 2008), is separate from the body that advises on qualification standards for professional youth work (National Youth Agency, NYA), which

is separate from the union (Unite!) that negotiates pay and conditions under the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) award (Cooper, 2013). In the UK, a recognised youth work degree is required for recognition as a professional youth worker under JNC, and the youth work degree must include a minimum of 888 hours of supervised professional practice, as well as specified theoretical and skills content. Under the current arrangements, graduates from Australian universities would not be recognised as qualified.

In England, a new professional body formed in 2012 (Institute of Youth Work), and at the time of writing it was unclear what changes this would bring to the regulatory environment, especially because there has been declining employer support for the youth work JNC award (Cooper, 2013). In view of the satisfaction of Australian stakeholders (professional associations, peak bodies, employers, and students) with existing practicum duration, it would be premature to align practicum hours with the UK and Ireland when arrangements there are in flux. The weakening of commitment to JNC also means that Australian youth workers would be employable in many organisations in the UK, despite lack of recognition of their qualification.

The issue of internationalisation has become increasingly prominent in Australian higher education. Respondents to the student survey indicated that a sizeable number of students (43 per cent) expected to work or volunteer overseas after graduation. There are many ways to prepare students for overseas employment and volunteering. The curriculum can include global content, without losing its Australian focus, courses can facilitate student exchanges and study tours, both in-bound and out-bound; and universities can facilitate contact and international exchanges and research collaboration between youth work educators, so that staff are aware of changing international trends in youth issues, youth work and youth work education.

Youth work professionalisation in Australia

The process of professionalisation is underway in Australia, but will probably take 10-15 years before youth work is fully professionalised throughout Australia. Professionalisation is important to the HE sector for a number of reasons. Firstly, professional associations have an important influence in the quality management process for professional qualifications offered through universities, and are able to insist that staff teaching youth work have appropriate qualifications and experience. Secondly, courses that are accredited have greater credibility within the university. Finally, professionalisation of the sector will only have influence when employers make a decision to recruit only professionally qualified staff. The employers' survey indicates that in states where youth work degrees are offered, a degree qualification is the employers' preference, but it is not yet a mandatory requirement.

Online delivery and flexible learning

Many respondents identified that online course delivery and flexible learning arrangements, including blended learning and intensive teaching of units, are likely to be useful strategies for youth work degrees, especially if this enables degrees to be offered in states where no university currently offers a youth work degree.

Multiple pathways

The surveys indicated that the partner organisations already had good centralised institutional support for multiple pathways into courses. However, a number of informants indicated that the VET/HE pathway in particular was sometimes problematic because of lack of academic preparedness of students and because of incommensurability of the curriculum frameworks. Steps have been taken to build transition activities into some courses.

Inter-professional working

Information from the literature and from discussions with stakeholders indicate that in the foreseeable future, youth workers are more likely to be working in multi-disciplinary teams, in education, local government and in large non-government organisations. Inter-professional working requires youth workers to have a very clear understanding of their own identity and role. These elements will be facilitated by the emphasis on integration of knowing, acting and being in Barnett and Coate's (2005) curriculum.

Joint badging and sharing of course materials

A way to maintain diversity of experience in small teams is to collaborate across institutions through joint badging or franchising of courses and courseware. This requires strong centralised institutional support to facilitate.

Double degrees and postgraduate courses

Double degrees and postgraduate courses were mentioned by course leaders, as meeting student demand for greater choice. The number of double degrees that include youth work has increased since the commencement of the project and are planned to increase further in future.

Intensified competition between universities

Competition between universities has intensified since the commencement of the project because of changes to higher education policy and funding. However, one of the most promising strategies for niche courses depends upon collaboration. One of the biggest challenges for the future will be finding ways to collaborate in a competitive environment.

Work intensification in both teaching and research

Academic work intensification has occurred in both teaching and research. Fewer staff teach more students, with the expectation of higher quality materials and increased learning support. Compliance paperwork has increased and so have expectations of research outputs, and professional and community engagement. In small teams, this has greater impact than in large teams because they are no opportunities for specialisation, and course leaders are expected to manage increased demands across all areas of their work: teaching; research; administration; professional engagement and compliance. Professional courses are especially vulnerable because of the need to maintain non-academic professional networks, and the additional complexities of courses that include practicum. Professional courses that do not have professional closure are also vulnerable to under-resourcing if there is no professional body that can insist on adequate levels of support as a condition of accreditation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Strategies

- Courses should maintain strong connections with professional bodies and policy makers through consultative committees, informal connections and collaborative research.
- Institutional support for cross-institutional disciplinary networks that foster contact, collaboration, good will and a preparedness to share curriculum and other resources between Australian youth work educators.
- Institutional support for global perspectives in the curriculum, study exchange and study tour opportunities, and strong international staff connections and awareness of international trends in youth work and youth work education.

- Creative and flexible institutional support for innovative course delivery methods and cross-institutional arrangements.

Embedding change

Changes to the curriculum have been embedded at ACU, ECU and VCU. At ECU the process to consolidate change to online material will be completed by 2015.

There are plans to maintain collaboration through regular benchmarking partnerships. For ECU, this will require institutional support, especially for travel to/from Western Australia

The following international links have been consolidated during the project:

ACU: Caritas Institute Hong Kong; University of South Pacific, Delhi University, and TATA Institute of Social Sciences, India.

ECU: University of Cumbria, YMCA National College, UK; National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Harold Washington City of Chicago Community College; University of Huddersfield, England; Manchester Metropolitan University England; Youth Workers Association, Singapore; City University, New York; and Strathclyde University, Scotland

RMIT: CUNY, USA; Strathclyde University, UK; Durham University, UK; and Oxford University, UK.

VU: University of Maynooth; Youth Work Educators UK; University of Estonia; Youth Workers Association Estonia; University of East London; Goldsmiths University.

Dissemination

Dissemination has taken place during the project in the following ways.

In year one the main focus of the dissemination activities was dissemination for awareness with external stakeholders (the youth sector) to ensure that external stakeholders who we were consulting were aware of the project and its potential importance to the youth sector. The main methods of dissemination were through: South Australian Youth Work Conference (Adelaide); National Youth Work Conference (Sydney) the ECU industry engagement event (Perth), and internationally, the Somerset Dialogue Series, plus consultancy in Singapore.

In years two and three dissemination took place through the following meetings and conference presentations as well as further development of the website.

- Conference presentation Youth Studies Conference Maynooth July 2012
- Conference presentation July Dublin July 2012
- Threshold Concepts Conference presentation YACWA Perth July 2012
- Conference presentation International Youth Work Educators Conference Maynooth 2013
- Conference presentation SAYWC Adelaide April 2013
- Meeting with YAPA, Sydney November 2012 to explain the project and seek their support
- Meeting with AYAC staff, Sydney November 2012 to explain the project and seek their support
- ECulture 2012 presentation accepted in November 2012, but the presenter had an accident just before the presentation and was unable to present
- Discussion with professional associations to ensure they were fully informed of

what was happening and that they supported the process (Perth, Victoria and Adelaide –the Victorian presentation is scheduled for March 2014, the WA presentation is scheduled for April 2014).

- Two presentations (one on sustainability the other on curriculum) to the conference of the *Society for Research into Higher Education*, Wales, UK, in December 2013
- Presentation on the curriculum approach within the project to the Teaching and Learning Forum (WA) January 30th 2014.

Learning from the project

The main learning from the project can be summarised as

- External factors that delay or hamper the project cannot always be foreseen
- It takes a long time to establish the depth of trust required for genuine cross-institutional collaboration in what is essentially a competitive higher education market. Face-to-face meetings supplemented by electronic communications are essential for this process.
- Project management is crucial to the success of projects, but it is not always easy to find people who have these skills. Mainstream academic researchers who have discipline knowledge do not always have good project management skills.

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Appendix A: Curriculum mapping

Curriculum comparison and changes

The initial audit identified eleven areas of content that appeared in all youth work degree courses. These were:

1. Youth work theory
2. Practice methods in youth work
3. Practicum
4. Professional ethics
5. History and Sociology of youth
6. Youth well-being
7. Young people and diversity
8. Social Research
9. Community work and social action
10. Interagency work and child protection
11. Policy and Politics

The following tables outline the initial content and summarise changes made during the project at each institution.

For more detailed information about changes to the unit content please contact the project leader, Associate Professor Trudi Cooper at ECU t.cooper@ecu.edu.au

Table A1 Youth work theory

UNIT	Changes
ACU: PRAC 3 INTERFACE WITH YOUTH	
ACU: ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF YOUTH WORK	Introduced: Ethical Principles & practice of youth work (2014)
ECU: PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH WORK	
RMIT: WHAT IS YOUTH WORK?	
VU: ETHICS AND YOUTH WORK PRACTICE Also in Ethics	
VU: YOUTH WORK PROGRAMS	Added since 2010

Table A2 Practice methods in youth work

UNIT	Changes
ACU: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE	
CASE MANAGEMENT AND YOUTH WORK	New unit added since 2010
ECU: INTERPERSONAL AND HELPING SKILLS	Unit shared with other courses currently being reviewed in conjunction with other coordinators
ECU: WORKING WITH GROUPS	Unit shared with other courses currently being reviewed in conjunction with other coordinators
ECU: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN COMMUNITY SERVICES	Shared unit changes being negotiated with other disciplines
RMIT: MODELS OF PRACTICE AND SITES OF INTERVENTION	
RMIT: MAPPING THE YOUTH SECTOR	Added since 2010
VU: NO Specific unit	
VU: HOLISTIC PRACTICE AND YOUNG PEOPLE	
VU: YOUNG PEOPLE, DIVERSION AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES	Added since 2010
VU: PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION	Added since 2010

Table A3 Practicum

UNIT	NO. OF HOURS	Changes
ACU: PRAC 3 INTERFACE WITH YOUTH	40 days placement approx 300 hours.	
ECU: YW PROF PLACEMENT	400 hours	Redeveloped around Barnett & Coate curriculum framework and Threshold Concepts, see Table 30
RMIT: YW FIELD ED 2 ND YR	No amount given. States 216 learner directed hrs per semester – no differentiation between class/practicum	
RMIT: YW FIELD ED 3 RD YR	Same as above but with 280 hrs and states 35 day practicum	
VU: PROF PRACTICE 1	No set amount given in outline. States between Aug and Jan on basis of 1.5 days per week or block time between Oct and Jan.	Content re-worked during the project
VU: PROF PRACTICE 2	Same as above. Also states students will spend min 200 hrs working with an agency on project.	

Table A4 Professional ethics

UNIT	Changes
ACU: ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF YW	
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF YOUTH WORK	
ECU: ETHICS IN HUMAN SERVICES	Unit shared with other courses currently being reviewed in conjunction with other coordinators
RMIT: YW ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM	
VU: ETHICS AND YW PRACTICE Also in Youth Work	Does not appear to be in current curriculum (2014)

Table A5 History and sociology of youth

UNIT	Changes
ACU: HISTORY OF YOUNG PEOPLE	This is now called Knowing young people
AUSTRALIAN YOUTH CULTURES	Added since 2010
ECU: THEORIES OF YOUTH	Redeveloped around Barnett & Coate curriculum framework and Threshold Concepts, see Table 30
ECU: INTRO TO SOCIAL ANALYSIS	Unit shared with other courses currently being reviewed in conjunction with other coordinators
RMIT: KNOWING YOUNG PEOPLE	
RMIT: KNOWING YOUNG PEOLPLE	Added since 2010
VU: GANGS AND GROUPS – THE CULTURE OF YOUNG PEOPLE	

Table A6 Youth well being

UNIT	Changes
ACU: WELLBEING AND YOUNG PEOPLE	
ECU: YOUTH ISSUES	Redeveloped around Barnett & Coate curriculum framework and Threshold Concepts, see Table 30
RMIT: LEGAL AND JUSTICE ISSUES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	
RMIT: YOUNG PEOPLE AND HEALTH	Does not appear to be in the current curriculum (2014)

Table A7 Young people & diversity

UNIT	Changes
ACU: NO SPECIFIC UNIT	
HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA	Introduced since 2010
ECU: INCLUSIVE YW PRACTICE	Redeveloped around Barnett & Coate curriculum framework and Threshold Concepts, see Table 30
RMIT: NO SPECIFIC UNIT	
VU: WORKING WITH DIVERSE YOUNG PEOPLE	

Table A8 Social research

UNIT	Changes
ACU: RESEARCHING YOUNG PEOPLE	
ECU: SOCIAL RESEARCH AND PROGRAM EVAL	Unit shared with other courses currently being reviewed in conjunction with other coordinators
RMIT: ETHNOGRAPHY AND YOUNG PEOPLE	Does not appear to be in the current curriculum (2014) Replaced by generic unit on research methods in social science
VU: SOCIAL INQUIRY THEORY AND RESEARCH	
VU: RESEARCH AND YOUNG PEOPLE	
VU: YOUTH RESEARCH PROJECT	

Table A9 Community work and social action

UNIT	Changes
ACU: YOUTH WORK IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS	
ECU: INTRO TO COMMUNITY WORK	Unit shared with other courses currently being reviewed in conjunction with other coordinators
ECU: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	Unit shared with other courses currently being reviewed in conjunction with other coordinators
ECU: STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE	Redeveloped around Barnett & Coate curriculum framework and Threshold Concepts, see Table 30
RMIT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND YOUNG PEOPLE	
RMIT: YOUTH STUDIES AND SOCIAL ACTION	New unit added since 2010

Table A10 Interagency work and child protection

UNIT	Changes
ACU: NO SPECIFIC UNIT	
ECU: VULNERABLE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES	Shared unit changes being negotiated with other disciplines
RMIT: YOUTH WORK AND STATUTORY AGENCIES	Does not appear to be in the current curriculum (2014)
VU: PROFESSIONAL CULTURE AND COLLABORATION	

Table A11 Policy and Politics

UNIT	Changes
ACU: YOUTH POLICY	
ECU: SOCIAL POLICY	Shared unit changes being negotiated with other disciplines
ECU: IDEOLOGY AND YW PRACTICE	Redeveloped around Barnett & Coate curriculum framework and Threshold Concepts, see Table 30
RMIT: YOUTH POLICY	
VU: YOUTH POLICY AND CIVICS	
VU: YOUTH POLICY, CIVICS AND CULTURE	

Appendix B: Interview and Survey Questions and Information Letters

- Information letters
- Questionnaires for course leaders and programme directors
- Questionnaires for staff of youth work degree programmes
- Questionnaires for university managers/heads of school
- Questionnaires for professional bodies
- Questionnaires for peak bodies
- Informed consent
- Online survey questions for Associate deans of teaching and learning
- Online survey questions for employers of youth workers
- Online survey questions for students of youth work degree programmes



For all queries, please contact:

Research Ethics Officer

Edith Cowan University

100 Joondalup Drive

JOONDALUP WA 6027

Phone: 6304 2170

Fax: 6304 2661

Information letter to youth work course leaders, programme directors and staff of youth work degree programmes

Australian Youth Work Education: Curriculum Renewal and a Model for Sustainability for Niche Professions

We would like to invite you to participate in an interview as part of a research project designed to develop a sustainable curriculum model for youth work professional education. You have been selected as a potential participant because you are a course leader or staff member within a youth work degree.

This research project is being funded by Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) and conducted at Edith Cowan University, in collaboration with Australian Catholic University, RMIT University and Victoria University. The project leader is Associate Professor Trudi Cooper, of the Faculty of Computing, Health and Science at Edith Cowan University, who can be contacted at the address given below.

Description of the Research

The purpose of the project is to renew the curriculum for Australian youth work professional education. The renewed curriculum will anticipate future education and training requirements for youth work professionals. The project will guide the future direction of youth work professional education in universities and its relationship with the VET youth work training curriculum. This will facilitate future benchmarking, inter-sectoral and inter-professional pathways, and international qualification recognition. The project will contribute to develop curriculum that is relevant to the current and future needs of the youth work sector.

We are inviting you to take part in an interview about your perceptions of the youth work curriculum based upon your experiences in your work role. We anticipate that the interview will take up to an hour. The interview will be recorded on a digital recorder. The data you provide will be combined with interview data gathered from other participants and presented in a format that does not permit you to be identified.

The interviews will be conducted either in person or by phone at a pre-arranged time and place that is convenient to you. The information you provide will enable your perceptions to contribute to discussions about the future education and training needs of youth workers, the future curriculum for youth work professional education and the sustainability of youth work within Australian higher education.

If you would like to take part in this research, please retain this information letter and sign the consent form attached, scan it and email to j.jarvis@ecu.edu.au Participation in this project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Non-participation will not disadvantage you in any way.

Your contribution is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Trudi Cooper

If you have any questions or require any further information about the research project, please contact, Associate Professor Trudi Cooper at Edith Cowan University, 100 Joondalup Drive, JOONDALUP WA 6027. Phone 6304 5637, or by email at t.cooper@ecu.edu.au

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact: Research Ethics Officer, Edith Cowan University, 270, Joondalup Drive, JOONDALUP WA 6027

Phone: 6304 2170

Fax: 6304 2661

Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

For all queries, please contact:

Research Ethics Officer

Edith Cowan University

100 Joondalup Drive

JOONDALUP WA 6027

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Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au



Information Letter to Participants (Students)

Australian Youth Work Education: Curriculum Renewal and a Model for Sustainability for Niche Professions

We would like to invite you to participate in a survey, as part of a research project designed to develop sustainable curriculum model for Youth Work professional education that is relevant to the Youth Work sector. You have been selected as a potential participant because you are a student in Youth Work professional degree course and have completed at least half the youth work content.

This research project is being funded by Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) and conducted at Edith Cowan University, with collaboration with Australian Catholic University, RMIT University, Tabor College and Victoria University. The Project Leader is Associate Professor Trudi Cooper, of the Faculty of Computing, Health and Science at Edith Cowan University, who can be contacted at the address given at the end of this letter.

Description of the Research

The purpose of the project is to renew the curriculum for Australian Youth Work professional education. The renewed curriculum will anticipate future education and training requirements for Youth Work professionals. The project will guide the future direction of Youth Work professional education in universities and its relationship with the VET Youth Worker training curriculum. This will facilitate future benchmarking, inter-sectoral and inter-professional pathways, and international qualification recognition. The project will contribute to develop curriculum that is relevant to current and future needs of the Youth Work sector.

We are inviting you to take part in an e-survey to discuss your experiences as a Youth Work student and your expectation of a Youth Work degree. We anticipate that the survey will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. The data you provide will be combined with data gathered from other people and presented in a format that does not permit you to be identified.

We hope that you will find it useful to participate in this process that will enable your perceptions to be recorded, including your ideas for any improvements to the curriculum.

If you would like to take part in this research, please complete this survey. Participation in this project is completely voluntary and non-participation will not disadvantage you in any way. Your contribution is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Trudi Cooper

If you have any questions or require any further information about the research project, please contact me, Associate Professor Trudi Cooper at Edith Cowan University, 100 Joondalup Drive, JOONDALUP WA 6027. Phone 6304 5637, or by email at t.cooper@ecu.edu.au

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact: Research Ethics Officer, Edith Cowan University, 100 Joondalup Drive, JOONDALUP WA 6027

Phone: 6304 2170

Fax: 6304 2661

Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

Interview questions for course leaders and programme directors of youth work degree programmes

Australian Youth Work Education: Curriculum Renewal and a Model for Sustainability for Niche Professions

Introduce self and thank participant for returning the consent form and agreeing to take part in the project. Remind participant that their participation in the project is completely voluntary and they are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The data that you will provide will be analysed in a format that does not permit you to be identified. Non-participation will not disadvantage you in any way.

1. How long have you been involved in teaching/directing/leading the youth work programme?
2. How did you come to be working in this field?
3. How long has the youth work course/programme been running in this university?
4. How many staff work in the programme? Full time Part time
5. How many students are enrolled in the programme?
6. How did the youth work course develop in this university?
7. How has the course changed since you have been involved with the course?
8. What are the different pathways for students to enter youth work course?
9. Do you have any advanced standing pathways/agreement?
 - a. If yes, what are they?
 - b. How well does this work?
10. Approximately what proportion of students enter through:
 - a. ATAR (cut off scores)
 - b. mature entry
 - c. VET
 - d. previous degree
 - e. other alternatives
11. How is the practicum organised in the curriculum?
12. What feedback do you receive from students about practicum?
13. What feedback do you receive from placement agencies about practicum?
14. What do you see is the biggest challenge facing the youth work education in your institution?
15. What strategies to address this challenge?
16. Is there a sustainability policy for the youth work course?
 - a. If yes, please describe it
 - b. How is it applied?
17. Are there any threats to on-going support for the course/programme?
18. What strategies are there to maintain sustainability?

19. Is there a relationship between youth work education at your university and VET youth work training curriculum?
 - a. If yes, please describe
20. What are the current relationships between your youth work curriculum and other professional courses (e.g.: teaching, social work, welfare)?
 - a. Are there any plans to expand this relationship in the future?
 - b. If yes, please describe the
21. Please identify the strengths of the current youth work curriculum
22. Can you identify any limitation or areas of improvement for of the current youth work curriculum?
 - a. If yes, please describe
23. What are the biggest curriculum/pedagogy changes you would like to see?
24. How do you think youth work and the youth field will change in the next 10-15 years?
25. How do you think the youth work degree curriculum needs to change to maintain its relevance in the next 10 to 15 years?
26. What supports are there for this process?
27. What impediments might there be?
28. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.

Please note: For the purpose of this report all response lines have been removed.

Interview questions for staff of youth work degree

Australian Youth Work Education: Curriculum Renewal and a Model for Sustainability for Niche Professions

Introduce self and thank participant for returning the consent form and agreeing to take part in the project. Remind participant that their participation in the project is completely voluntary and they are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The data that you will provide will be analysed in a format that does not permit you to be identified. Non-participation will not disadvantage you in any way.

1. How long have you been involved in teaching/directing/leading the youth work programme?
2. How did you come to be working in this field?
3. What is your main teaching area/ contribution to the course?
4. (If relevant) What feedback do you receive from students about practicum?
5. (if relevant) What feedback do you receive from placement agencies about practicum?
6. What do you see is the biggest challenge facing the youth work education in your institution?
7. What strategies can address this challenge?
8. Please identify the strengths of the current youth work curriculum
9. Can you identify any limitation or areas of improvement for of the current youth work curriculum?
 - a. If yes, please describe
10. What are the biggest curriculum/pedagogy changes you would like to see?
11. How do you think youth work and the youth field will change in the next 10-15 years?
12. How do you think the youth work degree curriculum needs to change to maintain its relevance in the next 10 to 15 years?
13. What supports are there for this process?
14. What impediments might there be? Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.

Please note: For the purpose of this report all response lines have been removed.

Interview questions for University Managers/Heads of School

Australian Youth Work Education: Curriculum Renewal and a Model for Sustainability for Niche Professions

Introduce self and thank participant for returning the consent form and agreeing to take part in the project. Remind participant that their participation in the project is completely voluntary and they are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The data that you will provide will be analysed in a format that does not permit you to be identified. Non-participation will not disadvantage you in any way.

1. How long has youth work been offered as a degree course at this university?
2. How long have you been responsible for managing the youth work degree?
3. How does the youth work degree programme fit with the core values and directions of the university?
4. What are the relationships between the youth work course and other professional courses (such as teaching, social work, welfare)?
5. What are the connections between the youth work degree programme here and external stakeholders?
6. What are the strengths of the youth work degree programme?
7. What are the vulnerabilities of the youth work degree programme?
8. What actions have you taken to support the youth work programme?
9. What sustainability strategies does your institution use to increase the economic viability of small niche courses?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time

Please note: For the purpose of this report all response lines have been removed.

Interview questions for Professional Bodies

Australian Youth Work Education: Curriculum Renewal and a Model for Sustainability for Niche Professions

Introduce self and thank participant for returning the consent form and agreeing to take part in the project. Remind participant that their participation in the project is completely voluntary and they are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The data that you will provide will be analysed in a format that does not permit you to be identified. Non-participation will not disadvantage you in any way.

1. What is your role within the professional body?
2. How long has this professional association been in existence?
3. Why did the association decide to form?
4. What is the purpose of the association?
5. Do you have a constitution? (check website)
6. May we have a copy?
7. What is the relationship between professionalisation and education and training in youth work?.
8. What are your membership requirements (indicate all that apply) (check website)
 - Youth work degree graduates
 - Youth work diploma
 - TAFE Cert (Youth Work)
 - Social Work Degree Graduates
 - Psychology Degree Graduates
 - Teaching Degree graduates
 - Other (please specify)
 - None
9. How many members do you currently have?
10. What do you think of the current system of education and training for youth workers? What are its strengths?
11. What are its limitations?
12. How could it be improved?
13. How well do you think degree courses meet the needs of youth work professionals?
14. How well do you think VET courses meet these requirements?
15. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time

Please note: For the purpose of this report all response lines have been removed.

Interview questions for Peak Bodies

Australian Youth Work Education: Curriculum Renewal and a Model for Sustainability for Niche Professions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. Participant in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The data that you will provide will be analysed in a format that does not permit you to be identified. Non-participation will not disadvantage you in any way.

Interview questions for peak bodies

1. What do you think of the current system of education and training for youth workers?
2. What are its strengths?
3. What are its limitations?
4. How could it be improved?
5. How well do you think degree courses meet the needs of youth work professionals?
6. How well do you think VET courses meet these requirements?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time your participation is extremely appreciated.

Please note: For the purpose of this report all response lines have been removed

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Informed Consent

Australian Youth Work Education: Curriculum Renewal and a Model for Sustainability for Niche Professions

This research project is being funded by Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). The chief investigator for this project is Associate Professor Trudi Cooper, of the School of Psychology and Social Science, in the Faculty of Computing Health and Science at Edith Cowan University.

If you agree to take part in this project please sign, date and email a scanned copy back to j.jarvis@ecu.edu.au

- I have been provided with a copy of the information letter which explains the study
- I have read the letter
- I have had opportunities to ask questions about what the letter means and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction
- I understand what the study is about and what I will be asked to do
- I know I can contact the research team if I have any other questions
- I know that what I say is being used only for the purpose of this research
- I agree to the researcher recording what I say on a digital recorder
- I know my identity will not be revealed unless I agree
- I am free to withdraw at any time and do not need to give a reason
- I freely agree to take part in this research project

Name

.....

Signature

.....

Date

.....

Online survey (Associate Deans of Teaching and Learning)

1. What is your disciplinary background?
 - a. Arts
 - b. Business
 - c. Science/Engineering/ Maths
 - d. Health/ medicine /Veterinary
 - e. Creative industries
 - f. Social science
 - g. Education

2. How long have you been in your present position of Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning?
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1 – 5 years
 - 6 – 10 years
 - More than 10 years

3. Does your School/Faculty/Institution offer any niche professional courses (courses that serve numerically small professional groups and/or that are offered at fewer than 10 universities across Australia)?

4. In what disciplines are these courses located
 - Allied Health
 - Welfare and Community Services
 - Specialised Engineering
 - Languages other than English
 - Medical/ veterinary
 - Creative industries
 - Other (Please specify)

5. Within your area of responsibility, are you aware of any strategies to enhance sustainability of small niche courses?

These might include:

 - Double codes units
 - Mixed mode units
 - Units shared with other courses
 - Flexible course structures to enable units to be offered alternate years
 - Single cohort offerings
 - Other (please explain)

6. Have you any suggestions about **practical strategies** to support the sustainability of niche professional courses?

7. Have you any suggestions about **policy changes** that would support niche professional courses?

Questions for e-survey (Employers of youth workers)

1. What are the main functions of your organisation (choose as many as apply)?

- Housing
- Employment
- Education
- Leisure and Recreation
- Welfare
- Drug and alcohol
- Advice and counselling
- Youth health/ Health
- Social action/ campaigning
- Recreation
- Other (please specify)

2. What sector best describes your organisation?

Local Government

- State Government
- Federal government
- International
- Non-government, community based
- Non-government, other
- Other (Please specify)

3. What is your current role?

- Youth Work Manager,
- Community Services manager
- CEO
- Other (please specify)

3. How long have you been in your present role?

- 0 – 1 year
- 1 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years

4. How many Youth Workers does your organisation employ?

- under 5
- 5-10
- more than 10

5. What do youth workers do in your organisation? (open ended)

6. What qualifications do you prefer for Youth Workers in your organisation? (list in order of preference)

- Youth Work Degree Graduates
- Youth Work Diploma
- TAFE Cert (Youth Work)
- Social Work Degree Graduates
- Psychology Degree Graduates
- Teaching Degree graduates
- Other (please specify)
- None

7. What knowledge do new employees require (likert -4 point)

- o health and safety and risk management
- o advocacy
- o young people's rights
- o youth issues (school, housing, employment, etc)
- o Relevant policy and political processes
- o sociological perspectives/ social exclusion factors
- o human development

- identity formation and young people
- Needs of Indigenous Australian history and contemporary issues
- Needs of Migrant and culturally and diverse young people
- Juvenile/Youth justice system
- Health, including addictions and sexual health
- Youth sector
- Purpose of youth work
- Alternative methods of youth work intervention
- young persons views
- effective practices with young people

7. Skills and capacities (likert 4 point)

- Able to prioritise their work
- Maintain boundaries in relationships with young people and colleagues
- Counselling/ advice skills
- Group work skills
- Management skills
- Critical thinking
- Good time management
- Advocacy and Leadership
- Clerical skills
- IT skills
- Public relations
- Public speaking and presentation skills
- Sports
- Arts, media, craft
- Inclusive practice
- Skill in relationship building with young people
- Team work
- Written skills, report writing
- Analytical skills
- Policy development
- Risk management planning
- Evaluation skills
- Research and writing skills
- Networking skills
- Able to adapt to youth work practice to needs of young people
- Ability to work autonomously within guidelines

9. Values, interest and dispositions (likert 4 point)

- Ethical practice (honesty, non exploitative)
- Commitment to organisational values
- Courage
- Good judgment
- Sense of responsibility
- Ability to learn from mistakes
- Life-long learner
- Commitment to securing young people's rights
- Commitment to securing a more equitable society
- Commitment to equal opportunity
- Commitment to improvement of youth work practice
- Resourcefulness

10. "What other knowledge, skill, values or capacities have you found in youth worker employees that are valuable for employment in this profession?"

11. Have you employed any Youth workers in the last 5 years (yes go to 11, no go to finish)

11. How many:

- 1-5
- 6-10
- More than 10

12. What relevant qualifications did they have:

- No formal qualifications
- VET Cert 4 in Youth Work
- VET Youth Work diploma
- Youth work degree (ECU)
- Youth work degree (ACU)
- Youth work degree (VU)
- Youth work degree (RMIT)
- Youth work degree (Tabor)
- Other related degree (e.g. education, social work or psychology)
- Other degree
- Other VET Diploma in related area (Community Services, Human Services and related)
- Other VET Diploma (not related)
- Other VET Diploma
- Not known

13. What do university Youth work courses do well? (state briefly)

12. What do VET youth work courses do well (open ended)

13. Identify one aspect that most needs to be improved in university youth work education

14. Identify one aspect that most needs to be improved in VET youth work education

15. Would you be prepared to be interviewed?
(send an automatically generated email to Chris)

16. Do you want to be entered in the prize draw?
(send automatically generated email)

Thank you for your time

Questions for e-Survey (students)

1. Where are you studying?
 - a. ACU
 - b. ECU
 - c. RMIT
 - d. VU
 - e. Tabor

2. How many years have you completed?
 - Not yet completed first year (go to the end of the survey)
 - 1st year
 - 2nd year
 - 3rd year
 - 4th year

3. How many units of youth work have you completed? (If less than 4 go to the end of the survey)
 - a. 0-3
 - b. 4-7
 - c. 8-11
 - d. 12 or more

4. How does your study commitment fit with your other commitments (likert 4 point always, mostly, sometimes, rarely)
 - a. attend class/ complete online materials
 - b. complete the required readings
 - c. contribute to class or online discussions
 - d. well prepared for my studies
 - e. complete assignments on time
 - f. Find it difficult to study because of employment commitments
 - g. Find it difficult to study because of family commitments
 - h. Look for additional materials to enhance my studies
 - i. Spend extra time on study because I am a perfectionist

5. Are you employed or a volunteer in the Youth Work sector?
 - Yes
 - No

6. What units have you found most interesting (name up to 3 units) and please say why

7. What units do you think will be most useful to your future employment (name up to 3 units) – please explain why

8. What additional units or topics would you like to see as part of the youth work degree? (up to 3)

9. Are there any topics or units you think could be removed from the youth work degree? (up to 3)

10. What do you value most about the youth work degree (likert) (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)
 - a. It challenges the way I think
 - b. I learn a lot about young people
 - c. I gain skills relevant to youth work
 - d. I get a lot of support from the lecturers

- e. I am able to direct my own learning
 - f. My studies support my professional development
 - g. staff care about my personal development
 - h. I learn I can do things better than I expected
 - i. Working with other students in ways that support my learning
 - j. The youth work degree has exceeded my expectations – suggest this is cut
 - k. The degree is well integrated with the youth work profession (not clear what is being said here)
 - l. The theoretical perspectives help my learning
 - m. The assignments offer good learning experiences
 - n. The discussions which helped my learning
 - o. The balance between theory and practice
 - p. other
11. What I would change about the youth work degree?
12. Practicum: How many practicum hours will you complete in your youth work course
- a. Under 300 hours (about 8 weeks)
 - b. 300-500 hours (8 weeks-13 weeks)
 - c. Over 500 hundred hours (more than 13 weeks)
 - d. Not sure, don't know
13. Have you completed any practicum yet? (if no, go to next question)
If yes, please answer
14. What did you think about practicum? (likert) (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)
- a. The practicum length is too short
 - b. I received good supervision from my placement agency
 - c. I received good supervision from the university
 - d. The tasks enabled me to develop my skills
 - e. The practicum helped me make sense of my university learning
 - f. My university learning prepared me for my practicum
 - g. I did not have enough variety
 - h. The practicum was not challenging enough
 - i. Practicum was the best part of my degree
15. What will you do after you graduate? (tick as many as apply)
- a. Travel
 - b. Work as a youth worker
 - c. Work in community services but not as a youth worker
 - d. Further study (youth work) – please specify
 - e. Further study (another profession, e.g. teaching, social work)
 - f. Undecided
 - g. Employment in another sector (please specify)
16. If you intended to work as a youth worker, do you intend to work in overseas?
Yes
No
If yes, which countries (please list)
17. Is there anything else you would like to add?
18. Do you want to go into the draw?
(send automatically generated email)
19. Would you be willing to take part in a focus group?
(send an automatically generated email to Chris)

Appendix C: Survey results

This section contains the detailed results from the online surveys completed by employers, students, and university staff. Detailed results from staff interviews, course leaders' interviews, and line managers' interviews are not included in the report because small numbers and known position holders mean that informants are potentially identifiable.

Employers' Survey

Profile of the organisations and participants

Twenty-two participants responded to this survey, however not all responded to every question. The 22 employer respondents worked for a range of organisations that are involved in youth work. The functions of the organisations in which respondents were employed are shown in Table A1. Some organisations had more than one function. The majority of respondents (75 per cent) indicated that their organisation was non-government community based, 5 per cent reported themselves to be non-government (other), 5 per cent were State government organisations, and 15 per cent were from local government.

Table A12

Functions of organisations in which respondents were employed

Function of organisation	<i>n</i> ⁶
Housing	4
Employment	1
Education	8
Leisure and recreation	3
Welfare	8
Drug and alcohol	5
Advice and counselling	10
Youth health/health	10
Social action/campaigning	4
Recreation	4
Other **	5

** Qualitative responses indicated that these organisations were involved in: local government, youth services, youth justice and leaving care, support, development, resilience building, diversion from youth justice.

The current role of respondents within their organisations varied with nine indicating that they were youth work managers, two described themselves as community services manager, one as a Chief Executive Officer, and seven as 'other'. Other included a range of descriptions.

The majority of respondents (53 per cent) indicated the time in their current role was between one and five years. Thirty two per cent had been in their role for between six and ten years and 15 per cent had been in their position for less than one year.

The number of youth workers employed varied with 58 per cent of the respondents' organisations employing more than ten; 21 per cent reported employing between five and ten, and 21 per cent less than five.

Materials

An online (Qualtrics™) survey was designed specifically for this research in order to answer

⁶ Number of respondents

specific questions about the nature of work within these organisations and the opportunities for employment in relation to youth work. An important aspect included what employers thought about the formal education for youth workers and what they thought were the necessary skills that should be targeted in this education. The design of the survey did not allow for identification of the respondents. The survey is included in Appendix C.

Procedure

Participant contacts were provided by each of the universities participating in the research and emails were sent to 35 individuals or positions within Australian organisations. Twenty-two responses were received providing a response rate of 63 per cent, although not all respondents answered every question.

Results – The nature of work undertaken within the responding organisations

Youth workers undertake a range of diverse tasks within the organisations that responded to this survey. The responses have been categorised and are shown in Table A2. Several respondents provided multiple answers.

Table A13
What youth workers do

<i>n</i> ⁷	Nature of work reported by responding organisations
6	Case management
4	Advocacy
4	Assessment
4	Engage and support young people
3	Mentor
3	Programme delivery (a diverse range of programmes were cited)
3	Referrals
3	Residential youth work case management
3	School programmes/alternative education
3	Street based youth work activity
3	Substance use
2	Counselling
2	Family support case management
2	Networking/partnership programmes
2	Recreation work
1	Coach students on placement
1	Intake
1	Leadership training strategy
1	Policy development

This shows diversity of tasks undertaken between organisations, but also within organisations as demonstrated in the following responses “and anything that is considered to be useful interventions with young people aged between 12-25 years”; and “housing, income, education, vocation, recreation, counselling, mental health, legal support, primary health”. Additionally, some organisations indicated multiple programmes targeting different needs. As an example one organisation reported that they

Provide a range of programmes and services that support young people. This includes counselling, case management, mentoring programmes, parent forums, workforce development and training - such as youth mental health first aid courses, community development programmes - such as anger management, leadership, relationships, sexuality, employment, cyber safety etc which we deliver in school and community settings. We also provide engagement programmes such as drop ins, lunchtime programmes at schools, camps. In addition we offer youth participation programmes

⁷ Number of mentions

including, FReeZa, Youth Voice Committee - who in turn develop events and projects for young people.

The complexity of the work reported is not well captured within a table, as many of the items cited are also implicit within other aspects of the work. Therefore Table A13 contains only the work explicitly cited by respondents.

Results – Youth workers employed in the last five years, number and qualifications

The vast majority of respondents (82 per cent) had employed youth workers during the last five years. The numbers employed were represented as follows:

1 – 5 ⁸	43 per cent
6- 10	7 per cent
More than 10	50 per cent

The relevant qualifications of employers varied, but the majority had a university degree in youth work.

Table A14
Preferred qualification for employees

QUALIFICATION OF EMPLOYEE	PERCENTAGE
University degree (youth work)	58%
TAFE Community services, mental health	14%
TAFE diploma	7%
TAFE certificate IV	7%
None	7%
University degree (other)	7%

These results emphasise the importance of the youth work degree to employers.

Results – Preferred qualifications for employees (youth workers)

When asked their preferences for qualifications for youth workers, the majority of the respondents (63 per cent) indicated a youth work degree (42 per cent) or a youth work diploma (21 per cent), while a minority (21 per cent) indicated that a social work graduate was their preference. The remaining 16 per cent was evenly split between psychology degree, teaching degree and a TAFE certificate in youth work.

When first and second preferences are combined 73 per cent of employers preferred a youth work degree, and 52 per cent placed a diploma as either their first or second option. Not all respondents ranked the full list in order. Therefore only the first and second preferences have been detailed.

Results – Employers perceptions of required knowledge of youth work graduates

For all the knowledge listed as response options, the mean scores were above three indicating that all these aspects were important. There was very little difference within the mean scores indicating that no one item was considerably more important than the others. The range of response options for this question was from 1-not important to 4-very important. See Table A4 and A5 below in which the knowledge has been ranked by mean score. This table has been split to allow the reader to consider the most important knowledge that has been defined as those aspects that scored more than 3.5.

⁸ youth workers

Table A15

High agreement about required knowledge of new entrants (part 1)

Knowledge required by beginning youth workers	Mean	Std Dev
Young people's rights	3.73	0.46
Youth issues (school, housing, employment, etc)	3.73	0.59
Effective practices with young people	3.71	0.77
Purpose of youth work	3.63	0.72
Alternative methods of youth work intervention	3.63	0.72
Identity formation and young people	3.63	0.50
Advocacy	3.60	0.51
Young persons' views	3.56	0.51
Health, including addictions and sexual health	3.53	0.74
Health and safety and risk management	3.50	0.63

Part 2 indicates the remaining responses in relation to the knowledge required by new employees.

Table A16

Moderate agreement about knowledge required by new entrants (part 2)

Knowledge required by new entrants	Mean	Std Dev.
Sociological perspectives/social exclusion factors	3.47	0.64
Human development	3.44	0.63
Needs of migrant and culturally and diverse young people	3.33	0.62
Indigenous Australian history and contemporary issues	3.27	0.70
Relevant policy and political processes	3.13	0.72
Juvenile/youth justice system	3.13	0.74
Youth sector	3.07	1.10

In response to the qualitative aspect of this question "What other knowledge, skills, values or capacities do you think youth workers have prior to employment", eight responses are shown below. These responses appear to capture personal attributes, encompassed by Barnett and Coate (2005) in the being domain of learning (knowing, acting, being). This represents integration of knowledge, skills, experience, and practice wisdom.

- Potential youth workers need to check their own baggage before attempting to positively intervene in the lives of young people.
- Life experience. Empathy.
- A liking for young people. A commitment and interest in doing the work on the ground in preference to a desire to move quickly to management positions.
- Life experience
- Educated youth workers should have a strong sense of their own self...ability to work inter-generationally, not just exclusively with young people but the whole community. Be creative community development workers. Holistic in their approach to young people not just with popular techniques but using left field techniques to lift the bar for young people and demand greatness from them. Literate, able to do the basic addition and multiply, facilitation skills at the highest level. Understanding of the schools system and how they work
- Genuine, compassionate, systems theories, family inclusive practice
- Awareness of structures/running of community based organisations.
- An understanding of the holistic approach is very important. An understanding of harm minimisation approach is very important.

Results - Expected skills and abilities

The expected skills and abilities of commencing youth workers have been rated from 1 (not important) to 4 (very important). Table A6 shows the mean scores for all skills listed from the

highest mean scores to the lowest mean scores. The most important skills with a mean of 3.88 were “Maintain boundaries in relationships with young people and colleagues and Able to adapt to youth work practice to needs of young people”. The least important skills were in relation to sports, arts, and crafts, each with a mean score of 2.07. There were greater differences amongst the scores for this question perhaps suggesting that there is a greater emphasis on knowledge compared to the practical skills that might be useful. Again the table has been split to cluster the skills and abilities to those that scored 3.5 or greater, where there is high agreement amongst employers, those between 3.49 and 3, where there is moderate agreement, and those scoring less than 3 where they are valued in some contexts but not in others.

Table A17

High employer agreement on skills and abilities of commencing youth workers (>3.5)

	Mean	Std Dev.
Maintain boundaries in relationships with young people and colleagues	3.88	0.34
Able to adapt to youth work practice to needs of young people	3.88	0.34
Skill in relationship building with young people	3.81	0.40
Ability to work autonomously within guidelines	3.80	0.41
Team work	3.56	0.51
Inclusive practice	3.53	0.64

Table A18

Moderate employer agreement on skills and abilities of commencing youth workers (mean <3.5 - 3)

	Mean	Std Dev
Critical thinking	3.47	0.74
Advocacy and Leadership	3.47	0.64
Counselling/ advice skills	3.40	0.74
Networking skills	3.43	0.65
Good time management	3.40	0.51
Written skills, report writing	3.33	0.62
Analytical skills	3.33	0.62
Able to prioritise their work	3.31	0.79
Evaluation skills	3.19	0.83
Group work skills	3.06	0.85
Risk management planning	3.00	0.93

Table A19

Context dependent expectations of employers about skills and abilities of commencing youth workers (Part 3 – mean <3)

	Mean	Std Dev
Clerical skills	2.93	0.80
IT skills	2.93	0.70
Public relations	2.88	0.72
Public speaking and presentation skills	2.75	0.93
Management skills	2.73	0.80
Research and writing skills	2.57	0.85
Policy development	2.33	0.72
Sports	2.07	0.80
Arts, media, craft	2.07	0.80

Two qualitative responses were provided in relation to other skills not listed in the survey.

- Able to adapt youth work practice to needs of young people - this is critical, as being familiar with theory does not automatically enable you to work with young people.

- Ability to structure intervention (i.e. understand purpose of intervention and methods for responding, motivating, creating change etc.)

Results – Employers’ expectations of values and dispositions of youth workers

Employers’ expectations of values, interests and dispositions of commencing youth workers indicated that a commitment to particular value was important to youth work practice. The response scale was from 1 (not important) to 4 (very important).

Ethical values were the most important with all respondents scoring it as ‘very important’. Again all scores were above 3 indicating importance and the majority were above 3.5. Some of these values, interests and dispositions had a narrow range of scores. Table 5 shows the scores ranked in order of mean score. All scores were above 3 demonstrating importance, but the only score below 3.5 was for Courage at 3.07.

Table A20
Values and dispositions expected of youth workers

	Mean	Std Dev.
Ethical practice (honesty, non exploitative)	4.00	0.00
Ability to learn from mistakes	3.81	0.40
Good judgment	3.75	0.45
Sense of responsibility	3.73	0.46
Commitment to securing young people’s rights	3.67	0.62
Commitment to organisational values	3.63	0.50
Commitment to securing a more equitable society	3.53	0.74
Commitment to equal opportunity	3.53	0.64
Commitment to improvement of youth work practice	3.53	0.74
Life-long learner	3.50	0.89
Resourcefulness	3.50	0.63
Courage	3.07	0.88

The qualitative responses indicated that creativity was another desired disposition.

Results – Employers’ perceptions of what university youth work courses do well

Thirteen respondents provided information in response to this question. The responses indicated both the importance of the theoretical aspects of learning and of the practical skills provided for within placements. Other responses suggested that universities provided a range of employability skills such as insight into the industry, research and writing skills, the ability to understand industry needs such as flexibility, lateral thinking and a non-judgemental approach. Employers also considered learning from industry practitioners an important.

Results – Employers’ perceptions of what Vocational Education and Training (VET) youth work courses do well

Ten responses were provided for this question, however the majority indicated that they could not comment for a variety of reasons such as no experience with VET students; or that they were not sure which students were VET and which were university students. The more positive comments indicated that VET provided basic skills required of a youth worker; opportunities to learn; and develop learning habits. The comments provided here support the preferences for employing university qualified university-qualified staff that has been indicated above.

Results – Employers’ perceptions of how universities could improve youth work courses

Thirteen comments provided a range of items for consideration. Several comments were similar.

- Lecturing staff still working in the industry

- Better training to enable students to work individually with young people (case management)
- Better training to work with complex cases; increasing knowledge of drug, alcohol and mental health issues
- Issues regarding the long placements which impact on those already working in the industry (need to be able to do placement at work)
- Issue of meaningful work, reduce workload of agencies in providing for placement students, and additional practical work placements
- Greater understanding of various legislation
- Greater understanding of policy and its effects on youth work
- Promotion of youth work as a valued career.

Results – What VET could do to improve youth work courses

Five responses were provided to this question.

1. More individual attention to students
2. Develop reflective practice
3. Industry employed teachers
4. Appropriate recruitment of students
5. Greater knowledge of legislation and requirements for working in the industry.

Perceptions of current students

The survey was ‘opened’ 103 times and 71 surveys were noted as complete, however the number of responses for each question varied as completion of every question was not compulsory. There does appear to have been a ‘fatigue’ effect as the later questions appear to have lower response rates compared to the earlier ones. Additionally, some of the qualitative questions have a lower response rate, but this is not unusual in qualitative data. Some first year students are known to have initially accessed the survey but could not proceed as a result of the screening question which only allowed progression if the respondent had completed eight units or more of their degree (not only youth work units).

Demographic data

The number of students from each participating university is shown in Table A21. Different participation rates may have been affected by a range of factors such as staff being available to market the survey to students, student activity at the time the survey was marketed, and the tendency of students to comply with staff requests.

Table A21
Number of participants by institution

Institution	Number	Percentage of sample
Australian Catholic University (ACU)	34	38%
Edith Cowan University (ECU)	5	6%
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)	27	30%
Victoria University (VU)	5	6%
	90	100% (rounded)

Respondents were evenly spread across the three years of their degree, with most (36 per cent) having completed between eight and 16 units and a further 27 per cent between 17 and 24 units. Eight respondents had completed their three years and four respondents indicated that they were studying at postgraduate level. This suggests that the majority of respondents would have knowledge of the structure of their course and considerable experience of the course. Additionally, 74 per cent of respondents indicated that they had completed at least eight youth work units.

Balancing study with other commitments

Participants were asked to state how often various study commitments fitted with other commitments. A four-point scale of rarely (1), sometimes (2), mostly (3), always (4) was provided. Responses are shown in Table A22.

Table A22

Study Commitments fitting with other commitments

Question	Range	Mean	SD	n
1 Attend class/ complete online materials	2.00 - 4.00	3.15	0.70	61
2 Complete the required readings	1.00 - 4.00	2.78	0.69	60
3 Contribute to class or online discussions	1.00 - 4.00	3.17	0.77	59
4 Well prepared for my studies	1.00 - 4.00	3.05	0.62	61
5 Complete assignments on time	2.00 - 4.00	3.51	0.62	61
6 Find it difficult to study because of employment commitments	1.00 - 4.00	2.36	0.92	56
7 Find it difficult to study because of family commitments	1.00 - 4.00	2.19	0.85	57
8 Look for additional materials to enhance my studies	1.00 - 4.00	2.66	0.83	58
9 Spend extra time on study because I am a Perfectionist	1.00 - 4.00	2.27	0.97	60

These data suggest that on average the students managed to balance study and other commitments quite well. However two respondents provided comments that suggest otherwise:

Personal life - good study/life balance can be hard to achieve!

I guess the commitment to post grad studies does interfere with my well being in that it leaves very little room to maintain relationships and social networks.

The results also suggest that employment and family commitments affect study. The fact that students also scored lower on looking for additional materials to enhance their studies may also reflect a time pressure; or may reflect shallow rather than deep learning, or a sense that the basic materials supported learning that was sufficient for their purposes.

Work experience of the respondents

Respondents were asked if they were currently employed or working as a volunteer in the youth work sector. Sixty two per cent indicated that they were involved in the sector, suggesting that the sample has some knowledge of the sector.

What students' value about their youth work degree

Respondents were provided with a range of responses about what they might value in their youth work degree. A four point response scale of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3) and strongly agree (4) was used. Results are shown in Table A23.

Table A23

What students' value about their youth work degree

Question	Range	Mean	SD	n
It challenges the way I think	1.00 - 4.00	3.25	0.80	51
I learn a lot about young people	2.00 - 4.00	3.55	0.61	51
I gain skills relevant to youth work	2.00 - 4.00	3.48	0.58	50
I get a lot of support from the lecturers	2.00 - 4.00	3.51	0.58	51
I am able to direct my own learning	2.00 - 4.00	3.12	0.68	51
My studies support my professional Development	2.00 - 4.00	3.47	0.61	51
Staff care about my personal development	2.00 - 4.00	3.41	0.64	51
I learn I can do things better than I expected	1.00 - 4.00	3.31	0.68	51
Working with other students in ways that support my learning	1.00 - 4.00	2.96	0.69	51
The youth work degree has exceeded my expectations	1.00 - 4.00	3.12	0.82	51
The degree is well integrated with the youth	2.00 - 4.00	3.41	0.61	51

work profession (I can apply knowledge from the degree with my work as a youth worker)				
The theoretical perspectives help my learning	2.00 - 4.00	3.25	0.66	51
The assignments offer good learning experience	2.00 - 4.00	3.24	0.65	51
The discussions which helped my learning	3.00 - 4.00	3.51	0.50	51
The balance between theory and practice	2.00 - 4.00	3.08	0.72	51

With mean scores above three, students generally agreed with these statements. The only mean just under three (2.96) was in response to 'working with other students in ways that support my learning'. Qualitative responses in regard to other valued aspects revealed both professional and personal benefits:

The networking opportunities you receive and the connections with people in the field that you make.

.has helped me be a better parent to my teenagers and am hoping in the future that youth works skills and principles might be incorporated into a parenting programme.

More practical classes would be good. A field trip in third year to a youth organisation would be helpful, as we have learnt more and would be able to ask more informed questions. Having guest lecturers in also helps- i.e.: people from the field.

I appreciate the room for discussion in the degree (and classroom activity) and how there are many different opinions or slight variations between students and theory that challenge my thinking and grow me personally and professionally.

Practicum

Practicum hours may vary by institution. Respondents were asked how many practicum hours they expected to undertake as part of their youth work course. Responses are shown in Table A13. Interestingly 20 per cent of respondents were unsure of their commitment/ requirement for practicum. Of the respondents 75 per cent had already undertaken some practicum. All of the courses required in excess of 300 hours. The student expectation of less than 300 hours might be explained by either advanced standing or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), or by students' lack of knowledge of their course, or perhaps a misunderstanding of the question.

Table A24

Number of hours of expected practicum across the youth work course

Number of Hours	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Under 300 hours (about 8 weeks)	7	14%
300-500 hours (8 weeks-13 weeks)	18	35%
Over 500 hundred hours (more than weeks)	16	31%
Not sure, don't know	10	20%

A series of statements was provided for students who had undertaken some practicum to indicate what they thought of their practicum. These questions were scored as 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; and 4 = strongly agree. Responses are shown in Table A25.

Table A25

Comments regarding practicum

Comments	Range	Mean	SD	<i>n</i>
The practicum length is too short	1.00 - 4.00	2.03	0.75	38
I received good supervision from my placement agency	1.00 - 4.00	3.14	0.92	37

I received good supervision from the university	1.00 - 4.00	3.37	0.75	38
The tasks enabled me to develop my skills	1.00 - 4.00	3.37	0.71	38
The practicum helped me make sense of my university learning	2.00 - 4.00	3.42	0.68	38
My university learning prepared me for my practicum	1.00 - 4.00	3.29	0.73	38
I did not have enough variety	1.00 - 4.00	2.14	0.92	37
The practicum was not challenging enough	1.00 - 4.00	1.94	0.85	34
Practicum was the best part of my degree	1.00 - 4.00	3.05	0.81	37

These scores suggest that for the most part students were satisfied with their placements. There was no support for the proposition that placements should be longer, but since, these are aggregate results, and placements were of differing length, it is not possible to infer students' perceptions of the appropriate length.

Two respondents provided comment on their practicum. Overall, students who responded felt positive about their practicum experience, as typified by the following qualitative comment, although some students reported that some organisations offered better placement experiences than others.

I felt well supported in doing practicum and both agencies gave me a lot of opportunity to do valuable work (i.e. work with young people and in programmes, not just photocopying). I found practicum gave meaning to the other subjects I was doing and I learnt a lot from my supervisors, other workers at the agencies, and reflecting on my own practice.

Post-Graduation Expectations

Respondents were asked what they would do after graduation. The majority (69 per cent) expected to work as a youth worker (55 per cent) or to undertake further study in youth work (14 per cent). A sizeable minority intended to work overseas at some time 43 per cent, although not all were sure of where and several indicated that they were considering a number of different countries. The countries in which they intend to work are shown in Table A26. The postgraduate expectations are shown in Table A16.

Table A26

List of countries in which graduates intend to work as a youth worker

USA, South America somewhere, Canada
England
Philippines
Maldives
India
Tanzania, USA, Kenya, Cambodia
Unsure yet
UK, and maybe other parts of Europe
America, England
Maldives, and probably some other countries in South Asia
Thailand and Cambodia
Unsure completely. Australia. America. New Zealand. Jordan.
India, Cambodia, Sri Lanka
Cambodia - Africa - India - England
India
Anywhere really (aside from US)
UK
Latin America and the United States
Ireland

Table A27
Post-graduation expectations

Option	Number	% of responses
Travel	3	6%
Work as a youth worker	28	55%
Work in community services but not as a youth worker	2	4%
Further study (youth work) – please specify*	7	14%
Further study (another profession, e.g. teaching, social work)	4	8%
Undecided	7	14%
Employment in another sector (please specify)	0	0%

*Those planning or already undertaking further study intimated their intentions as:

- Honours (3)
- Sport & Recreation and Education
- Post-graduate (unspecified)
- Currently doing a PhD.

In closing respondents were asked if they had anything else to add to assist the research. Closing comments were provided by 25 students. These have been content analysed and the following positive themes were evident:

- Enjoyment of the course
- Support from staff
- Importance of degree level studies (compared to TAFE)
- Supports Professional development as a youth worker.

Evidence in support for these themes is provided below through the specific comments provided by respondents.

Enjoyment of the course

It has been an amazing experience so far and I have enjoyed the degree.

... Youth work is amazing!"

Overall, I really truly love this course ...

Support from staff

I would like to express my gratitude to all lecturers for ongoing support, kindness and understanding throughout these two years.

They were constantly supportive of me as a student, particularly because academic achievement does not come easily to me.

Importance of degree level studies (compared to TAFE)

... I would also suggest a course such as this because I do feel that it is better to have a Bachelor's degree rather than a diploma because of the shift that youth work as a

profession is taking.

This course is everything I thought it would be and more. Coming from a youth work diploma at TAFE I didn't think I would learn so much more. I was very very wrong!

Supports Professional development as a youth worker

. . . and the information I am learning is directly applicable to my work and professional development.

Content analysis identified aspects of courses where some students wanted to see improvement:

- Global perspectives
- Indigenous perspectives
- Some individual experiences of Practicum

Global perspectives

I think we also need far more global perspective in youth work. This can come from sociology, but it is not youth work specific. The subject in youth cultures covered global youth cultures, but more is needed.

Indigenous perspectives

I would love for our course to address indigenous issues in further depth the electives I have done have been amazing and I feel that it would be really important for all youth workers to experience them.

Practicum experience

. . . I feel an area that is really lacking in is placement. It's not fair to be in a placement where you don't get any help from your placement agency, they should be helping you learn more.

Survey questions are included in Appendix B

Participants

The disciplinary backgrounds of the ten respondents varied across six domains: business; science, mathematics, engineering; Health, medicine, veterinary; Creative Industries; Social science; and education. Participants' current positions within their institution also varied from senior lecturer to deputy vice chancellors. Fifty percent of the respondents had been in their current position between one to five years.

Materials

An online (Qualtrics™) survey was designed specifically for this research in order to answer specific questions in relation to niche courses and their potential sustainability within Australian universities. The design of the survey did not allow for identification of the respondents.

Procedure

Emails were sent to 40 individuals or positions within Australian universities. The addressees were asked to forward the email to another more appropriate individual for response if they felt that another within their institution could provide more relevant information. Ten responses (25 per cent response rate) were received, with several of the original addressees indicating that they had forwarded the email to another person.

Results – Number of niche professional courses

Nine of the ten respondents indicated that they were aware of niche professional courses in their school/faculty or institution. The respondents identified a total of 19 courses across five discipline areas. The disciplines in which these courses were located are shown in Table A28.

Table A28

Disciplines in which niche professional courses are located

Discipline	Number of courses
Allied Health	9
Welfare and Community Services	4
Languages other than English	1
Medical/veterinary	1
Creative Industries	4

Results –Strategies used for the sustainability of niche courses

The sustainability of niche courses was enhanced through a range of strategies that are shown in Table A29

Table A29

Strategies for enhancing sustainability of nice professional courses

Strategies applied	Number of responses
Double code units	5
Mixed mode units	6
Units shared with other courses	7
Flexible course structures to allow units to be offered in alternative years	4
Single cohort offerings	1
Other (please explain)	4*

*Double degrees; online units from other universities; use of partnerships with other organisations; industry partnerships

Results - Practical Strategies to support sustainability of niche courses

An important aspect for the future of niche professional courses is the creativity of those responsible for them to support their sustainability. Five respondents provided nine ideas on how to support the sustainability of niche professional courses. These ideas were:

- Develop and maintain strong links with the industry
- Develop and maintain potential partnerships between specific employers and the institution
- Develop and maintain strong industry support for courses
- Ensure marketing of courses with the ability to generate public interest
- Provide the media with stories that make 'good press'
- Ensure that the reputation of courses focuses on high quality
- Ensure that courses are supported by high demand (by students and industry)
- Use multidisciplinary expertise for course delivery
- Reduce competition and move to collaboration amongst institutions.

Several of these ideas were integrated throughout the responses of several participants.

Results – Policy Changes to support sustainability of niche courses

Five respondents provided information in response to the question seeking suggestions about policy changes that would support niche professional courses. Several of these ideas

were integrated across several responses.

- Ensure courses are connected to the institution's research strengths and industry links
- Promote opportunities for flexible delivery for the learning such as short courses
- Provide opportunities for international delivery of courses
- Ensure admission standards for students are appropriate to facilitate a good fit with the requirements of the intended occupation
- Provide appropriate timeframes for the establishment and consolidation of niche courses
- Provide incentives for universities to collaborate in the areas of niche courses

Several respondents indicated that there were challenges to be overcome to enable some of these proposed policies to be developed. Challenges such as the lack of flexibility in university administrative systems to address and cope with units flexibly delivered; calculation of staff workload for units delivered flexibly; admitting students who had appropriate attributes to be successful in particular employment fields.

Appendix D: Barnett and Coate's Framework and Threshold Concepts: some key units and change (ECU)

Table A30
Barnett and Coate's Framework and Threshold Concepts: some key units and change (ECU)

	Barnett & Coate	Threshold Concepts (key concept in bold)
YWK1220 Youth Issues	Knowledge Actions Being	'Myth-busters' Differentiate between commonly held opinions about youth issues and sociologically 'research informed' understanding. Research Search skills; Appraising credibility of information sources; Correct academic referencing; writing skills: to be able to report research findings and compare them with commonly held beliefs First Year Experience (FYE): Library skills; academic support; variety in assessment tasks; groups skills; reflection on learning; independent learning; peer learning
YWK1101 Principles of Youth work	Knowledge Action Being	'What is youth work' What is the essence of youth work? What is the difference between a youth worker and a worker with youth? What aspects of youth work change over time, what remains the same? What are the different ways youth work is conceptualised through models? Exploration of the youth field. Becoming a youth worker: Steps towards integration between knowledge about youth work, youth work skills and personal aspirations and strengths. Personal investigation to determine 'what kind of youth worker do I want to become'? Implications for Placement. At the end of the unit students submit a placement request form based upon investigations; Basic skills for youth work: Informal learning and conversation; trust; relationship building; knowledge, skills, and wisdom;
YWK3113 Youth work Practice	Action Being	'Becoming a youth worker: Knowing, doing and being (competency and beyond competency)' Lifelong learning, continued professional development, reflective practice to integrate knowledge skills and self; independent life-long learning: how to find out what we don't know (and need to know) how do we develop own work-based learning programme? 'theory to practice to being to theory to practice to being'
YWK3107 Ideology and Youth work	Knowledge Being	Politics and everyday life: how politics and different political perspectives shape concepts of youth, and youth/ youth work policy Why politics matters. Relationships between assumptions about

		<p>how the world is and how we interpret what we see; consequences for youth policy. Political ideology and discourses about issues relevant to youth policy for example, 'active citizenship' 'youth development' 'equality' 'social justice'. Politics and self.</p>
<p>YWK3211 Inclusive youth work practice</p>	<p>Knowledge Action Being</p>	<p>Identity and the interplay between social structure, culture, inter-personal relationships, intra-personal processes; How identity and life chances are shaped by class, gender, race, cultural, disability, etc. Social justice and effective strategies youth workers can use to counter oppression and promote social inclusion and support young people to reach their potential. Integration between knowledge, skills and self through exploration of processes in own life</p>
<p>YWK3203 Theories of youth</p>	<p>Knowledge Action</p>	<p>Lenses on youth –why do different disciplines interpret young people in different ways –assumptions and meaning Different disciplines conceptualise youth in different ways. Interpreting experience. All disciplines offer some insights, but are also limited. How can youth workers use theory and research to develop innovative practice methods? Integration of knowledge and action.</p>
<p>YWK3231 Strategies for social change</p>	<p>Knowledge Action Being</p>	<p>How to choose when and how to act What is the relationship between changes to individuals and social change? What are the implications of informal education in youth work and social change? Participation, facilitation. Animation, lobbying digital media campaigns, non-violence, changing organisations from within, arts and social change, How to match methods with context with skills. Social change and integration of knowledge, action and self. Social change, young people and youth work.</p>
<p>CSV3116 Ethics in Human Services</p>	<p>Knowledge Action Being</p>	<p>Why don't ethical theorists agree? Pluralist approach to ethics Strengths and limitations of different perspectives. Situational ethics Application to youth work</p>

Appendix E: ECU SWOT Analysis

Table 31
ECU SWOT Analysis

<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only course in state • Strong support for online delivery • University mission supports non-traditional access pathways to university • Good academic and disability support for students • Course aligns well with university mission to engage with community and promote education and welfare • Fits well profile of university offerings in professional education (semi-professions, teaching, nursing, allied health) • Skilled and dedicated staff of practitioner teachers • Flexible workforce • Interactive teaching spaces • Strong field and professional links • Strong demand from employers • Financially viable • Revised curriculum written for delivery by part-time and sessional staff who are practitioners • Promises to facilitate staff to gain higher degrees 	<p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one permanent staff member and one half-time staff member on temporary contract • No succession planning • Compliance systems make timely responsive curriculum change increasingly difficult
<p>Opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double majors with other disciplines • Opportunities for development of online courses for remote students and students in states where there is no youth work degree • Local demand for Graduate Diploma for graduates in cognate disciplines (Teaching, social work, psychology) entering or working in youth work • Collaboration on course materials with other institutions 	<p>Threat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excess focus on measurement of quality through curriculum-as-designed to the detriment to curriculum ecology • Marginalised within School and Faculty: Education/social justice perspective – Paradigm incommensurate with dominant medical paradigm in School and Faculty • Standardisation in the university systems inhibits curriculum innovation because of paperwork requirements, multiple layers of approvers who are not discipline experts and long lead-times • Aging staff team and lack of succession planning • Excessive workload on key staff • Vulnerable to illness of permanent staff • Inadequate time allowance to redevelop online materials puts staff under pressure

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faculty requirement that all full-time staff must have a PhD, but almost no youth work staff have PhD prior to employment at university plus substantial professional experience.
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