

HISTORICAL RECORD Session:

Youth Worker Systems in the UK

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WHAT DID YOU HEAR? WHAT ARE THE BIG IDEAS?

- New accountability required as a result of Thatcher-ism
- Youth services were separated in England – now integrated with other work
- Change in policy, change in philosophy – leads to complete change in youthwork
- People entering the field will know it only in the “new” way – integrated & targeted
- Degree and professional certification as youthworker power
- Youth work is becoming less and less placed in “civil society” and more in control of the state
- Accreditation and proscribed outcomes are changing youthwork in the UK
- Plethora of policies under government over past 10 years. Policies are putting out accreditation targets.
- Prescribed outcomes for youth work are not a good thing.
- Political action in the UK regarding Youth Work policy has taken away the power and expertise of youth workers
- Accreditation of youth workers is a double-edged sword.

WHAT QUESTIONS AROSE OR LINGER?

- Big difference between US and England in size of country and difficult to translate to US in some ways
- Notion of gate-keepers of profession
- Future despite change
- If competencies are new, how has accreditation been implemented for 50 years?
- What can we learn from the labor or union traditions of youth workers in other countries?
- How have the policies affected youth programs and organizations in current years?
- How can the UKs experience help identify issues and challenges that America is facing regarding direction and funding?

WHAT NUGGETS, GIFTS, PIECES OF WISDOM SHOULD BE CAPTURED & ARCHIVED AS WE MOVE FORWARD TO DECIDE WHO AND WHAT WE WANT TO BECOME?

- Be careful about being co-opted by other larger systems and losing your identity
- Maybe the fact that we have only very limited government support is better than being controlled by government?
- Even though today’s youth workers continue to do good work despite policy change, how will the future of the work be safeguarded as new people enter the field under new parameters? Are the or will the touchstones change?
- The pursuit of professionalism can create a bureaucratic game of meeting requirements and competencies
- Bureaucracy and political actions have proven ineffective in positively growing youth work practice – we need to take opportunities to define the importance of our work
- We need to take steps to ensure the upcoming policies support the distinct approach of youth work