

# **Transformative Innovations involving Justice and Young People**



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# Innovation



- A basic premise of the term ‘innovative’ is that something is being created, trialled or experienced that presents a new better way in which to provide a product, service or solution to an existing problem or mode of service delivery.
- Innovative justice has an *a priori* commitment to human rights, desistance and safety for the benefit of all stakeholders – otherwise it is not innovative and it is not just.
- Claims of ‘innovation’ and ‘success’ are inevitably relative and contextualised, subject to diverse interpretation and frequently contested.

# Why Schools?



**Schools are places where problems become visible:** if a young person has a problem (such as a mental health problem or family breakdown) it will almost inevitably be reflected in their school performance.

**In partnership it may be possible to provide the support, advice and facilitation that young people who are at risk of being marginalised need.** Initiatives such as school-focussed youth services, where a youth worker is assigned to work with a cluster of schools, reflect an understanding that a range of professional expertise is needed to support young people.

These kinds of partnerships (e.g. school-industry, school-parent, schools as core social centres), open up the possibility of focusing on the **strengths of a community** rather than on its deficits.

# Types of Collaboration



## Vertical Collaboration:

- those who work *within* an institutional hierarchy
  - e.g., teachers, principals, receptionists, coaches

## Horizontal Collaboration:

- those who work *across* institutional settings
  - e.g., social workers, youth workers, juvenile justice, teachers

# Diverse Professionals



## **Teachers**

- Pedagogy, classrooms, formal

## **Social Workers**

- Welfare, case management, confidential

## **Youth Workers**

- Social problems, client-centred, informal

## **Child Protection Workers**

- Crisis response, system-oriented, risk assessment

BUT – each professional may be concerned with the education, welfare and empowerment of each individual young person, in their own way

# Different Workers, Different Missions



- **Accountability:** to school principals, to professional body, to client group
- **Autonomy:** confidentiality, education department standards and protocols, group versus individual-based work
- **Work structuring:** timetable driven, on-campus versus flexible, off-campus
- **School dynamics:** purpose shaped by pedagogical concerns and local school-related cultures versus clients across schools and orientation to non-school relationships and contacting

# GPS - Restorative Contexts



## *A Primary School Initiative in Tasmania*

- Issues of trauma: caring for those who need care
- Issues of respect: two-way street
- Issues of therapeutic intervention: don't react to each transgression, understand where the 'acting out' is coming from
- Cross-over of 'clients': juvenile justice and child protection
- Use of animals: school-based, juvenile justice-based
- Strengths-based: what children (and staff) can **do**

# GPS - Establishing a 'Restorative Ethos'



- Whole-of-school participation: teachers, students, counsellors, office admin staff, groundskeepers, accountants, principals
- More than just 'conflict resolution': a **way of being** and interacting
- Multiple dimensions: food, friends, animals, rules
- Restorative ethos = knowing boundaries and enforcing mutual respect through principles and guiding rules
- Leadership is 'authoritative' but not 'authoritarian'



# GPS - 3 R's



- **Respect Yourself**
- **Respect Each Other**
- **Respect Our Place**
  - importance of repeating this message time and again, and at all public forums such as assemblies
  - importance that all staff embody these principles as part of modelling for students
  - boundaries and rules = 'lines in the sand'; otherwise too much ambiguity and unsafe if no one knows the rules

# GPS - Benchmarks and Performances



- **Attendance**
- **Engagement**
- **Attainment**
  - creating a sense of urgency about ‘learning’
  - child-centred: **the potential to improve their learning is paramount; not trauma-related care**
  - individual and personalised learning plans
  - restoration/conflict resolution = ‘Back on Track’ as a form of problem-solving

# GPS - Reporting Systems



- Instantaneous – teacher computers
- Non-Interpretive – actual descriptions, not based on deputy principal narratives
- Non-stigmatising – no ‘red cards’
- On Record – emails
- Trends – historical record so that individuals can be tracked over time
- Personal – for each individual it records different teachers, and different events
- Collaborative – involves multiple staff within the school community
- Improves teaching/learning – content and practice enhanced by early, confidential and decisive ‘trouble shooting’

# Inclusion and Exclusion



Policies might be ‘universal’ but schools are highly differentiated in relation to class, gender, race, ethnicity and (dis)ability

- This has knock-on effects insofar as what is deemed to be ‘normal’ may make some students targets for discipline – for example, Indigenous children and ‘swearing’

Policies might be exclusionary but students do not accept the basis of the exclusion

- Catholic schools that oppose same sex marriage have been responded to by student ‘rainbow’ protests

# Importance of 'Ownership'



## Formal and Informal participation

- *Formal systems* and procedures to deal with 'acting out' behaviour – including 'time out' and use of settle-down tactics (e.g., puzzles and books)
- *Informal atmosphere* that encourages everyone to actively engage in school activities and contribute to the making of the overall school climate (i.e., rules set the scene in which all are made to feel valued, welcome and responsible)

## Alternative Schools and ownership

- Vandalism is construed as an attack on 'our space'
- Relationships over time in shopping centre become trustful and open

# Take-Home Message



- ‘restorative justice’ is only a minor part of this, and only relates to immediate conflict resolution, not creating a convivial social atmosphere;
- Whole-of-school praxis can foster greater cross-professional collaboration, in which practitioners are an integral part

# Importance of Nature



- The idea of ‘biophilia’ refers to the innate need of humans to connect with the nonhuman world. Food, water and air are the basics of life. Being in tune with Nature also brings with it **spiritual and aesthetic benefits** and an appreciation of the little things that bring pleasure.
- There are profound **health benefits** associated with working in green spaces and outdoor environments. Our bodies require Vitamin D, which is derived from exposure to sunlight. Fresh air also enhances wellbeing. Energy and mood are swayed by the immediate environments within which we live and work.
- Engagement with Nature can also be tied to social innovation to the extent that the ethos and outcomes of specific projects tie in to the meeting of **broader community needs** and environmental leadership.

# Nature Dis-Connect



An evaluation of the Green Brigade horticultural programme, a community-based treatment and diversion programme for juvenile offenders in San Antonio, Texas, made the following revelation: young people participating in co-educational (that is, both sexes) sessions, where the hands-on activities involved **plant materials**, displayed more positive interpersonal relationship scores than participants in an all male session where the hands-on activities focussed on the installation of **hardscape materials** and a lack of plant materials.

The project of the latter group involved a location for the construction of a greenhouse that was an enclosed courtyard with little view of outside areas and no vegetation. The **lack of vegetation and naturalistic environments** contributed to the stress and tension associated with working on this construction project.



# Work and Nature Ethics



- Participants in schemes and projects in which they are engaged directly with nature learn both a '**work ethic**' and a '**nature ethic**'.
- The first refers to the capacity to undertake tasks within given boundaries and timeframes, involving pro-social interpersonal skills.
- The second refers to appreciation of the contours and dynamics of 'nature', including the importance of conservation and reproduction of plant and animal species. This entails knowledge of tree and plant species, and in some cases animal species, and general ecological and agricultural principles.

# Greening Justice Initiatives



Greening justice initiatives may be a catalyst for tailoring and hybridisation of offender rehabilitation models and principles, to not only manage risk but also to support rehabilitation and identity change outside of traditional therapeutic group work and counselling settings, although these remain important. Such initiatives enable desistance to begin in the types of places and doing the types of activities which the individuals can continue to pursue in the community.

# Indigenous Young People



- In the Tribal Juvenile Detention and Re-entry Green Demonstration Program, people from three tribes were involved: the Hualapai Indian Tribe, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. This initiative assists detained and re-entering Native American young people to successfully reintegrate into the community through the use of green technologies and **participation in environmental sustainability activities.**
- Activities include gardening, beekeeping, building greenhouses, solar panel installation, and hydroponics, as well as incorporating traditional tribal culture through cultural education, activities and ceremonies. This initiative promotes participants' **cultural citizenship and social rehabilitation**, including opportunities to boost their cultural, human and social capital. It also affords culturally sensitive means for restoring their moral character and personal identity to manage issues of stigma and shame.

# Young People in Environments



- The greening of inner-city areas, especially vacant lots, is associated with reductions in certain types of crime and reductions in residents' fear of crime. **Tackling the signs of disorder associated with violence, fear and further crime can be materially addressed by repairing damage and replacing concrete with trees, shrubs, grass and gardens.** Allowing offenders to lead green initiatives which prevent crime and reduce residents' fear of crime may, consequentially, enable their desistance and therefore reduce their risk of re-offending.
- Urban greening and **community gardening initiatives** which involve offenders engender *pride of place* (that is, the garden or restored environment itself, as well as restoring local community pride), *pride in skilled achievement* (that is, something tangible is actually produced, a new garden and fresh food for low income earners), and *pride in citizenship* (demonstrating they are capable of change and fulfilling citizenship responsibilities).

# Physicality



Physically demanding labour is a core component of many ‘greening justice’ projects, but this in and of itself is not sufficient to the realisation of positive benefits. Outdoor chain gangs, for instance, involve demanding toil but under circumstances that are extremely negative and brutal. The context and purpose of physical labour influences the lived experiences and perceptions of offenders and those with whom they interact. The places and spaces where the activity occurs must not only be neutral (or not overtly coercive), but attractive from the viewpoint of natural light, views of nature and hands-on engagement with plants.

# SM - The Skill Mill



The mission of the Skill Mill is to undertake water and land based management thereby helping to reduce the local flood risks and improve the local environment. It aims to:

- Improve the flow of watercourses and contribute to the reduction of flood risk.
- Increase engagement, participation, employability and educational levels of the young people and move them closer to long term sustainable employment.
- Reduce re-offending and increase community safety through engagement of ex-offenders in employment.

# SM - Social Enterprise



- It is a non-government 'social enterprise' meaning that half of its operational money has to come from non-grant sources – such as contracts with local entities including the Local Authority, Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water. It is governed by a Board of Directors, advised by a committee of supportive businesses, agencies and universities. It has one key operational supervisor, who oversees four candidates at a time, usually drawn from the YOT reparation pool.
- The young people are paid at minimum wage and are selected on the basis of a combination of attitude, skills, punctuality and vulnerability (that is, those already 'work ready' are not selected; those who need extra assistance to find work are). They are employed on a six month contract. The young people undertake water-work and grounds maintenance tasks (such as cleaning drains), and are awarded Level 1 Certification (national qualification) for basic competencies.
- The combined pre-Skill Mill offending is in the order of 300+ offences. After the first 18 months of the programme, there were only 2 further offences reported for 12 youths employed

# SM - Organisational Features



The organisational logistics of the Skill Mill include:

- scheduling of work
- budget/payroll/invoices
- social media and website
- procurement/ordering (equipment, uniforms, vans)
- site reports and photos \*\*
- keep samples of what is found in streams \*\*
  - social and cultural history
  - art and heritage exhibitions

\*\* analysis of contents of water courses and (1) links to local/community level input into the originating problem (e.g., tossing of waste and bottles), and (2) environmental offences (e.g., illegal dumping of waste).



# SM - Socio-Cultural Features



- Personal relationships are at the heart of projects such as the Skill Mill and it is the **qualities and skills of supervisors** that matters most in developing these. Supervisors need to work with young people, have an interest in the environment, have the ability to undertake manual labour, and has good organisational and people skills. Needs to be viewed (a) as a progression, and (b) with the interests of the young people (not the program as such) in mind. For example, a job for the young person is more important than completion of the Skill Mill contract.
- There are inevitably going to be issues pertaining to compliance and breaching. The Skill Mill has adopted an '**out-reach**' model, where the agency goes out to the young person, and listens to what the young person has to say, before deciding what to do. It is acknowledged that measures have to be taken to ensure the allocation of the right case manager to suit the young person and to address their personal problems. Attention is also given to the agency difficulties and the variety of means/solutions/responsivity required or possible before breaching as such occurs.
- There is a tension between allowing multiple chances (e.g., lateness or missing days) versus real life demands (e.g., punctuality and attendance at work), and in relation to the notion that the young people are being paid as incentive to participate.

# SM - Measures of Success



Typically, recidivism is defined as conviction for offending behaviour within 2 years of initial criminal justice intervention. However, the 'desistance' and 'restorative justice' literature refers to more holistic measures that might also be utilised in evaluation:

- better relationships
- re-connecting with family and institutions
- engagements
- networks
- job ready/enjoying work
- social role modelling
- life changes

Evaluation techniques, methodologies and conclusions differ greatly depending upon what is being measured and for what purpose.

# SM - Benefits



- The Skill Mill attempts to transform the lives of communities and individuals with sustainable low cost environmental benefits.
- As part of its mandate, it undertakes general construction (walkways, access ramps), waterway construction (digging channels), waterway clearance (general litter, plant litter), waste clearance (household, industrial, commercial), mapping of invasive species (Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam), mapping of protective species (water vole, otters, birds), habitat vegetation management (habitat building) and flood defence work (sandbag wall construction).
- In undertaking substantial projects for communal objectives, the participants – young people, supervisors and engaged local residents and businesses – all gain a better appreciation of the other and the positives that result from giving something back to the community.

# Take-Home Message



- Working with individuals and improving environments can be achieved in a productive and positive way
- Climate change will demand more interventions to mitigate and adapt to circumstance, including a growth in green jobs and heightened consciousness about global warming
- There are issues pertaining to level of resources available to governments in the face of both austerity budgets and disaster relief – which affects funding for youth work

# Conclusion 1



- The dialectic between ‘where they are at’ and ‘where they could be’ for young people is partly contingent upon how relationships are socially constructed.
- The crafting of respectful relations **within specific institutional contexts** (schools, juvenile justice, child protection) depends upon how specific activities are organised, problematic behaviours responded to, and social and natural environments created so as to provide spaces which are safe, positive and enjoyable for all concerned.

# Conclusion 2



- Crafting respect is an intentional social process that is premised on activity, reflectivity and receptivity.
- It can be forged as a universal non-coercive approach (e.g., creating a restorative ethos in a school) and through a specific direction-oriented approach (e.g., greening justice young offender restoration projects). It involves both preventive and rehabilitative aspects.
- The net result is respect for others, respect for place, and respect for oneself. And the respect **of** others in the community.

# Making Meaning



- Creating respect by giving respect
- Creating jobs by being creative in voluntary engagements
- Creating change by challenging the status quo
- Creating security by protecting those who are insecure
- Creating satisfaction by doing something for others
- Creating belonging by working in community and in concert
- Creating justice by holding the powerful to account
- Creating the future, by actions that interconnect time (past, present, future) and space (local, regional, global)

# The Future is Now



‘Youth are the Future’ ignores how the Future is eating the Present – in the form of government budgets and policies that privilege the well-off, in the form of global warming that undermines intergenerational equity, in the form of transnational corporations that today continue to exploit tomorrow’s human and natural resources unsustainably, in the form of the securitisation of everyday life that forestalls opportunity and creativity.

Radical change is needed, now, to re-construct the present so that all may have a future that is safe and secure – one that meets the material, spiritual and environmental requirements for a life that is good, fair, just and happy.