

Chapter 7

Legislation and Policy

7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses State legislation and policy that provides official legitimisation of youth work as a distinct profession. This is something additional to more generic youth policy, although youth policies imply the recognition of youth work as a profession. It is this recognition that will ultimately enhance youth work processes and practices as discussed in the previous chapter.

7.2 Legislation and policy for youth work

The Commonwealth has had an ongoing commitment to working with governments to institute enabling policy and legislation for professionalisation of youth work as a means of improving practice and the dissemination of the most effective ideas, approaches and standards relating to the delivery of youth work services. It is the Commonwealth's position that legislative and policy commitments to youth work, as in the case of Malta, or in emerging contexts such as St Lucia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Africa or Zambia, have a distinct bearing on systematic support for realising youth work delivery structures and, ultimately, on the wellbeing of young people. This commitment has been complemented by the Commonwealth's ongoing advocacy to obtain recognition for youth work within public service commissions of member states, as articulated in the Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE).

This chapter discusses aspects of State legislative and policy action that can provide the foundation of professional recognition, such as:

- a. Generally, the existence of youth policy (which implies support to youth work) and broader legislative enactments such as Youth Acts,
- b. Specifically, policies and legislative enactments for youth work including explicit commitments to youth work within youth policies.

Youth policies formulated in the last ten years or so are generally acknowledged irrespective of the end date on the policy. Additionally, it is to be noted that only explicit commitments to youth work that have pragmatic implications for implementing policy, and not mere references to youth work in youth policy, were considered for a positive answer in relation to commitments to youth work.

This report acknowledges that many countries have a specific public sector cadre along the lines of 'youth officers' or 'youth service officers' whose roles and responsibilities often imply youth engagement in enabling and empowering contexts. This too, in essence, can be seen as an indirect policy commitment to youth work.

However, in the absence of professional recognition for youth work, including recognition in public service commissions, and the lack of adequate qualification pathways, these practitioners often receive low priority in terms of status and remuneration, often resulting in high turnover. Greater recognition for the profession will create a higher status, and create a more enabling environment for them to deliver consistently according to collectively agreed, systematic approaches to engaging with young people.

The baseline survey indicates a mixed response to legislation and policy around youth work. Only 11 countries (31 per cent) had distinct national/local government policies that recognised youth work as a distinct profession, and only two had legislated for youth work as a specific profession (one still in draft form). This is perhaps partially due to the lack of political momentum, and partially due to an inadequate understanding of ways in which youth work, as a distinct profession, can contribute to youth wellbeing, and by extension to national development.

From the perspective of youth work practitioners, there has been caution in lobbying for professionalisation because of the implication of narrow qualifications criteria that may exclude certain kinds of youth workers from practice, particularly youth workers from, and serving, marginalised communities who neither have funds, or time, to obtain certified qualifications. A focus on qualifications, they argue, also devalues the finer youth engagement competencies developed in specific localised contexts.

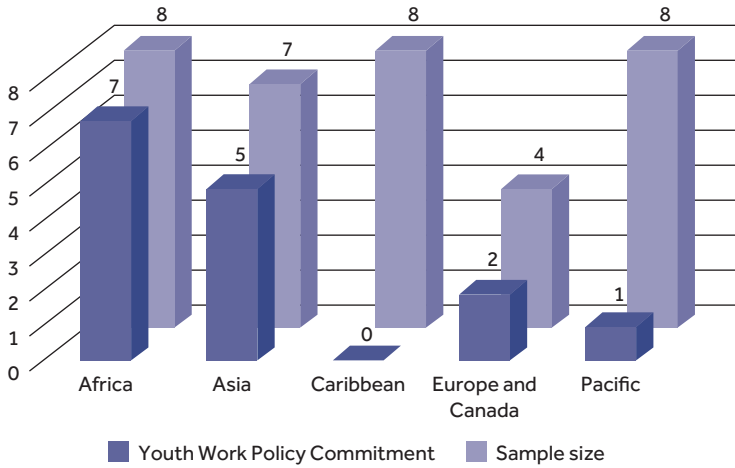
Moreover, in similar professions, such as in children's social work in the United Kingdom, fears have been raised that the accreditation of the profession 'risks being "punitive" to practitioners rather than developing their skills' (CommunityCare, 2016).

These concerns raise pertinent issues, and point to non-constructive tendencies we need to guard against. The Commonwealth's bid to professionalise the sector in no way undermines such concerns of practitioners. It promotes legislation and policy driven by the interests of the profession, the professionals, and of young people, rather than policy that attempts to curb and limit the profession's growth. In terms of broadening the ambit of accepted practice, the Commonwealth has already supported the articulation of competency through assessed practice, as further discussed in Box 9.1: Qualifying through practice: The Caribbean competency framework's criteria.

A snapshot of advances in policy commitments is shown in Figure 7.1. While significant advances have been made in Africa, Asia and Europe, the good work that exists in other regions in relation to education and training, and good practice, has not been reflected in specific state policy commitments. Similarly, countries that indicate policy and legislative commitments need to also examine the extent to which policies are implemented and invested in, and if policy commitments reflect the criteria identified in the baseline for professionalising the sector.

The strongest example of sustained links between legislation and policy and established and systemic structures and processes for youth work practice has been identified in **Malta**, as indicated in the case study in Box 7.2.

Figure 7.1 Regional trends – No. of countries with policy/legislative commitments to youth work as a profession



7.3 Regional trends in legislation and policy

7.3.1 Africa

All eight sampled countries have national youth policies, and four countries (Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia) explicitly indicate youth work commitments in their policies, including in youth policy. While Malawi and Tanzania have both briefly discussed capacity building for youth workers, South Africa and Zambia have deliberated extensively on the potential legislative framework for youth work. They have taken action in respect of ethical standards, financing and qualifications pathways towards the professionalisation of youth work practice (South Africa National Youth Policy, 2015, p. 18 and Zambia National Youth Policy, 2015, pp. 11, 12).

This activity has been in part motivated by the associations of youth workers in both Zambia and South Africa. These associations have also been involved in dialogue

Table 7.1 Policy/legislative commitments to youth and youth work – Africa

Country	Current youth policy exists	Current youth policy indicates commitments to youth work	Specific youth work policy exists	Youth Act exists	Youth Work Act exists
Ghana	Yes	No	No	No	No
Kenya	Yes	No	No	No	No
Malawi	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Nigeria	No	No	No	No	No
South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes (<i>Draft</i>)	Not accessible	No
Tanzania	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Uganda	Yes	No	No	No	No
Zambia	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

around the development of national youth policy. South Africa, through the efforts of the South Africa Association of Youth Workers (SAYWA), is currently developing a policy for youth work practice.

The National Youth Policy of Ghana (2010) makes no mention of youth work but looks ‘towards an empowered youth, impacting positively on national development’, implying a role for youth work. The policy makes frequent mention of ‘youth development’ but does not define what this might be, although it is associated in the document with empowerment.

While the Kenyan National Youth Policy (2007) refers to youth development, empowerment and participation, it does not mention youth work but ‘visualises a society where youth have an equal opportunity as other citizens to realize their fullest potential, productively participating in economic, social, political, cultural and religious life without fear or favour (p. 4)’. The strategic plan (2007-2012) provided a detailed action plan for the implementation of the eight strategic areas.

The vision of Malawi’s 2013 youth policy is ‘an educated, healthy, well trained, cultured, vibrant and productive youth’. It lists priority areas – economic empowerment, education, health and nutrition, participation and leadership.

The policy ‘strongly advocates’ (p. 23) ‘Human resource development – training of professional youth workers and youth participation structures and policy-makers in the youth sector’. It also mandates the Ministry of Youth and Sports (p. 26) to ‘Develop and provide guidelines for youth development and participation’, and ‘Build capacity of youth workers, youth participation structures and regulate their professional conduct’.

The policy refers to youth empowerment and participation throughout.

The Nigerian National Youth Policy (2009) aims to

promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well-being of all young men and women in order to enhance their participation in the overall development process and improve their quality of life.

While the policy refers to empowerment and participation it does not mention youth work or youth development.

The South African National Youth Policy 2009-14 made consistent reference to youth work and youth development, starting out by stating (p. 1): ‘It is hoped that recognition of youth work as a profession will strengthen capacity while promoting the provision of quality services’.

Empowerment and participation are also key words in the text. The 2015-20 policy provides a similar perspective.

The Tanzanian National Policy on Youth Development (2007) intends to create an enabling environment that builds the capacity of young people and promotes employment opportunities and access to social security. The policy focuses on a number of areas and mentions youth work, (p. 25), pledging to ‘Facilitate provision

of well-trained and qualified professional staff for youth work at all levels of the community’.

It refers more widely to youth development, empowerment and participation.

The Ugandan Children Act 1997 consolidated the law relating to children, their rights, protections and provisions. The National Employment Policy for Uganda (2011) lists youth employment as a policy priority action area. The National Youth Policy does not mention youth work and refers to youth development briefly just once, but advocates both participation and empowerment.

The core principle of the Zambian National Youth Policy (2006) commits to a holistic, integrated and multisectoral approach to youth development with a vision for ‘a nation of skilled, enlightened, economically empowered and patriotic youth’.

Section 4.6 Youth Work includes subsections 4.6.1 ‘Overall Objective: To professionalise youth work practice in Zambia’ and 4.6.2 ‘Specific Objectives: 1. To regulate youth work practice in Zambia; and 2. To enhance the capacity of institutions offering training in youth work.’

The policy also makes broad mention of youth development, participation and empowerment.

7.3.2 Asia

In Asia, one country has a specific youth work act (in draft),² although all but two have a commitment to youth work as part of youth policy. So, with the exception of Singapore and Pakistan there is a field of legislative and policy commitments to youth work in the countries in the baseline sample for Asia.

In Bangladesh a specific section on youth work has been included in the Draft National Youth Policy (2015) with the provision illustrated in Figure 7.2.

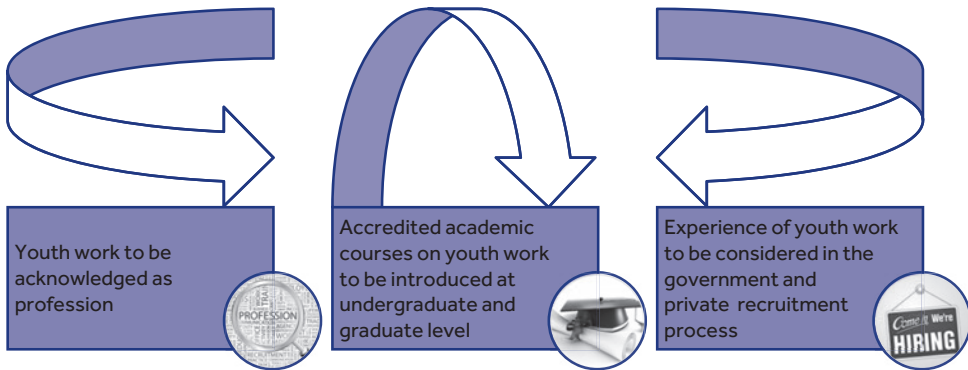
Empowerment and participation are also mentioned in the document.

The Indian National Youth Policy (2014) aims to create a productive workforce, promote social values and community service, facilitate participation and civic

Table 7.2 Policy/legislative commitments to youth and youth work – Asia

Country	Current youth policy exists	Current youth policy indicates commitments to youth work	Specific youth work policy exists	Youth Act exists	Youth Work Act exists
Bangladesh	Yes	Yes (draft)	No	No	Yes
India	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Maldives¹	Yes	Yes (draft)	No	No	Draft
Malaysia	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes (draft)
Pakistan	Yes	No	No	No	No
Singapore	No	No	No	No	No
Sri Lanka	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

Figure 7.2 Policy commitments to youth work – Draft National Youth Policy Bangladesh



Courtesy: Draft Bangladesh youth policy

engagement, support youth at risk and create equitable opportunities for all disadvantaged and marginalised youth. The policy also aims to provide a framework and guidelines for stakeholders.

While the policy does not explicitly mention youth work, it does recognise the State-supported Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) as of critical importance in policy advocacy and in its role in capacity building in youth development efforts, and so referring to a central role of the RGNIYD in training youth workers and youth officers (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2014, p. 65), which it also engages in (see Box 5.1).

In the Maldives, the current National Youth Policy dates back to 2003 and is in the process of review. The policy's vision is that young people are able to contribute to the development of the country and have fair opportunities to develop themselves. The latest progress, the first of its kind in Asia, has been a Youth Work Act, similar to that of Malta in Europe, but information on its implementation has not been received.

The ninth priority area in the Malaysian Youth Policy (MYP) (the 2015 policy due to be implemented in 2018) focuses on building the capacity and competency of youth workers so they, as implementers of policy, might fulfil the needs of youth development and contribute towards strategic development of the country in the future (Malaysian Youth Policy, 2015, p. 12).

The National Youth Policy's objective is 'to establish a holistic and harmonious Malaysian youth force imbued with strong spiritual and moral values'. Its strategies included developing a knowledge base on youth as well as a focus on skill development.

The MYP commits to strengthening the human capital and the potential of youth as drivers for the future strategic development of the country in accordance with the Federal Constitution and Rukun Negara (National Principles). It outlines three policy areas as follows: 'Positive Youth Development', 'From Youth to Youth' and 'Youth are the Nation's Resource and Asset', and it introduced a new youth priority

Box 7.1 Creating platforms for an academically qualified and competent cadre of youth workers: The Sri Lankan Experience

By Dr Shantha Abeysinghe,
Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, The Open University
of Sri Lanka.
Member, Board of Directors, Professional Youth Workers'
Association (PYWA), Sri Lanka

Youth Work Education and Training

Implementing the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work was a major milestone in Sri Lanka for enabling youth workers to access the requisite qualifications and skills for youth work practice. This initiative, launched in 1998 as an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programme, was a collaboration between three key public agencies in the country: The Open University of Sri Lanka, the former Ministry of Youth and Sports, and National Youth Services Council (NYSC) of Sri Lanka, working in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

However, offering youth work education and training only in the English medium proved to be a significant limitation that affected students in rural and war-affected areas whose languages of proficiency were Sinhala and Tamil, the two main local languages in Sri Lanka. With the end of 30 years of militarised ethnic conflict in 2009, there was an urgent need to strengthen youth work practice in war-affected areas and this expansion of the offer to local languages met this critical professional need. The Diploma, therefore, was translated into the two local languages to broaden opportunities. According to statistics at the end of 2016, 914 individuals were enrolled in the programme in all three languages.

In line with further strengthening an academically and professionally qualified youth work cadre, the Bachelor of Arts in Youth and Community Development was approved by the Open University of Sri Lanka in 2014 and was further evaluated and approved by the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka. Part of the degree will be material created through the Youth Work Degree partnership created by the Commonwealth in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning and the University of the West Indies.

Towards an evidence-based approach towards youth development work

The first baseline survey of youth work in Sri Lanka conducted in 2011 with the assistance of the Commonwealth revealed that Sri Lanka was the only country which had not formulated a national youth policy in the South Asian Region. It also highlighted the absence of a professional youth work cadre and association of youth workers in Sri Lanka. Based on the findings of this baseline study, a three-day workshop was conducted by the Ministry of Youth and the staff of the

(continued)

(continued)

Department of Social Studies of the Open University of Sri Lanka with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat and Dr Brian Belton – This was another milestone in the development of the youth work sector in Sri Lanka.

This intervention paved the way for a new chapter to strengthen a professionally qualified youth work sector in Sri Lanka.

Moving On: Formal Recognition of Credentials and a Professional Association

The following initiatives were significant among work undertaken as a result of this momentum:

1. The formal recognition of youth work as a professional category in the National Youth Policy of 2014,
2. The establishment and registration of the Professional Youth Workers' Association (PYWA), Sri Lanka in 2014,
3. A range of regional and national workshop led by PYWA on building a relevant and responsive youth work cadre,
4. The development of a short course for continual learning of youth workers by PYWA in partnership with the Commonwealth and India's Youth Collective.

There was no legislation or policy that recognised youth work in Sri Lanka until the Cabinet approved the first National Youth Policy (NYP) in 2014. This recognition became a clear stepping stone towards the work that followed in establishing the Association and promoting professional practice.

PYWA has the capacity to conduct training of trainers (ToT) programmes in all nine provinces in Sri Lanka.

Moving forward: State support and investment

Currently PYWA is in the process of obtaining government support to institutionalise the short course as a complement to the existing diploma and degree qualifications, and to advocate for adequate investment for instituting youth work practice.

Since the Hon. Prime Minister of Sri Lanka is taking the lead role of the Ministry of Youth, both youth workers and other stakeholders of youth are more optimistic concerning government intervention that will support an academically qualified and professionally oriented youth work cadre through the delivery of a quality and responsive youth work programmes for young people in Sri Lanka.

area on professionalising youth work. The MYP is a starting point to structure the current unstructured youth work setting in Malaysia. At this moment, the Ministry of Youth and Sports through its research arm, Institute for Youth Research (IYRES), is studying the framework of youth work practice in Malaysia. The study also examines the possibility of the framework being used as an amendment to the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act 2007 to establish structure and professionalism in youth work in Malaysia.

A Youth Work Act will not be specifically legislated, but a section on youth work will be considered to the amendments of the new Youth Societies and Youth Development Act 2007.

The collaboration in research and development work across youth work practitioners, policy-makers, scholars and researchers strengthen the whole youth development ecosystem in Malaysia.

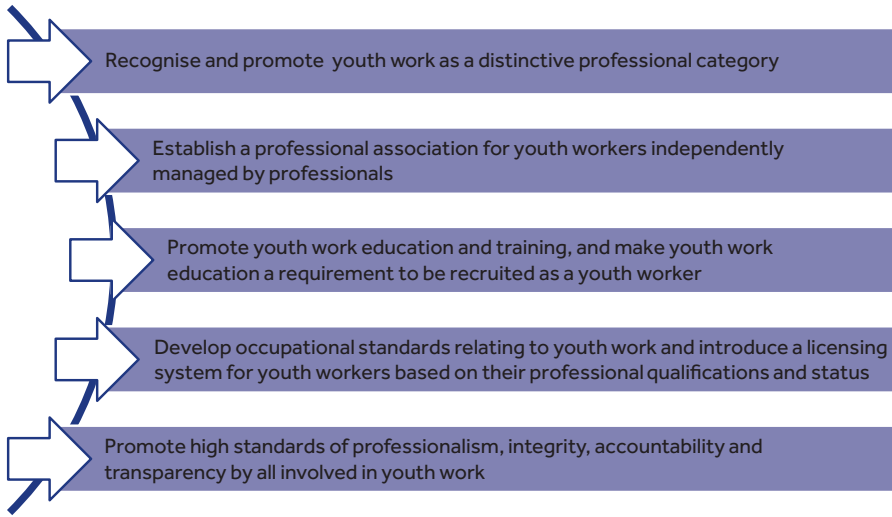
In 2009, the Pakistan Federal Cabinet approved the national youth policy (2008). However, in 2010 the Ministry of Youth Affairs was dissolved, and responsibility for youth was devolved to the four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and two territories (Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir). The Punjab province approved its youth policy in 2012, and, at the same time, the Sindh province produced a draft youth policy. Balochistan presented a youth policy in 2015. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has produced a draft policy, while details of the progress of Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir are available.³ No specific commitments to youth work were observed.

Singapore has no dedicated youth policy.

The National Youth Policy Sri Lanka (6.5 Professionalisation of the youth work sector) has a fully-fledged articulation of policy commitments to youth work as follows:

[A]t present youth work is characterised as a top down approach that hardly reflects the developmental needs of young people. This has hampered the evolution of a participatory and development approach to youth work. Youth work could also be characterised as a form of event management where the main youth work programmes are implemented in a uniform manner throughout the country according to an annual calendar. This limits the ability of youth officers to act innovatively at the grassroots level. In general, youth work in Sri Lanka is perceived as a variant of social or charity work, not necessarily as a distinctive professional category. The youth officers are often called to play conflicting roles where they might be seen as involved in political mobilisation at the grassroots levels. This explains the underlying challenge faced by the youth officers in delivering professional youth services. Recruitment to youth service is based on minimal academic qualifications. There are also lack of opportunities for professional education and training for the youth workers.

Figure 7.3 illustrates this.

Figure 7.3 Youth work commitments in youth policy – Sri Lanka

The national youth policy (2014) aims to ‘develop the full potential of young people to enable their active participation in national development for a just and equitable society’.

7.3.3 The Caribbean

The youth policies for six of the countries in the Caribbean sample have developed a framework of youth empowerment and speak to the personal development of youth and the role of young people in community and national development. Young people were part of the process and the generation of policy. The Commonwealth Youth Programme’s asset- and evidence-based approaches, principles and the Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) are said to have greatly influenced the process.

Table 7.3 Policy/legislative commitments to youth and youth work – the Caribbean

Country	Current youth policy exists	Current youth policy indicates commitments to youth work	Specific youth work policy exists	Youth Act exists	Youth Work Act exists
Barbados	Yes	No	No	No	No
Belize	Yes	No	No	No	No
Dominica	Yes	Yes (draft)	No	No	
Guyana	Yes	No	No	No	No
Jamaica	Yes	No	No	No	No
St Lucia	Yes	Yes (draft)	No	No	No
St Vincent and the Grenadines	Yes (+new draft)	No	No	No	No
Trinidad and Tobago	Yes	No	No	No	No

While most Caribbean youth policies acknowledged youth work and youth workers, specific policy commitments were not directly articulated in the documents provided during the survey, except in St Lucia's draft policy. General commitments do, however, exist.

The National Youth Policy of Barbados (2011) identifies nine areas of priority largely focused on youth development, empowerment and participation. Even though there are no clear commitments to youth work as a profession within the policy, it does state that it agrees with the goals related to youth work and its professionalisation, as stated in the goals of the Commonwealth's Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE). The policy mentions youth work and indicates that, locally, youth workers are seen as closely aligned with social workers as the terms were used interchangeably, and refers to social workers specialising in youth. For Barbados, youth workers try to:

equip young people with core values and effective role models during adolescence to ensure that they can resist the temptation to indulge in anti-social behaviour. Effective youth work is to provide young people with survival kits to help them navigate safe pathways to adulthood.

The National Youth Policy of Belize (2012) centres on three primary goals that focus on empowering and supporting young people to achieve optimal wellbeing, ensuring policies and frameworks are 'multi-sectoral, co-ordinated, cohesive and resourced', creating an 'optimal ecology' of home, school and community that allows young people to grow up to be 'healthy, caring and responsible'.

While making no allusion to youth work, the policy makes consistent referral to youth development. Participation and empowerment are also mentioned.

The mission of the National Youth Policy for Dominica (2004) is

to create a framework that will ensure that young men and women in Dominica grow up with a sense of belonging and worth and are empowered to participate fully in the social and economic development of the nation.

The policy focuses on six strategic areas.

With regard to youth work the Policy has it that previously youth work was mostly concerned with 'recreation programmes for youth, the traditional model of youth work [as perceived in Dominica]. These developed alongside probationary and youth welfare services' (p. 1).

However

Youth unemployment and adult reproductive health were the two major concerns for youth work in the 1980s. In response, the government initiated a non-formal youth training programme to assist in job creation among the young. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, youth centres were established in two areas to attempt to address problems of sexual and reproductive health. Youth volunteerism gained greater importance and as non-government community organisations expanded, the interest in youth work grew also.

Today, unemployment and problems of sexual health still remain major issues and more so since the onset of HIV/AIDS in the latter part of the 1980s. This is compounded with problems of drug abuse and the shift in traditional values and thinking among youth brought on by the revolution in technology and the attending problems of globalisation.

According to the Vin Lawrence Report, 'Youth work in Dominica should supplement the effort of schools and formal training to prepare young people for their life as adults. It should prepare them for future responsibilities of parenthood and family life, enable them to be intelligent consumers and assure their active participation in creating the culture of tomorrow.' Youth services such as sports, education, training, culture, health, employment and recreation therefore should encompass the broad areas of their development. (National Youth Policy, 2004, p. 3)

In spite of these interpretations of youth work, there are no specific policy commitments to professionalising the youth work sector in the Dominica youth policy.

The policy consistently refers to youth development and participation but makes less mention of empowerment.

The Government of Guyana reported in October 2016 that the National Assembly adopted the national youth policy which serves to recognise and respond to the needs of pre-adolescents (age 10-14) and young people (14-35). It was stated in the draft policy that it 'represents a stated commitment to improve the situation of young people in Guyana in a manner that is empowering, inclusive and sustained' (Preface, NYP, 2015). The policy prioritises youth empowerment, identity, political participation and representation along with key youth development components such as education, skills development, employment, entrepreneurship and health. There is no specific mention of youth work.

Jamaica's Ministry of Youth and Culture, National Youth Policy 2015–2030 focuses on nine strategic areas.

The policy states that the Commonwealth Youth Programme's approach will be adopted

which indicates that a new concept of youth development and youth work should promote a positive youth development model rooted in human rights and emphasise the view that young people personify the vibrant hope and potential of any society (Jamaica. Ministry of Youth and Culture, National Youth Policy 2015–2030, p. 4).

The policy makes consistent reference to youth development, participation and empowerment. Again, there are no specific policy commitments to youth work.

In St Lucia, the National Youth Policy (enacted in 2003) is currently being reviewed through technical support provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The 2003 Policy aimed to 'provide the youth with a voice, equal opportunities and autonomy, with a view to developing their full potential'.

The draft policy mentions and refers to training of youth workers and indicates that the ‘department of youth and sports provides short and long-term training in youth work for persons involved in youth organisations’.

A Strategic Plan for Youth Development was developed in 2008, which formed the basis of the 2012-2017 Development Plan. It focuses generally on the activities of the Ministry of Youth Development and Sports. There are specific commitments to youth work in the strategy.

The older National Youth Policy (1996) of St Vincent and the Grenadines was focused on employment, education, health, culture, sports, participation and representation. It did not mention youth work or empowerment, but made reference to youth development and participation. A new youth policy is underway but reports on progress are pending.

A 2011 report by The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) noted a draft National Youth Policy as focusing on education, employment, health, HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence. The current status of the draft is unclear.

The National Youth Policy 2012-2017 for Trinidad & Tobago puts forward a vision that sees each young person as having ‘a unique purpose to his or her life, based upon naturally endowed skills and competencies and those they may choose to develop over time, and focuses on five strategic goals’. Again, there is no focus on youth work.

7.3.4 Europe and Canada

While all four countries in the European region had legislation and policy relating to young people, only Malta had specific commitments to youth work in the form of a Youth Work Act.

In Canada much of the legislation is made and enacted at province/territory level, but as in Cyprus, youth work is not recognised as a distinct practice at national level; there is no national definition.

The key challenge with respect to youth work policy is that while there may be some support observed in some provinces, it requires a significant investment and existing

Table 7.4 Policy/legislative commitments to youth and youth work – Europe and Canada

Country	Current youth policy exists	Current youth policy indicates commitments to youth work	Specific youth work policy exists	Youth Act exists	Youth Work Act exists
Canada	No	No	No	No	No
Cyprus	No	No	No	No	No
Malta	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
UK	LG ⁴	LG	Scotland and LG ⁵	No	No

relationship in order for the profession to be recognised, with a particular political party in place. For example, Alberta has made progress based on the election of a political party with socialist ideals, and a relationship with the Minister of Health who has knowledge of what child and youth care/youth work is. In Quebec, services are divided by language and a regulated profession that is close to youth work – psychoeducation – which is only found in the French sector. Assessing policy for commitments to youth work is challenging as in Canada youth work spans several different legislations – for example, in Nova Scotia, practice is regulated by 13 different legislations for child welfare.

As youth workers are located in various settings – including child welfare, schools, community centres, health and hospitals – the practice setting is regulated with standards, safety guidelines, etc. Therefore, while the occupation is not regulated, the work that youth workers undertake usually is. For example, in Nova Scotia, residential care is regulated and mandates youth work qualifications for staff working in these provincially funded facilities.

A 2010 report from Policy Research Initiative states that very few federal policies in Canada directly address youth rights. Instead, policies at the provincial or municipal level address youth-related issues, including education, health, employment and participation. For example, the province of Quebec has one of the only well-established youth policies in Canada. It has a Quebec Youth Policy and a related Youth Action Strategy, which identifies measurements and indicators for success.

In and across Canada no single national authority has a mandate for youth, but rather several agencies have well-defined youth responsibilities relating to justice and crime, employment and health. Departments and ministries relating specifically to youth exist at the provincial and municipal levels. For example, the province of Ontario has a Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Other provinces, such as Nova Scotia's Youth Secretariat, have one agency responsible for co-ordinating youth interventions across different sectors.

Cyprus has no unifying or over-arching youth policy. Instead, as listed in the 2012 youth policy briefing, Cyprus has a variety of laws that are concerned with youth issues such as No. 33(I) of 1994: Youth Board Law and No. 48(I) of 2001: Protection of Young Persons at Work. According to a 2012 European Commission report, there is also an inter-ministerial Consulting Committee on Youth consisting of representatives from 10 ministries and agencies. Ministries include the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

Cyprus makes use of broad youth work initiatives (commonly via the European Union). There is no specific definition of youth work and it has no definitive State recognition as an occupation. The people who might be considered to be practising youth work do so as part of their wider occupational role, but have usually been employed to undertake another specialty. This being the case, there is no youth worker association and no minimum qualification for youth workers. There is a tendency for people with a background of psychology to take on youth work-type roles, but people

with other degrees undertake similar practices. This said, it is stating the obvious that without recognition youth work cannot be professionalised in Cyprus.

For all this, at the time of writing a process is starting in Cyprus by way of a significant conference focusing on the validation of non-formal and informal learning in that national context. This initiative, motivated by the European Union expectations, is envisaged to last for a two-year period.

Box 7.2 Professional Recognition of Youth Work in Malta – A Brief History

By Simon Schembri

on behalf of Maltese Association of Youth Workers Committee,
Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Workers' Associations (CAYWA)

In February 2014, the Maltese parliament unanimously passed the Youth Work Profession Act, through which youth workers are recognised as professionals (Buontempo, 2014). This makes Malta one of a few states where youth workers are at par with other social and educational professions.

The process for the recognition of youth workers has been a long journey which was initiated by the first group of Youth and Community Studies students graduating from the University of Malta in 1998. This article will have a look at how the academic course in youth and community studies, lobbying and the national youth policies have been instrumental to achieve this result. Furthermore, it will highlight how the setup of Agenzija Żgħażaġh (National Youth Agency) has contributed to the creation of employment opportunities for youth workers.

Up to the early 1990s, youth work provision was mainly provided through church-based youth centres and uniformed groups. In 1993, the Maltese Government through the first National Youth Policy envisaged the need to have trained professionals working with young people (The Ministry for Youth and Theatre, 1993). This led to the introduction of the Institute of Youth Studies, 'later as a programme within the Department of education Studies and now forms part of the Faculty for Social Wellbeing' (University of Malta, para 1).

Azzopardi (1998) states that the Institute of Youth Studies was placed in a unique position because at the time it was the only entity focused entirely on youth issues during a period where there was an increase in the number of services targeted towards young people. The Institute of Youth Studies welcomed its first group of students in 1993 (Azzopardi, 2002, p. 7). The course was set on 3 main concepts: participation; emancipation; and empowerment, concepts which those wanting to work with young people had to adopt in their practice.

The Youth Studies Certificate progressed to a diploma and eventually a BA in Youth and Community Studies by 1998. The first group of students graduating in 1998, inspired by the youth work setup in the UK, decided to setup the

(continued)

(continued)

Maltese Association of Youth Workers (MAY). The main goals of the association were to have youth work recognised as a profession, and the setting up of a National Youth Agency. Though qualified as youth workers, most graduates were not officially employed as youth workers but rather performed youth work practice on a voluntary basis with youth NGOs. This consolidated existing youth organisations. A practical example was Zghazagh Azzjoni Kattolika (ZAK), a branch of the Maltese Catholic Action, which was revived during the late 1990s and nowadays is one of the leading youth organisations in Malta with several qualified youth workers working in the organisation.

Some of the work carried out by MAY includes the drafting of the first code of ethics for qualified youth workers, recommendations in the National Youth Policies, providing training courses for youth workers and participation in international fora. A concrete example of the effective advocacy for the youth work profession can be noted in the 1999 National Youth Policy where it declared that the 'government and local councils have to strive to see that youth-oriented services will be managed in collaboration with professional youth workers' (Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, 1999, p. 24).

At the turn of the millennium, seven Youth Empowerment Centres were set up by local councils in different localities. These were run by part-time youth workers with the aim of providing information and support to young people and local NGOs (Schembri, 2006, p.9). In 2005, the association was enrolled in the Maltese Federation for Professional Associations (MFPA). This meant that though few youth workers were employed, they were considered as providing a professional service to young people even if it was on a voluntary basis.

The next milestone for youth work as a profession was the introduction of youth workers in schools: 'An agreement with the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) has been established to integrate youth workers in schools both with challenging behaviour students and in extended school settings to support youth participation through student councils' (Teuma, 2009, p. 84). This paved the way to a number of youth work posts being issued by the Ministry of Education and other agencies such as the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC).

All four National Youth Policies published in 1993, 1999, 2003 and 2010 respectively, emphasised the need to set up a National Youth Agency to co-ordinate youth services on behalf of the government. Supporting the need for investment in the youth sector was highlighted by a team of international experts who reviewed the implementation of the Youth Policy in Malta on behalf of the Council of Europe (2004). The report probed the need to increase funding 'to facilitate the creation of more full and part-time youth work posts' (Council of Europe, 2005, p. 41). In February 2011, the Secretariat of Youth and Sport launched the National Youth Agency named Agenzija Żgħażaġh (AZ). The aim of AZ was to:

- develop action plans for the implementation of the policy;
- co-ordinate, direct and monitor the implementation of such plans as a matter of priority;
- initiate, co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate youth work programmes aimed at young people and facilitate participation and empowerment of youth;
- co-ordinate research work;
- promote a uniform approach amongst stakeholders in the youth field to matters
- relating to young people;
- make recommendations to stakeholders on issues affecting young people.

(National Youth Policy, 2010, p. 53)

AZ introduced a number of programmes and initiatives such as the ‘youth local councils’ and ‘youth cafés’, to cite two examples. All projects are co-ordinated by either full-time or part-time qualified youth workers.

January 2014 marked another milestone for Maltese youth work as the Maltese parliament unanimously passed the ‘Youth Work Profession Bill’ (MAY, 2014). This makes Malta one of the few countries where youth work is regulated by law. ‘Austria, Estonia, Germany, Ireland and Romania have specific legislation that establishes a framework for the provision of youth work’ (Youth Partnership, 2008, p. 21). In the comparative analysis, the Youth Partnership (2008, 2009) highlights that existing definitions of youth work focus on providing positive experiences to support young people’s personal development and assist them in their transition to adulthood. Similarly, the Maltese Bill defines youth work as

a non-formal learning activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people. It takes into account all strands of diversity and focuses on all young people between thirteen (13) to (30) years of age. Youth workers engage with young people with in their communities and support them in realising their potential and address life challenges critically and creatively to bring about social change’ (p. C18).

The Act established that youth work provides learning experiences for youth, sets the base where youth work takes place and indicates the philosophical approach youth workers ought to adopt in their practice. This definition is essential as it guides and provides a common framework for practice for Maltese youth workers. In November 2016, the first group of youth workers were awarded the professional warrant.

This has been a long and fruitful journey for youth workers in Malta. The main objectives set by the first members of MAY have been achieved through the setting up of the National Youth Agency and the Youth Work Profession Act. This does not mean that the journey is at an end but at a crossroad where Maltese

(continued)

(continued)

Youth workers need to strengthen and validate their practice by highlighting the impact and benefits of youth work provision. The next steps are to create a collaborative network amongst Maltese youth workers. This is paramount since different forms of youth work provisions are evolving through the different services hence developing new skill sets to work with different groups of young people both in youth clubs, educational institutions and in the streets. This means that youth workers need to invest in their professional development – an aspect which is highlighted in the Youth Work Profession act. These aspects are vital to set youth work standards to establish accountability and a quality service to all young people in Malta.⁶

Malta's National Youth Policy *Towards 2020* provides extensive support for youth work, empowerment and participation. Malta provides the highest form of commitment to youth work through a Youth Work Act and its systematic implementation. Box 7.2 is an elaboration of this exemplary process.

In the United Kingdom, Parliament has devolved responsibility for a range of issues, including education and youth work, to administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Department for Children, Schools and Families' Joint International Unit has overall responsibility for representing UK youth policy within Europe and abroad. Ministries with responsibility for youth are as follows:

- England – The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).
- Scotland – Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, Scottish Executive
- Wales – Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Welsh Assembly
- Northern Ireland – Department of Education.

The United Kingdom has an enormous range of policy and legislation relating to young people, and young people are a significant concern in a range of legislation not specifically related to youth. The legislative provision that comes closest to commitments to youth work is a local government legal provision known as 507B which, while it does not explicitly mention youth work, requires local education authorities to provide leisure-time activities for persons aged 13–19, and certain persons aged 20–24. It does not, however, convey minimum requirements and refers to 'activities' and 'training' rather than the nuanced provision that youth work is. However, it has been used to support youth work via English local authorities.

Also regionally (particularly in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, but also in contexts such as Guernsey, Jersey and Gibraltar) legislation impacting on youth and youth work exists. However, in total, these geographical areas include less than 17 per cent of the population of the UK.

As such, across the region and within national contexts, the development of legislation and policy for the professionalisation of youth work is diverse:

- It has been established in Malta.
- It is evolving in Cyprus and Canada (although this is not without challenges)
- In the UK there has historically been an effort to adopt something of the persona and practices associated with profession status. This activity has caused those within and around youth work circles to broadly regard the occupation as professional.

In common with the rest of the Commonwealth, compared to social work or teaching, youth work, as a full-time, paid occupation represents a relatively small (and, due to austerity measures, in the UK shrinking)⁷ workforce. It can be regarded as something of a marginal occupation in terms of public consciousness.

At the same time, perhaps with the exception of Malta, youth work practice is broadly understood to be perhaps more closely related to play work, child care and social work than a ‘free-standing’ response to young people. This is perhaps understandable as youth workers in the region, particularly in Canada and the UK, do often work alongside social workers and in schools, colleges and child care provision.

7.3.5 The Pacific

In the Pacific, while Australia, New Zealand and the Solomon Islands have demonstrated advanced approaches to youth work as established through culture and practice, and instituted through education and training and through youth work coalitions and associations, State commitments to youth work were less evident.

While the Australian national youth policy is not current, all state governments have up to date youth policies and ministries related to affairs of young people. In regard

Table 7.5 Policy/legislative commitments to youth and youth work – the Pacific

Country	Current youth policy exists	Current youth policy indicates commitments to youth work	Specific youth work policy exists	Youth Act exists	Youth Work Act exists
Australia	LG	-	LG	No	No
Fiji	Yes	No	No	No	No
New Zealand	No	No	No	No	No
Papua New Guinea	Yes	No	No	No	No
Samoa	Yes	No	No	No	No
Solomon Islands	Yes	No	No	No	No
Tonga	Yes	No	No	No	No
Vanuatu	Yes	No	No	No	No

to youth work there was no evidence in any Pacific nation, including Australia, of legislation specifically defining or regulating ‘youth work’ as an occupation or profession, even though some local government policies that facilitate youth work do exist in Australia.

Australia’s 2010 ‘National Strategy for Young Australians’ mentions youth workers just once. This strategy is now dated and has not been renewed. The strategy also contains broad elements that can be understood to be congruent with youth work practice. Its vision is that

all young people grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient and to have the opportunities and skills they need to learn, work, engage in community life and influence decisions that affect them.

Australia does have national vocational training standards set for the training of youth workers at certificate and diploma levels and does have state-level government regulatory measures and safety standards (e.g. criminal record checks) for all those who work with young people. Broader commitments to shaping and regulating youth work practice have historically been set by youth sector peak bodies, youth councils, youth work academics and youth workers’ associations. Youth policies in many states have had limited impact on the shape and delivery of youth work with the exception of Victoria, where legislative commitments to human rights in the Children, Young People and Families Act 2005 led to a rights-based code of ethical practice being developed by the sector (see Box 10.2), and the establishment of an active professional association. Most states, and government-funded Youth Affairs Councils and peak bodies, along with university youth work departments, have largely carried the load of lobbying and encouraging the professionalisation of youth work. This is not unlike the situation in the UK, where peak bodies such as the National Youth Agency (NYA), and to a lesser extent the unions, have filled the gap left by the lack of an effective and broad professional association.

Fiji’s National Youth Policy makes no mention of youth work. However, it claims to recognise ‘the current status of young people and the potentials they possess for the future’. It further aims ‘to enhance their holistic development to become resourceful and effective members of society’.

The policy looks to work ‘in tandem’ with the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development, which has a specific children and youth section.

New Zealand’s former youth development strategy titled ‘Youth development strategy aoteaoroa’ was launched in 2002, but commitments to its implementation have not been clear and are reported to have been largely abandoned.

This strategy expressed a strong understanding of the principles of positive youth development in youth work practice. It had clear commitments to supporting youth workers, as follows:

- encouraging youth work training in conjunction with non-governmental agencies and local authorities,

- promoting youth workers in schools who work as part of youth development programmes,
- ensure training for youth workers in a comprehensive youth development approach,
- creating an infrastructure for community youth workers' training,
- encouraging formal supervision of isolated youth workers,
- encouraging the development of training standards for community youth workers,
- training youth workers working for local authorities in youth development and working with young people,
- encouraging local government to take a leadership role in youth worker networking to support youth development.

It mentions one qualification specifically relating to youth work: the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology National Youth Work (level 4) Certificate even though in reality, qualifications around youth work are proliferating.

In terms of real strategic initiatives, New Zealand reported a small funding pool (NZ\$181,000 nationally) for regional youth work training.

There is no mention of youth work commitments in the Papua New Guinea National Youth Policy.

The vision of the Samoan National Youth Policy (2011) perceives of young people as partners in sustainable community development. The document refers to youth development as a strategy but does not refer to youth work as a career pathway that contributes to youth development.

With regard to the Solomon Islands, *Urban Youth in the Pacific (2011)* had it that the National Youth Policy (2010–2015), and the accompanying strategic action plan, replaced the national youth policy (2000) after a lengthy review and consultation process. Again, while it perceives of young people as partners in development, and refers to youth and wellbeing, there is no explicit mention of the profession of youth work as contributing to this, nor commitments to youth work.

In Tonga, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community supported the development of a youth policy in 2005, which was adopted in 2007 as the Tonga National Youth Strategy (TNYS). The TNYS envisions a strengths-based approach to youth development, but again, does not mention youth work.

Vanuatu has a Youth Development Policy under the Ministry of Youth Development. Its vision is that the young '[avail] themselves of traditional and religious values, along with modern technologies' in support of both person and socio-economic development.

7.4 Conclusions

Generally speaking, the relative professionalism of any occupation is often defined by way of government policy/legislation and or regulation with regards to practice. So

Table 7.6 Policy/legislative commitments to youth and youth work – Cumulative

Region	Total sample size	Has youth policy	Has explicit policy commitments to youth work	Has a Youth Work Act
Africa	8	7	4	0
Asia	7	6	4 + 1 draft	1 (draft)
Caribbean	8	8	2 (draft)	0
Europe and Canada	4	1	2	1
Pacific	8	8	1	0

this is what needs to be assessed, as a first step, in any context, to understand the level and extent to which youth work might be recognised as a profession.

The baseline survey's findings indicate a range of commitments to legislation and or regulation specifically relating to the occupation or professionalisation of youth work. Table 7.6 attempts to provide a general picture of policy/legislative commitments where they were found.

The data indicates a mixed picture around official commitments to youth work. In terms of the actual advancement of youth work practice, however, the clearest correlation between policy and practice was seen in Malta. In countries such as the UK, Australia, New Zealand and India, while relatively advanced approaches to youth work were identified in the practice chapter, empowering and asset-based practice were seen as largely threatened due to the official defunding of structures. In countries such as India, commitments to youth work were seen as emerging.

Countries with clear policy commitments to youth work such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia were still in the process of translating policy to practice, a process which calls for commensurate State investment for the education and training of youth workers, and for establishing mechanisms and processes for youth work practice.

A range of other legislation, policy and institutions of course influence and impinge on the development and shape of youth work as a profession internationally. There is no consistent evidence from across the sampled countries on these. However, legal Acts underpin the work of the National Youth Services Council in Sri Lanka, which has implications for those termed youth development officers.

A provision for the youth work profession is being drafted into the new amendments to Malaysia's Youth Societies and Youth Development Act 2007, and work is currently in progress for a framework on the youth work profession that is being undertaken by the Institute of Youth Research (IYRES) (at the time of writing).

In Canada, although there are no State guidelines or supporting mechanisms and no unified legislation that regulates youth work, efforts have been made to regulate the occupation. However, these vary from one province/territory to another.

Notes

- 1 Since the conduct of this baseline, Maldives has voluntarily left the Commonwealth. However, due to its progress through a Youth Work Act, the first of its kind in Asia, and its official commitments to youth work, data on the Maldives has been retained in the baseline.
- 2 This is the Maldives, which has since withdrawn from Commonwealth membership.
- 3 These can be found on <https://www.facebook.com/GBYouthPolicy/> and https://www.facebook.com/AJK-Youth-Policy-532593863423142/about/?entry_pointpage_nav_about_item&tabpage_info respectively
- 4 In Wales, Extending Entitlement provided the framework for youth support services, bringing together all services, support and opportunities for young people aged 11 to 25. Young People's Partnerships were established in each local authority area to coordinate services for 11-25 year olds.
- 5 In Scotland, a national youth work strategy was published in 2007, setting out the role of youth work in achieving the broader aims of the Scottish Executive – that young people are nurtured, safe, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible. The strategy catered for young people aged 11 to 25. In Northern Ireland, the Children and Young People's Unit was set up within government to ensure that the rights and needs of children and young people (up to 18 or 21 for those who are disabled or have been in care) are given a high priority.

A raft of more recent policy has been applied to the above four contexts within the UK while local authorities and regional assemblies have initiated and dissolved a range of responses. This could consist of one part-time volunteer – although few would go this far but there has certainly been legal action on this that did not find in favour of local authority provision being statutory or legally enforceable. The situation is very much ongoing.

Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales each have devoted youth policy and/or youth work strategies. Wales has developed a 2014–2018 National Youth Work Strategy, and Scotland a 2014–2019 National Youth Work Strategy. Both build on civil society consultations and have a transversal approach. Northern Ireland has a youth work policy titled Priorities for Youth

In a press release on 3 July 2013, it was announced that responsibility for youth policy would be transferred from the Ministry of Education to the Cabinet Office – a cross-thematic Ministry. However, no youth department exists. The Cabinet Office focuses on national programmes, such as the National Citizenship Service, while most youth provisions and services are provided at a local and city level of government. Scotland has a Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Youth Employment.
- 6 This case study has been informed by Azzobardi (2002), Buontempo (2014), Ministry of Education and Arts (Malta), (1993), Ministry of Youth Malta (2004), Parliamentary Ministry of Education, Malta (2009), Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth and Sports Malta (2010), Schembri (2006), Teuma (2009), University of Malta (2013), Youth Partnership I (2008), Youth Work Profession Bill, Malta (2012).
- 7 Austerity considerations, the result of the 2008 economic downturn, do not appear to be as impactful on youth provision in Malta and Canada, although Cyprus has been subject to long-term political, economic and social limitations.