

**passion • action • reflection**  
beyond management by numbers

rank foundation youth work agencies conference, chester college,  
5-6 september 2005

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### passion • action • reflection

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### support

Additional resources are available on the rank agencies support pages:  
<http://www.ymca.ac.uk/rank>.

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# Timetable

## ***Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2005***

<b><i>12.30-1.30</i></b>	<b><i>Lunch available</i></b>
<b><i>1.30-2.00</i></b>	<b><i>Welcome</i></b>
<b><i>2.00-3.30</i></b>	<b><i>Opening Workshop/ Passion, action, reflection</i></b>
<b><i>3.30-4.00</i></b>	<b><i>Break</i></b>
<b><i>4.00-5.00</i></b>	<b><i>Case study 1</i></b>
<b><i>5.00-5.15</i></b>	<b><i>Break</i></b>
<b><i>5.15-6.15</i></b>	<b><i>Case study 2</i></b>
<b><i>6.15-6.30</i></b>	<b><i>Change rooms</i></b>
<b><i>6.30-6.45</i></b>	<b><i>Plenary</i></b>
<b><i>7.30</i></b>	<b><i>Dinner</i></b>

## ***Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2005***

<b><i>8.00-9.00</i></b>	<b><i>Breakfast available</i></b>
<b><i>9.00-9.15</i></b>	<b><i>Plenary</i></b>
<b><i>9.15-9.30</i></b>	<b><i>Change rooms</i></b>
<b><i>9.30-10.30</i></b>	<b><i>Case study 3</i></b>
<b><i>10.30-11.00</i></b>	<b><i>Break</i></b>
<b><i>11.00-12.00</i></b>	<b><i>Closing Workshop/Reflection</i></b>
<b><i>12.00-12.15</i></b>	<b><i>Change rooms</i></b>
<b><i>12.15-1.00</i></b>	<b><i>Closing plenary/feedback</i></b>
<b><i>1.00</i></b>	<b><i>Lunch available</i></b>

Note: People work in the same workshop group throughout the conference. Details of groups will be available on arrival at the conference.

# Welcome

Welcome to our annual business conference. Our theme this year is exploring the way we manage face-to-face work with young people. This conference workbook provides you with some background material, details of the case studies we will be using, and some suggestions for follow-up.

The context in which we operate has changed. Increasingly, much state-sponsored youth work has become:

- focused on ‘targeted’ young people (especially those not in employment, education and training);
- centred on achieving predetermined outcomes; and
- short-term, pre-packaged and more formal.

State and organisational objectives are routinely and openly placed above the needs of young people. Many managers and workers are ‘counting heads’ and ‘managing by numbers’. As a result, much of the passion and space for creative innovation is being leeched out of that area of work. And much of the activity that is called ‘youth work’ is really something else.

Many Rank-network agencies are involved in such work. Workers and managers can find it difficult to juggle the more open-ended and process-centred work that the Rank Charities fund with the product-orientation of other programmes. Part of the problem is the contrasting ways of working involved – and what happens when they rub up against each other in an organisation. A further issue is that many of the ways we have of thinking about and ‘doing’ management come from settings where achieving or exceeding the set target is everything. However, there is a simple truth: creating environments where young people take responsibility, explore difficult questions and flourish demands those same opportunities for workers. Youth work, if it is to mean something in young people’s lives, has to be managed at the ‘front-line’.

We have to search out discussion of how to manage process-oriented and person-centred work. In this conference we explore ways of managing that are appropriate to ‘real’ youth work. We suggest that such a way of managing has to build upon, and sustain our passion for the work. It also needs to encourage action that both involves, and leads to, reflection.

## Notes

Opening workshop:

# Passion, action, reflection

This opening workshop involves exploring:

- Some general points about what makes for good management in open and young-people centred work.
- Passion, action and reflection in managing.
- Where we are as managers.

As a starter here it is worth reflecting for a moment on a fundamental problem with much of the discussion around education.

The question we most commonly ask is the “what” question – what subjects shall we teach?

When the conversation goes a bit deeper, we ask the “how” question – what methods and techniques are required to teach well?

Occasionally, when it goes deeper still, we ask the “why” question – for what purposes and to what ends do we teach?

But seldom, if ever, do we ask the “who” question – who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form – or deform – the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes?

Parker J. Palmer (1998) *The Courage to Teach*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, page 4 (our emphasis).

Here Palmer is talking about schools – but the argument holds for other areas of educational work. For example, what attention has been given in recent policy pronouncements in youth work to ‘why’ and ‘who’ questions?

We cannot hope to reform education and develop ways of working that matter in people’s lives, Palmer argues, if we fail to cherish and challenge ‘*the human heart that is the source of good teaching*’ (1998: 3). For him, work such as ours is rather more than technique. It flows from the personality,

integrity and responsiveness of the educator. The people we are, the way we conduct ourselves, and having room to respond are what matters. This leaves us with some big questions when we think about what we do as managers. For example, how do we create the right culture in our agencies so that workers can flourish and act with integrity?

## Managing

The group that planned this event worked with the following understanding of managing.

- Managing is a value-driven activity: ‘good’ management is about matching our actions with our values.
- Our goal as managers is to establish a culture for ourselves and for our organisation.
- We are all responsible for managing ourselves and, in this way, we are all ‘managers’ – whether we identify ourselves as such, or not.
- As managers, we need to be clear about what we are working towards – our aims when working and organising.
- Managing is both an ‘art’ and a ‘science’ (honing our intuitive skills and using analysis of ‘hard’ evidence and management tools as a resource).
- Managing others involves establishing trust and enabling risk.

These points lead us to a way of looking at managing....

## Passion, action, reflection

Youth work is based in passion. It is a matter of the heart. As Josephine Macalister Brew put it some 50 years ago, ‘If we are not in youth work because of our love of our fellow men we have no business there at all’ She went on, ‘This burning love of humanity always meets with response, though not always in the ways we most care for... young people want to know where they are and they need the friendship of those who have confidence and faith’.

Passion isn’t much use unless it is expressed in action; in ways that allow people to grow and be happy. Classically, this has been done in youth work by forming relationships with young people, offering the opportunity for association and challenge, and by encouraging them to talk and explore their feelings and experiences. Reflection, thus, plays a crucial part. As workers we encourage it in others, and we engage in it ourselves so that we may respond in the best ways to people and situations.

Once we recognize this, we can see that there are deep implications for how we manage the work. We need to ensure that we:

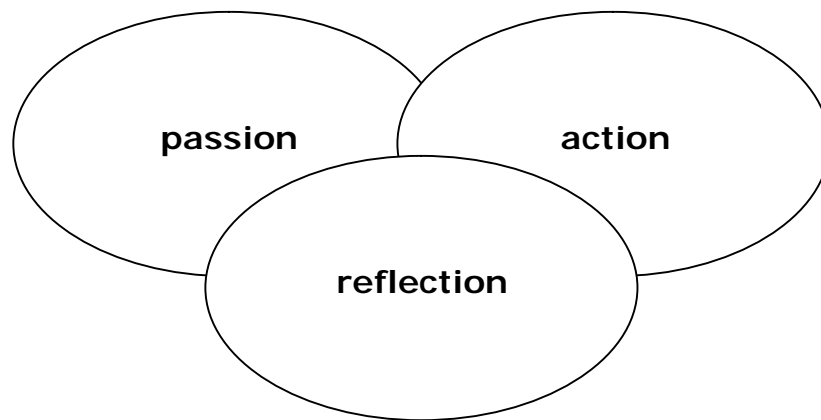
- find the right people – people with passion who also have the ability to engage with young people and to think about what they are doing - and
- create the right environment for them to flourish as workers.

What is more, as managers we need to share in the passion for the work and the well-being of all.

Now we ask you to look at yourself as a manager in terms of passion, action, reflection....

### Where are we as managers?

In our welcome we said a little about the current context in which you as managers of youth work have to operate. But where are we now as managers? How do these ideas relate to your own experience?



**what am I already good at?**

**where do I want to develop?**

## Notes

## Case study 1:

# Managing others

In this session we ask you to explore the first of three case studies in your groups. The focus here is upon line management.

### case study 1

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You are the senior worker in a youth work project with a small staff of part-time and volunteer workers. Recently you recruited a young, local woman as a 'gap' trainee.

The young woman is enthusiastic and committed. She sometimes lets her enthusiasm carry her along. A recent example involved deciding on the spot with a group of 14 year olds to go on a trip to a skate park in the next town. They jumped on the next bus. No parental/carer permission sheets had been signed. She was the only worker with them.

The young worker also appears confused about her role and is often inconsistent. For example, she will let some young people owe money, and not others. However, she already has good relationships with most of the young people in the project. She is lively and approachable.

Time-keeping does not appear to be a strong concern for her. She frequently turns up late for meetings and for setting up sessions.

Some of the team have complained to you and asked you to talk to her. She has also been talking about not knowing where she fits in. It appears that many of her old friendships have fallen by the wayside – and have not been replaced by new relationships.

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#### ***Some possible questions include:***

- What are your priorities in supporting a young worker, especially one 'in transition'?
- What strategies and processes can you use? What role, if any, does mentoring, training and support from other agencies play?
- What would be your aims and a timescale for achieving them?

## Notes

## Case study 2:

# Managing within an organization

In this session we want to explore the sorts of organizational cultures we inherit and create – and how people can fit into, and change them.

## case study 2

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You have been working for 15 months with a group of around 14 young women and men living on a local estate. The group had been attracted by a weekly theatre workshop that you had got a small amount of money to run. They have developed and put on a couple of productions. The group is now largely self-organizing and many of its members have become friends. A lot of the time they are in the project they are simply enjoying each others company. Most of the young people are doing well at school and are coming up to doing their GCSEs.

The money for the theatre workshop has long run out. The local authority that funds the workers involved wants the work to reflect their priorities: it has either to lead to an accredited outcome; or to be directed at young people at risk of being not in education, employment or training. Your line manager is now asking you to justify the work in these terms or change direction.

You believe that continued work with the group is worthwhile. While they may be, as one of the youth service managers described them, 'ordinary kids', they are still having to make sense of the world and deal with different issues. You also believe that encouraging group involvement at this point in their lives is important in terms of the continuing health of the communities in which they will live. You are also uncomfortable about extending work aimed at the achievement of accredited outcomes rather than trusting in conversation and process.

What do you do? Can you change direction with integrity?

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### *Possible questions include:*

- How can/do you go about establishing a set of principles that guide the work of your agency?
- What work is to be done with the group, your project managers, and local youth service managers?
- How do you manage potential conflicts/tensions over funded programmes, with specific targets?

## Notes

### Case study 3:

# Managing ourselves

In this session we explore how you deal with conflicting demands on your time, and how to match your values and your use of time. In particular we want to look at how you can maintain your own values and act as a role model to others.

## case study 3

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You get back from holiday and find there are requests and pressure on you as the senior worker/project coordinator to do two different things that day. These are to:

- Attend a day conference run by the local authority based around a combating anti-social behaviour initiative that you have been receiving funding from to undertake some work. The conference is for those agencies wanting to take the work further.
- Support a less experienced colleague in taking a difficult group from the holiday scheme on a visit to a city farm. There are no other experienced workers available.

It is not possible for you to do both.

What do you do?

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### ***Possible questions include:***

**What does your response tell you about your priorities and passions?**

**What helps you to make your work match your values (and passions)?**

**In what ways does your management of yourself influence others?**

## Notes

Closing workshop:

# Reflection

Reflection is an activity in which people 'recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it'. It involves

***Returning to experience*** - that is to say recalling or detailing salient events.

***Attending to (or connecting with) feelings*** - this has two aspects: using helpful feelings and removing or containing obstructive ones.

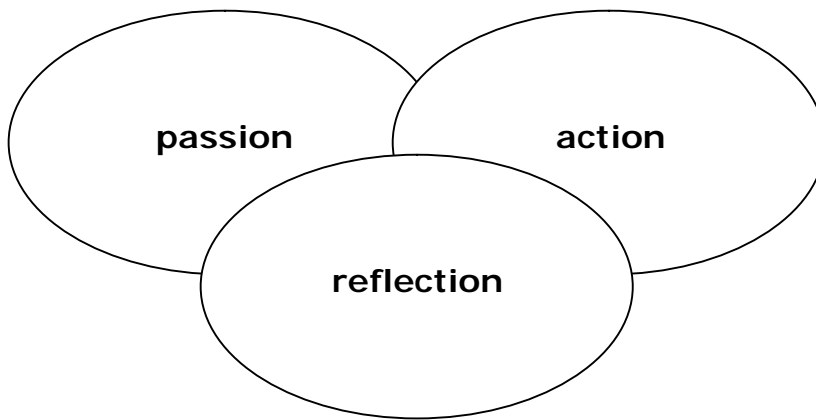
***Evaluating experience*** - this involves re-examining experience in the light of one's intent and existing knowledge etc. It also involves integrating this new knowledge into one's conceptual framework.

David Boud *et. al.* (eds.) (1985) ***Reflection. Turning experience into learning***, London: Kogan Page. pages 19, 26-31

This session provides you with time to reflect on how ideas and issues from the conference could be integrated into your personal practice.

The aim is to provide an environment where you can reflect on:

- what you can take away from the conference and use to enhance your work as managers;
- how your work as managers can be further developed and sustained, especially through the support of the Rank network



**what have I learnt?**  
**where do I want to go next?**

Final plenary

# Summary and moving on

The aim here is to collate feedback from the previous session and look at how the learning can be taken forward.

The conference will:

- hear some brief feedback from groups on whether they saw any key messages coming out of the 'what people can take away' discussion;
- begin a discussion on possible priorities for the network, in terms of supporting each other.

## Notes

Passion, action, reflection:

# Further reading and references

## Books

Mary Louise Holly (1989) *Writing to Grow. Keeping a personal-professional journal*, Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann. Still one of the few explorations of journal keeping for professional development.

Parker J. Palmer (1998) *The Courage to Teach*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. A thought-provoking read.

## On the net

There is a full set of links from the conference support page ([www.ymca.ac.uk/rank/conference](http://www.ymca.ac.uk/rank/conference)). However, you might to look at the following:

Parker J. Palmer - Community, knowing and spirituality in education:  
<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/palmer.htm>

Reflection: <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-reflect.htm>

Setting up and managing projects:  
[http://www.infed.org/rank/managing\\_projects/](http://www.infed.org/rank/managing_projects/)

## References

David Boud *et. al.* (eds.) (1985) *Reflection. Turning experience into learning*, London: Kogan Page.

Josephine Macalister Brew (1957) *Youth and Youth Groups*, London: Faber and Faber, pages 112-3

Parker J. Palmer (1998) *The Courage to Teach*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



