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Abstract

Purpose:
One thing an examination of the literature on youth work makes clear is a lack of clarity on youth work’s purpose. This study investigated the value of using the concept of telos as an analytical tool to orient youth work towards the right ends.

Design/methodology/approach:
Relevant literature was systematically reviewed. The value of telos in understanding youth work was examined. Common aims of youth work were described. The merits of different goals were assessed to figure out which, if any, is youth work’s proper purpose.

Findings:
A telos would provide youth work a clear and cohesive definition, act as a useful guide for good practice, and distinguish youth work from other interventions into young people’s lives. The case was made for the telos of youth work to be ‘enabling young people to live the good life’.

Implications:
Exploring youth work’s ethically worthwhile aim challenges prevalent neo-liberal inspired and instrumentally oriented approaches to practice that circumvent deliberation on the desirability of different ends.

Originality/value:
This paper will be of interest to researchers, policy makers, practitioners and others who appreciate the importance of understanding youth work in ways that can improve policy and practice for the benefit of young people.

Keywords.
Youth work, youth development, child and youth care, telos.

Introduction

Youth work, also phrased child and youth care, informal education and youth development, is a form of human service that has a rich history spanning at least 200 years and is growing as practice and a profession in many countries (Beker and Eisikovits 1997, Freeman 2013, Jones 2005, Spence and Devanney 2006). However many researching youth work agree that there is no agreement on what youth work is. For example, a meeting of ‘experts’ on youth work in Europe reported:
Because of the different national historical contexts and as a result of its orientation to the various life situations of its target groups, youth work is a complex and diverse field suffering from a lack of basic definitions... (Institute for Social Work and Social Education, nd, p. 10).

The need for a coherent understanding of youth work has similarly been observed in Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) 2011, Commonwealth Youth Program Africa 2011, Martin 2002, ProYouthWork America 2011).

There are good reasons to get the right type of answer to the question, ‘what is youth work?’ For example, the AYAC (2013) argued that a clear account of youth work is needed to protect and improve the occupational, social and political recognition and standing of the practice. According to the AYAC (2013) a good theory of youth work would help distinguish the practice from other interventions into the lives of young people and promote a shared identity among youth workers. The AYAC (2013) suggested the conceptual refinement of youth work would lead to increased resources and support for youth workers and secure better services for young people.

This article aims to assist with reaching a good understanding of youth work by proposing a method for doing just that. Drawing on Carr (2004, p. 57) I ask a substantive philosophical question about the fundamental aims and values that should provide the intellectual basis for contemporary youth work practice. I begin by describing the concept of telos and I explain its’ value in describing youth work. Up to now telos is virtually absent from the youth work literature and I aim to fill that gap. Second I identify some of the goals of youth work that have been articulated or inferred in the literature. I examine and assess the merits of the different aims as a way to identify the proper purpose or telos of youth work. Finally I make a case for youth work’s telos to be ‘enabling young people to live the good life’.

The value of telos in understanding youth work

Telos is an old idea that can be used to understand present-day practices such as youth work. Aristotle (2009, p. 1) argued, ‘All human activities aim at some good’, and identifying the universal or chief human good or telos of human life was a central concern in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Despite the problems with Aristotle’s ethical theory, including a blatant prejudice against children and young people’s capacity to reason, some contemporary moral philosophers and social theorists have revived his concept of telos (eg., Emslie 2012, Kinsella and Pitman 2012, MacIntyre 1984, Sandel 2009). For example, Schwartz and Sharpe (2010, p. 7) articulated one of its practical consequences.

Acting wisely demands that we are guided by the proper aims or goals of a particular activity. Aristotle’s word for the purpose or aim of a practice is *telos* (original italic). The telos of teaching is to educate students; the telos of doctoring is to promote health and relieve suffering; the telos of lawyering is to pursue justice. Every profession – from banking to social work – has a telos, and those who excel are those who are able to locate and pursue it.

Similarly O’Neill (2002, p. 49) argued;

Teachers aim to teach their pupils; nurses to care for their patients; university lecturers to do research and to teach; police officers to deter and apprehend those whose activities harm the community; social workers to help those whose lives are for various reasons unmanageable or very difficult. Each profession has its proper aim...
According to Dunne (2011, p. 14) practices are characterised by ‘internal goods’ that include; ‘…the desirable outcomes characteristically aimed at through a practice, for example patients restored to good health, well-educated students, and clients’ achievement of greater resourcefulness in dealing with emotional conflict – in the cases, respectively, of medical practice, teaching and psychotherapy. What all these examples show are the characteristic end-results of a practice, the attainment of which is its essential end or telos as a practice.

Carr (2004, p. 61) reiterated the point; For Aristotle the ‘end’ of a practice is some ethically worthwhile ‘good’ that is internal to, and inseparable from, the practice and only exists in the practice itself. These accounts demonstrate that the telos’s of teaching, doctoring and lawyering are cosmopolitan and transcend contexts and it is reasonable to assume that this can also be the case for youth work. Assuming youth work is a particular practice, then according to proponents of telos youth work must also have a proper aim, right end, or internal good.

There are good reasons for identifying the telos of youth work. First, according to MacIntyre (1984, p. 58) the proper goal of youth work would act as a good definition; [Youth work is a] functional concept; that is to say, we define…[youth work] in terms of the purpose or function which…[youth work is] characteristically expected to serve. It follows that the concept of…[youth work] cannot be defined independently of the concept of…good [youth work]…

Baizerman (2013), Davies (2003), Martin (2006), Smith (2005) and Young (2010, 2006) suggested defining youth work by focusing on the intent or purpose of the practice. However proponents for defining youth work according to its purpose have typically failed to examine different aims, compare and assess their merits, or argue the case for a proper purpose. Bessant (2009, pp. 432-433) agreed:

Ours’ is a time when a willingness or the capacity to engage in a specification of the ethical point or purpose of social intervention is often either poorly done or not at all. Consequentialist-oriented managerialist policy talk about ‘better outcomes’, for example, which is typically accompanied by inadequate resourcing for the tasks at hand inspires little enthusiasm.

The concept of telos, and its value in understanding youth work, has essentially been missing in youth work literature. Baizerman (2013, p. 189) mentioned telos and argued:

The telos of purely scientifically based youth work may only be a fantasy…It is a troublesome fantasy if that telos draws away potentially viable alternative strategies of grounded practice, such as phronesis.

Baizerman makes an important point shared by others that youth work is a form of action that should be guided by phronesis or practical wisdom rather than scientific rationality (Kinsella and Pitman 2012, Ord 2014, Polkinghorne 2004). However Baizerman’s use of telos does not engage with the purposes of youth work typically articulated in the literature. Baizerman also does not make a case for using the telos to define youth work.

Second, a telos would help youth workers avoid bad practice and promote good youth work practice. Skott-Myhre (2006) argued against the use of moral discourse in youth work because he claimed it functions to include and exclude. However there needs to be some delineation about what it is youth workers ought to be aiming to do when they work with and for young people. In the absence of a telos, the goals youth workers pursue could be inappropriate. For example, aiming to harm, oppress, exploit, punish, deceive or control young people should not be considered youth work’s proper end. On a different note, according to Carr (2004, p. 61) the ‘end’ or ethically worthwhile ‘good’ of a practice should
not be the ‘satisfaction’ of the practitioners ‘own immediate needs and desires’. In other words making money or securing other personal gains are not the proper purposes of youth work. And on another note drawing on Bessant (1997), Carr (2004, pp. 64-68) and Ord (2014) the proper goal of youth work should not be externally imposed outcomes and goals set by the state that subordinate the excellence of the practice to institutional efficiency and effectiveness. Smith (2001) agreed:

Over the last twenty or so years there has been a consistent failure to properly theorize...[youth] work...and to consider [its] aims...The result has been a been a series of pathetic attempts by many youth services and agencies to justify their existence in terms that would first make sense to the...[neo-liberalist government] agenda – and more recently to the rhetoric...[of] managerialism.

Moreover delivering services as cheaply as possible and thoughtlessly complying with managerial accountability regimes and prescribed standards of performance are not the goods that youth workers should be aiming to realise or promote (Belton 2010). On the other hand a telos can orient youth workers to do the right thing. It is therefore important to get the telos right to assist youth workers to ‘act wisely’ and do youth work for the right reason.

Third, working out the telos would help to demarcate youth work from other practices and facilitate a clearer understanding of who is a youth worker. Young (2006) agreed that identifying youth work’s purpose was a way of distinguishing it from other forms of work with young people. There have been explanations of youth work based on how it is distinct from other practices however it remains unclear whether youth work is dissimilar to or derivative of other interventions into the lives of young people such as social work, generic human service work, child care, counseling and teaching (Anglin 2001, 1999, Beker 2001). A telos could unite different practitioners in a wide range of settings on what they have in common, a shared commitment to realising the proper purpose of youth work.

**Figuring out youth work’s telos**

I scoped the literature to identify and categorise the common and dominant aims of youth work. This investigation was complicated because many accounts of youth work had multiple goals that were at times ambiguous and therefore did not fit neatly within a single category (for example: Batsleer and Davies 2010, Furlong 2013, Roche, Tucker, Thomson and Flynn 2004, Sapin 2009, Wood and Hine 2009, Youthlink Scotland nd). Fusco (2012, p. 224) agreed that in the United States the aims of youth work are not articulated with consistency. The same argument applies to other jurisdictions. For example, the Council of the European Union (2010) suggested youth works’ purposes include supporting young people’s development in multiple ways, empowering young people, addressing social exclusion, targeting young people living in poverty, and strengthening civil society. Lauritzen (2006) similarly listed a range incompatible aims for youth work:

The general aims of youth work are the integration and inclusion of young people in society. It may also aim towards the personal and social emancipation of young people from dependency and exploitation.

Bessant (2012a, p. 57) saliently observed that youth work, ‘is a highly contested field characterised by paradox and contradiction between “control and cure” or “regulation and emancipation”’. To stress the point, youth work can have a range of aims however according to Aristotelian tradition of telos one of these will be the proper goal and good internal to the practice.
Deciding upon a telos of youth work is difficult for a number of reasons however these challenges can be resolved. First drawing on Niedenthal and Cantor (1984) and Dworkin (2011) the concepts likely to be used in youth work’s telos, such as best interests, positive outcomes, making a difference, personal or social transformation, are ‘fuzzy’ or interpretive. Many descriptions of youth work’s purpose are vague or incoherent because key concepts are inadequately explained. Therefore the concepts in an account of youth work’s goal need to be interpreted and characterised. Fuzzy concepts contribute to the second challenge in weighing up the proper end of youth work. According to Rittel and Webber (1973) identifying youth work’s telos is a ‘wicked problem’; there can be no objective or meaningfully correct or false telos and any account can be disputed. The Australian Public Service Commission’s (2007) report on tackling wicked problems also suggests that no version of youth work’s proper purpose can be complete, verifiably right or wrong, or proven to be scientifically true. The best any account can be is better or worse when compared to others.

In light of such ‘fuzziness’ and ‘wickedness’, an appropriate method to work out youth work’s telos is pragmatic or practical reasoning and deliberation. Dworkin (2011), Flyvbjerg (2001) and Sandel (2009) are proponents of such reasoning and deliberation in matters that are highly contested, which figuring out the telos of youth work is a good example. According to these authors determining the most plausible and desirable interpretation of youth work’s proper aim includes thinking critically, imaginatively and empathetically to form ideas, make judgments and articulate good arguments about which goals are better and which are worse (Sandel 2009). It also involves the willingness to subject points of view to critical public examination, the ability to scrutinise and critique claims and evidence, and the good sense to change one’s mind when a better argument is presented. The following analysis uses these ideas to assist with figuring out youth work’s telos.

**Aims of youth work in the literature**

Eight key goals of youth work were examined (Table 1).

Table 1: Eight key aims of youth work

| 1. To care for and protect young people |
| 2. To help disadvantaged young people |
| 3. To meet the needs of young people |
| 4. To support young people’s development |
| 5. To improve young people’s wellbeing |
| 6. To empower young people |
| 7. To realise justice for young people |
| 8. To enable young people to live the good life |

**1. To care for and protect young people**

One goal of youth work is to care for and protect young people. Similar aims include protecting young people from harm, keeping young people safe, and preventing young people from being abused as well as supporting them if it takes place. Child protection services are an example of this aim in practice. In light of the extent of violence against young people these are relevant and worthwhile ends for youth work however there are a number of concerns that
question whether this is youth work’s telos. For example, the aim to care for and protect young people is somewhat based on and perpetuates assumptions and prejudices that young people are troubled and troublesome, are ‘out of control’ and are incapable of making good decisions or looking after themselves (White, 1990, pp. 164-176). Bessant (2012a, 2005) argued such ideas have been used to justify the monitoring and regulation of young people by adults. Young people can also take on the claims being made about them; that they are weak and unable to protect themselves and need protection (Tucker 2004). Paradoxically this does not help protect young people from harm and instead can intensify their ‘vulnerability’. Protecting young people can also be at odds with aims of youth work aligned to young people’s liberation (Farrell 2004, Sebba 2005).

2. To help disadvantaged young people

Another purpose of youth work is to support young people who are disadvantaged, traumatised, in distress, or in trouble. This goal can also be understood as reintegrating ‘at-risk’ young people back into the ‘community’ as well as helping the marginalised, the vulnerable, the poor and those deemed to be part of the ‘underclass’. Targeting interventions to particular populations of young people including young refugees, homeless youth, young people who are living in poverty and indigenous young people can be understood as an ethically worthwhile good for youth work and can be a way of addressing the adverse effects of social problems. However whether youth work should be ‘universal’ or ‘targeted’ is a point of contention (Bradford 2004). There are good reasons for youth work to be universally available to young people regardless of circumstance. For example, if youth work is interested in developing citizenship then all young people should be targeted. Selective youth work approaches may also stigmatise those it aims to help (Bessant 2012a, Sercombe 2010). Another criticism with this aim according to Tait (2000, pp. 7-8) is that any category of ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘at-risk youth’ can be understood as a ‘governmental construction’ used to bring a greater number of young people into ‘the field of regulatory strategies’ that include the interventions of youth work (Kelly 2007). The meaning of key concepts such as ‘help’ and ‘disadvantaged’ are also unclear; is ‘help’ oriented towards prevention and addressing the ‘structural’, social or environmental causes of problems, or is it a charitable exercise focused on responding to young people who are suffering?

3. To meet the needs of young people

A goal of youth work is to meet young people’s needs. For example, Ord (2012, p. 3) argued that youth work should have ‘broad aims’ that are not specific and, ‘…importantly are grounded in, and developed, in response to young people’s aspirations, intentions and interests rather than [aims that are made] pre-set, immutable in advance by ‘others’’. However there is disparity on what young people’s ‘needs’ are. A range of material, social, spiritual and psychological needs are sometimes specified and are often based on Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs. There are conflicting reports that all young people need is discipline, ‘love’, freedom, good role models, or supportive communities. On other occasions no specific needs are identified and instead it is suggested that youth work should deal with young people ‘holistically’. Whether youth work can and should meet all of young people’s needs is debatable. On a different note, aiming to meet the needs of young people can also function as a governmental technique, obliging young people to understand and manage
themselves in particular ways, such as individuals capable of and expected to take care of themselves, that may not necessary benefit them (Kelly 2007, Tait 2000).

4. To support young people’s development

An aim of youth work is to support young people’s development. This is variably described as developing young people as human beings, promoting young people’s social, moral, academic, emotional, or personal development, developing young people’s ‘life skills’ or ‘social skills’, and promoting ‘positive identity formation’ in ways that help young people to fully develop their potential and enable them to become independent (Banks 2010, Bessant 2009, European Commission 2012, Harrison and Wise 2005, Williamson 2007, Youth work Act 2001). Weems (2009, p. 2) described this goal as fostering what is best for child and adolescent’s development and functioning; ‘In other words, to help the child and adolescent actualize’. This purpose has also been referred to as providing positive pathways for young people, promoting young people’s resilience, supporting young people’s ‘precarious’ transition from childhood to adulthood, and creating positive adults who can contribute to their families, communities and society (Hoyla 2012). On other occasions the goal has been described as developing particular types of people, such as ‘rounded’ citizens who are active and democratic and who benefit from and contribute to the common good (Gharabaghi 2012, VeLure Roholt and Cutler 2012).

As the various accounts of this aim demonstrate there is disparity on what and how youth work should be developing young people. For example, is it about socializing young people to fit in and comply with prevailing norms, or encouraging them to question, critique and change social conditions? (Coussée 2008). Another limitation of this purpose is that it typically relies on discredited developmental theory, which has been criticised for focusing on deficits and producing ‘healthy’, ‘normal’ and ‘natural’ expectations and assumptions that can be harmful to, exclude and pathologise young people (Bessant 2012a, 2012b, Pacini-Ketchabaw 2011). A further problem with this goal is that too often young people’s ‘development’ has narrowly focused on producing human capital or generating young people’s productive and consumer capacity (Ginwright and Commarota 2002). In other words, attention has been on regulating transitions from school to work, ‘development’ has been defined with commercial and economic ends in mind, and individual responsibility for achieving positive (employment) outcomes in increasingly complex, ‘risky’ and uncertain labor markets has been emphasised (Kelly 1999).

5. To improve young people’s wellbeing

Another aim of youth work articulated in the literature is improving or promoting young people’s wellbeing. Similar goals include remedying social exclusion, ensuring young people have a good quality of life, and building social capital. As these descriptions suggest there is no consensus on the meaning or measurement of wellbeing (Wyn 2009). Sometimes wellbeing refers to young people’s ‘happiness’, moral ‘hygiene’, mental health or physical welfare. At other times wellbeing is closely related to young people’s engagement in employment, education or training, or securing and strengthening young people’s relationships and connections with their peers, family, significant others and community. Further still there are arguments that emphasise economic and social determinants of young people’s wellbeing. Such perspectives highlight the connections between social conditions,
such as economic inequality, and individual wellbeing. Wellbeing has also been associated with the ‘capability approach’ (Clark 2006). Bessant (2012a) argued some people have claimed an interest in improving young people’s wellbeing to justify ‘class-based’ interventions. These forms of youth work, which include the work of Boy Scouts and the YMCA, have the intent of ‘pacifying the urban poor and working classes’ as well as managing social problems such as delinquency, juvenile crime and larrkinism by reinforcing ‘moral uprightness and physical wellbeing’.

6. To empower young people

There are suggestions that youth work’s ethically worthwhile good is to empower young people (Belton 2012, Fitzsimons, Hope, Cooper and Russell 2011, Forrest 2010, Nicholls 2012). This goal has similarly been described as helping young people help themselves, giving young people responsibility, developing young people’s leadership skills, and enabling young people to experience the consequences of their decisions. Other ways this aim has been referred to include promoting young people’s participation, raising young people’s political and social consciousness, providing young people a voice, and facilitating young people’s agency. There has also been an interest in empowering young people through processes of engagement so they can affect change in their lives and communities.

Typically proponents of this goal overlook critiques of empowerment and these concerns draw into question whether empowering young people is youth work’s telos. For example, processes designed to empower young people can paradoxically increase the control and surveillance of them. Youth work might also empower young people to participate in conventional practices that maintain the status quo rather than disrupt political or social conditions that exclude and marginalise (Bessant 2004a, Wong 2004). The empowerment of young people might also be used to promote self-management or self-governance in ways that primarily serves the interests of governments, teachers, youth workers or parents (Bessant 2012a). The way empowerment is typically explained also assumes that ‘power’ is something that workers or adults have and are able to give to powerless young people. However according to Foucault (1979) young people are far from powerless.

7. To realise justice for young people

Bessant (2012a, 2004b) makes the case that youth work’s purpose is to realise justice for young people. Bessant (nd.) described this as securing the basic principles of equality of respect to young people as complete human beings.

Because a person might sometimes need some assistance, does not mean they cannot or ought not exercise their rights, nor does it entitle others to deny them their basic human rights. Yet this is common practice with young people (Bessant, nd., p. 13). This purpose for youth work is consistent with the goals to help young people receive a dignified and deserved place in society and to strengthen citizenship by actively pursuing and securing young people’s human and voting rights. This aim incorporates addressing aged-based stereotypes and prejudice against young people, encouraging political engagement among young people, ending corporal punishment, and addressing poverty and inequality (Bessant 2012b, Males 1996, Young-Bruehl 2012). Other purposes captured by this broader aim include improving youth wages, achieving intergenerational equity, challenging discriminatory ideas associated with ‘teen brains’, banning mosquitos alarms and anti-social
behavior orders that have disproportionate negative consequences for young people, and ensuring young people participate in decisions that affect their lives (Adam and Hall 1972, Godwin 2011).

This aim is complicated by different ideas of justice (Sandel 2009). For example, the classical idea (Aristotle 2009, MacIntyre 1984) differs from modern perspectives, which are also hotly contested (Dworkin 2011, Fraser 1997, Rawls 1999, Sen 2010, Young 1990). Indigenous perspectives of justice can also diverge from classical and modern accounts. The idea of justice and child rights may also have very different meanings in secular, Western, and wealthy countries compared to poor, developing countries and nations that privilege religious thought (Shaafee 2013). de Finney, Cole Little, Skott-Myhre and Gharabaghi (2012) argued the purpose of youth work is to name and address social injustice however similar to others who suggest that this is youth work’s aim the authors failed to mention aged-based prejudice against young people among the ‘contexts of injustice’ which need to change. Moreover prejudice against young people is often opaque and overlooked by those who are committed to securing justice for young people.

**Youth work’s telos: To enable young people to live the good life**

Compared to the goals just mentioned I propose youth work’s telos is to enable young people to live the good life. According to Aristotle (2009) and Sen (1983) the seven aims of youth work previously described are at times useful and worthwhile ends to pursue. There can be value in orienting practice towards caring for and protecting young people, helping disadvantaged young people, supporting young people’s development, empowering young people, and pursuing a social justice agenda with and for young people. However these goals are not the good youth work is seeking, they are, ‘…merely useful for the sake of something else’ (Sen 1990, p. 44). That something else is enabling young people to live the good life.

Davies (2003) and Ord (2014) similarly made the case for the aim of youth work to be enabling young people to live the good life. Corresponding aims in the youth work literature include enabling young people to flourish and live well (Smith and Smith 2008). This ethically worthwhile end for youth work is also described as an interest in wanting young people to grow up good, with the capacities to ‘…make reasoned choices and informed decisions that can be sustained through committed action’ (Young 2006, p. 59; see also Sercombe 2010). Dworkin (2011) offered a more thorough account of ‘the good life’. He argued having a good life is inextricably linked to living well.

Someone lives well when he (sic) senses and pursues a good life for himself and does so with dignity: with respect for the importance of other people’s lives and for their ethical responsibility as well as his own (Dworkin 2011, p. 419).

According to Dworkin there is a level of personal responsibility for living a good life. At the same time there is an obligation for everyone, especially governments, to make the lives of other people better.

There are good reasons for youth work’s telos to be enabling young people to live the good life. First the value of phronesis to good practice in youth and human service work is well documented, and developing and promoting practical wisdom and flourishing in young people supports youth workers role modeling practical wisdom or phronesis to realise it (Bessant 2012a, Kinsella and Pitman 2012, Ord 2014, Polkinghorne 2004, Walker and Walker 2012).
Second this goal for youth work aligns with the capability approach, which is connected to the telos tradition and has demonstrated cultural transferability. Sen (1990, 1983) is a prominent proponent of the capability approach. He argued that while economic growth and the expansion of goods and services are critical for addressing poverty and inequality, wealth is not the good or proper purpose of human development. According to the capability approach the proper aim of human development is the promotion and enhancement of people’s achievements, freedoms, functioning, and capabilities to achieve valuable ‘functionings’ (Clark 2006, Sen 2010). In other words the telos of human development is to enable people to live the good life and flourish. The capability approach has been adapted and adopted to measure and improve social and economic conditions in developed and developing countries; demonstrating it has diverse cultural relevance and applicability which is critical in light of the ‘youth bulge’ or the fact that a majority of people aged 15-24 years of age live in poorer, developing nations (Stanton 2007, Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi 2009, UNICEF 2012). A relevant illustration of this goal is offered by Nussbaum (2000) who, unlike Sen and ‘after years of cross-cultural discussion’, identified a list of human capabilities that she claimed if supported enhance the prospects that people will have good or flourishing lives. According to Nussbaum the goal of youth work is to support young people to flourish and this can be realised by securing the capabilities.

**Conclusion**

Drawing on the Aristotelian tradition I argued that a useful way to understand youth work is by its telos. Getting the telos right means that practitioners can pursue the correct goal of youth work. In light of the ubiquity of the command model of organization in modern institutions that obliges compliance with and obedience to the authority of administrators and managers it is critical that youth workers orient their practice towards youth work’s ethically worthwhile end. I argued that a telos would serve to demarcate youth work from other interventions into young people’s lives. The case was made for the telos of youth work to be enabling young people to live the good life.

There is a need for further research on how youth work is understood and what youth work is and ought to be. This includes investigating the meaning and purposes of youth work in China, India, Indonesia and other countries where it is unclear whether a practice named youth work even exists. This project should also involve conducting research in the field so that the voice of youth workers, youth, and others are included.
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