

CONSTRUCTING THE FUTURE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:

Four Trends & the Challenges and Opportunities They Provide



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What's Changed

- New research on the impact programs can have
- Greater understanding of the value of youth engagement and other broader outcomes for learning and development
- Increased emphasis on expanding learning time
- Greater awareness by, and scrutiny from, other sectors
- Change in policy discussions with themes like ***Ready by 21*** and ***A New Day for Learning***
- Growing recognition of need to nurture the sparks within youth to use Peter Benson's new language



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This Means

- Non-formal learning is becoming the third critical leg of a community stool supporting youth – along with early childhood and K-12 education
- Higher expectations for impact
 - if YD programs are more necessary than just nice, prove your program is making a difference*
- A greater presence in policy arena
- **Youth development is in the major leagues** –
 - it will be watched differently and must be played differently to succeed*



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TREND #1

Emerging “New Math” of Youth Development

- We have been stuck in an *additive mode* – need more impact, just add a program
- The accumulation of research now suggests we need to think more in *multiplicative terms* if we want to improve actual impact

***Doing better to have more impact
rather than just doing more***



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The “New Math” of Youth Development

$$\text{Impact} = P \times E \times Q \times PI$$

The Impact (I) of a program is significantly affected by four elements:

- **Potential Impact** (PI) – The design of the program
- **Participation** (P) – Whether a youth participates
- **Engagement** (E) – The extent a youth is engaged
- **Quality** (Q) – The quality of practice as delivered



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Critical Forces Shaping Impact

- Whether or not youth can and does **PARTICIPATES** (if not, multiply by zero and get no effect)
- The extent to which each youth becomes **ENGAGED** in the program (from 0 to 1, full engagement – if less than fully engaged, less than full impact)
- The **QUALITY of the Practice** (from -1 to +1) this includes
 - both the quality of the youth worker &
 - the quality of program implementation



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ESTIMATING IMPACT ON YOUTH

4 youth in 3 Different Programs

YOUTH	Does youth Participate?	Level of Youth's Engagement	IMPACT OF		
			Poor Quality Program (-.25 effect)	Average Quality Program (.5 effect)	High Quality Program (1.0 effect)
Jane	No (0)	None (0.0)	0	0	0
Joe	Yes (1)	Low (.33)	-8.25	16.5	33
Mary	Yes (1)	Medium (.67)	-16.75	33.5	67
Mike	Yes (1)	High (1.0)	-25	50	100

In this example, the Maximum Impact is equal to 100

Implications & Challenges

- As a field we need to build systematic research, policy and practice efforts that address each of these multipliers
- We strengthen impact of our field less by seeking to add programs and more by
 - improving the quality,
 - deepening engagement, and
 - assuring access and availability so youth can participate



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TREND #2

Quality Matters & the Field Better Improve It

- Research showing more clearly than ever that implementation of a program involves a wide range of quality that tends to wash out significant across the board impact
- Only finding major impact when programs are high quality and youth are engaged in consistent and sustained ways

Quality is key because it affects impact directly but also affects participation & engagement



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Implications & Challenges

- Doing good or doing more activities are no longer enough –especially for public funds
- Field needs clear and widely shared sense of quality and a willingness to make decisions based on quality – this could divide field
- Quality must become intentionally managed, measured, and a visible part of our language and approach



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TREND #3

Differentiation of the Youth Worker Workforce

- Youth development is multidisciplinary and youth workers are quite varied
- External and internal push to get degrees, count competencies, or provide certificates is growing in many quarters and likely to expand
- We face issues of choosing between approaches a “*raise the bottom*” vs. “build from the middle”

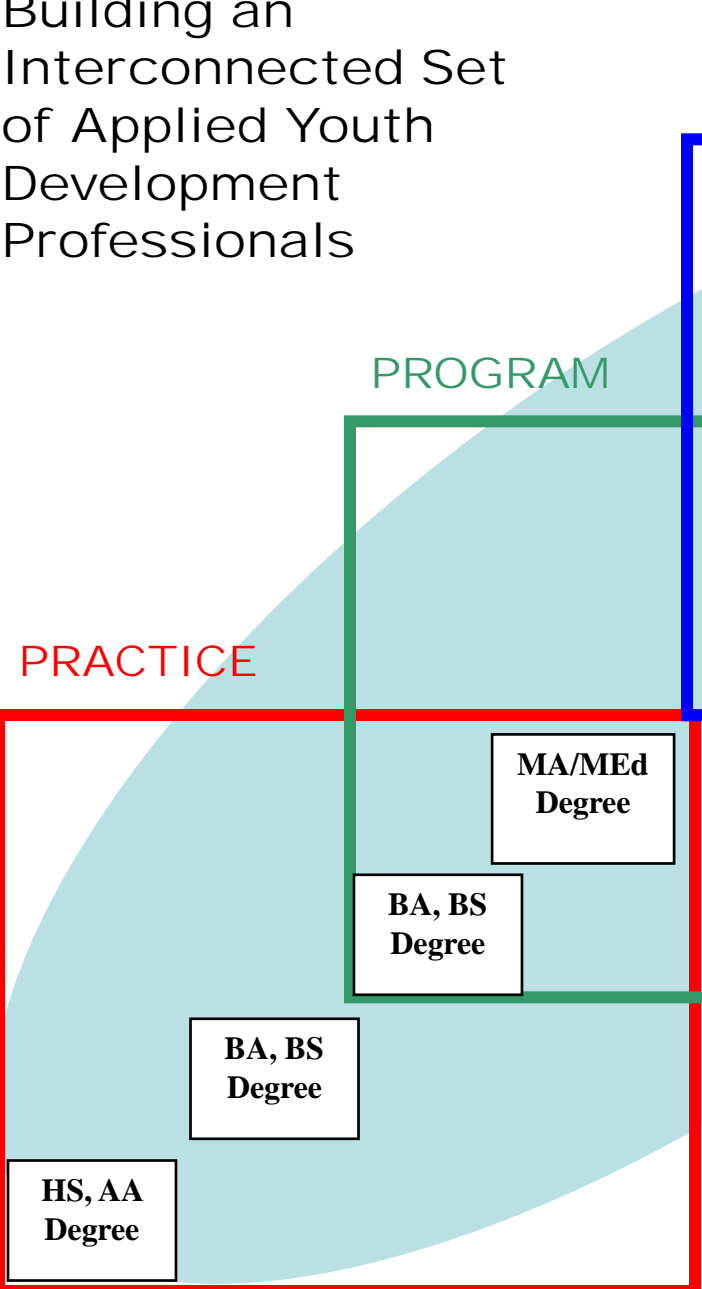
We need to build a field, not just a profession



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Building an Interconnected Set of Applied Youth Development Professionals



PRACTICE

PROGRAM

POLICY

HS, AA Degree

BA, BS Degree

BA, BS Degree

MA/MEd Degree

MA/MEd Degree

PhD, EdD Degree

MA / MS Degree

PhD, EdD Degree

Skills applied to practice directly with youth

Skills applied to program & organizational development

Skills applied to Understanding

Not Just a Single Professional Ladder

- Applied Youth Development Scholar
- Master Youth Development Professional
- Exemplary Youth Worker
- Principled Youth Worker
- Entering Youth Worker
- Volunteer

Implications and Challenges

- No longer about building a single profession - need to build a field of youth development with many allied types of professionals
- Need to build from the middle out if we are to have a connected field and not just focus of practice
- Scholarship becomes a critical glue to connecting the allied fields – it needs to occur within & across boxes
- Getting clearer and better at defining and improving the practice of youth workers without getting bureaucratic or exclusionary



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TREND #4

Accountability is

Increasing & Multidimensional

- As we learn more we have to rethink where we put responsibility for the different types of accountability levers
- Ultimately as a field we need to better align different types of accountability

Accountability for Quality not Outcomes is the key lever for improving impact at the program level



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Defining & Aligning Types of Accountability

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WHAT	WHERE
Selecting Outcomes	<i>Policy Level</i>
Monitoring Outcomes	<i>Geographic Levels</i>
Effective Strategies	<i>System Levels</i>
Quality of Program	<i>Organizational Level</i>
Quality of Professional	<i>Association Level (Peers)</i>

Implications and Challenges

- Accountability needs to be more data-driven
- The burden of assessing and responsibility for changing outcomes must shift up
- Research & significant evaluation studies must strengthen the Quality – Outcomes linkages (we need to focus resources not diffuse them)
- Accountability must be linked and aligned, not simply forced to lower levels



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In Summary, These Trends Provide Opportunities to ...

- Build a Field, Not Just a Profession
- Create a Set of Allied & Connected professionals
People who have a range of competencies both within their domain and an ability to bridge across domains
- Enhance Scholarship – the Lifeblood of a Field
Products of Discovery, Integration, & Application
- Align Accountabilities to Enhance Impact
- Focus on Quality of Practice as Key to Impact
- Position 4-H, Extension and Higher Education



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