Outreach social work in Hong Kong

To what extent is it a kind of confessional control in policing young people’s problem behaviour?

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Historical Development

- Outreach Work was formally commenced in 1979
- The only children & youth (C&Y) service served young people at risk in the period.
- After the riots in 1966 & 1967 Pioneering “detached work” was experimented by NGOs to prevent young people from triad temptation.
- Service integration was adopted among children & youth services in 1994.
- Manpower of outreach work was pooled to integrated C&Y services.
- In 2001, Overnight Outreach Service for Young Night Drifters was setting up.
- In 2002, District Youth Outreach Social Work Service was re-organized in 16 districts of the territory.
- 3 Pilot Cyber Youth Outreach Projects were experimented.
- 3 District Youth Outreach Social Work Teams were added.
Children & Youth Services in Hong Kong

- 35 years ago in 1979
  - Children and youth centres
  - School social work service
  - Family life education
  - Outreach social work service

- Outreach social work was the only children & youth services serving young people at risk in the period.
Children & Youth Services Nowadays in Hong Kong

**Child Care Services**
- Day Nursery / Residential Homes for Children with Special Needs
  - Aged between 0 and 6.
  - Early education & training
- Foster Care Service
- Small Group Homes
- Boys’ & Girls’ Homes

**School Social Work Services**
- Secondary Schools
  - 1 school with 1 worker
  - 0.2 worker on drug prevention
  - Totally, 484 schools
- Primary Schools
  - Social workers are employed by schools.
- Kindergartens
  - School social work service is pilot tested.
- Police-School Liaison Teams
  - Teams are formed with all secondary schools

**Children & Youth Centre Services**
- Integrated Children & Youth Services Centre
  - One centre for 12,000 youth populations.
  - Serves young people between 6 and 35.

**Other Services**
- Services for children with special educational needs
- Youth Employment Training Programme
- Youth Hotline Services
- Uniform Groups

**Mental Health Services**
- Clinic for Young People with Psychosis
- Community Health Projects for Young People

**Services for Youth-at-Risk**
- District Youth Outreach Social Work Teams (YOT)
  - Aged between 6 & 24
  - Opening hours: 10:00a.m. - 10:00p.m.
- Overnight Outreach Service for Young Night Drifters (YND)
  - Opening hours: 10:00p.m. – 6:00a.m.
- Pilot Cyber Youth Outreach Projects
- Community Support Service Scheme (CSSS)
  - Aged between10 & 17
  - Under Police Superintendent’s Discretion Scheme
- Services for Youth Drug Abusers
  - Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers
  - Voluntary based Residential Rehabilitation Services
- Crisis Residential Service
- Services for Young Offenders
  - Tuen Mun Child and Juvenile Home
Services for Youth-at-Risk in Hong Kong

Community-based Services

- **Young people with minor deviant behaviours**
  - Children & Youth Centre Services
    - Integrated Children & Youth Services Centres
      - Serves young people with deviant behaviours

Outreach Social Work Services

- **District Youth Outreach Social Work Teams (YOT)**
  - 19 teams
  - Young people from 6 to 24
  - Opening hours: 10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.
- **Overnight Outreach Service for Young Night Drifters (YND)**
  - 18 teams
  - Opening hours: 10:00 p.m. – 6:00 a.m.
- **Pilot Cyber Youth Outreach Projects**
  - 3 projects are experimenting.
  - Engage hidden / at-risk youth through online media.

Young people with delinquency (Juvenile Gangs *)

Young people with minor offences & drug addiction

Services for Youth with Minor Offences

- **Community Support Service Scheme (CSSS)**
  - 5 teams
  - Serves young people with minor offences from 10 to 17
  - Under Police Superintendent’s Discretion Scheme

Community-based Services for Youth Drug Abusers

- **Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CSSS)**
  - 11 teams
  - Provides preventive education and drug treatment & rehabilitation for drug abusers in all ages.

Residential-based Services

- Residential-based Services for Youth Drug Abusers
  - Voluntary-based Residential Rehabilitation Homes
  - Emergency-based Residential Services
    - Crisis Residential Shelters for Boys & Girls

Voluntary based drug testing scheme is experimented in school and mandatory-based drug testing scheme in community is now under consultation.

Outreach work is also employed as a working approach to reach out and engage young people in need and their families proactively.

* Criminal gangs with hardcore behaviours should be handled by Police.
Outreach Work in Hong Kong

- In Hong Kong, outreach work can both be a method & a service which is employed to work with youth-at-risk & their families who are hard-to-reach.

- As a method, it is employed by different services to reach out and contact their potential service targets proactively in the places where they can be approached.

- As a service, three different kinds of outreach service for young people have been developed nowadays:
  - District Youth Outreach Social Work Service (YOT)
  - Overnight Outreach Service for Young Night Drifters (YND)
District Youth Outreach Social Work Service

- The earliest outreach work for young people in Hong Kong
- The teams are operated by NGOs with Gov’t funding.
- Service output is governed by the Funding & Service Agreement (FSA) signed between Gov’t & the NGOs operating the teams.

- **Manpower Strength of a Team**
  - The service is mainly provided by Registered Social Workers with professional training at least in the Associate Degree level.
  - Extra Social Worker is added to handle drug related issues in 2010/11.

- **Manpower Strength of a YOT Team**
  - At least 4 social workers with Bachelor Degree or above
  - At least 6 social workers with Associate degree
  - At least 10 Social Workers a Team with 1/3 social work supervisor.
District Youth Outreach Social Work Service

- Purposes of the Service
  - There are **19 teams**. Social workers are required to take shift duties from 10:00a.m. in the morning until 10:00p.m. at night.

  - Reach out and establish contacts with young people who are:
    - Aged *between 6 and 24*;
    - Unattached to normal social systems, such as school & family;
    - Easily associated with undesirable influences, such as gang, triad, drugs, sex and other undesirable youth culture;
    - Unwilling or unmotivated to go to the ordinary services or seek help since they may not feel they need any change.
District Youth Outreach Social Work Service

- Purposes of the Service
  - Ultimately, it is hoped that young people’s potentials and social functioning can be enhanced through remedial, preventive & developmental measures rendered.

- Services provided as requested in the FSA signed with Gov’t
  - Identify and target potential clients
  - Establish direct contacts with target clients.
  - Provide counselling to assist clients overcome their problems.
  - Organizing group activities or programmes for guidance, skill training, education, drug awareness, community service, recreation, rapport building or other special purposes in order to achieve case plans
  - Referring clients to other appropriate services, e.g.
As society develops, late night life becomes more popular. Concern for young night drifters who hung around public places overnight & created public nuisance increased in the late 1990s.

**Manpower & Establishment of the Team**
- In 2001, 18 teams were formed under the Integrated Children & Youth Services Centres (ICYSC).
- One car accommodating 7 persons is equipped for travelling around the spots and reaching out to the young night drifters.
- Around 6 social workers a team under the supervisor of the ICYSC.
- One car accommodating 7 persons is equipped for travelling around the spots and reaching out to the

**Manpower Strength of a YND Team**

- 1 social worker with Bachelor Degree as the team leader
- 2 social workers with Associate degree
- 3 social workers were added between 2005 & 2008
Overnight Outreach Service for Young Night Drifters

- **Purposes of the Service**
  - Working hours of the service are between 10:00p.m. & 6:00a.m. Then young people under the age of 18 who loiter or drift in the street at late hours at night can be served.
  - Reach out to prominent spots, e.g. playgrounds, parks, cyber cafes, discos, mini-bars in the upstairs, 24 hours fast food shops, etc., where young people usually gather at late night to prevent them from falling prey to negative influences in the street.

- **Services provided:**
  - On-the-spot crisis intervention, e.g. escorting back to home or temporary boys’ or girls’ shelters.
  - Provide short-term intervention, e.g. counselling, welfare referrals & escorting to agencies concerned.
  - Refer them to mainstream services for positive
Pilot Cyber Youth Outreach Project

Nowadays, more young people indulge in the world of internet which may lead to at-risk behaviour over the internet, e.g. internet addiction, compensated dating, cheating, etc.

Purposes of the Project

◦ In 2011, three projects were pilot tested for three years with the funding support from the Lotteries Fund in HK.
◦ The project includes 3 professionally trained social workers and one IT supporting staff.
◦ Through various cyber means, e.g. SMS, MSN, blogs, facebook, online games, etc., children & youths who are under 24 and identified as at-risk or hidden are approached for timely intervention and provision of support services.
Pilot Cyber Youth Outreach Project

**Services Provided:**

- Search through internet for and identify target youths
- Provide online education, assessment & intervention for those who have not sought help from other services.
- Provide face-to-face counselling, programmes or activities when relationship is established & the target youths are willing to receive services directly.
- Establish formal referral or interfacing mechanism with other mainstream welfare, medical or rehabilitation services.
- Provide online developmental programmes & web-based preventive education:
  - e.g. stress and emotion management, critical & positive thinking, problem solving skills, conflict resolution, resilience or establishment of positive life...
Needs of Young People in Different Periods

Before 1979
- Hong Kong society was poor
- Young people were easily associated & tempted by gangs & triad societies in the street.
- Street work and gang work were emphasized in outreach work at the period.

1979
- Go beyond street work to entertainment places where young people were interested in.

1994
- Rave parties come to Hong Kong in mid 1990s.
- Party drugs became one of the main concerns of outreach work.
- Along with technological advancement, internet bars became another concern of the service.
- Reach out to discos, dance parties, internet bars, etc.

2001/02
- Youth unemployment became serious.
- Reach out to mini-bars located upstairs or through cyber media, e.g. SMS,

2010 onwards
- Triad societies & criminal gangs become less organized in HK.
- Because of strong law enforcement, drug / illegal activities become more hidden at homes or through different social media.
- Youth unemployment became serious.
- Reach out to mini-bars located upstairs or through cyber media, e.g. SMS,
Stages of Intervention

- As the clients are:
  - Unattached to the conventional & formal systems, and
  - Unwilling or unmotivated to seek help and services

- Outreach workers is required to:
  - be proactive, and
  - work in their natural & living environment
to understand and develop trustful relationship / dialogue with
  them, otherwise resistance may not be able to be handled.

- In that situation, outreach workers needs to:
  - spend tremendous time in their work to relate & build up relationship with the target young people
  - so as to reduce their resistance & increase their motivation to be assisted.
Five Stages of Intervention

Based on the natures & the proactive orientation of outreach work, in Hong Kong, we divide our work into five stages:

- **Field observation**
  - to identify target clients

- **Rapport Building**
  - to engage & establish initial contact

- **Maintain positive social relationship**
  - with tailor-made programmes or services that young people are required / interested in.

- **Establish working / helping relationship**
  - to carry out agreed intervention

- **Service termination**
Field observation to identify target clients

This stage is important to:

- Identify, spot-out & develop a profile of the district at which a team is serving with.
  - hot & new-spots where young people are frequent to,
  - potential youth groups/clients who associate
  - Updated gang dynamics developed in the district

- Contact & locate community resources
  - Mini-bar/internet café/shop owners
  - Management offices of shopping malls
  - Local community leaders / organizations

Develop action plan to approach the target clients

This stage is ongoing and continuous since youth and community profiles in the district are always changing.
Five Stages of Intervention

- **Rapport Building** to engage & establish initial contact
  - Reach out to the places / spots identified
  - Make use of various means to contact & build up initial relationship with the target young people:
    - *Causal contacts*, like chatting, playing ball / magic games, conducting simple questionnaires, doing IQ tests, etc.
    - *Set up counters* at the places where they are frequent, e.g. on sex or drug education, or programme & activity promotion.
    - *Arrange body check counters* outside entrances of mini-bars, counselling with creative arts or plays.
    - *Provide one-shot & recreational activities*, e.g. Disneyland
    - *Provide more regular & drop-in services* in outreach team.
  - Needs, problems or group dynamics of young people can be collected & the role of social workers can also
Five Stages of Intervention

- **Maintain positive social relationship**
  - When trustful relationship establishes, young people’s needs and dynamics become clearer, outreach workers can *tailor-make programmes / services to deepen the relationship.*
  - Depending on the needs & interests of the target clients, different & organized programmes / groups can be employed:
    - **Music, dance and creative arts** – forming band teams, hip hop dancing, graffiti drawing, etc.
    - **Beauty courses** for girls or **hair styling** for boys
    - **Adventure-based activities** – war games, hiking, climbing, etc.
    - **Social skills training, job hunting, life and career planning**
    - **Sports** – football, basketball, x-games, board-games,
Establish working / helping relationship

At this stage, worker-client relationship becomes stable. Outreach worker’s role becomes clear. Clients are willing to share their problems and may also seek help actively.

Outreach workers try to:

- keep effective communication & channels for mutual sharing
- engage target youth with individual work to set and start off his/her individual intervention plan for further changes.
- Provide indepth counselling if necessary and motivate them to join appropriate treatment activities (e.g. drug treatment group) and to face with their problems positively.
- Help target youth with concerted efforts from their significant others (school, family or employer) &
Five Stages of Intervention

- **Service termination**
  - Helping relationship may terminate:
    - **Prematurely.** It is usual in outreach work, e.g. put into jail, lost contact or move away from service area.
    - Because of **service transferal**, e.g. transfer to residential based drug rehabilitation service.
    - Because of **successful intervention**, e.g. client can turn a new leaf and stand on his own feet.
  - Outreach workers should:
    - Assess the effectiveness of service rendered with the clients
    - Help clients / significant others **consolidate their change experience** and encourage the sustainability of their change.
    - Make service referral if necessary.
    - Provide short-term observation & follow-up service to ensure the availability of outreach workers.
Five Stages of Intervention

1. **Field Observation**
   - Ongoing & continuous fieldwork to spot out youth & community profiles of the district.

2. **Rapport Building**
   - Casual contacts with different means & one-shot activities

3. **Maintain Positive Social Relationship**
   - With tailor-made & organized groups, programmes and activities.

4. **Indepth & individual counselling** to tailor-make treatment plan for each individual and draw support from significant others.

5. **Service Termination**
   - Consolidation & Evaluation with referral & follow-up arrangement

   - Establish working / helping relationship
Based on the needs & problems of target young people & the stages of intervention, different working approaches are employed in outreach work:

- **Crisis intervention**
  - Gang fighting, suicidal attempt, on bail after arrest, accompany to seek legal advice or to go through the court process.

- **Gang Work (Degroup & Group Transformation)**
  - Degroup + Group Transformation
  - Transform into other kinds of group, e.g. football team, band team, etc.
Working Approaches

- **Harm Reduction**
  - Handling issues of drugs / psychotropic substance abuse & casual sex among young people.
  - Say “know” instead of say “no” to drug & sex.

- **Motivational Interviewing**
  - Begin at the clients’ stage of readiness & motivation for change. Instead of intense & confrontational methods, empathy, acceptance & respect are advocated to motivate clients for change at their paces.

- **Approaches in Handling Drug Addiction**
  - Cognitive behavioral based 12-step drug recovery programme
  - Art-based drug relapse prevention programme
  - Mindfulness based drug relapse prevention programme
  - Family-based drug relapse prevention programme
Working Approaches

- **SSLD Approach to Addictive Behaviour**
  - Strategies and Skills Learning and Development (SSLD)
  - Assume that *addictive behaviour is purposeful & functioning* to meet some personal needs of clients.
  - What should be done is to *expand the skills & strategies to achieve the needs* instead of using addictive behaviour.

- **Life and Career Planning**
  - Help young people realize who are they? What are their life goals & meanings of life? What are their interests in work and their skills & knowledge in work?
  - Eventually, *deliberate a well thought out plan* in their life, learning, work, social and leisure time.
  - Encourage them actualize the plan through different types of training, e.g. *social skills & employment related*
Working Approaches

- **Experiential Learning**
  - Through adventure-based training & service learning experience to realize their personality traits and develop their strengths & potentials.

- **From “casual contact” to “community work” & from “individual” to “structural” level of intervention**
  - In respect to outreach clients’ specific needs and sources of their problems, outreach workers are required to use various working approaches ranging from:
    - Fieldwork observation, casual contacts, programmes and activities, group work and community work.
    - **Individual level** to accompany & provide indepth counselling, **group work level** to transform them into alternative groups with positive influences, and the **structural level** to advocate for modification of social environment to enable better development of the young people.
A Qualitative Research in 2006 to 2008

A qualitative research was conducted in 2006 to 2008 with 15 pairs of outreach youths and outreach workers from 10 out of 16 District Youth Outreach Social Work Teams.

- **Key findings from the outreach youths**
  - Most of them came from families with quite complicated compositions and backgrounds.
  - Gender differences were found in describing the causes behind their problem behaviour.
  - Delinquent behaviour is a kind of “body politics” that they use to guard against adult regulations & control.
  - Even though family factor was influential to their problem behaviour, they longed for parents’ love. Moreover, parental care, understanding & support were the only things which can keep them away from...
Gender Differences in Describing Their Problem Behaviour

Female Youth Interviewees

Initiating Factor

Peer Influence
- Know friends with problem behaviour

Individual Curiosity
- Curious to novel matters
- Want to play, to try & to have fun

Facilitating Factors

School Performance
- Lack of support & appreciation
- Can’t catch up eventually

Further influence their school performance
- Drop out finally

Harsh Parental Control
- Control too harsh
- No say & respect in family

Go to discos, drug taking
- Stay out overnight

Play outside

Quarrel with parents heavily
- Further enhance the conflicts

Continuation of problem behaviour

As a result

Individual
- More rebellious & hostile to harsh parental control

Family factor

Body-politics of resistance

Continue to play outside

Continue to play outside
Gender Differences in Describing Their Problem Behaviour

Male Youth Interviewees

Initiating Factor

School Performance
- Not interested in school
- Can’t catch up & quit

Individual Curiosity
- Curious to novel matters
- Want to play, to try & to have fun

Facilitating Factors

Employment Situation
- Can’t seek a job with Satisfactory conditions
- Change jobs frequently or unemployed

Money

Peer Aggregation
- Aggregate with friends with similar nature
- Go to discos, drug taking, hanging around

Play Outside
- Quarrel with parents heavily
- Further enhance the conflicts

Indifferent Family Relation
- Disappointed to their Disengagement in work & education

Continuation of problem behaviour

As a result

Individual
- Escape from further conflicts / quarrels with parents

Family factor
- Body-politics of resistance

Continue to play & gather outside
A Qualitative Research in 2006 to 2008

Key findings from the outreach workers

- Most outreach workers were quite conscious:
  - to relate young people’s problem behaviour to the broader social, contextual and familial factors instead of treating it as facts corresponding to their individual deficits.
  - to treat their problem behaviour as natural & normal in their adolescent stage of development.

- Unfortunately, their understandings toward young people’s problem behaviour were always subjugated in:
  - The policy demands on the work focus of the service.
  - The service output standards set with the Gov’t.
  - The agency’s orientations toward macro level practice.

- Even though they also agreed that family factor became increasingly important in influencing young people’s behaviour, they felt inadequate to intervene into young
A Qualitative Research in 2006 to 2008

- As a result, when outreach workers were:
  - Helpless to intervene into the broader social, contextual & familial factors, and
  - Inadequate to intervene into young people’s families.
  - What they can do remained at the personal & individual level handling young people’s problem behaviour and their association with peers.

- Without the vision to facilitate necessary social, familial & structural changes:
  - Outreach work became a kind of confessional control which recruits young people’s complicity to regulate & police their behaviour to the norms of society.
  - Even though many outreach workers were well-intentioned in helping their clients, their problem behaviour would finally be recurring.
Outreach work is a kind of confessional control

Outreach workers’ discourses on young people’s behaviour

- Normal & natural at their ages
- Contextual factors:
  - Economic hardship in society,
  - Media exaggeration
  - Technological advancement
  - Victims of adult illegal activities
- Familial factors:
  - Complicated family structure
  - Lack of parental care
  - Overly protective or controlling
  - Poor communication & relationship

Outreach workers’ discourses were always subjugated in:

- The policy demands on the work focus of the service
- The service output standards set with the Gov’t
- The agency’s orientations toward macro level intervention

As a result, when outreach workers were:

- Helpless to intervene into the broader social, contextual & familial factors
- Inadequate to intervene into young people’s families

Remained at the individual level handling young people’s problem behaviour & their association with peers.

Even though they resist to strong disciplinary control, their work is a kind of confessional control regulating young people to conform to the society.
~~ Thank You ~~