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**Emergence and future status of Youth Work:  
Perspectives of Social Service Professionals  
in South Africa**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

# **Emergence and future status of Youth Work: Perspectives of Social Service Professionals in South Africa**

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With Youth work being one of the key interventions used to advance the development of young people, through this study, the researcher takes a closer look at how Youth work can be enhanced to ensure its maximised contribution to empowerment and development of young people. On that basis, the researcher investigates the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of social service professionals towards emergence and future status of Youth work practice in South Africa. This is essential, given that policy directions ought to be guided by rational, fact-based information.

The researcher used two-phased sequential mixed methods research approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods in sequence, to explore the research phenomenon. Qualitative data was gathered from four (4) focus groups, conducted in each of the selected South Africa's provinces. Quantitative data was gathered from five hundred and ninety-three (593) respondents who completed a measuring instrument.

Some of the key empirical findings suggested that the social development factors compared to human resources and diversion factors are key drivers behind emergence of Youth work. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that interventions primarily and consequently enhance the social functioning of young people. On the current status of Youth work, a significant majority of respondents indicated that Youth work is the responsibility of a multi-disciplinary team. The evidence also pointed to Youth workers being more skilled than Social workers and Child youth care workers in rendering services to the youth. Additionally, the findings showed that the involvement of social service professionals in Youth work was mainly in collaborating with other professionals when rendering Youth work services, and also in direct service delivery. Their involvement in policy development was to no extent. This was associated with a limited number of Youth workers in the public sector.

The findings on perceptions of social service professionals regarding the future status of Youth work showed that 75% of the respondents believe that Youth work should become an area of specialisation for Social work and/or Child and youth care work; followed by 17% who are of the opinion that it should remain as an occupation; whilst only 8% said it should be an autonomous profession. Additionally, an overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed with all statements which were listed as advantages or benefits of having Youth work recognised as an area of specialisation or a profession.

On the basis of these findings, the researcher recommended that young people's problems and aspirations should be addressed within their social contexts; there is a need to ensure that interventions primarily enhance the social functioning of young people; there is a need to have Youth work as an area of specialisation for Social work and/or Child and youth care work; and there is a need to create additional capacity to provide services to the youth, especially in government as a policy making structure.

It is essential to note that the support for specialisation supports South Africa's approach to mainstreaming youth development across various sectors. It could also be seen as a clear indication of the positive role and value placed on Youth work, and the potential

contribution it might have should it become an area of specialisation for Social work and/or Child and youth care work.

**Key concepts:**

- ⇒ Youth work;
- ⇒ Youth development;
- ⇒ Youth or Young person;
- ⇒ Occupation;
- ⇒ Profession;
- ⇒ Professionalisation;
- ⇒ Specialisation;
- ⇒ Social service professions;
- ⇒ Social work;
- ⇒ Child and youth care work;
- ⇒ Educators.

## **OPSOMMING**

# **Opkomende en toekomstige status van Jeugwerk: Perspektiewe van Professionele Maatskapliedienverskaffers in Suid Afrika**

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Met Jeugwerk as een van die hoofintervensies om die ontwikkeling van jongmense te bevorder, ondersoek die navorser met hierdie studie die wyse waarop Jeugwerk verbeter kan word om die maksimum bydrae daarvan tot die bemagtiging en ontwikkeling van jongmense te verseker. Die navorser ondersoek op grond hiervan die persepsies, houdings en opinies van professionele maatskapliedienverskaffers oor die ontstaan en toekomstige status van Jeugwerkpraktyk in Suid-Afrika. Dit is baie belangrik, aangesien beleidsbestuur deur rasionale, feitegebaseerde inligting gelei behoort te word.

Die navorser maak gebruik van 'n tweefase opeenvolgende gemengde navorsingsbenadering wat kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe metodes in opeenvolging gebruik om die navorsingsverskynsel te ondersoek. Kwalitatiewe inligting is met vier (4) fokusgroepe ingewin wat in elkeen van die gekose vier (4) Suid-Afrikaanse provinsies

gehou is. Kwantitatiewe inligting is onder vyfhonderd drie en negentig (593) respondente ingewin wat 'n meetinstrument voltooi het.

Van die kern empiriese bevindinge het voorgestel dat, behalwe ekonomiese, menslike hulpbronne en politieke faktore; sosiale faktore die hoof dryfvere tot opkomende Jeugwerk is. Dit is daarom belangrik om seker te maak dat intervensies hoofsaaklik die sosiale funksionering van jong mense bevorder. 'n Beduidende meerderheid respondente het aangaande die huidige status van Jeugwerk aangedui dat Jeugwerk die verantwoordelikheid van 'n multidisziplinêre span is. Bewyse dui voorts daarop dat Jeugwerkers meer bekwaam is in die lewering van dienste aan die jeug as Maatskaplike werkers en/of Kinder-en-jeugsorgwerkers. Die bevindinge dui ook daarop dat professionele maatskaplikediensverskaffers in Jeugwerk hoofsaaklik in samewerking met ander professionele persone betrokke is tydens die lewering van jeugwerkdienste, asook in direkte dienslewering. Hulle was glad nie in beleidsontwikkeling betrokke nie. Dit is geassosieer met 'n beperkte aantal Jeugwerkers in die openbare sektor.

Die bevindinge oor die persepsies van professionele maatskaplikediensverskaffers met betrekking tot die toekomstige status van Jeugwerk dui daarop dat 75% van respondente van mening is dat Jeugwerk 'n spesialiteitsarea in Maatskaplike werk en/of Kinder-en-jeugsorgwerk moet word; dit word gevolg deur 17% wat van mening is dat dit as 'n beroep moet voortbestaan; slegs 8% het aangedui dat dit 'n outonome professie moet wees. Voorts het 'n oorweldigende meerderheid respondente met alle stellings saamgestem wat as voordelig gelys is indien Jeugwerk as 'n spesialiteitsarea of professie erken word.

Op grond van hierdie bevindinge beveel die navorser aan dat jongmense se probleme en strewes binne hul sosiale konteks aangespreek moet word; dat daar 'n behoefte is om te verseker dat intervensies die sosiale funksionering van jongmense primêr verbeter; dat daar 'n behoefte is om Jeugwerk as 'n spesialiteitsarea vir Maatskaplike werk en/of Kinder-en-jeugsorgwerk te vestig; en dat daar 'n behoefte is om addisionele



kapasiteit te skep om dienste aan die jeug te bied, veral in die owerheid as beleidsbepalende struktuur.

Dit is belangrik om daarop te let dat die ondersteuning vir spesialisering ondersteuning aan Suid-Afrika se benadering verleen om jeugontwikkeling as 'n hoofstroomaktiwiteit oor verskeie sektore te vestig. Dit kan ook as 'n aanduiding gesien word van die positiewe rol en waarde wat aan Jeugwerk geheg word, asook die potensiële bydrae wat dit mag lewer indien dit 'n spesialiteitsarea vir Maatskaplike werk en/of Kinder-en-jeugsorgwerk word.

### **Sleutelbegrippe:**

- ⇒ Jeugwerk;
- ⇒ Jeug ontwikkeling;
- ⇒ Jeug of Jeugdige persoon;
- ⇒ Beroep;
- ⇒ Professie;
- ⇒ Professionalisering;
- ⇒ Spesialisering;
- ⇒ Professionele maatskaplikediensverskaffers;
- ⇒ Maatskaplike werk;
- ⇒ Kinder en jeugsorgwerk;
- ⇒ Opvoeders.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AU:</b>	African Union
<b>AUC:</b>	African Union Commission
<b>ABET:</b>	Adult Basic Education and Training
<b>AIDS:</b>	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
<b>ANC:</b>	African National Congress
<b>ASASWEI:</b>	Association of South African Social Work Education Institution
<b>AYC:</b>	African Youth Charter
<b>CBOs:</b>	Community Based Organisations
<b>CYP:</b>	Commonwealth Youth Programme
<b>DPME:</b>	Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>DSD:</b>	Department of Social Development
<b>EFA:</b>	Exploratory Factor Analysis
<b>FBOs:</b>	Faith Based Organisations
<b>GA:</b>	General Assembly
<b>HIV:</b>	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
<b>MDGs:</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>NACCW:</b>	National Association of Child Care Workers
<b>NEPAD:</b>	New Partnership for African Development
<b>NGOs:</b>	Non-Government Organisations
<b>NPC:</b>	National Planning Commission
<b>NYC:</b>	National Youth Commission
<b>NYDA:</b>	National Youth Development
<b>NYDF:</b>	National Youth Development Forum Agency
<b>NYP:</b>	National Youth Policy
<b>NYS:</b>	National Youth Service
<b>PCAS:</b>	Policy Coordination and Advisory Services
<b>PRODYWOC:</b>	Professional Development of Youth Work Consortium

<b>PYCs:</b>	Provincial Youth Commissions
<b>PYU:</b>	Pan African Youth Union
<b>RPL:</b>	Recognition of Prior Learning
<b>SAASWIPP:</b>	South African Association for Social Workers in Private Practice
<b>SABSWA:</b>	South African Black Social Workers Association
<b>SACE:</b>	South African Council for Educators
<b>SACSSP:</b>	South African Council for Social Service Professions
<b>SANC:</b>	South African Nursing Council
<b>SAYC:</b>	South African Youth Council
<b>SAYWA:</b>	South African Youth Workers Association
<b>SAQA:</b>	South African Qualification Authority
<b>SWASWA:</b>	Social Workers Association of South Africa
<b>UN:</b>	United Nations
<b>UN GA:</b>	United Nations General Assembly
<b>UK:</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UNISA:</b>	University of South Africa
<b>USA:</b>	United States of America
<b>UYF:</b>	Umsobomvu Youth Fund
<b>YPAG:</b>	Youth Practitioners Advocacy Group



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