Governing Youth Work Through Problems: A WPR Analysis of the 'Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes'

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Table of Contents

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Abstract

A central premise of this study is that Irish youth work is increasingly governed and re-formed through problems constituted in Government policy discourse. The purpose of the study is to critically analyse contemporary youth work policy in a context of neoliberal reform. The research specifically focused on analysing data from one particular policy text – the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes (VFMPR) (DCYA, 2014). This text was chosen because of its intense interest in the conduct of youth work, which included an 'examination' of youth work practice in 13 sample sites across Ireland. This study sought to understand how the VFMPR policy attempts to govern the future conduct and shape of youth work and to analyse how this might have damaging effects for the ideals and practices of open and open-ended youth work.

The study draws on poststructural and governmentality perspectives to conceptualise policy as a governing technology that works through constructing problems and opening certain solutions. Policy as a governing technology also works by disseminating governing through its discourse which has both symbolic and material effects. Using governmentality theory, neoliberalism is conceptualised as a dominant rationality in contemporary modes of governing and the influence of this rationality is examined in the work of the VFMPR policy discourse. Specifically, the study engaged the analytical framework called 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) (Bacchi, 2009). This framework supports a form of poststructural policy analysis that questions policy and the role it plays in ordering society (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016).

The findings of the study suggest that the VFMPR policy attempts to produce youth work as a site of neoliberal governmentality through the production of various problem representations of youth work. The work of this policy displays attempts to discursively shift youth work as a 'human service', out of an older social domain and into a newer economic and market domain.

This study contributes to a critical analysis of Irish youth work policy and the increasing attempts at producing youth work as a site for neoliberal governmentality. It offers youth work practitioners and advocates an analysis of the role of policy in re-forming practice at the current time.

List of Acronyms

BOBF	Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures
CES	Centre for Effective Services
CDYSB	City of Dublin Youth Service Board
DBEI	Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
ETB	Education and Training Board
LDTF	Local Drugs Task Force
NCS	National Children's Strategy
NQSF	National Quality Standards Framework
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
NYS	National Youth Strategy
NYWAC	National Youth Work Advisory Committee
OMCYA	Office for the Minister for Children
SPY	Special Project for Youth
TYFS	Targeted Youth Funding Scheme
VFM	Value for Money
VFMI	Value for Money Initiative
VFMPR	Value for Money and Policy Review
WPR	What's the Problem Represented to be?
YAU	Youth Affairs Unit
YPFSF	Young People's Facilities and Services Fund
YWI	Youth Work Ireland
YWO	Youth Work Organisations

List of Figures

List of Tables

This passage quotes a ‘certain Chinese encyclopaedia’ in which it is written that ‘animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies’. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking that.

Michel Foucault, 1989 [1966], Preface to ‘The Order of Things’

Chapter 1: Introduction

…she trying hard to know her fellow creatures, and to beautify their lives of machinery and reality with those imaginative graces and delights, without which …the plainest national prosperity figures can show, will be the Writing on the Wall, — she holding this course as part of no fantastic vow, or bond, or brotherhood, or sisterhood, or pledge, or covenant, or fancy dress, or fancy fair; but simply as a duty to be done. (Charles Dickens, 1854, Hard Times[1])

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation critically analyses the role of Government policy in re-forming[2] youth work in the mid 2010's. In the study, I deploy governmentality theory to explore how policy works to govern the conduct of youth work, particularly through the use of problems. Drawing from the analytical framework called 'What's the Problem Represented to be? (WPR) (Bacchi, 2009), the study focuses on one Government policy document: the *Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes* (VFMPR) published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) in 2014. The VFMPR is critically examined for the ways in which it works to problematise and steer the re-form of youth work programmes for 'at risk' young people, and I analyse neoliberalism as a dominant rationality informing this. Contemporary developments in Irish youth work policy display significant re-forming intent and my concern relates to the implications this has for limiting the possibility of what youth work can be and what it can offer young people. While the object of this study is Government policy, the concern is for the organisation and practice of youth work and as such I locate critical policy analysis as a central point between these two. This study contributes to the important, but currently limited arena of Irish youth work policy analysis.

Irish youth work shares its roots with the early nineteenth century, youth work developments in the UK (Hurley, 1992). These developments saw the establishment of charitable and voluntary organisations set up to address the growing 'problem' of leisure time for young people. In Ireland this included the setting up of the Catholic Young Men's Society, The Boy's Brigade and the Girls Brigade in the late 1800s. After Irish Independence in 1922 a

[1] In the novel Hard Times, Dickens offers a critical commentary on the rise of statistics and Bentham's utilitarian cost/benefit theories in the 1800s, and their application in education. The novel aims to illustrate the damage done to young people and teachers by this approach, including the subjugation of 'fancy' or 'circus' values – enjoyment and curiosity. In particular there is a concern about individualism and the damage to social bonds. The novel aims to contest this economic view of human action and argues that the 'robber Fancy' cannot be quelled by Facts.

[2] I deliberately use this representation in places in order to underscore the work of 'reform' as reshaping youth work.

variety of voluntary and Catholic based youth organisations emerged and flourished, underwritten with a strong nationalist philosophy (ibid). In contrast to developments in the UK where, alongside a strong welfare state that was established post World War II, youth work came to be predominantly delivered by the state, Irish youth work has remained within the voluntary sector right up to today[3]. With the exception of ad hoc and minor funding schemes and policy forays, state involvement in Irish youth work lacked any real meaning until the passing of the Youth Work Act in 2001. Up to this point the state provided limited funding and support to the voluntary youth work sector and showed little interest in any direct involvement. The Irish voluntary youth work sector, influenced by the status and recognition accorded to British youth work by the state, had campaigned for the establishment of a statutory footing for youth work since the 1980s. The Youth Work Act 2001 provided such a footing but this was also accompanied with a much greater role for the state in governing Irish youth work (McMahon, 2009). In the 17 years since the passing of the Act, the state has increasingly become interested in the management and funding arrangements for the sector (ibid). The Celtic Tiger years (mid 1990s up to 2008) brought something of a golden era for Irish youth work with increased recognition and funding from the state culminating in extensive promises to support the sector in the National Development Plan published in 2007. A significant change in attitude has been palpable within the post-crash youth work policy landscape where, it is the argument of this thesis, youth work has been problematised in order to be re-formed and governed in new ways.

In this chapter, before identifying the research questions, I give an overview of the context and rationale for the study. I give a brief overview of WPR, the main analytical framework used and following this, I point to the significance of the study, its theoretical and methodological contribution and its limitations. I also give an account of my own positionality as the researcher before providing an overview of the layout of the dissertation.

1.2 Rationale for this Study

There have been significant developments in Irish youth work policy since the establishment of DCYA in 2011. Across a two-year period (2014-2016) several new youth policy documents were published. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 – 2020* (BOBF) acts as an umbrella framework for coordinating all policy dealing with young people aged 0 – 24 years of age. The *National Youth Strategy* (NYS) provides priority objectives and actions for implementing BOBF for people aged 10 – 24 years of age. The *National Strategy on Children and Young*

[3] See Appendix 1 for a short overview of Irish youth work provision.

People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015 – 2020 provides details of policy ambitions to ensure young people under the age of 18 have a voice in relation to the five national outcomes identified by BOBF. *The Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes* (VFMPR) sums up an economic assessment of certain youth work programmes and provides a range of re-form recommendations. To date, only one academic contribution has examined what these policy developments might mean for youth work (see Kiely and Meade, 2018).

Davies (2010) centrally locates policy analysis as a 'a first and vital skill' of youth work practice. He argues that Government policy can work to steer youth work in 'various and sometimes contradictory ways' (ibid:10). Understanding youth work involves analysing the policy landscape within which it is set. Davies is an advocate of the importance of policy analysis for youth work and many of his own recent contributions (Davies, 2008; 2011a; 2013) detail his concern about the negative impact of new policy directions on English youth work. There, he points to evidence of: greater state control and determination of youth work's aims through the use of outcomes and targets; increased interest in targeted youth work with certain young people categorised as 'at risk' to the detriment of universal youth work that does not label young people and is open to all; and an emphasis on 'rescue and rehabilitation' approaches to work with young people to the detriment of an informal education approach that 'starts where young people are at'. His assessment is that as a result of policy shifts, youth work is moving away from a practice 'as youth workers define it'. These concerns are shared by a number of UK youth work scholars (e.g. Jeffs and Smith, 2008; Ord, 2014; de St Croix, 2016; 2017; Taylor, 2017). In the Irish context, Kiely and Meade (2018:2) also point to shifts in contemporary Irish youth work policy that may be undermining 'the integrity of youth work *as* youth work'. Whilst recognising that youth work as a socially constructed practice is always unfinished, this study is also concerned about current policy shifts and their potentially negative impact on youth work.

Until the 1970s youth work in Ireland was autonomously defined, designed and practiced in various ways by different organisations and workers. The early history of youth work indicates it was shaped by a variety of concerns including Catholic governance, the work of social reformers as well as social movements concerned with nationalism (Powell et al, 2012). Since then, youth work has experimented with various modes of governing that can be analysed in terms of ideal models such as 'character building', 'personal development' or 'critical social education' (e.g. Hurley and Treacy, 1993). Alongside this, youth work as a distinctive practice has been delineated by reference to its informal education process as a way of working with young people (Devlin, 2013). Values informing this practice are expressed in different ways but most often include: the voluntary participation of young

people; empowerment of young people; respect for all young people; involvement of young people in decision-making; partnership with young people (NYCI, 2010). Youth workers engage in anti-oppressive practice and promote equality, diversity and inclusion (Fitzsimons et al 2011; Devlin, 2017). Youth Work is collective and associational in its nature (Jeffs and Smith, 2010). Devlin and Gunning (2009:12) argue that this values base illustrates an '*ethical* dimension' to youth work and points to its 'commitment to human well-being…and the broader common good'.

This study emerges from the necessity to analyse current policy developments and their implications for youth work. I am interested in examining the recent and intensified efforts of Government policy to govern and re-form youth work. Using a governmentality perspective offers what Marston (2002:313) describes as a 'powerful and revealing form of social inquiry, particularly when used to investigate the nature of changes and forces that are shaping welfare state programs and forms of service delivery at the local, institutional and socio-cultural level'. Relatedly, I am interested in examining youth work policy as a site of neoliberal governmentality: as a location for the dissemination of neoliberal logic such as the promotion of market principles and competition. In particular this study engages in a critical policy analysis that focuses on policy as a governing technology: conceptualising it as operating through discourse and as constituting a 'problem space' where governing takes place producing 'problems' that must be 'solved' by policy (Dean, 1999). In that process of governing, I consider how youth work becomes located as 'problematic' for governing elites like policy makers and funders, and thereby opened up to re-form. As such, this study pays attention to how youth work gets defined as a set of 'problems' in Government policy because it is through these problem representations that youth work is made governable (Bacchi, 2009; Miller and Rose, 2008).

The government of youth work is undoubtedly bound up with the government of young people. Current youth policy constitutes young people and problematises them in particular ways. Indeed, within this, youth work can be invoked as a governing 'solution' to the 'problem of youth' as well as articulated as part of the governmental machinery that seeks to deploy 'better outcomes' for young people (e.g. DCYA, 2014a). As Batsleer (2010) suggests, youth work is attractive to policy makers because of its malleability to be put to work in meeting a variety of governing ambitions for young people. While a focus on youth policy offers an incredibly rich area for governmental analytics (see for example Smith 2016; Kelly and Kamp, 2015; Ryan, 2017), I reference young people's position in policy discourse as it relates to the re-form of youth work and I pay attention to the uncomfortable pathologizing of 'at risk' young people and the implications this has in producing youth work as 'rehabilitating'. Here, I also pay attention to the work of policy to intensify dividing

practices: by finding ways to classify the 'risk' status of young people as a targeting and governing tool and as a means to inspire the efficient organisation of youth work.

Youth work has always sought to govern the conduct of young people (Bradford, 2004). However, the aims of governing were relatively open to interpretation by voluntary organisations and workers, based on their own founding purposes and practice ideologies. State involvement in youth work has steadily increased since the 1970s (McMahon, 2009), new policy and funding arrangements led to the production of a 'bifurcated' youth work divided into 'targeted' and 'mainstream' provision (Powell et al, 2012). Various state funding schemes were created to support these provisions but increasing amounts of money have been allocated to 'targeted' work (O'hAodain, 2010). From the 1980s until recently, targeted funding schemes including: the Special Projects for Youth Scheme (SPY), The Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF), Local Drug Task Force Projects Scheme (LDTF), operated within a set of broad objectives and rules that allowed youth work organisations and youth workers discretion to apply principles and values to inform the nature of the work with young people. This position has been significantly problematised by the VFMPR and it has recommended a redrawing of state funding arrangements for work with 'at risk' young people. This includes tightening of the administrative rules and regulations, and greater prescriptive conditionalities associated with state funding for youth work. This has significant implications for how youth work is re-formed and may potentially limit the possibility of what youth work can be. Thus, my concern is that VFMPR re-forms will narrow the governing work of Irish youth work to very specific, possibly neoliberal, ends.

1.3 Methodological Focus

The WPR Approach

The object of this study is youth work policy. Methodologically the research can be described as a policy analysis. To support the research, I draw on the policy analysis framework called 'What's the Problem Represented to be? (WPR) (Bacchi, 2009)[4]. The WPR framework is informed by governmentality concerns and the analytic focus centres on problematisations[5] which refer to 'how something is put forward as a problem' (Bacchi, 2009:277); specifically, it is concerned with how we are governed through 'problems' found in all policies and proposals for change (Bacchi, 2009:25). The aim of WPR is to critically analyse how 'problems' are constructed and represented in policy, and in this way, WPR is radically

[4] See Chapter 4.
[5] See Appendix 2 for a summarised list of terms used in WPR.

different to conventional policy analysis that starts with an assumption that policy seeks to solve 'real' problems. Instead, WPR:

> …approaches policies as problematizations that *produce* "problems" as particular types of problems. By asking how "problems" are represented or constituted in policies, it becomes possible to probe underlying assumptions that render these representations intelligible and the implications that follow for how lives are imagined and lived (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:6).

This problematising approach utilises a set of questions that facilitates analysis of the assumptions that underpin policy. As an analytic method, WPR combines strategies of Foucauldian analysis, such as archaeological and genealogical analysis, along with critical policy analysis (Goodwin, 2011:173). The method attempts to 'work backwards' from the solutions often presented in policy documents, to trace the implied problem/s and to analyse their underlying rationalities as well as their effects. The WPR framework, is organised as a set of seven questions[6] that can be used to guide the policy analysis process.

The merits of using a WPR guided governmental analysis for this study are many. Most importantly, this analytic framework aligns with the theoretical orientation, research questions and political aims of this research. The framework offers a conceptual and practical method for applying governmentality thinking specifically to 'the realm of policy' (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:17). It offers an excellent fit with attempts to analyse social policy (Lister, 2010) of which youth work policy is part. In its general approach to policy analysis, it harnesses the concepts of 'problematisation' and 'critical analysis' that are already familiar (though have somewhat different meanings) to those involved in youth work who engage with Freire. The application of WPR is well advanced through many publications (e.g. Bacchi 1999; 2009; 2010a,b; 2011; Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016; Bletsas and Beasley, 2012; Goodwin 2011; 2012).

The VFMPR Policy

Youth work is increasingly problematised in official Government policy discourse. This is indicated by the steady increase in commitments to a 'reform process' since the publication of DCYA's (2012a) first *Statement of Strategy*. Here, I outline why I chose the VFMPR policy as an 'entry point' (Bacchi, 2009) to analyse Government policy discourse relating to youth work.

Firstly, I have been intensely interested in this document since its publication. Upon reading it, I was left with a number of questions most significantly I asked 'how did we arrive at this

[6] Detailed in Chapter 4.

place where youth work had become the object of such intense examination?'. My interest in this policy stems from personal and professional experiences and forms part of the study rationale:

> Soon after the publication of the Value for Money Review of Youth Programmes and Policy (DCYA, 2014), I facilitated a training session with several youth workers during which I put up a slide about the VFMPR. I was struck by, what seemed to be, a general lack of concern about the contents of the VFMR and its recommendations. Instead, the talk in the room was about the need for youth work and youth work services to be more competitive; to be better at doing what government objectives required; and to be better at measuring all of this so that it could prove the value of youth work to government funders. I found it quite challenging to bring the question of youth work values back into the room and into the discussion. Months later, I had two other interactions, this time with TUSLA[7] funders. In both cases, I was struck by the strong language about measurement and evidence. To me, something has shifted in the last number of years. How can I begin to understand these changes? (Extract from my Research Proposal, May 2016)

Secondly, I was perplexed by the *lack* of critical analysis in relation to the policy with only one published article relating to the VFMPR appearing in YNOW Magazine (2015) giving a summary description[8]. Amidst the fanfare that launched BOBF and the NYS it appeared that this mundane, rather technical document was to lie quietly in the background. Thirdly, the decision to trigger a value for money (VFM) review is quite exceptional in the work of any Government department. It is highly symbolic that one of the first policy decisions made by the newly constituted DCYA, was to commit targeted youth work programmes to such a review. Finally, since its publication, the VFMPR recommendations have inspired a series of significant re-form processes beginning in 2016. This has included the setup of a pilot process to test out and solidify the VFMPR recommendations in practice[9].

The VFMPR offers a clear example of a governing moment where 'givens become questions' (Bacchi 2012a:2); it is a policy text that proposes many changes and it is centrally important in the current re-form of youth work. It stands out amongst other recent policy documents because of its direct interest in the conduct of youth work. Other policies such as BOBF and NYS are more focused on the government of young people and implicate youth work in these concerns (Kiely and Meade 2018), but the VFMPR pays significant attention to the inner workings of youth work, including the youth work relationship. For these reasons, I

[7] TUSLA is the national Child and Family Agency set up in 2014 and now under the remit of DCYA.
[8] Since I began this research in 2016 one academic article written by Kiely and Meade (2018) has been published.
[9] A recent DCYA newsletter (DCYA, 2018a) identifies the VFMPR as 'where it all started' for youth funding reform.

suggest the VFMPR acts as a central governing technology in the re-form of youth work and therefore merits the attention given in this study.

1.4 The Research Questions

Arising from the above concerns, and drawing on the WPR framework mentioned above I pose a number of related research questions to guide the research process as follows:

- How is youth work governed through problems constructed in policy? Specifically, how does the VFMPR policy work to govern and guide the conduct of youth work?
- What are the problem representations of youth work within the VFMPR?
- How are these representations of youth work as problematic constructed in the VFMPR policy discourse? What underlying rationalities give this discourse its legitimacy?
- What effects do these problem representations have for youth work?
- How can the problem representations of youth work in the VFMPR be challenged?

1.5 The Research Contribution

Overall, this study contributes to an underexplored area of Irish youth work at a time when shifts in the social policy environment, are playing a part in its re-form. I argue that this research is necessary to help support and inform Irish youth work practitioners and advocates at a time of considerable change. Currently, there are few *Irish* contributions from which practitioners can draw on to help either understand the nature of changes or to support policy advocacy on behalf of youth work.

The VFMPR policy text I analysed is relatively new and despite the implications it has had for reform of targeted funding programmes, there has been little academic review of the document. There is a dearth of literature relating to Irish youth work generally (Forde et al, 2009) and there have been relatively few academic contributions to the area of Irish youth work *policy*. Some existing contributions are descriptive and make up part of the background to empirical studies of the youth work sector (e.g. Powell et al, 2010; Jenkinson, 2013; Melaugh, 2015; Dunne et al, 2014). Other contributions focus on analysing Irish *youth* policy and as part of this make an assessment of *youth work* policy and developments (see Kiely and Kennedy, 2005; Moran, 2013). There are far fewer contributions that are solely focused on providing an assessment of the state of Irish youth work policy (e.g. Devlin, 1989; 2008; 2013) or that offer a critical analysis that situates Irish youth work policy within a neoliberal context (see Swirak, 2013; 2015; Kiely and Meade, 2018). Overall, there has been limited

scholarship that engages Foucauldian theory and methods with Irish youth work policy. Devlin's (1989) critical discourse analysis of youth work policy was the first Irish contribution of this kind. The study examined the most significant youth work policy documents from Government and voluntary sector sources across the 1970s and 1980s to explore the underlying aims, orientations and ideology in youth work discourse at that time. Since then, Foucauldian analysis of Irish youth work policy and issues include: Swirak's (2013, 2015) and Sargent's (2014) analyses of the Irish youth justice system; and Kiely and Meade's (2018) analysis of youth work policy.

Kiely and Meade's (2018) work is also noteworthy because it is the only academic contribution that has analysed contemporary youth work policy documents including the VFMPR. Their work is situated in a concern that neoliberal inspired government policy discourse is reshaping youth work in ways that dislocate it from its previous 'democratic model'. They argue 'that the integrity of youth work *as youth work* is at risk of being eroded still further by policy makers' growing fetish for evidence-based practice, value for money approaches, and the delivery of prescribed outcomes' (ibid:2, emphasis in original). In relation to the VFMPR, they pay attention to its reorientation of youth work towards a 'programmatic' emphasis and following Batsleer (2010) suggest that it 'facilitates the channelling of funding into the specialist 'problem solving' or 'liquid' engagements designed to produce quick results' (ibid:2). Thus, they consider how youth work can be useful as a problem-solving tool for policy makers once it can be narrowed down to a programme of work and stripped of its philosophical basis.

There is no doubt that the study here shares similar concerns with that of Kiely and Meade and it also shares the same broad governmental approach to policy analysis. However, there are also key differences that distinguish this work: the first is my use of the WPR framework, which has not been applied to any youth work policy analysis in Ireland or elsewhere. The location of this study in the WPR framework shifts the analytic emphasis to problematisation processes. For example, where Kiely and Meade see a reformed, liquid youth work as offering possible problem-solving solutions to policy makers, this study pays more attention to the ways youth work is actively constructed as a problem for policy makers, so that reform can be justified. This study both draws upon and extends Kiely and Meade's governmental analysis of Irish youth work policy and the VFMPR. In this way, it contributes to an area of academic knowledge about Irish youth work policy that currently lacks substantial attention.

In a recent edition of the *Child and Youth Services* journal, the editors made a plea for more 'critical scholarship' in the field of child and youth studies (Gharabaghi and Anderson-Nathe,

2017). This they suggest, is work that sees research as a form of resistance against the dominant 'truths' reproduced by adherence to the evidence orthodoxy, and is needed both 'because of and in spite of' the evidence-based approaches so caught up in studying young people and services through the lens of psychology. Critical scholarship is they say: critical in its starting points; sees knowledge as uncertain; and actively engages with issues of power. Theoretically, this study contributes to just such critical scholarship. By engaging a governmental analysis and paying particular attention to neoliberalism as a dominant rationality, I set out to produce a critical analysis of Irish youth work policy that re-problematises policy and the rationalist assumptions it relies upon; thereby engaging with issues of knowledge and power. Alongside Devlin (1989) Kiely and Meade (2018) and Swirak (2013, 2015), this study contributes to the theoretical development of Irish youth work knowledge by using Foucauldian and governmentality concepts.

Methodologically, this is the first youth work study to use the WPR framework as a means of analysing contemporary policy developments. In my experience, practitioners and youth work organisations are struggling to find an analysis that allows them to voice concerns about the challenges posed to practice by a new policy environment and are left to simply implement what government requires of them[10]. Critical social analysis and policy skills are important for youth workers and youth work advocates, and I believe this study provides an interesting example of how youth workers might apply governmental analysis and a 'problematising' approach (such as WPR) to their own policy work. As Davies, an advocate of the importance of policy analysis for youth work, has suggested for English youth work:

> In a world of ambitious empire builders, youth worker's determination to defend what is distinctive about their practice is understandable – indeed essential. Too easily however this can turn them inwards. And, once there, they can fail to notice that, as always, powerful political imperatives are driving wider social policy agendas – that 'they', far from just picking on 'us', have other services in their sights, too; that 'we' are in fact simply being caught up in a much bigger strategy (Davies, 2009: 188).

In this way, the aim is to try to understand changes in youth work by working outwards, by tracing and analysing the policy connections and 'bigger strategies' that might be involved in the re-form of Irish youth work.

1.6 Positionality

Bacchi (2009) refers to the need for the policy researcher to engage in 'self-problematisation' as part of the WPR process. She uses this concept in two ways: firstly as a reflexive

[10] I attended a range of regional meetings with 5 Youth Work Organisations where we discussed an upcoming DCYA Consultation relating to the Value for Money process (April 2017), I also attended the DCYA Consultation on VFM for Service Providers (April 2017).

mechanism for the researcher to 'think about how we become the people we are' (Bacchi, 2015:9); and secondly as a task for the researcher to subject their own analysis to the WPR process. In this section, I focus on the first meaning and give an account of how I position myself in this research because this plays a role in orienting the research in particular ways (Savin-Baden and Major Howell, 2013).

Personal Stance: Acknowledging Subjectivity

Most social research is generated through biographical experience (Agee, 2009:439) and in the case of this study, its beginnings emerge through my own involvement in youth work. I think it is important to point to my training and work experiences as a particular influence in shaping my research choices (Creswell, 2007:19).

I qualified as a youth worker in 1997 and as part of that I developed a critical analysis infused by Freirean theory. 'Problematisation' and 'problem posing' were key concepts for Freire (Crotty, 1998:156). This in part, explains my attraction to Bacchi's (2009) 'problematisation' approach to policy analysis as it resonates strongly with the Freirean Training for Transformation (see Hope and Timmel, 2014) mode of critical analysis[11] and the Critical Social Education model of youth work (see Hurley and Treacy, 1993). In my work as a lecturer I have observed increased managerialism and marketisation of third level education and this impacts directly on my everyday work. I can identify with Ball's (2003) work on the 'terrors of performativity'. As part of a coping strategy, I have worked voluntarily in youth work organisations. This commitment hasn't been altruistic, rather an attempt to restore some professional autonomy to my sense of self. But, over the last number of years, even that voluntary space has become occupied by the discourses of managerialism and marketisation. The relevant experiences here include: time spent as Chairperson of a Regional Youth Service during the austerity period from 2008 – 2012; engagement with youth workers through work as a facilitator; and my current membership of the Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB) Youth Work Committee. These experiences have brought me into contact with both policy and practice issues and have often prompted reflection on the interrelationship between the two. These experiences have generated a concern about the role of contemporary policy in constituting and limiting youth work: its organisation, identity, aims and practices.

[11] It is acknowledged that Freirean problematisation is somewhat different and belongs to a more explicit Marxist critical social theory approach, but despite this, there are similarities in the way questions are used to problem pose as part of critique.

Seeking a new space, I joined the D.Soc.Sc. in Maynooth University in 2014, where I gained the opportunity for critical reflection. This dissertation has emerged from that reflection and it represents the questions I have about the influence of policy for practice.

Philosophical Stance: The Political Nature of Research

The *decision* to choose a poststructural philosophical stance at an early stage in the research process was a deliberate attempt on my part to select a perspective that would allow for a critical analysis of youth work policy. From a poststructural perspective all knowledge production involves power, therefore all research is political (Bacchi, 2012b). Acknowledging that research is political, Ronnblom (2012:122) says that 'methodology matters', since researchers shape reality in the methodological choices they make. For Wetherell (2001:385), a 'politically engaged stance of some kind is probably the most common position among discourse analysts', including poststructuralists. Here, my selection of governmental analysis to examine the ways in which policy problematises youth work is deliberate. Thus, the methodological choices and research design of this study are meant to be, in themselves, ways of interrupting the rationalist and evidence-based policy approach that seems to be invested in current Irish youth policy (Kiely and Meade, 2018). This political intent is supported by Mol and Messman's (1996:422, cited in Bacchi, 2012b:144) advice to researchers that they should consider not 'what they want to *know*' but 'what they want to *do*'.

Normative Stance: An Open and Open-Ended Youth Work

Koopman (2009) argues that it is possible to hold a normative position whilst at the same time engaging in Foucauldian problematisation. Bacchi (2009) is a strong proponent of the role of WPR in supporting forms of governing that are less harmful and that rule with a minimum of domination. I recognise that youth work in all its forms – conservative and progressive - governs young people (Bradford, 2014). However, I take a normative position in support of ideals for an open (to all young people without labels based on their voluntary participation) and open-ended (a loose, uncertain form that is negotiated with young people) youth work, best described in the literature as critical democratic youth work (see IDYW 2009; 2014; Batsleer, 2013; Davies, 2015).

I share a concern with Kiely and Meade (2018) that this type of youth work is being undermined by contemporary neoliberal policy developments. In this research, I seek to critically analyse the work of policy in attempting to silence youth work as a democratic practice, and I wish to counter emerging policy ideas that attempt to narrow youth work's

possibility down to a select set of outcomes. In putting forward this position, I recognise that it might seem contradictory to assert a 'pure' democratic vision for youth work whilst at the same time critiquing the role of neoliberal policy in limiting youth work's possibility. Following Davies (2015), I acknowledge that youth work is contested, that it is always in formation and cannot be or should not be 'fixed' as one thing. For both Lorenz (2009) and Duffy (2013), the contested nature of youth work is the basis of an ethical practice. Room for contestation and dialogue is core to any democratic claim for youth work practice. What I am suggesting is that a broad, critical democratic youth work offers the potential to 'govern with a minimum of domination' (Foucault, 1987:129 cited in Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:24) since it leaves space for contestation.

I therefore acknowledge the role that values and subjectivity played in this research process from the choice of research topic and methodology; to the interpretive act of analysis; to this write up. As such, I do not claim that the research presented here is a final, fixed or 'true' interpretation, it is one possible interpretation and must be read as such.

1.7 Chapter Layout

Chapter 2

In this chapter I provide a short introduction to the VFMPR policy and I give details of the text itself as well as its context. In doing so, I set the VFMPR within a broad intersection of policy domains that begins to illustrate the genealogical aspects of the VFMPR. This means acknowledging the multiple contemporary and historical relationships that exist in one policy text that give that policy its 'conditions of possibility'.

Chapter 3

This chapter explains the main theoretical and conceptual assumptions that underpin the study. I give an outline of poststructuralism and governmentality theory and I identify the way these perspectives are put into action through a governmental analysis. I outline my conceptualisation of the four substantive areas of this study: youth work; policy; policy analysis; and neoliberalism, and I discuss criticisms of the governmental analysis of policy. I give an outline of the political aims associated with a governmental analysis.

Chapter 4

In this chapter I lay out the main research methods used in conducting this study. I give a detailed outline of the 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) analytical framework and I link this framework with the research questions. I give details of how I operationalised WPR in this study and I discuss some of the challenges and modifications I made. I explain

my selection of policy texts for analysis and outline the methods of data collection and data analysis.

Towards the end of this chapter and arising out of details that demonstrate how I arrived at the identification of problem representations within the VFMPR, I effectively begin the WPR analysis. Here, I introduce the three main ‘problems’ of youth work constructed in the VFMPR. Each of these problem representations is then analysed in the following chapters.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7

These chapters provide the substance of the WPR analysis. Each chapter is devoted to analysing one of three problem representations of youth work identified in the VFMPR. I begin each chapter by clarifying how these ‘problems’ are discursively constructed and then I go on to analyse the underlying assumptions or ‘unexamined ways of thinking’ that inform these problem representations. I discuss the effects these problem representations have for youth work. The analysis draws out various attempts to govern youth work in new ways.

Chapter 8

This chapter addresses the final tasks of WPR and it provides a conclusion to the study. It also offers an opportunity to reflect upon the study, its contribution and its limitations. Future research contributions that could enhance or build upon this research are identified.

Chapter 2: Contextualising the VFMPR

> *…a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy [was] that everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase... Every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter. And if we didn't get to Heaven that way, it was not a politico-economical place, and we had no business there. (Dickens, 1854)*

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide the background to the VFMPR policy. I address the lead up to the production of the VFMPR and the policy contexts it emerged from, including processes of contemporary public sector, children's and youth work reform. I give practical details of how the VFMPR process was undertaken by DCYA and I outline the shape and structure of the published policy document. I also give consideration to what has happened since the publication of the policy document and I identify the re-forms it has inspired.

2.2 The Policy Context of the VFMPR

In this section I set out the broad policy context within which the VFMPR can be set. I begin by outlining some austerity inspired, public sector reforms that have breathed new life into VFM initiatives in Ireland. Following this, I discuss developments in children's reform that have had implications for youth work policy. I then give an overview of relevant policy developments in youth work prior to the production of the VFMPR. In doing so, I provide an 'abbreviated genealogy'[12] (Bacchi, 2011) of the conditions of possibility that have led to the emergence of the VFMPR policy, and I locate it in an intersecting set of contemporary policy developments in public sector reform, children's reform and youth work reform.

Public Sector Reform: New Public Management and the Value For Money Initiative

Modern Irish public-sector reforms began with the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) in 1994. Hardiman and MacCarthaigh (2008) characterise these early reforms as an 'Irish style version' of New Public Management (NPM). NPM is a label for a wide range of reforms in the public sector that are associated with neoliberal economic thinking and include: privatisation; marketisation and promotion of competition; and the use of private sector

[12] Genealogy is a form of Foucauldian historical tracing of problematisations (Delanty 2011). Full genealogies are significant pieces of work and Bacchi (2011) suggests that where it is not feasible to produce a full genealogy for WPR, an abbreviated tracing can suffice.

management principles with an emphasis on performance, effectiveness and efficiency (Hardiman, 2010). Ireland was an outlier amongst English speaking liberal states because it adopted NPM in a slower and softer form, since it was led by the public service itself, and not by right wing political leadership (Hardiman and MacCarthaigh, 2008). Just prior to the economic crisis of 2008, the OECD suggested that Ireland displayed increased movement towards NPM but was failing to engage with a strong performance system (MacCarthaigh, 2017a:148). The austerity programme that emerged after the economic crisis provided a legitimising backdrop for 'unprecedented public service reform' (MacCarthaigh, 2015). The most obvious manifestation of reform was the establishment of a new Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) in 2011 and it took control over public spending. DPER published two national public service reform plans in 2011 and 2014. Reform strategies included the introduction of new economic evaluation methods (MacCarthaigh, 2017b).

Value for Money Reviews (VFM) were initially introduced in 1997 under the SMI[13] reforms that sought better efficiency and effectiveness as well as a desire to shift public sector focus from inputs to 'intended results' or outcomes (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2001). However, leading economists were critical of their limited success (see Comptroller and Auditor General, 2001, Boyle, 2009, McCarthy, 2009a,b). Austerity provided impetus for a renewed focus on economic evaluation and 'value for money' as part of public sector reform. Austerity inspired reforms have included the introduction of the *Comprehensive Review of Expenditure* (CRE), a 'root and branch' assessment of each department's expenditures; and the development of a new *Public Spending Code*, with updated rules for conducting newly named Value for Money Reviews and Policy Reviews (VFMPRs) (MacCarthaigh, 2015; 2017b).

The OECD (2010) defines VFM as 'reforms which aim for better quality of services at lower costs'. In Ireland, VFMPRs are economic evaluations that are undertaken at the level of government departments and:

> …should primarily be concerned with looking at ways to improve the operation of programmes. The focus should be on effectiveness and efficiency, the scope for alternative delivery mechanisms, and generally be based on the programme logic approach (Boyle 2014:7).

The *Value for Money Initiative* (VFMI) is managed by DPER and it sets out three yearly cycles of VFM reviews for each Government Department. Recent studies confirm that VFM is now a strong feature of public sector reform in Ireland (e.g. OECD, 2010) with McKevvitt and Davis (2016) arguing that it has now reached a 'tipping point' amongst policy makers.

[13] Therefore VFMs can be traced to efforts to introduce NPM into Irish public administration.

Children's Reform[14]: Rights, Risks and Outcomes

Ireland's first[15] *National Children's Strategy* was published in 2000 and as part of this, the *National Children's Office* (NCO) was set up. Both emerged from a critique of Ireland's lack of progress on advancing children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Kaoukji and Little, 2007). They were aimed at improving policy development for children across the whole of government, but implementation proved difficult. In 2005 the NCO was replaced when responsibility for children was established under the ambit of the *Office for the Minister for Children* (OMC) located in the Department of Health and Children (DoHC). The OMC was responsible for the policy work relating to early years' education, children's services and youth justice (Kaoukji and Little, 2007). Based on the initial work of the NCO, as well as a new relationship with Atlantic Philanthropies (AP), the OMC promoted evidence-based approaches in children's services, with the aim to achieve 'better outcomes'[16] particularly for disadvantaged children. This included an interest in: prevention and early intervention science; the use of epidemiological data; the design of experiments and evaluation of children's programmes (see Little and Abunimah, 2007).

There have been intensified policy efforts aimed at the reform of children's services since the publication of the *Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse* (DoHC, 2009) commonly known as the Ryan Report. This has included implementation of the recommendations on child protection, the roll out of *Children First* and the setup of a new agency for children and families – TUSLA (DCYA, 2018b). The Ryan Report has been influential in the development of policy perspectives that seek to mitigate risks faced by children. For example, the *National Children and Young People's Policy Framework 2014-2020* aimed to:

> …meet one of the key recommendations of the Ryan Report to bring together relevant policies including those relating to prevention and early intervention initiatives, early childhood education, area-based approaches to address child poverty, and addressing youth homelessness and aftercare provision (DCYA, 2013a:6).

In 2008, the Youth Affairs Unit[17] (YAU) was moved out of the Department of Education and was merged with OMC, to become the *Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs* (OMCYA) located in the Department of Health[18]. Reflecting on these developments the *OMCYA Annual Report* suggested:

> This Government decision builds on the progress made by the OMC and brings greater coherence to policymaking and service delivery for children (OMCYA, 2008:1).

[14] DCYA has referred to 'a reform programme for children' (see DCYA, 2012b).
[15] The Better Outcomes: Brighter Future policy published in 2014 now replaces this.
[16] This referred to 'developmental' outcomes for children.
[17] This is the Government unit with responsibility for youth work policy.
[18] This was the result of a Cabinet reshuffle after the appointment of a new Taoiseach.

In 2011, following the election of a new coalition Government, further restructuring occurred with the establishment of a new *Department of Children and Youth Affairs* (DCYA). The new department represented a merging of the OMCYA with the National Educational Welfare Board and the Family Support Agency. Commitments to children's reform remained a key defining feature of the new DCYA policy paradigm, its first *Statement of Strategy 2011 – 2014* (DCYA, 2012a) expressed a commitment to the implementation of the Ryan Report and the pursuance of a constitutional mandate in relation to children's rights.

The children's reform agenda encompasses concerns about children's rights and the protection of children facing risks. It represents a set of policy commitments and policy interests (e.g. in developmental outcomes) that predated the arrival of youth work into its orbit in 2008. After 2008, youth work policy became entangled with these various commitments and interests. In efforts to harmonise policy, I suggest that children's reform is one of the influencing contingencies that eventually led to the production of the VFMPR.

Youth Work Reform: Intersecting Policy Threads

The policy period 2000 – 2008 saw significant developments in youth work policy. The momentum that had built throughout the 1990s toward the provision of a legislative basis, finally culminated in the *Youth Work Act 2001*. Under the Act, for the first time a Government Minister was designated as responsible for the provision of youth work services in Ireland (Breen, 2001:16). The Act also provided definitional clarity regarding the educational nature of Irish youth work (Devlin, 2010). Soon after, a *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003 – 2007* (NYWDP) (Department of Education, 2003) was published. Its goals included enhancing the contribution of youth work to social inclusion, providing greater support for youth work at local and national level, and enhancing professionalism and quality standards in Irish youth work. Arising out of the Plan, a North-South Education and Training Standards Committee (NSETS) was set up in 2006 to oversee professional endorsement of youth work education and a National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) was launched in 2010. These developments served to enhance the recognition of youth work as a profession in Ireland (Devlin, 2010). In the *National Development Plan 2007 – 2013: Transforming Ireland, A Better Quality of Life for All,* published just before the crisis, significant Government commitment was given to:

> Supporting the Youth Work Sector: The objective of this measure will be to develop and resource the sector, both voluntary and statutory, for the continued rollout of the provisions of the Youth Work Act, 2001 and of the various elements of the NYWDP. It will also support the work of volunteers and youth work practitioners (Government of Ireland, 2007:247).

When taken together, all these policy developments along with what Coyne and Donohoe (2013:80) suggest was a Celtic Tiger boom offering significant funding opportunities to youth work organisations in Ireland up to 2007[19], seemed to suggest a 'golden era' for Irish youth work policy developments.

After the economic crisis in 2008, a programme of austerity aimed at public expenditure had significant impacts for all social service areas, including youth work (see Harvey, 2012). The VFMPR acknowledges cuts of 31% to the youth work sector from 2008 to 2013 (DCYA, 2014b). In the youth work literature, research from the austerity period reveals low morale amongst the youth work sector (Jenkinson, 2013; Melaugh, 2015). This is mostly related to the challenges arising from funding and service cuts, alongside greater demands for services. Melaugh (2015) identified increased stress for organisations and staff as a result of trying to 'do[ing] more with less'. Jenkinson (2013) found there was apprehension in the sector that funding cuts would undermine the open access principles of youth work even further. Both Jenkinson and Melaugh present a discourse of survival, questioning the ability of organisations to keep services going on shoestring budgets.

Besides the cuts, a restructuring of the landscape of youth work policy was also underway from 2008 onwards, when responsibility for youth work shifted to the OMCYA. Youth work policy was to be harmonised with children's services, as the first OMCYA Annual Report makes clear:

> The policy framework underpinning the work of the OMCYA is The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook (OMC, 2007a). This new policy approach involves integrated delivery of services in partnership with children, young people, their families and their communities (OMCYA, 2008:2).

Devlin (2010) noted this move as of concern for two reasons: firstly, it occurred without any consultation with the youth work sector and secondly, it seemed to disregard the educational nature of youth work. Under the new structures, policy commitments to supporting youth work seemed to stall[20]. A significant number of actions listed in the NYWDP had not been implemented and a policy review was initiated in 2009 (Devlin, 2012a). The promises of supporting the youth work sector made in the *National Development Plan* in 2007 were I suggest, informally suspended, but not just because of cuts. In 2010, a senior OMCYA official suggested that youth work needed a 'more cogent articulation' in the context of the new child and youth policy framework (see Canavan, 2010). This was an early indicator of a problematising attitude to youth work: it too would need to be **re-formed** to fit in with the new policy paradigm of prevention and early intervention logic, and the increasing use of

[19] Minister for Youth Affairs, Ms. Síle de Valera, T.D., announced youth work funding in the 2007 estimates as €51.266m, representing an increase of 14% since 2006 and a 123% increase in funding since 2002.
[20] One exception to this was the rollout of the *National Quality Standards Framework* (NQSF).

outcomes, evidence and evaluation in making children's services more effective (Kaoukji and Little, 2007; OMC, 2006).

Further reform pressures emerged with the establishment of DCYA. A new emphasis on public sector reform is immediately obvious in the policy discourse of the DCYA as it expressed its commitment to increasing the effectiveness of services and outlined its vision in the first CRE exercise:

> DCYA has been given an ambitious mandate and set of Programme for Government priorities, full achievement of which will represent a significant contribution to public service reform (DCYA, 2011a:3).

Public sector reform concerns are very clear too in the DCYA's first *Statement of Strategy*, manifesting in two main ways: firstly, to seek reforms in service provision and secondly, to achieve internal reform within the Department itself in relation to performance, governance and accountability (see DCYA, 2012a). Youth work as a service provision site, would become the subject of scrutiny as it was set out amongst these various lines of reform. DCYA proposed that youth work funding schemes should be 'renovated and reoriented, ensuring responsive, policy and evidence-informed service provision' (ibid:30). Thus, the problematising of youth work at official Government level continued within the new DCYA: this time in the context of public sector reform concerns.

The VFMPR represented an available technology within which to put problematising and reform thinking into play and in 2012, DCYA triggered a review process to examine the funding of targeted youth work schemes. Arguably, it also represented a way for the DCYA to be seen to 'perform performance' (Clarke, 2004), that is, be seen to take reform seriously, thus enhancing its own performance as a new Department:

> This is the first VFMPR exercise undertaken by the DCYA. Being a relatively new Government department, the DCYA was keen to harness the VFMPR as one of a range of change initiatives designed to rationalise, reform and improve programmes and areas of policy responsibility assumed by the Department (from other departments) when it was set up (DCYA, 2014b:16).

The 2000s had started with great promise for youth work policy but the political, economic and social context in Ireland had changed significantly by 2010. As the decade closed, Devlin (2010: 103) acknowledging a changing context, expressed hope that 'advances of recent years through youth work legislation, the national development plan and related initiatives' could be retained, with appropriate emphasis placed upon the historical values in Irish youth work developed over 150 years.

2.3 The VFMPR Text

Production of the Text

The VFMPR was initiated by DCYA to evaluate three funding schemes for 'disadvantaged' young people. These three included: Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF), Local Drugs Task Force funding (LDTF) and Special Projects for Youth funding (SPY). The rules for VFMs identify the grounds upon which an area can be selected for evaluation, these include: that the area should represent a significant expenditure and offer good potential for adding value and focus on discretionary funding where effectiveness and efficiency issues are important. The VFMPR alludes to two reasons why DCYA chose to focus on targeted youth work schemes: firstly, the expenditure involved was thought to be significant enough to warrant a review[21]; and secondly it provided an opportunity to pilot solutions to performance management challenges in other DCYA areas of responsibility (DCYA, 2014b:16).

The conduct of VFMs is guided by a set of rules outlined in the *VFM Manual* (CEEU, 2007) and *Public Spending Code* (DPER, 2013). Under these rules, departments are responsible for leading the conduct of the evaluation. In addition, the VFM process is overseen by an independent steering committee with at least one member from DPER. There were seven people on the VFMPR steering committee that included: three from DCYA, one from DPER and two independent members. It was chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality. All seven members are noted as having expertise in either finance, economics, auditing or evaluation (see DCYA, 2014b:20). The rules do not allow any members with a 'sectional interest', thereby ruling out anyone from the youth work sector, who were to be instead the subjects of the evaluation.

The programme logic model (PLM) is the standard methodology used for producing a VFM. This involves mapping the objectives, inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of the evaluated spending programme (DPER, 2013). The VFMPR evaluation process also involved: interviews with DCYA officials; a survey of youth work organisations; analysis of application forms and annual reports including cost calculations; site visits to a sample of 13 youth work organisations; and interviews with youth work staff and young people. Additionally, the Centre for Effective Services (CES) was commissioned to produce a literature review to inform the VFMPR evaluation work.

[21] Representing €56.806 million in 2012 and €182.238 million for the review period of 3 years 2010-2012.

Shape and Structure of the Text

The VFMPR was published in October 2014 and it is freely available on the DCYA website. The outputs of a VFM process are written up in report format and must include a 'balanced scorecard', which is a table that summarises the key findings of the VFM (DPER, 2013). The intended audience of a VFM report includes the initiating Government department, the DPER and the appropriate Oireachtas Sub Committee. Responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the VFM lies with the Government department. The VFMPR is clearly produced with a view to advising DCYA on what it needs to do to improve the governance and performance of the evaluated funding schemes.

The final text is 190 pages long and is structured as a research report with the following nine chapters: Introduction; Background; Methodology; Governance Arrangements; Rationale; Efficiency; Effectiveness; Relevance; Conclusions and Recommendations. There is a significant amount of back matter including seven appendices and eight pages of end notes. Appendix 4 is an eight-page literature review subtitled '*Focusing on Outcomes relevant to Youth Intervention Programmes: Key messages from a short scan of the research literature'*. This is particularly interesting to note given that many assumptions made in the main document rely upon the findings of this literature review.

Overall the contents of the text provide an assessment of the three funding schemes SPY, LDTF and YPFSF by drawing on a variety of assumptions and evidence. The major conclusion is that despite difficulties arriving at a precise assessment of value for money, the targeted programmes merited continued public expenditure. This conclusion is strongly based in a set of conditionalities that seek to improve the governance and performance of both DCYA itself as well as that of the youth work programmes reviewed. A set of 12 recommendations[22] were made that included:

- collapsing the three schemes into one for the benefit of streamlined governance and performance management;
- improving the DCYA governance system by increasing local monitoring of youth work sites and using a deliberative forum for negotiating with service providers;
- reform of administration systems to yield better data;
- increased use of demographic information for service planning;
- setting up a performance oversight system that would include a coherent logic model of the funding schemes and clearly articulate outcomes to be achieved by providers.

[22] See Appendix 3 for this list.

2.4 The VFMPR Re-Forms

After its publication, the VFMPR made few sound waves with only one newspaper article and two youth sector articles commenting on it (O'Brien, 2015; YNow, 2015; YWI 2015a). The initial reaction in the youth work sector appeared to treat the VFMPR recommendations as quite benign:

> The policy environment has continued to evolve with the consolidation of the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures Framework from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs supplemented by the National Youth Strategy… The news is also good as there is nothing alarming or surprising in these documents… A Value for Money Review has also pointed the way on the future method of support for our work by the State (YWI, 2015b).

However, for DCYA the recommendations emerging from the VFMPR were to be the basis for reform. The then Minister, Dr. James Reilly announced that the VFMPR findings were 'important to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs reform agenda' and that DCYA were committed to progressing the VFMPR recommendations through the proposed *National Youth Strategy* (Reilly, 2014). The NYS takes up the response to the VFMPR by committing to:

> Enhancing effective prevention and early intervention through the reformed targeted youth programme as recommended in the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes (2014), while ensuring a preventive focus in and across all other universal programmes and schemes within DCYA which focus on the development of young people (DCYA, 2015b:5).

In 2016 the VFMPR reform process was launched when Minister Zappone announced new funding of €200, 000 for five areas, including South East Cavan, West Wicklow, Drogheda, Cahir and the Fethard/Killenaule area of Tipperary. In announcing the new services, the Minister stated that:

> The establishment of these new services will assist my Department in its reform programme, in particular in the implementation recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Funding Schemes (Zappone, 2016).

These initial five sites colloquially became known as the VFMPR sample projects. In late 2017, it was announced that a further number of new youth work projects would be added, and that some existing youth work projects would become 'augmented' as VFMPR sample locations. These sample projects have offered the opportunity for DCYA to trial various VFMPR recommendations, including the shaping of a new performance oversight system (see CES, 2018a). A recent DCYA newsletter says:

> The VFMPR made twelve recommendations, and we're working on all twelve at the same time so there's a lot going on. We're trying out new ideas through sample projects and learning from the results, both good and bad. (DCYA, 2018a:2)

The pilot process has also included a reconfigured governance chain, featuring new service level agreements (SLA) between DCYA, Education and Training Boards (ETBs)[23] and youth work organisations. The new SLA undertaken by youth work organisations specifies:

- Use of the Hardiker Model[24] to target and profile young people
- 80% of participants must be designated as Level 2 on the Hardiker scale or above
- Use of a set of seven outcomes identified by the VFMPR as 'proximal' outcomes that aim to develop young people's personal and social skills and are to be used to focus practice with young people
- 70% of youth worker time to be in face to face work
  (Limerick/Clare ETB, 2018)

Other VFMPR recommendations have also been implemented. A variety of consultation processes took place as DCYA sought to establish new parameters for funding relationships with the voluntary youth work sector (see Roe 2017, CES 2018b). DCYA in association with POBAL Maps now have a webpage for mapping targeted youth work programmes and their geographical boundaries and profiles (see https://maps.pobal.ie/WebApps/DCYA/index.html). In 2017 a new *Youth Reform Unit* was set up in DCYA to develop a new targeted youth funding scheme (TYFS). Finally, the recommendation to collapse all three funding schemes into one has resulted in the publication of a proposed new Targeted Youth Funding Scheme (TYFS) in April 2018 (DCYA, 2018c).

A number of additional reform areas have also been suggested by DCYA, including the review of the Youth Service Grant Scheme which is 'intended to enhance its accountability, transparency and scheme measurement' (Zappone, 6th March 2018a). One significant change has been the suspension of the National Youth Work Advisory Committee[25] (NYWAC), previously a key policy forum for the youth work sector. In 2013 NYWAC was not reconvened for a new term by then Minster, Francis Fitzgerald. Under recent challenge in the Dail, Minister Zappone has said 'there are no current plans to reconvene it' (Zappone,

[23] ETBs are statutory agencies with responsibility for education, training and youth work at local levels. Following VFMPR recommendations, ETBs are the new intermediary between youth work sites and DCYA. Youth work organisations contract with the ETB and the ETB contracts with DCYA. As a result, local ETB Youth Officers have a key role in local monitoring and decision-making regarding funding. This effectively reduces the role of voluntary National Youth Work Organisations who have historically acted as funding intermediaries and it signifies increased state intervention in youth work.

[24] This model is being used to risk assess young people and categorise them according to low (level 1 and 2) to high (level 3 and 4) risk.

[25] The Youth Work Act (2001) established NYWAC to have a role in governance arrangements between the voluntary youth work sector and the government.

17th October, 2017a). This appears to be in contravention of the Youth Work Act 2001 but Minister Zappone has also indicated that it too is to be 'reviewed' (Zappone 10th October 2017b). All these changes taken together have led to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs recently expressing that 'my Department is managing the most significant reform of youth services ever undertaken' (Zappone, 9th May 2018b).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides a contemporary genealogy of the emergence of the VFMPR and lays the foundations for later analysis in Chapters 5 to 7. In it, I provide a descriptive and analytical context for understanding the VFMPR policy, paying attention to intersecting policy domains. The timing of the VFMPR policy development indicates that neoliberal austerity and a new wave of public sector reform bears an influence on its production. However, historical tracing suggests that the relationship between NPM and 'value for money' goes back further, to the mid-1990s. Alongside this, the recent development of a children's reform agenda, with an emphasis on psychological based developmental outcomes, appears as a surprising influence on the policy context for youth work and the VFMPR.

The chapter also provides descriptive details of how the VFMPR was produced as well as an account of the document itself. To underscore the importance of the policy in the contemporary re-form of youth work, I have outlined some of the changes in the organisation, administration and funding arrangements it is directly impacting upon.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

When from thy boiling store, thou shalt fill each jar brim full by-and-by, dost thou think that thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within — or sometimes only maim him and distort him! (Dickens, 1854)

3.1 Introduction

As already outlined, this study uses Bacchi's (2009) WPR framework as a core analytical tool. Chapter 4 will provide the practical details of how I operationalised WPR, but in this chapter I draw on the theoretical perspectives that underpin WPR and use them to create the conceptual framework for this study. Accordingly, this study adopts poststructural and governmentality theory to conceptualise the substantive aspects of this study: youth work; policy; policy analysis and neoliberalism. In the following sections, I draw out some of the implications of taking these theoretical perspectives as guides for this study.

The chapter is divided into three main parts. Firstly, I explain how I use poststructural perspectives to situate the approach to knowledge here as postpositivist and how I conceptualise youth work as harbouring the possibility for multiple meanings. Secondly, I explain my use of governmentality perspectives in this study as a means to conceptualise policy as a governing technology, and to analyse the work that policy does to govern the conduct of youth work. I also use governmentality to conceptualise neoliberalism as a dominant rationality in governing. Thirdly, I outline and respond to some of the criticisms made against governmental approaches to policy analysis.

3.2 Poststructural Perspectives

Poststructuralism is a term used in relation to critiques of structuralism (Eliott et al, 2016). This perspective, closely associated with Michel Foucault, emerged in France in the 1960s as a reaction against the deterministic focus of theories that relied on structures (linguistic, social, economic) as the basis for explaining society (Olssen, 2003; Olssen et al, 2004). I draw upon aspects of poststructuralism to do two things: firstly, to set up the broad theoretical assumptions of the study in relation to taking a postpositivist stance to knowledge; and secondly, to set out my understanding of youth work.

Postpositivist Stance

Poststructuralism rejects the possibility that knowledge production can be objective or value neutral, since knowing is linked to 'human interpretation' (Coffey, 2004) and discourse is central to understanding the social world (Taylor, 2001). Discourse refers to more than a system of words, rather it is a 'meaning constituting system' that is used to relate to the world around us (Scott, 2003:379). Through discourse the social world is constantly remade and there is no objective place to stand outside of this. Instead, reality is multiple and is constructed through meaning making that is anchored in particular times and places, shaped by historical and cultural factors. Accordingly, what can be known, is partial, fluid and uncertain. For poststructuralists, how we can know, at least in the partial sense of what can be known, is through analysis of discourse (Wetherell, 2001).

Poststructuralism as a postpositivist orientation in social policy (Carson and Kerr, 2017) rejects positivism and scientific claims that research can uncover universal truths about society. Poststructuralists reject 'grand narratives' associated with modernity and instead recognise there are a multiplicity of truths and 'reality' is complex (Coffey, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln 2013). Poststructuralism takes an anti – epistemological position in its rejection and dismantling of dominant modernist epistemologies and it is sceptical about any degree of certainty in knowledge claims. The 'scientific method' is a particular target for poststructural analysis and scientific categories are seen as shaped by discourse and culture (Delanty and Strydom, 2003:9).

These ideas about knowledge have implications for social policy analysis. Social policy as a discipline has been slow to take up poststructural ideas (Coffey, 2004), partly because its implications draw questions about the universalising assumptions in social policy-making (Carson and Kerr, 2017:100). In the main, poststructural orientations in social policy analysis are taken up more for their *critique* of current policy-making and policy change (ibid:100) rather than for their *contribution* to producing alternative grand visions for how things should be. A poststructural position challenges the increasingly rationalist, scientific and 'evidence based' approaches used in social policy-making at present (Bacchi, 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016). This is relevant to this study, since the aim is not to describe policy progress in Irish youth work, but to critically analyse the positivistic frame upon which much contemporary youth work policy is now made (Kiely and Meade, 2018).

Youth Work as Multiple

Taking a broad poststructural perspective means that concepts such as 'youth work', 'youth', 'youth workers' are regarded as categories that have been socially and discursively

constructed. These concepts then, have multiple meanings that are always in flux. Duffy's (2013) poststructural analysis positions youth work as an ambiguous discourse that reflects multiple 'sub-discourses' that can display 'both critical pedagogy and a form of social conditioning at the same time' (ibid:169). This ambiguity is vital in creating the tension space for reflective practice and it is she says what 'makes youth work ethical' (ibid:15). Lorenz (2009) similarly notes the virtues of harnessing ambiguity and open-endedness in attempts to 'improve' practice and to leave space for negotiation, dialogue and difference. These poststructural positions stand in marked contrast to the search for certainty evident in contemporary youth work practice (e.g. through best practice research) and in youth work policy (e.g. attempts to delineate a set of outcomes guaranteed by participation in youth work).

In line with the poststructuralist approach adopted, I use the term 'youth work' as a reference point for a multiplicity of ways of thinking about youth work - as a collection of practices, knowledges and possibilities. I focus on attempts to govern the *possibilities* of what youth work can be in Ireland at the present time, underscored by a concern that current attempts to produce certainty, particularly in the VFMPR, *constrains and delimits* youth work in various ways. Another point to make in using the term 'youth work' is that this appears to contradict the language used in the VFMPR policy document. The VFMPR attempts to bracket out the term 'youth work' by replacing it with generic references to 'youth programmes', 'the relationship' and the 'youth professional'. It produces an artificial distinction between 'youth programmes' and 'youth work'. I am concerned about these attempts to silence youth work, and so when analysing the VFMPR I am purposefully bringing 'youth work' back in.

Adopting a poststructural perspective to conceptualise youth work in this way, helps to address my interest in advocating for a democratic understanding of youth work as expressed by Batsleer (2013), IDYW (2014), Taylor (2010) and Kiely and Meade (2018). This understanding of youth work promotes open-ended possibilities for what youth work can be, and rejects attempts to produce certainty and or any kind of 'pure' model of youth work (Payne, 2009). An open-ended understanding of youth work allows it to remain contested and this is vital to the production of dialogue and negotiation at the heart of democracy (Brown, 2015).

3.3 Governmentality Perspectives

Governmentality theory is situated within poststructuralism (Larner, 2000) and this is the main perspective I use to construct the conceptual framework for this study. Governmentality theory was developed by Michel Foucault during the late 1970s and was advanced by

scholars including Nikolas Rose and Mitchell Dean and more recently by Brady (2016) and Bacchi and Goodwin (2016). I use this perspective to do three things: firstly, to conceptualise policy and the work it does to govern conduct; secondly, to conceptualise how to analyse the governing work of policy using problematisation as a core analytic tool; and thirdly to help theorise neoliberalism.

Policy as a Governing Technology

Ideas of government are the central concern of governmentality theory. Here, ***government*** has a broader meaning than its usual association as a political institution[26], instead it refers to practices that guide 'the conduct of conduct' (Dean, 1999:2). In this sense, government extends well 'beyond the state' and involves a vast array of technologies and knowledges:

> Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interest and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes (Dean, 1999: 11).

This study could not address all the heterogenous aspects of government as suggested above, and so I specifically focus on studying youth work policy as a form of government.

Governmentality has a number of meanings (Edwards and Fernández, 2017a:5). As a neologism, the term indicates that governing involves two things: the deployment of ***technologies*** of power ('govern'); and ***rationalities*** or ways of thinking ('mentalities') that mobilise power in the form of knowledge (Dean,1999). Technologies might include: 'the mundane programmes, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents and procedures through which authorities seek to employ and give effect to governmental ambitions' (Rose and Miller, 1992:175). Technologies tend to be more obvious than the rationalities that inform them, but both require study in order to understand how governing works and the relationship between power and knowledge that it involves (Lemke, 2001). Adopting this understanding of governmentality, youth work policies can be conceptualised as governing technologies (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:42).

Whilst acknowledging that governmentality theory pays attention to the dispersed nature of government, this study does privilege the state as an important location for governing youth work. Following McKee (2009:470), the state 'still remains a pivotal actor in shaping both the conceptualisation of the 'problem' and the proposed solution'. This is also in line with Kiely and Meade (2018) who view Government policy as a key site for governing youth work given

[26] I will use 'Government' with a capital G to distinguish when I am referring to the state institution and 'government' when referring to the broader meaning.

its reliance on the state for funding. By taking the VFMPR as an 'entry point' for analysis (Bacchi, 2009:25), there are still opportunities to look beyond the state and to identify other knowledges and expertise that interacts with this Government discourse.

Policy as Discourse

Miller and Rose (2008:30) suggest that 'governmentality has a discursive character'. For them discourse is 'a technology of thought' through which various rationalities of government are articulated. Rationalities are the 'discursive fields' and 'aspirational visions' upon which governing is justified: they involve a moral dimension that is used to legitimise governing and an epistemological dimension that helps to provide the knowledge as to why and how governing should take place (Miller and Rose 2008). Many different rationalities can inform techniques of government: these can operate simultaneously and may even be contradictory, creating further problems for government; and they undergo constant change. Rationalities make governing thinkable and understandable to 'both its practitioners and on whom it is practiced' (Gordon, 1991:2). This thinking is discursively formed so that discourse establishes the 'conditions of possibility' for seeing governing in particular ways, which in turn impacts on *how* governing is made practical or operational (Carmel and Harlock, 2008).

Knowledge is central to government, to govern requires knowledge of that which is to be governed (Rose et al, 2006:87). Foucault saw knowledge and power as inextricably linked: represented as a nexus of ***power/knowledge***. Knowledge here refers to 'common sense – a kind of unquestioned knowledge' that at a given point in time is seen as true. For this kind of knowledge to become established, it requires 'the support of arrangements of power' (Feder, 2014: 56). But knowledge also supports power relations by helping to inform techniques of government. Thus power and knowledge support each other: 'Knowledge is at the base of the exercise of power, while the exercise of power also produces knowledge' (Alvesson and Skolberg, 2009). Knowledge production and the deployment of knowledge through expertise (e.g. accountants, economists, psychologists, youth workers) facilitates 'governing from a distance' (Miller and Rose, 2008) and this draws attention to the importance of how knowledge is used to govern through non-state actors (Bacchi, 2009:266). Attention to knowledge also helps to see how governing rationalities can be informed by theories and ideas that are part of culture, or can be derived from human sciences including economics and psychology (Dean, 1999:17). Power and knowledge, rationalities and discourse are intermeshed in governing: rationalities are produced through power/knowledge relations, while discourse works to reproduce and disperse these. Discourse carries and produces knowledge and power, but is also created as an outcome of power (Lynch, 2014). For Bacchi

(2010b:63) discourse represents ‘socially produced forms of knowledge’ that set boundaries on what it is possible to think or say.

The governmentality literature then, establishes the importance of discourse in how governing works: discourse makes governing thinkable and sayable. Taking this into policy, Stephen Ball coined the term ’policy *as* discourse’ to draw attention to the governing work of policy that extends beyond policy content (Ball 1993, 2015). Policy as a governing technology draws upon discourse to inform ways of thinking about and rationalising governing; but it also carries and reproduces discourse in documents, statements and debates to help legitimise policy proposals about what and how to govern. Further to this, policy as discourse governs through its effects: its capacity to produce problems, solutions, subjects, objects and places (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016).

Conceptualising policy as discourse in this study has a number of implications. Firstly, it means taking a sceptical view of claims that the VFMPR policy is rational, and evidence-based; such claims ignore the existence of discursively created practices, meanings and categories upon which ‘rationalist’ discoveries and solutions are made (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016). Secondly, it means that to understand the work that Government policies do to govern youth work it is necessary to analyse them as a discursive field where ‘exercising power is rationalized’ (Lemke, 2001:191). It is necessary to examine the role of power/knowledge in producing problem representations of youth work and the ‘unexamined ways of thinking’ that are used to articulate youth work as problematic. Thirdly, it means paying attention to forms of knowledge that are silenced. ‘Subjugated knowledges’ are historical knowledges that are ‘disqualified’ by practices of power and governing (Bacchi, 2009) and in this study may help to highlight the subjugation of practitioner knowledges. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016:47) suggest that bringing these kinds of knowledges back into visibility through a governmental analysis, helps to provide resistance to scientific and rational knowledges. Fourthly, it involves examining the effects of the VFMPR discourse particularly in relation to the production of subject positions. Following Carmel and Harlock (2008) who have studied the construction of voluntary and community organisations as ‘governable terrain’, I am particularly interested in analysing how youth work ‘as a category of social subject’ is constituted within the VFMPR discourse. Fifthly, policy as discourse means undertaking a type of policy analysis that is *about* policy, about the work it does to govern and so involves analysing issues of power and knowledge (Bacchi, 2000, Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:35).

Policy Analysis as an Analytics of Government

I also draw on governmentality perspectives to conceptualise policy analysis, the main research tool of this study. As established in the last section, I regard policy as a governing technology, therefore policy analysis can be regarded as an analysis of how policy works to govern, in this case, the conduct of youth work. Of particular interest for this study, is using the concept of problematisation as a core analytical tool for exploring the governing work of policy and in this section, I also point to the role of discourse and the productive work of policy in governing.

Policy as Problematisation

The process by which governing actors call governing into question is referred to as a 'problematisation'. For Dean (1999:268) this includes 'modes of evaluation of success or failure' as well as questioning 'the past, present and potential alternatives' in governing practices. 'Problematizations are something relatively rare. They have particular dates and places and occur at particular locales or within specific institutions or organisations' (Dean, 1999:27). For Bacchi (2009:263), governing is based on problematisations which act as 'framing mechanisms' for deciding on what is and is not to be governed. Miller and Rose suggest that 'if the conduct of individuals or collectivities appeared to require conducting, this was because something in it appeared problematic to someone', through problematisation any part of life can be 'transformed into a zone that is considered to need governing' (Miller and Rose, 2008:14). Once something is made to appear problematic, it is opened to intervention, to being solved in some way.

Studying ***problematisation*** is then central to governmental analysis and this has implications for doing policy analysis. A key starting point is to locate moments when 'actors and agents of all sorts must pose the question of how to govern' (Dean, 1999:27). These are times when governing processes are more readily visible, points where government is made thinkable and practical. Miller and Rose (2008:14) outline the socially constructed nature of 'problems' which are made visible through the governing work of actors such as politicians, experts, and researchers:

> The term 'problematizing' was a useful way of designating this as a process, for it removed the self evidence of the term 'problems'. It suggested that 'problems' are not pre-given, lying there waiting to be revealed. They have to be constructed and made visible, and this construction of a field of problems is a complex and often slow process. Issues and concerns have to be made to appear problematic, often in different ways, in different sites, and by different agents (Miller and Rose, 2008:14).

For Bacchi and Goodwin (2016:40), 'governing takes place through the ways in which issues are problematized' and 'policies and policy proposals are seen to create or produce

"problems" as problems of particular types'. We are 'governed through problematisations' (Bacchi, 2009:xii) and 'policies are problematising activities' (Bacchi 2009:xi). Policy discourse can name, shape and create an understanding of social problems. This means conceptualising policy as governing by the way they problematise and construct 'problems' rather than the traditional view of policy as solving problems. Policy as a governing technology works then by *constituting* problems.

Problematisation is a central concept applied in this study. Firstly, in conceptualising the VFMPR policy as a problematisation, I am situating it as a clear 'moment' when the government of youth work is called into question. I also use problematisation to examine how the VFMPR constructs 'problem representations' of youth work, so that these can be used to govern youth work in new ways. Secondly, this study itself is a problematisation (Fimyar, 2008). This research problematises the VFMPR as a problematisation and it returns the governmental gaze of policy makers upon youth work, back onto the process of that policy-making. As Bacchi and Goodwin (2016:40) suggest the research task 'becomes analysing how "problems" are made'.

Neoliberalism as Governmentality

I also use governmentality perspectives in this study also as a means to theorise neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is regarded as more than simply an ideology or set of economic policies, it is a dominant political rationality that informs governing at the present time (Brown, 2015). Before I explain neoliberal rationality, I must first outline a second interpretation of governmentality as a new 'art of government'.

Governmentality as an Art of Government

Dean (1999) offers a second meaning for governmentality: as an historically new style of governing in Western liberal democracies. In this view, governmentality refers to governing through the concept of population which lends significant new possibilities to the 'art of government'. Through advances in statistics, population could be imagined as a nation's asset and a means to govern in various ways. For example, constructing 'norms' by which to compare people within a population or devising means to classify the population, so that certain groups can be targeted for different types of government. Such 'dividing practices' (Dean, 1999:167) aim to identify those capable of governing themselves so as to target those deemed otherwise, such as 'at risk' groups, for appropriate expert intervention.

Also, as a new 'art of government' that aims to foster the wellbeing and security of population as an asset, governmentality involves the exercise of soft power (Brown, 2015).

Governmental power guides conduct not through force but through freedom (Rose, 1999a). As a subtle form of governing, it involves rational problem-solving approaches where human science knowledge is central to convince, persuade and instil desires (Dean, 1999). In this way, governmental power involves 'each and all' (Gordon, 1991), since individuals internalise the desire to conform to processes of 'normalisation', based on knowledges developed from the concept of population (for example giving up smoking because epidemiological knowledge shows one in two smokers die). This art of government implies it is possible to govern 'beyond the state', to garner a whole array of expertise that will support individuals to govern themselves through freedom using forms of rational knowledge (Miller and Rose, 2008). It is a subtle form of governing 'from a distance', because it stretches out past institutions or the state to include governing by a multitude of others, including governing by and within the self.

Neoliberal Rationality

By comparing the development of the art of government through three phases of classical liberal, expansive liberal and advanced liberal rule, governmentality scholars illustrate the distinctiveness of neoliberalism as a political rationality (Foucault 1991; Dean, 1999; Miller and Rose 2008; Brown, 2015). This distinctiveness centres on the role that a new type of economic thinking plays in neoliberal governing, with implications for the social and political aspects of society. Liberal rationality in general seeks freedom of the market economy and is critical of state intervention. In *neo*liberal rationality, the market, instead of being based on the 'natural' phenomenon of barter and exchange is instead 'recoded' to be based on an artificially created phenomenon of competition. The relationship between the state, society and market is redefined as the market becomes the organising principle for the state and society (Lemke, 2001). Thus, there is an expansion of the economic into all areas of life, including those areas previously regarded as social. Whereas classic liberalism saw a distinction between the economy and society, neoliberalism dissolves these differences, the line between these areas becomes blurred and all is economic (Brown, 2015).

The basis of governing also shifts beyond the state to the neoliberal subject – *homo oeconomicus*. As the social is recoded as economic, this generates ever more opportunities to foster competitive qualities necessary for market freedom, and *homo oeconomicus* has the opportunity to govern all aspects of life, in a way that utilises a rational, cost benefit calculation. This does not mean a reduction in the state, but rather a reconfiguring of the state's role which, under neoliberal rule, comes to focus upon creating the conditions necessary for the market to work. This change of role means that a neoliberal state actively works to expand markets into areas previously thought to be the realm of the social such as

welfare provision (McKinlay and Pezet, 2017). This involves a role for the state in stimulating competitive behaviours using direct means such as state power to marketize public services, as well as newer, indirect means for instilling enterprise, self-responsibility and competitive drive within individual subjects. A key aspect of neoliberal rationality is the production of a subject that can combine both a moral quality of responsibility and rational quality of calculation between costs and benefits (Lemke, 2001). In this way, the neoliberal subject is produced as an individual who 'strategizes for herself' rather than 'strives with others', and this has implications for undermining democracy (Brown, 2015). For Binkley (2009), neoliberalism cannot be opposed as an ideology, instead, serious attention must be paid to the way, as a governmentality, it attempts to transform subjectivities: to produce people as fundamentally self-interested and to close down the 'sense of possibility' for collective action.

Various themes are analysed as characteristics of neoliberal rationality, these include: a reconfigured role for the state in governing; an expansion of markets and economics into all areas of life with an emphasis on competition; a reorientation of the social as part of the economic; an increasing emphasis on the individual as a target for governing, and as a technique for shifting responsibility for risk away from the state and as a site for enterprise; a reliance on techniques of information, data gathering, reporting, calculation in order to govern from a distance; an increased emphasis on psychology and techniques of the self as part of individualisation and as part of governmental power (Gordon, 1991; Dean, 1999; Miller and Rose 2008). Brown (2015) posits that neoliberal rationality is always changing and she adds a number of more recent characteristics of 'late' neoliberal rationality that includes: the financialization of human capital and the appeal to investment; an emphasis on national competitiveness, not just economic growth; austerity and permanent recession; as well as the rise of governance as a vehicle for disseminating neoliberalism.

The rise of neoliberalism as a dominant rationality in advanced liberal governing since the 1970s in part relied upon a problematisation of the failures of social governing (Brady, 2016:10). Part of the dominance of neoliberal rationality can be attributed to the fact that it can draw upon *both* left and right-wing critiques of a paternalistic welfare state. A new 'problem space' for governing emerged, the question of how to produce the government of freedom (Rose et al, 2006) and one solution to this was to recode the social as an economic domain. The main features of a reconfigured social domain under neoliberal rationality include: contractual relations replace bonds of solidarity; the welfare state is replaced by fragmented 'individual spaces of personal responsibility'; there is a shift in responsibility for welfare away from the state devolved to a mixed economy of providers; and governing from a distance includes the use of programmes of marketisation, managerialisation as well as techniques of budget, audit and accountability (Harris, 1999:46; Rose et al, 2006:94). Most

significantly, neoliberal rationality recasts economic growth as the only legitimate social policy; through economic growth, individuals can be responsible for their own welfare (Brown, 2015:64).

Utilising governmentality theory to explain neoliberalism as a dominant rationality helps to achieve a number of things in this study. Firstly, it means recognising that neoliberalism is not the sole rationality to inform governing. Governmentality studies avoid producing analysis of neoliberalism as monolithic, they aim to illustrate neoliberalism as complex, non-uniform, specific to context, often contradictory and coexistent with other rationalities (Rose et al, 2006; Larner, 2000). One of the strengths to such theorising is that it promotes an exploration of the complexity of advanced liberal rule (Rose et al, 2006:99). Both Larner (2000) and Lemke (2001) argue that this understanding of neoliberalism as something more than an ideology or set of political-economic policies, offers great critical potential. Attention can be given instead to neoliberalism's distinctive innovations: its capacity to take different forms in various temporal and geographical locations (Brady, 2016); its potential to combine old and new governing ideas or to combine contradictory rationalities such as left and right political views (Larner, 2000); and its capacity for change (Brown, 2015).

There has been remarkably little analysis of neoliberalism in the Irish youth work literature to date. This study examines the role of neoliberal rationality in governing youth work through analysis of the VFMPR discourse. A governmentality perspective promotes attention to the nuances of neoliberal rationality as it applies to each context, this means considering the specifics of this study as an Irish policy context situated in a welfare domain that is primarily and historically located in the voluntary sector. It also alerts to the need to pay attention to other rationalities, such as the continued existence of social rule based on welfarism and social democracy, as well as neosocial techniques - new hybrids that combine both social and post social emphasis (Rose et al 2006; Kessl 2006; Larner, 2006).

3.4 Responding to Criticisms of Governmental Policy Analysis

A number of reservations are expressed in relation to governmental analysis in social policy. In this section I identify some commonly expressed limitations cited in the literature and I provide a response in relation to how these are addressed in this study.

Both McKee (2009) and Murray Li (2007) argue that governmentality studies tend to focus too much on documentary methods whilst not paying enough attention to 'the messy actualities' of how governing operates on the ground. I take the position that policy itself is an important governing technology and, in this study I point to the reasons why I think the VFMPR policy has significance as a moment when the governing of youth work is

questioned. Following Kiely and Meade (2018), I suggest contemporary Irish youth work policy has not been analysed or critiqued sufficiently and I argue that for these reasons policy itself merits research attention. I acknowledge that other methods and other voices are important in analysing how youth work is governed, and I suggest this as a piece of future research.

McKee (2009) also argues that the reliance on documents, particularly Government policy, leads to a neglect of resistance accounts that gives governmentality the appearance of being successful. Foucault's analysis of power sees resistance as 'a fundamental structural feature of power' (Lynch, 2014:24). Power is not deterministic or totalising, it flows and is produced in social relations so that there are always opportunities for resistance. Power is also seen as tied in with discourse and Foucault refers to 'reverse discourse' and 'counter conduct' as tactics of resistance (Gordon, 1991). Reverse discourse involves using dominant discourses and recasting them in new ways (Feder, 2014:64). Resistance itself can be seen as implicated in governing, as it acts to pull against or counter dominant governing approaches. While this study does not interview youth workers or policy makers, this should not imply that resistance is ignored or absent. I take the view that this study contributes to resisting dominant problem representations of youth work as part of its production and contribution to knowledge. I engage the use of WPR as a 'counter discourse activity' (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:8) that is 'designed to return politics to policy analysis' and that offers itself as 'a replacement discourse for evidence-based policy' (Bacchi, 2009:250).

Another limitation is that some regard poststructural perspectives as frustrating for practitioners because of failures to offer strong recommendations for change (see Blakemore and Warwick Booth, 2013). Yet despite this limitation, governmentality perspectives have attracted significant attention from practitioner fields, especially those in 'low status regions of applied knowledges' where practitioners 'recognized intellectual equipment that would enable them to make sense of the situations in which they found themselves: the ways of thinking and acting that they were obliged to enact and the cramped spaces and conflicting practices that they inhabited' (Rose et al, 2006:94). This study does not offer, indeed rejects, rigid practice prescriptions such as that provided by the 'what works' approach (see Redmond and Dolan, 2014; Brady and Redmond, 2017). This study does however, offer a critical analysis of the work of policy in governing the practice field of youth work and it offers new methods to support Irish youth work policy analysis through its use of the WPR framework.

Finally, poststructural perspectives are criticised for being so open-ended that they can be used to support inequality and individualisation (see Taylor-Gooby, 1994; Blakemore and Warwick-Booth, 2013). Joseph (2012) also points to the failure of many governmentality

studies to acknowledge the normative position inherent in taking up such an approach. However, others suggest it *is* possible to 'avoid the trap of unqualified relativism' characteristic of extreme poststructural positions (see Marston, 2002:308; McKee 2009; Bacchi 2009; Goodwin 2011). In a recent analysis of Irish youth work policy, Kiely and Meade (2018) take a normative stance while using a governmental approach to raise concerns about the 'integrity of youth work as *youth work*'. In Chapter 1, I similarly acknowledged my normative position in critiquing current policy as a means to highlight the closure of what is possible for youth work to be. In other words, I advocate for an open and open-ended youth work. One of the key reasons for engaging a WPR analysis in this study, is because WPR has 'an explicitly normative agenda' and a political vision as it sees that problem representations can be harmful to some and beneficial to others (Bacchi, 2009:44). Bacchi, following Foucault argues that the aim is to search for practices that 'govern with a minimum of domination' (Foucault, 1987:129 in Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:24). One of the greatest strengths of undertaking governmental analysis of policy then is that is has political aims that may have a 'Foucault effect', that is, it may disrupt current governing practices because they become problematised:

> The sense and object of governmental acts do not fall from the sky or emerge ready formed from social practice. They are things which have had to be - and which have been - invented. Foucault observed that there is a parcel of thought in even the crassest and most obtuse parts of social reality, which is why criticism can be a real power for change, depriving some practices of their self-evidence, extending the bounds of the thinkable to permit the invention of others. The 'Foucault effect' may, or such is our hope, contribute to a renewal of these powers of critique (Burchell et al, 1991, Preface).

Here it is important to provide a counterbalance to the claims that power and governing emanate from everywhere: governing is not to be seen as deterministic, final or necessarily successful. Indeed, the constant requirements for reform and for reinventing ways to govern underscores the point that 'government is a congenitally failing operation' so that:

> We do not live in a governed world so much as a world traversed by the 'will to govern', fuelled by the constant registration of 'failure', the discrepancy between ambition and outcomes, and the constant injunction to do better next time (Miller and Rose, 2008:71).

Governing presents many problems, the art of government needs constant work, repetition and reform to address the contradictions and tensions that arise. Governing is contested and contestable, and an important political aim of governmental analysis is to pay attention to these 'problematics of government'.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined poststructuralism and governmentality perspectives as the theoretical backdrop for this study. Drawing guidance from these perspectives, I outlined the

conceptual framework that orients this study and helps to connect various aims of the research. Rationalist and evidence-based approaches to policy are rejected by taking a poststructuralist position. Following this, an alternative view of policy is advocated for this study - policy is analysed for how it constructs ‘problems’. Here, policy is regarded as a governing technology which is produced by power/knowledge relations and is informed by dominant ways of thinking in certain cultures at certain times. As a governing technology, it carries out governing work by guiding conduct through problematisation and discourse and by producing effects ‘in the real’. Conceptualising policy in this way has implications for how policy can be analysed. There is an emphasis on discourse analysis to show how power/knowledge shapes the rationalities that inform policy and policy problematisations and there is also an interest in analysing the governing work of policy to produce: ‘problems’ and associated ‘solutions’; limits and silences; subject positions and subjectivities; as well as material effects.

In summary then, this study, conceptualised as a governmental analysis, is concerned to explore the role of problematisations, rationalities and technologies in attempts to make youth work thinkable and practicable as a ‘governable terrain’. By engaging in this type of policy analysis the aim is to add a critical dimension to the evolutionary accounts of youth work where policy is narrated as progress and to interrupt the increasingly dominant positivist production of youth work policy. In the next chapter, I detail the practical dimensions of the research process and methods for this study.

Chapter 4: Methods

A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over....With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. (Dickens, 1854)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides details of the research work associated with this study. It begins by situating and justifying this study as a poststructural policy analysis that uses policy documents as data. Following that, I explain the specific framework used, namely, 'What's the problem represented to be?'(WPR) method for poststructural policy analysis (Bacchi 1999, 2009, Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016). I outline the elements that make up the WPR framework and I illustrate how the framework is applied in this study by linking the research questions, conceptual framework and WPR framework together. I give details of the data collection and analysis work, explaining how I operationalised WPR throughout the research process: from the selection of policy documents to the eventual identification of key problem representations for analysis. I also reflect on challenges I encountered in applying WPR and the modifications I made to address these. Towards the latter part of the chapter, I begin the WPR analysis itself, by introducing the problem representations that form the basis of the analysis chapters that follow.

4.2 Justifying the Methodological Choices for this Study

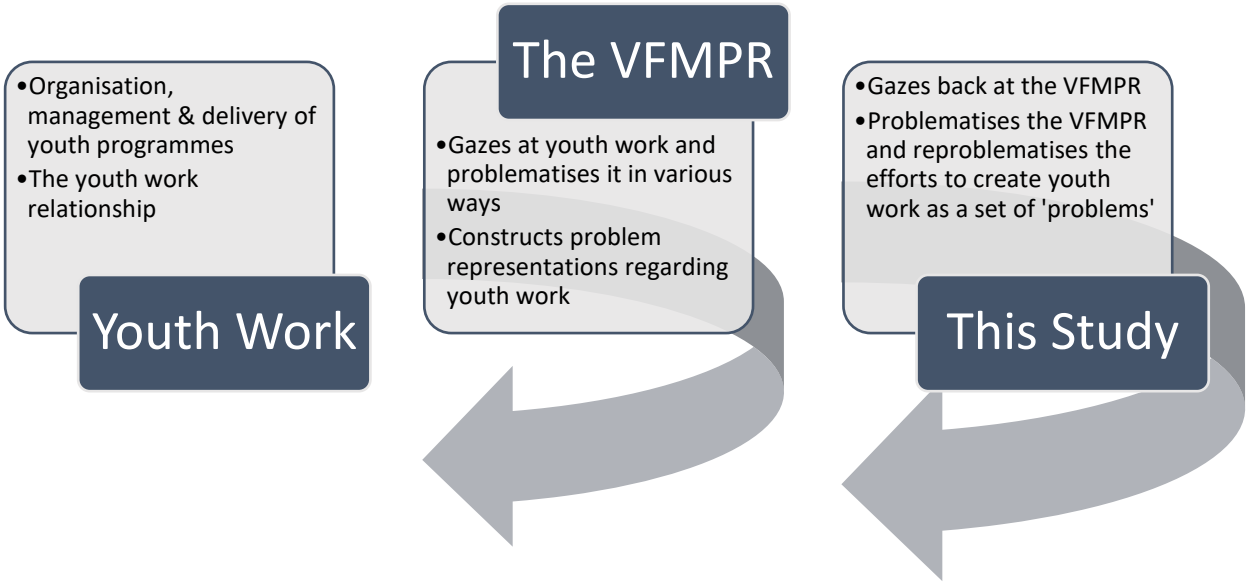
Following Ronnblom's (2012:122) point that 'methodology matters' since researchers shape reality in the methodological choices they make, in this section I give a justification for the methods I have used in this study.

Policy Analysis as the Research Strategy

A key decision in the research design process was to focus the research analysis on policy alone. I had considered the work of Stephen J. Ball who advocates combining both an ethnographic study of practitioners' enactments of policy alongside policy as discourse analysis (see Tamboukou and Ball, 2003 and Ball et al, 2012). I decided to focus solely on a discourse analysis of policy for two reasons. Firstly, at a practical level the D.Soc.Sc. process leaves less time and less write up space than a traditional PhD process. This meant

that an ethnographic approach would be beyond the scope of this study's timeframe. Secondly, and more importantly, the decision to focus solely on analysing policy was a deliberate attempt to return the problematising gaze of policy on youth work back onto that policy itself (see Figure 1) rather than onto practitioner's experiences of policy shifts. I wanted to use the research design to achieve something, to interrupt the work of policy. I did not wish to problematise how youth workers might be enacting policy, though I do accept that meant excluding the acts of resistance likely to be a feature of daily practice. I saw this research process as a first step, and I regard the inclusion of practitioners' voices, experiences and enactments as vitally important and I suggest this as a follow on research task.

Figure 1 Policy Analysis as Gazing Back



After settling upon a policy analysis research design, I then had to decide what type of policy analysis I would undertake. Policy research has a long history that can be traced back to a rationalist, social engineering approach that had emerged in programmes such as the 'War on Poverty' (Fischer et al, 2015:2). Today, there is a wide variety of policy research traditions that might be generally summed up as conventional and critical approaches. Conventional policy analysis can be associated with both 'comprehensive rationalist' concerns as manifested in the evidence-based policy movement and policy science as well as some 'political rationalist' approaches that seek to reform or improve policy making (Shaw, 2010).

A critical approach to policy research emerged in the 1970s rallying against the rationalist approaches associated with post WWII policy efforts[27]. Some of the early proponents of this 'critical' approach to policy analysis can be found in education studies (see Ball, 1993 and Taylor, 1997). Taylor (1997:24) advocated a 'discursive turn' to address the weaknesses in what she felt was a 'conceptually blunt' form of policy work in education at that time. In her 1997 article, *'Critical Policy Analysis: exploring contexts, texts and consequences'*, she highlighted the potential of discourse analysis for critical policy analysis.

The field of discursive oriented, critical policy studies has grown significantly in the intervening years (see Fischer et al, 2015). Fairclough (2013) distinguishes three different types of critical, discursive oriented, policy analysis methods: cultural political economy approaches (e.g. Jessop, 2010); critical discourse analysis approaches (e.g. Fairclough, 2013) and poststructuralist discourse analysis (e.g. Ball, 1993, Bacchi, 2009). I reviewed Fairclough's well-known *Critical Discourse Analysis* method (see Fairclough 2003) and found it to be quite focused on linguistics. I also reviewed Hyatt's *Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame* (see Hyatt 2013) which combines Ball's poststructural emphasis and Fairclough's more linguistic analysis.

However, I opted to engage with Bacchi and Goodwins (2016) poststructural policy analysis (PPA) method of inquiry because I thought it fitted most closely with the broad aims and conceptual framework for this study and because of its approach to mobilising critique. A significant theme in PPA (Bacchi and Goodwin's, 2016) is policy analysis as an opportunity to open up new spaces for questioning, critical thinking and critical analysis. This approach to policy analysis uses the 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) framework to analyse policy documents. The application of a poststructural critique, in the form of WPR[28], to Irish youth policy in this study, is an attempt to address a gap in the current research and literature surrounding Irish youth work policy. This research also aims to open up a space in the critical analysis of youth policy and youth work, thorough the application of PPA.

WPR as the Analytical Framework

The theoretical approach of this study is oriented to poststructural and governmental approaches. Miller and Rose (1990) provided the very first account of how policy might be analysed using a governmentality approach, though their work here provides little instruction on 'how to' undertake such analysis. Kendall and Wickham (1999, 2004) do however provide

[27] There were a variety of reasons for this including: disappointment with the failure of rationalist approaches to achieve effective resolution of social issues; a sense that technical experts were taking decision making over from democratically elected politicians; the emergence of new qualitative research methods.

[28] Identified by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016:9) as 'a tool to facilitate exactly this form of critique'

guidance on how to operationalise Foucauldian and governmentality analysis. Their book *Using Foucault's Methods* provides a framework of five steps that can support such analysis and I used their work to supplement my use of the WPR analytic framework.

There are a number of reasons why I chose WPR as the main analytic framework for this study. Firstly, on a practical level, the application of WPR is well developed and there were many studies to draw on in attempting to operationalise the analysis for this project. The framework is becoming increasingly popular and accepted for policy research. It has been used across many countries, in a wide range of disciplines and Phd studies (see for example Cort, 2011, Pereira, Partridge, 2014,)[29]. In an Irish context, WPR has been used in at least two recent PhD studies (see Swirak, 2013, Loughnane, 2016) and Swirak (2013) is of particular interest here since the study focused on youth crime diversion projects in Ireland.

Secondly, it is the only framework using governmentality perspectives that specifically targets 'the realm of policy' (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:17) as opposed to general discourse or textual analysis and it seen as appropriate to social policy analysis (Lister, 2010). Thirdly, I was drawn to the analytical focus of WPR – that is, a focus on analysing policy as problematisation and on the governing work of policy in constructing problems. The focus on problems and problematisation offers a novel approach to governmental critique in this study. Finally WPR, in comparison with alternative frameworks mentioned earlier, gives space and attention to political intent in the research process. The ability to take a normative stance, to argue in favour of an open and open-ended youth work, whilst using governmental analysis was important in this study. WPR appears to be the only poststructural, analytic framework that allows such a stance.

Policy Documents as the Research Data

The use of documents as data is well established in social research (Prior, 2016; Jacobsson, 2016). In some forms of social research, documents tend to be treated as containing content that can be analysed to tell us something about the nature of reality (Denscombe, 2010). Prior (2016:173) expands the possibilities associated with studying documents beyond documents as 'inert carriers of content' to focus on the '*vita activa* of documentation' and the influence of documents as actants on social arrangements. The use of policy documents as data in poststructural analysis differs from a purely linguistic approach that focuses on what is *in* the text of the policy document. This means that policy documents are not to be viewed

[29] In her latest contribution, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) reflect on the growing widespread use of WPR amongst postgraduate students and policy workers. The book uses many examples from this work

as objective reflections of reality but are analysed for the work they do to constitute reality and to make their objects of analysis amenable to being governed.

In this study, policy documents are used as the sole source of data. It was acknowledged earlier that data from policy makers and practitioners could provide rich analytical perspectives in addition to documents but that the purpose of this research is to deliberately 'gaze back' at policy. However, the decision to focus on one policy document in particular – the VFMPR – also needs to be justified. In WPR policy studies it is common to focus on one policy text as the entry point for the analysis and I give my rationale for selecting the VFMPR as that entry point below. From a governmental perspective I suggest that the VFMPR is both an unusual and significant policy text that merits attention as a 'crisis moment' when the governing of Irish youth work is clearly called into question and problematised. It is unusual since Value for Money Reviews are relatively rare occurrences and youth work has never been subjected to such an intense economic evaluation previously. It is significant in that the VFMPR now acts as the main inspiration for youth work reforms (DCYA, 2018). In sections below, I further explain how I selected and analysed documents as data for this study.

4.3 What's the Problem Represented to be?: WPR as a Tool for Policy Analysis

This study used the WPR framework to translate the conceptual and theoretical aims of this study into a methodological tool for undertaking poststructural and governmental analysis of the VFMPR policy. The WPR framework is organised as a set of seven question prompts, used to guide the policy analysis process. In line with a poststructural aversion to treating research as a set of strict rules, Goodwin (2011:171) warns that WPR should be regarded more like a 'conceptual checklist' than a 'step by step process'. Bacchi (2009) points out that WPR can be treated flexibly and adapted to each study. Following this section, I outline my own application of WPR for this study and my reflections at the end of this chapter give an account of the adaptations I made. Here, I begin with firstly providing an outline of the WPR question prompts.

The WPR Prompts[30]

Question 1 – What's the 'problem' represented to be in the selected policy?

This first prompt for analysis is focused on looking at the selected policy in an overall sense. Starting from the assumption that all policies are problematisations that harbour implied

[30] This section is summarised from Bacchi, 2009, 2011 and Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016.

'problems', the first question aims to clarify what these are and how they are represented. To do this, the analyst must 'work backwards' from the **solutions** advanced in the policy. Since policy can express more than one problem representation, it is important to identify the *dominant* problem representations and to pay attention to how these might relate to each other, for example, are they conflicting or reinforcing. The problem representations identified in this first piece of analysis work then become the focus of the rest of the WPR analysis.

Question 2 – What assumptions underpin this representation of the 'problem'?

The aim of this question is to prompt the analyst to consider the representation of 'problems' in the policy discourse at a conceptual level. This involves analysing policy discourse, where discourse refers to 'socially produced knowledges' and where the analysis involves identifying 'how meaning is created in policy'. Looking at how the problem representation is constructed; the analyst should pay attention to the multiple and 'commonly accepted authoritative knowledges' drawn upon in the representation of 'problems'. It is necessary here to identify and analyse **knowledges** upon which the 'conceptual logics' of problem representation rest - what 'unexamined ways of thinking' make it possible to see the 'problem' in this way? These knowledges play a role in governing. Paying attention to how policy language is used, what kinds of binaries, concepts and categories are used to construct the 'problem' help in carrying out this analysis. It is also important to look for patterns or repeated assumptions made. This means identifying varying and sometimes competing **rationalities** that operate simultaneously in a policy discourse to underpin problem representations.

Question 3 – How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?

This prompt encourages the analyst to consider the 'history of the present' and to trace the history of the problem representations. The aim of this analysis work is to destabilise the current representation of 'problems' by illustrating the contingent and contested nature of the 'problem' over time. This work also challenges the neat narrative of policy evolution that suggests the present construction of policy and policy problems was somehow natural or inevitable. Tracing the history of problem representations reveals the operation of power/knowledge in the various struggles that occurred when decisions were made to do one thing or another and where some knowledges were elevated, and others were suppressed. This analysis work involves undertaking a genealogical analysis which is a detailed historical mapping of problematisations and involves tracing backwards through interacting policy developments. The aim is also to 'challenge boundaries and to question the way policy 'problems' are made to appear discrete and self-evident' (Bacchi, 2009:55) by illustrating that policies are interrelated through social, economic and political developments.

By tracing the connections across different policy domains, it is possible to complicate the seemingly logical and discrete emphasis in a policy document.

Question 4 – (a.)[31] What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? What are the silences? (b.) Can the 'problem' be conceptualised differently?

Question 4 aims to prompt the analyst to 'think otherwise' and to unleash the 'critical potential' of WPR. This analysis work should again help to destabilise current problem representations by paying attention to 'what fails to be problematised', what gets silenced within them. Paying attention to silences involves noting things not said, left out or ignored. Identifying **silences** is only possible by contrasting things said against a much wider set of reading. Undertaking this analysis work means drawing upon resources generated in Question 2 and Question 3, as well as drawing upon a significant range of secondary literature.

Following from identifying the limits of current problem representations, this question also prompts the analyst to begin to think otherwise, to find **alternatives**, other ways of conceptualising the 'problem' than the one currently constructed in the policy. The work of 're-problematising' involves being 'inventive' and the analyst can utilise material from comparative work of historical policy as well as contemporary policy in other countries.

Question 5 – What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?

Here the analyst is prompted to engage in a critical analysis of the implications of problem representations as 'interventions' that 'shape worlds'. It is not enough to just identify and analyse problem representations, the 'normative' stance of WPR also seeks to identify the uneven effects these have for different groups, based on a concern that some groups may benefit while others may be harmed by the way 'problems' are constructed. There are three types of interacting effects 'bridging the symbolic-material divide' that the analyst should pay attention to: discursive, subjectification and lived.

Discursive effects are those that follow from the way policy discourse and their problem representations set limits on what is 'thinkable and sayable'. These effects result from legitimising some ways of seeing the 'problem' whilst closing off others, so paying attention to the effects of silencing is important here. Discursive effects shape both problem representations and the solutions or proposals for change that they give rise to. The earlier work of WPR will have already addressed discursive effects but this acts as the basis for

[31] I divided questions 4 and 6 into two parts because I wanted to reorder their sequence in my own application, see section 4.6 of this chapter for details.

considering the subjectification and lived effects of proposals for change in the policy and for effects ‘in the real’.

Subjectification effects are those that result from problem representations producing and limiting **subject positions**. This means analysing how problem representations work to govern and produce expectations of the type of subjects people ought to be. Since multiple discourses operate at any one time, people may occupy or refuse these subject positions. Of particular interest here are the ‘dividing practices’ that take place in problem representations, how different people are grouped and categorised to make them the targets for various modes of governing, and how some groups may be blamed or made responsible for ‘problems’. **Subjectivities** are the ways people think of themselves, whilst these are ‘always in formation’, they are influenced by problem representations in policy, so that effects on subjectivities are part of how subjects are made governable.

Lived effects are the material impacts of problem representations and refer to the ways people’s lives are impacted financially, emotionally, physically.

Question 6 – (a.) How and where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? (b.) How can it be disrupted or replaced?

The first part of this prompt is linked to Question 3 and focuses on analysing how certain problem representations come to dominate and achieve legitimacy through various practices and processes of **promotion**. Analysis should pay attention to the means by which problem representations become authorised, both through and beyond the state. In her online workshop, Bacchi (2011) provides a list of possibilities to explore in this analytical prompt including: macro analysis of dominant governmentalities, such as neoliberalism as a mechanism for influencing the construction of problem representations in policy; processes of policy transfer across countries; the influence of policy entrepreneurs and policy actors; the role of multinational agencies, such as the IMF in enforcing particular policy ‘solutions’; as well as the role of a plethora of **expertise** found in ‘conceptually friendly sub-disciplines’, such as behavioural psychology.

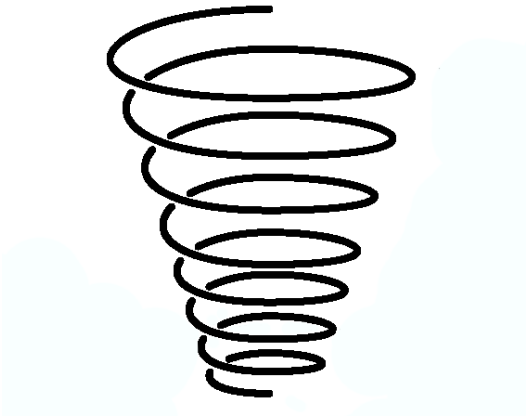
The next part of this question prompt aims to encourage the analyst to explore opportunities for **resistance**, by paying attention to the ‘existence and possibility of contestation’. Possible strategies for analysis could include: analysing contradictions and tensions within and between problem representations; and considering how to use multiple and alternative discourses at play, for example, using a human rights discourse as a resource to re-problematise a current problem representation.

Question 7 – Self Problematisation: Apply this list of questions to your own problem representations.

This prompt encourages the analyst to place their own problematisation of the problem representations under scrutiny. Since the analyst is 'immersed in the conceptual logics of our era' and it is impossible to find a place outside of this, this prompt as a 'technique of the self' encourages reflexivity on the part of the analyst. As the analyst's own work is also caught up in proposals for governing, there is a need to question if these proposals help to reduce 'deleterious effects' of current problem representations.

4.4 Operationalising WPR in this Study: A Spiral Research Process

In social science research, it is common to aim to produce research using systematic methods and to represent the research process as a set of steps, producing an image of research as linear, logical and planned (e.g. Creswell and Creswell, 2018). In a poststructural study, there is an underlying challenge to such modernist representations of knowledge production. Bacchi (2009) challenges the analyst to reflect not just on the claims made by other forms of knowledge production, but also our very own knowledge production processes. My account of the data collection and analysis work that follows is a somewhat neater re-presentation (with hindsight) of the actual process I engaged in, for example, the data collection and data analysis often overlapped rather than being altogether distinct processes.



In an effort to re-present the 'messiness' of the approach I refer to the research process as a spiral of activities that involved: an entry point; moving backwards, forwards and around; moving inwards and outwards.

Figure 2 A Spiral Research Process

An Entry Point: Selecting a Prescriptive Text

Bacchi (2009) suggests that to begin a WPR analysis it is necessary to select one or more 'practical texts' as an entry point. 'Practical texts' includes any material that offers advice, rules or opinions on how things *should* be, 'as a form of proposal and a guide to conduct' (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:18). Policy documents clearly fall into this category of 'proposals' for change and Goodwin (2011:171) suggests that policy documents can refer to:

‘organisational files and records, legislation, judicial decisions, bills, speeches, interview transcripts, media statements, organisational charts, budgets, program contracts, research reports and even statistical data’. Though every policy is open to a WPR analysis, Goodwin (2011) says that *certain* policy texts can be chosen because they ‘provoke pause for question’ or ‘represent a moment of crisis’ or else because they are ‘typical’ examples.

In Chapter One, I gave reasons as to why I selected the VFMPR as the focus for the WPR analysis of youth work policy. In summary these are: the unusual nature of the document and its intense interest in youth work; the very clear coming together of public sector reform concerns and youth work re-form; the lack of attention the document received; the mundane make-up of the document juxtaposed with the significant reforms it continues to inspire. I locate the VFMPR as a prescriptive text that calls the government of youth work into question (Dean, 1999:27) making it a legitimate focus for a WPR analysis.

Moving Backwards, Forwards and Around: Mapping the Territory

The VFMPR represents a ‘useful starting point’ for the WPR analysis but as Bacchi and Goodwin (2016:18) suggest, it is also necessary to become familiar with ‘other texts that cover the same or related topics’. In Foucauldian genealogical analysis, generally part of the research process involves identifying, searching, finding and analysing supplementary but related documents that orbit the primary documents that have been selected. This ‘wider range of documents’ enact ‘the transmission of ideas’ (Shaw, 2010:206). After a preliminary reading of the VFMPR, I set about ‘mapping the territory’ (Goodwin, 2011) around the VFMPR: this involved various moves.

Firstly, it involved an initial tracing **backwards**, meaning I gathered any policy documents referenced within the VFMPR itself (e.g. the DCYA *Statement of Strategy 2011 – 2014*, the *Public Spending Code*, the *VFM Manual Guide*, the *Horwath Review*). Secondly, moving **outwards** from this first layer of cross cutting documents, I gathered sets of documents that were referenced in this secondary set (e.g. the *DCYA Statement of Strategy* references *the Programme for Government*). Thirdly it involved working **around** the VFMPR. This meant trying to identify any further Government policy documents that made reference to the VFMPR or that linked to the contemporary environment of the VFMPR. This meant searching: DCYA media statements; Minister’s speeches; Minister’s responses to parliamentary questions; DCYA presentations at conferences; and other national policy documents. In terms of a timeframe, the VFMPR was published in 2014 so anything it cross references would have been published before then. As for working outwards, I gathered relevant Government documents up to 2014. However, in some cases I did go beyond this

date, for example the VFMPR references the *National Youth Strategy* (DCYA, 2015b) which was to be published the year after. With each new document I collected and read, I identified further documents to locate and trace key themes through. Shaw (2010:206) recommends avoiding setting a fixed list of documents in the early stages of a WPR analysis, the final selection of texts 'unfolds throughout' the research process. There was no sampling plan. Instead, influenced by the requirements of the WPR to conduct a broad process that would involve a genealogical element (tracing backwards and continuing to find interacting policy documents), I treated the data gathering approach as a 'moving target' (Cort, 2011:27). Goodwin (2011:168) argues that 'the policy analyst is embroiled in a process of marking off and marking out territory for analysis…choosing what to analyse is an interpretive act.'

Given my focus on Government policy documents, I sought 'publicly available' material. I cast a wide net at first and collected 200 items that could be defined as policy documents. These were found using various online searches of Government and Oireachtas websites and databases and Google searches for specific documents I had already found a name for. Documents were collected as electronic files and were easily imported into NVivo. Using the 2014 cut-off date, I ended up with a final selection of 82 documents[32] for analysis. This 'mapped territory' involves interacting policy threads that move outwards from the VFMPR as follows:

Table 1 Summary of Mapped Territory for WPR Analysis

Interacting policy threads	**Government Sources**	**Date Range**	**No. of Documents**
Youth Work Policy	DES, OMCYA, DCYA, Oireachtas	1984 - 2015	40
Public Sector Reform	DPER, DCYA,	1994 - 2014	17
Children's Reform	DH, OMC, DCYA	2000 - 2014	5
Developments in Philanthropy	Oireachtas, DPER, DCYA	2008 - 2014	3
Developments in the Voluntary Sector	DCRGA, Oireachtas, DPER,	2000 - 2014	7
Strategic Government Developments	Dept of an Taoiseach, DBEI	1994 - 2014	10

[32] See Appendix 4 for the full details.

Moving Inwards: Coding

Having gathered documents, I then began to **move inwards**, that is, concentrating on coding each of the documents I had gathered. Bacchi (2009) does not refer to the need for any process of coding work to support a WPR analysis. Others who have applied WPR make reference to developing WPR templates, collecting data into these templates as they go (see Kriznik, 2015; Partridge, 2014; Loughnane, 2016). I favoured a more iterative process that involved working between an open-ended and theory driven approach, common in qualitative research (Ryan and Bernard, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2012). In planning to use NVivo, I had to 'translate' the WPR framework into a set of coding cycles. The analysis process began with two phases of coding: open coding and thematic coding before eventually engaging in the WPR analysis proper.

Open coding involves 'cracking open the data' (Punch, 2005:200), breaking the document apart by looking for relevant data and giving these a code. During this process, I took an inductive approach and attempted to avoid imposing any pre-existing assumptions or theoretical frameworks. Inductive coding meant that I worked from the content of the policy document. Using Ryan and Bernard's (2003) techniques for identifying themes, I looked for: key words and phrases used, including linguistic connectors (e.g. 'if', 'then', 'because'); noted recurrence (of a similar phrase) and repetition (of the exact phrase) and forcefulness (the positioning of an idea or phrase with importance in the text); and watched for missing 'data' or silences as Bacchi (2009) describes[33]. After coding on paper, I transferred the coding work into NVivo and I produced lists of non-hierarchical nodes (i.e. code categories) for each document (see Appendix 5).

The next cycle of coding was more structured and thematic. In this phase, I deliberately went looking for themes associated with the analytical framework of the study. For example, using text search, I ran a query against youth work policies from 1984 to 2014 using a set of phrases associated with neoliberal governmentality including: manage; management; performance; evaluate; evaluation; evaluated; effectiveness; efficiency; evidence; outcomes; measure; measures; measurement; metrics; risk; risks; govern; governing; governance; accountability; reform; reforms; reformed; examination. The VFMPR was the policy document with most references and this assured me that my plan to start the WPR analysis with this document was sound (see Table 2).

[33] While Bacchi (2009) makes it clear that WPR is not a linguistic form of discourse analysis she does also note (Bacchi, 2011) that attention to language and indeed to frequency in the use of terms can be helpful starting points for WPR analysis.

Table 2 Use of Neoliberal Terms in Youth Work Documents 1984 - 2014

Document	References
2014 Value for Money & Policy Review	1572
2014 Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures	539
2013 Youth Work: A Systematic Map of the Literature	405
2000 National Children's Strategy	233
1984 Costello Report	165
2003 National Youth Work Development Plan	76
2011 National Quality Standards Framework	19
2001 Youth Work Act	15
1995 White Paper on Education: Chapter 7 Youth Work	12

The main aim of this coding phase was to start to assemble data fragments by sorting them into 'themes' that linked directly to the WPR framework. I use the term 'themes' in a broad sense here to refer to the process of placing codes dealing with common ideas together. In NVivo I made a copy of the open coding results and began to 'code on', this means merging codes and assembling early codes into a hierarchy. I ended up with three types of theme categories. Firstly, using the WPR framework and governmentality literature, I created themes around: problems/solutions; knowledges/rationalities; genealogical links; silences; implications/effects; expertise and technologies; contradictions and alternatives. Secondly, I created themes around inductive codes that had emerged in early coding, for example, references to youth work, youth workers and young people. Thirdly, I created descriptive themes to capture policy developments over time, for example, the theme 'funding cuts and reform' contained all historical references to funding cuts in youth work. Overall, this coding work helped to breakdown the VFMPR and interacting policy documents into themes that would act as a resource for the WPR analysis proper. When engaging both inductive and deductive approaches in coding, Braun and Clarke (2012)[34] suggest that one approach does tend to predominate. In this case I took a more deductive, theory driven approach which is 'often critical and constructionist' and examines 'how the world is put together and the ideas and assumptions that inform the data gathered' (ibid:59).

Moving Outwards: Analysis

After engaging in the above coding processes, I then turned to the WPR framework to undertake a governmental analysis of the VFMPR. In effect, the WPR prompts were lenses

[34] Though I adopted some advice from Braun and Clarke (2012), this was not a full Thematic Analysis as discussed by them.

through which I analysed the policy discourse of the VFMPR. I applied WPR in two rounds of analysis work: the first focused on identifying the dominant problem representations; the second analysed these problem representations in detail.

WPR Round 1: Identifying problem representations in the VFMPR

The emphasis here was on Question 1, identifying the various problem representations by answering the question 'What's the problem of youth work represented to be in the VFMPR?'. Bacchi (2009 3 – 4) suggests that identifying and clarifying problem representations can involve looking at both explicit problematising language of policy as well as 'working backwards' from policy proposals to identify implicit problematisation. In other words, if a policy presents proposals for change or recommendations for action, what are the implied problems these act as solutions to?

To identify the overarching problematisation, I particularly looked at: the introduction to the VFMPR paying attention to stated purpose of the process; the list of recommendations made by the VFMPR paying attention to relationships between them and the overall scope of their re-form ambitions, including where changes were to take place and what actors would be involved. I analysed references to problematising language for example, use of the terms 'problems', 'propose', 'solve', 'should', 'could', 'would'. Arising out of earlier theory driven coding work, I also took into account the frequency, recurrence and forcefulness of various terms such as 'governance', 'performance', 'measurement', 'risk', 'evidence', 'value for money' etc. Policy documents are complex and can mobilise a variety of 'problems' (Bacchi, 2009). Taking the overarching problematisation I then sought to identify the problem representations nested within this. Again, I drew upon the theory driven coding work as a resource for analysis and paid attention to patterns of frequency, recurrence, forcefulness and interlinking between terms such as 'governance', 'performance', 'measurement', 'risk', 'evidence', 'outcomes'. Working with these terms iteratively between context in the document, the coding work and WPR, I drew out three *dominant* problem representations. In summary, I arrived at this analysis in the following way:

Firstly, looking at the policy space within which the problematisation takes place indicates something important. Through the production of a Value for Money and Policy Review process, youth work is automatically constituted as an economic 'problem', as a value for money 'problem'. A significant interest of the VFMPR discourse is to constantly locate 'human services' as an economic, value for money 'problem'.

Secondly, looking at the conclusion of the VFMPR, here it states that it was not possible to make an assessment of whether youth work offers value for money. Youth work is produced

as incalculable and further 'problems' can be thought of in support of this 'problem'. The inability to economically determine youth work's value for money opens up 'problems' of:

a) Risk - particularly in relation the protection and maximisation of state investment in 'at risk' young people.
b) Performance and productivity - in relation to knowing if and which types of youth work are the best option for state investment in 'at risk' young people.
c) Proof and evidence - in relation to making certain that youth work can deliver 'what works' and is 'what's best' for 'at risk' young people so it can yield good returns on investment.

Thirdly, looking at the main recommendations or solutions of the VFMPR: these are significantly focused on addressing what are deemed to be weaknesses on the part of state machinery to adequately govern youth work. Considering ambitions to establish a means by which the value for money of youth work can be established, the main proposals for change focus on developing and increasing governance technologies to regulate and oversee state funding schemes for youth work. These solutions imply that youth work is a 'problem' of governance: that youth work in its current form is ungovernable and that poor administrative rules and systems leave it currently ungoverned[35].

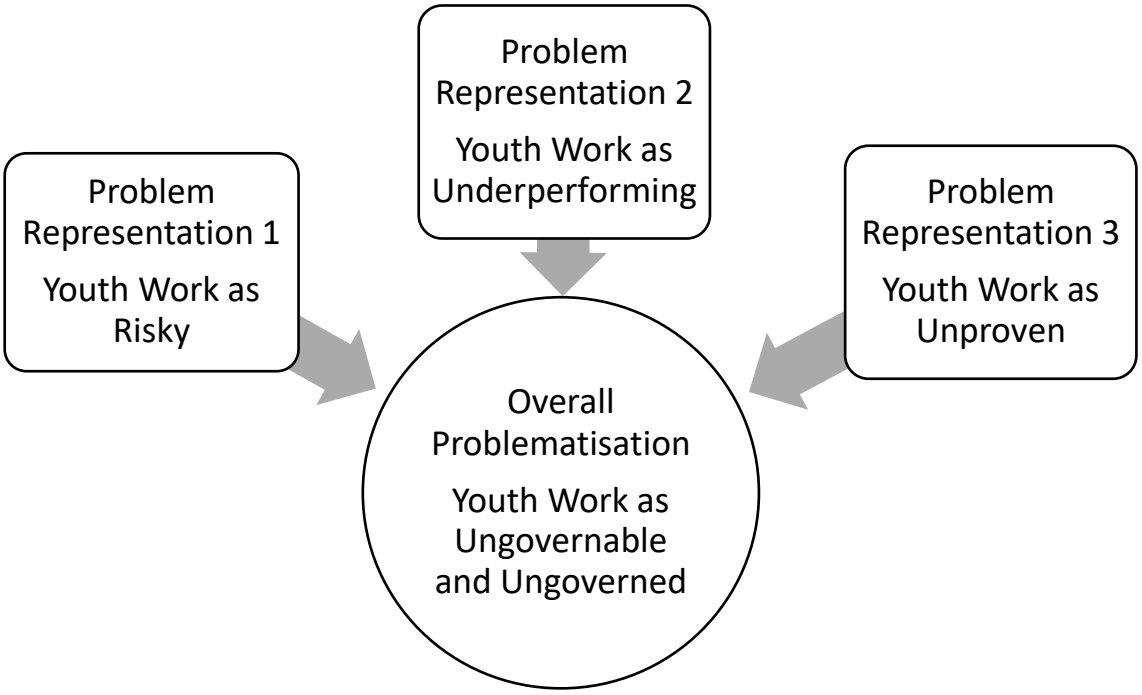


Figure 3 The VFMPR - One Problematisation: Three Problem Representations

[35] This analysis is one reading of problematisations within the VFMPR. For example, if I approached this study with an interest in looking at the 'problem' of young people in the VFMPR, this would surface a different set of problem representations.

WPR Round 2: Analysing the three problem representations

Once I had identified the dominant problem representations I then took each one separately and applied the WPR analysis framework to it. This involved starting with another round of WPR beginning with Question 1 again, for example, asking 'what's the problem of youth work represented to be within the proposal for managing risk', in order to identify further nesting of 'problems'. The full list of WPR prompts was applied across all three problem representations. I used NVivo to manage certain parts of this process, for example, I reorganised the coding work in NVivo under a new folder devoted to each of the three 'problems' – risk, proof and performance.

Producing the WPR analysis for reporting meant a process of writing that brought together: coded material in NVivo from the VFMPR as well as the range of other documents I had coded; secondary literature such as material on public sector reform in Ireland and on developments in philanthropy and children's reform; the governmentality literature; plus, research reflections and memos I had written with ideas for analysis. As I needed to extract relevant quotes or queries I worked between the writing process and the NVivo database.

4.5 Reflections on the Challenges of WPR and Modifications Made

I found some challenges with applying the WPR framework that required thought and modification for this study.

Different questions within the framework posed challenges. Question 3 was particularly challenging since it relies on genealogical analysis that can involve extensive and detailed research; it could, as Bacchi (2011) admits, be the focus of a whole PhD process on its own. I followed Bacchi's suggestion to instead use an 'abbreviated' approach, where I referred to short accounts of present policy developments that help to contextualise the problem representations. The analysis of the 'lived effects' in Question 5 also proved challenging in this study since it is associated with impact on people's lives, but I had not interviewed youth workers for this study. To deal with this, I broadened the focus to look at 'material effects' of the problem representations portrayed in the VFMPR. Material effects could then refer to issues impacting on 'real' changes and re-form for youth work organisations, such as organisational restructuring and changes to funding.

Bacchi (2010b) points out that WPR needs to be applied more than once in a study, since problem representations 'are embedded in multiple layers of meaning'. The labyrinthine nature of WPR analysis, and the tendency towards 'information overload' resulting from attempts to run numerous cycles of WPR analysis through problem representations that nest

like babushka dolls, has been noted by other researchers (see Goodwin, 2011 and Cort, 2011). A common challenge for discourse research is determining where to set boundaries and how to mediate between the need to present a 'fine-grained analysis' in the reporting, whilst working with large amounts of data gathered in the background (Garrity, 2013:17). Faced with word count limits and the volume of analysis arising from numerous WPR cycles of application, I decided to stop the WPR analysis after two rounds, at which point I had identified (Round 1) and analysed three *dominant* problem representations (Round 2).

There is little guidance available on how to report the outcomes of a WPR analysis and I struggled with how to structure the analysis chapters. I decided to report the WPR analysis using these dominant problem representations as organising concepts, each of the three were reported as an individual chapter because I wanted to place the emphasis on youth work, rather than on the WPR framework. Though I separated out the problem representations in order to highlight the 'story' of problematising youth work within the VFMPR discourse[36], I saw them as mutually reinforcing and interrelated. However, my approach to chapter layout meant that if rationalities, knowledges or silences ran across more than one 'problem' this could lead to repetition. I tried to avoid this by referring the reader to connections in other chapters.

Bacchi notes that the questions in WPR do overlap and therefore can produce repetition if applied sequentially. However, she does offer that the framework can be applied and modified in ways that suit the research (Bacchi, 2009: 233). This means it is not always necessary to address all the question prompts or address all the prompts equally. I chose to use the prompts in a flexible manner, with the exception that I did address Question 1 first (since the rest of the WPR analysis depends on what problem representations have been identified at this starting point) and Question 7 last. The other prompts were applied (and reported) by reordering them around my own 7C's list of WPR tasks. Table 3 illustrates how I mapped WPR to this study: it shows the links between the research questions, the 7C's WPR analytical tasks and prompts as well as governmentality concepts. The table helped to guide the analysis work, and the write up of the analysis in Chapters 5 to 7.

[36] I preferred this option rather than using a structure that followed and highlighted the WPR framework itself.

Table 3 Mapping the WPR Framework to this Study

How does the VFMPR policy work to govern and guide the conduct of youth work?			
Research Questions	**7 Cs Analysis Work**	**WPR Prompts**	**Links to governmentality themes**
What are the problem representations of youth work within the VFMPR?	Clarify	Q.1	Problems and proposals; governing through problems, problem representations; policy as problematisation
How are these representations of youth work as problematic constructed? What underlying rationalities give this discourse its legitimacy?	Contextualise & (de)Construct	Q.2, Q.3 and Q6.a	Rationalities; discourse, knowledges; expertise and technologies; conditions of possibility; power/knowledge history of the present; governing beyond the state; policy actors and agencies; policy as discourse; policy as governing technology
What effects do these problem representations have for youth work?	Critique	Q.4a, Q5	Silences; effects/implications knowledge/power; subjectivities; governing from a distance; dividing practices; policy as discourse; policy as re-forming
How can the problem representations of youth work in the VFMPR be challenged?	Challenge	Q.4b and Q6b	Alternatives; political aims; finding alternatives or replacement discourses; resistance; counter/reverse discourse; re-problematising
	Contemplate	Q.7	Self-problematisation
	Conclude		WPR conclusion

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has described the overall methodological approach of this study as a poststructural policy analysis and it has provided an account of the WPR analytical tool used to support this policy analysis. It has provided an account of the research process undertaken and given details of the practical aspects of the research work, as well as reflections on the challenges presented in the application of WPR in this study. Towards the end of the chapter, I began the WPR analysis by introducing, in summary form, the problem representations that form the basis of the following chapters. In the next three chapters, I engage the WPR framework described above, to clarify, deconstruct, critique and challenge the policy discourse of the VFMPR, and the ways it constructs youth work as problematic.

Chapter 5: Youth Work as Risky

Never wonder. By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, settle everything somehow, and never wonder. (Dickens, 1854)

5.1 Introduction

I begin the WPR analysis by exploring how the problematisation of youth work as an economic 'problem' requiring government, partly rests on representing youth work as a problem of risk. I have chosen to open the WPR analysis with an account of the risk problem representation because, I suggest, risk is used within the VFMPR to open up the space of youth work, to problematise it and to provide a lens through which re-form and making youth work more governable appear logical as a solution.

The chapter is structured to follow the WPR tasks as outlined in Table 3. Firstly, I demonstrate the work that the VFMPR policy discourse does to construct youth work as a problem of risk. Secondly, I analyse the rationalities, knowledges and policy context that support this construction. This addresses the first three tasks of WPR – to clarify, contextualise and deconstruct the problem representations in policy. Thirdly, I critically analyse (fourth task) the problem representation of youth work as risky by paying attention to the selective framing of the 'problem', as well as discussing what's at stake for democratic youth work and for young people.

5.2 Clarifying 'Problems' in the VFMPR: Youth Work as a Risky Agent

Using WPR analysis[37] to illustrate the problematising work of the VFMPR policy, in this section, I draw on extracts to demonstrate how the text discursively constructs youth work as a risk 'problem'. To begin, the word 'risk' appears 73 times in the VFMPR text indicating that it is explicitly problematised. But analysing the construction of youth work as risky also means paying attention to implicit problematisation that emerges in questions about youth work in the text. Here I demonstrate how the VFMPR text draws on a subset of five interrelated 'problems' to discursively construct youth work as a risky agent. These five include: economic and investment risk; information asymmetry; uncertainty in elusive practice; excessive local discretion; and deficient governance.

[37] This section addresses Q.1, 2, and 6a in the framework.

Economic and Investment Risk

At a conceptual level, the VFMPR text functions as an economic 'value for money' evaluation. Its fundamental role is to problematise the evaluand as an economic risk. The decision to make targeted youth work programmes the subject of a VFM automatically makes it possible to think about youth work as a potential economic risk. The text reiterates the large amounts[38] of public money being spent on youth programmes each year as a rationale for conducting the VFMPR. To heighten concern, a previous VFM review of the YPFSF programme is recalled so that its conclusion can provide salutary guidance and reinforce the rationale for the current review: '*the most important (and disappointing) finding from the Horwath Review (2009) was that it* ***could not make a judgement*** *on whether the YPFSF represented good value for money' (*p28 emphasis added[39]). Instead of easing doubts however, the uncertainty produced in the conclusion of the VFMPR text works to reinforce economic risk thinking about youth work:

> *This review of …youth programmes has raised a number of issues that have significantly* ***hampered the authors' attempts to determine value for money****, whether of the programmes as a whole or in discriminating relative performance by individual service providers within the programmes. This is obviously an* ***unsatisfactory*** *situation for programmes, which accounted for approximately* ***€128 million public investment*** *for the period under examination* (p128).

A strong discourse of investment (19)[40], including references to building 'portfolios' of programmes and 'yielding returns' intertwines with issues of economic risk within the VFMPR text. DCYA spending on youth programmes is at times referred to as '*budgeted expenditure'* (p16) and at others it becomes *'exchequer investment in these targeted schemes*' (p18). The text seeks better knowledge of youth work including improved mapping of youth work services and baseline data in order to provide a '*rationale for investment',* so that this may also *'permit re-investments and new investments to be better evidenced*' (p131). In the literature review conducted by CES for the VFMPR, a social investment paradigm is clearly invoked when they suggest: '*Funders need to know what can be expected in terms of* ***impact****,* ***outcomes*** *and* ***returns on their social investment****' (*p160).

[38] Cited expenditure of €56.806 million for 2012 and €182.238 million for 2010-2012 (p16).

[39] In presenting the analysis from the VFMPR text I just give page numbers on quotes. Unless otherwise stated, bold emphasis has been added as a device to draw attention to relevant ideas in quoted material.

[40] Numbers in brackets denote the number of times the word is used in the VFMPR text.

'Significant Information Asymmetry'

The VFMPR text problematises various aspects of the voluntary based organisation of youth work services and their relationship with the state. One dominant theme is that there are information problems between 'providers' and DCYA with '*… an acknowledgement by the YAU that **information** management across youth schemes is **problematic**'* (p28). There are multiple references to 'misleading' (6), 'incorrectly' calculated (8) and poor quality (5) information produced by 'providers', for example:

> *However, generally output data gleaned from annual service activity reports proved **unreliable**, requiring significant amounts of 'cleaning' and ultimately sampling to attempt to reconcile often **misleading information*** (p37).

The VFMPR also reports that 'providers' took a local interpretation of the rules for counting programme participants, suggesting the need for greater oversight and auditing by DCYA:

> *Counting **rules** were **interpreted** at local level and varied from year to year. It was also apparent that some **providers were aware** that output figures were not subject to detailed examination at departmental level* (p49).

Paradoxically, it is suggested that poor information from 'providers' '*inadvertently **frustrated attempts'*** to conduct the value for money evaluation, not because there was too little, but because there was *too much* information provided in qualitative form (p101). These various information problems are described as:

> ***'Information asymmetry'** – where contracting **agents** (in this case youth providers) are in receipt of specialist knowledge exclusive to commissioning **principals** (in this case the DCYA) – is considered **a key risk** in Principal/Agent relationships* (Footnote 48, p184).

By problematising the quality and accuracy of information and by drawing on the assessment that there is *'**significant** information asymmetry between service providers and DCYA officials' (p16)*, the VFMPR text produces a sense of mistrust in youth work organisations. This in part supports the problem representation of youth work as a risky agent.

Uncertainty in 'Elusive' Practice

Youth work practice is problematised in the VFMPR text as uncertain: there are references to youth work as 'elusive' (6), the youth work relationship as 'enigmatic' (1) and its outcomes as 'intangible' (1). Youth work is constructed as something difficult to define and measure, an unknown quantity; a form of '*service provision which is often **elusive** to **categorisation**'*

(p104) '*in a field which is **elusive** to **measurement**'* (p133). One of the reasons for using interview methodology as a part of the VFMPR process was to '*assist the VFMPR Team in **unpicking** some of the more **elusive areas of practice**'* (p109) and to *'be illustrative, **shining a light** on practice examples where features of effective practice appeared to be present (*p110), yet *'the relationship' [has] retained an **indefinable, enigmatic quality** in terms of what it is and what it does' (*p109).

The VFMPR process invested '*significant review effort in **direct face-to-face data collection'*** in order to make an *'assessment of 'value' in youth programmes',* focusing on *'the **point of engagement** between the front-line practitioner and the young person'* (p38). By problematising youth work as 'elusive' the VFMPR text constructs youth work as a risky agent and makes it possible for the surveillance mechanisms of site visits and interviews with practitioners and young people to appear logical and understandable.

'Excessive' Local Discretion

The VFMPR text also constructs other aspects of youth work practice as risky. The text problematises '***considerable** (and relatively uncodified) local **discretion** by **practitioners**' (p16)* and youth workers, stating that they '***enjoy** high levels of local discretion'* with a result that practices *'are not uniformly codified*'(p11). This created difficulties for the VFMPR evaluation process: *'the challenges to producing evidence of **effectiveness** in this VFMPR [were] significantly elevated by virtue of poor data, significant local **discretion** and service **variation**'* (p103). Local discretion is a 'problem' because it gives rise to variations across projects and programmes. This means practices cannot be easily measured or compared using a standard baseline.

Additionally, the VFMPR text also draws upon local discretion as an indication of failures of the centre (i.e. the state) to govern youth work from a distance and installs the problem of a 'governance gap' between DCYA and youth work organisations. In this process, youth work is constructed as a risky agent that requires governing, so that Government policy objectives are adhered to, particularly in relation to targeting:

> *One consequence of this **governance gap** was that variant conceptions of the schemes, particularly in relation to **targeting**, clearly operated concurrently. The degree to which the respective line departments effectively influenced these interpretations over the examination period is questionable, **permitting** local providers to exercise **excessive discretion** in the orientation as well as the design of local services*. (p48)

'Deficient Governance'

Governance (170) is a significant concern of the VFMPR and is understood as involving '*risk management*', 'p*erformance monitoring'*, '*financial matters, human resources…and the delivery of services'* (p45). The VFMPR extends its scope of interest beyond service delivery, saying that *'considerations of 'rationale', 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness' that apply to service delivery also apply to* ***the system that governs this delivery'*** (p41). The 'governance system' responsible for 'oversight' of youth work is broken into two: 'operational governance' belongs to youth work organisation management and 'programme performance governance' belongs to DCYA (p129). Both elements of the governance system are problematised when the VFMPR reaches the following assessment:

> *The review found that the governance system overseeing the youth programmes was* ***deficient*** *in terms of its configuration, operations and capacity. Human service programmes such as the youth programmes under examination* ***require considerable oversight*** *…and* ***risk management*** (p129).

Management issues appear 113 times in the VFMPR text, and it legitimises its attention to management regimes within voluntary youth work organisations by suggesting:

> *The quality of* ***staff management*** *provided by employers is* ***critically important****. There is growing evidence of the direct link between positive 'organisational climate' experienced by staff in human service provider organisations and positive outcomes for children and young people. In addition, professional* ***staff time is where the core financial costs of the schemes are invested*** *and* ***where the impact of the policy is intended*** *to be delivered* (p185).

The VFMPR tries to characterise the nature of management in youth work organisations and highlights that '*many of the professional* ***staff are managed*** *either by* ***voluntary local management committees*** *or more often by larger employer organisations that manage multiple services in communities locally, regionally or nationally*' (p44).

It is worth noting that the same year that the VFMPR was conducted, a number of high-profile voluntary sector 'scandals' involving questions about inappropriately high remuneration for charity CEO's were highlighted in the media[41]. It prompted significant political pressure to be brought to bear upon questions of management and accountability in the Irish voluntary sector. The Comptroller and Auditor General's report (2014:71) warned of the danger associated with state grants to non-state service providers, saying '*there can be*

[41] See for example Ryan (2014) 'Rehab Group reveals top executive salaries and twelve earn over €100k'; Quinlan et al (2014) 'CRC scandal Kiely 'won't give back' the charity cash'; Hilliard (2014) 'Majority of charities report drop in donations following scandals'.

an increased risk around the management of and accountability for the public money involved'. The VFMPR points to this challenge when it says: '*DCYA* ***does not have*** *an operational* ***management oversight****; rather, its governance is by way of service agreement*' (Footnote 279, p190).

Two recommendations in the VFMPR suggest a desire to have more knowledge about the management models and capacities of voluntary youth work organisations. These are also indicative of the VFMPRs work to construct youth work as a risky agent, since they infer a concern about the risks posed by the quality of 'operational governance' in voluntary youth work organisations. Firstly, it recommends a separate and additional Focused Policy Assessment of management to be carried out by DPER (p135). Secondly, and in the context of heightened mistrust that problematised voluntary sector management generally, the VFMPR recommends '*a* ***reform*** *and development programme for* ***voluntary organisations****' (p182).*

DCYA's own governance efforts are problematised and judged to have 'potential structural **weaknesses**' (p48) and overall the system is described as made up of '***complicated*** *governance structures'* (p16). The construction of the 'problem' of youth work as a risky agent overseen by a 'deficient' governance system provides the basis for a 'solution' – a re-form of the current DCYA system:

> *Consequently, Recommendation 3 states that a new* ***performance-related governance system*** *should be designed and constructed, giving clear direction in relation to how outputs and outcomes are specified* (p129).

In the re-formed governance system opened up, it becomes possible to achieve that which was predefined in DCYA's first *Statement of Strategy* – to '***reorient and renovate***' youth funding programmes (see DCYA, 2012a) as the VFMPR text suggests:

> *This [new] type of governance system, where the DCYA operates as principal acting on behalf of the taxpayer and commissioning services from youth providers, requires as a minimum that performance can be adequately and fairly monitored* (p129).

As DCYA is recast as the 'principal' seeking to mitigate economic risk by commissioning 'agents' to provide services, the older block grant system is simply not discussed.

5.3 Deconstructing Youth Work as Risky: Rationalities, Policy Context and Expertise

In this section, I deconstruct the problem representation of youth work as a risky agent by identifying the rationalities, expertise and policy context that underpins and helps to legitimise this problem representation. There are two dominant rationalities that the VFMPR

policy discourse draws upon in constructing the risk 'problem': New Public Management (NPM) and social investment.

NPM: Principal/Agent Theory

NPM describes an array of strategies for reforming public sector governance (Brodkin, 2011) but also has impacts for governance in voluntary organisations through relationships with the public sector (Coule, 2015). Brodkin (2011) suggests that 'new' public management is distinguished by a shift from hierarchical (command) management to performance management (steering via incentives). Some of the main features of NPM include: a focus on outputs; the use of performance goals and quantitative measurement; contractual relationships; promotion of market mechanisms for service delivery; blurring of boundaries between public sector, market and voluntary sector as a network of agents are brought into public service delivery; as well as a shift in values away from universalism and equity to efficiency and individualism (Pollitt 2003, cited in Hardiman and MacCarthaigh, 2008). NPM is regarded as an important driver in the current neoliberal restructuring of the Irish welfare state (Dukelow and Murphy, 2016).

Principal/agent (P/A) theory is a cornerstone of NPM and utilises economic expertise to explain human action (Schedler & Proeller, 2010). The key assumptions in P/A are that people and organisations are: rational in their decision-making; fundamentally self-interested; and always seek to maximise their own benefits. Using these assumptions, P/A is based on managing inherent risks in relationships where a principal delegates tasks to an agent, including where: agents seek to maximise their own objectives by deceiving the principal e.g. shirking (moral hazard); there might be better agents available (adverse selection); the principal has less knowledge than the agent given their expertise (information asymmetry) (Lamothe, 2011).

Finding solutions to the risks represented by agents seeking to maximise their own objectives, has become ever more important in the context of neoliberal welfare provision that is increasingly outsourced to networks of non-state agencies (Lamothe 2011, Dean 2012). Solutions can comprise various 'incentives' including market-like mechanisms such as competitive tendering and contracts. In relation to information asymmetry, it involves various accountability, oversight and monitoring strategies – including reporting to the principal, random checking and audit, the gathering of performance metrics and the use of incentives (rewards and sanctions) (Lamothe, 2011, Amagoh 2009).

For voluntary organisations, NPM means that they are increasingly likely to be seen as contractual agents to the state (principal) responsible for the delivery of public services,

through the use of contracts. Incentives such as performance goals (e.g. outcomes) and monitoring arrangements (e.g. reporting on outcomes) form part of the contract, so that the agent is forced to manage its own self-interest and align its goals to that of the principal (Lamothe, 2011). The contract and its related governance arrangements are regarded as key risk management devices.

The attempted construction of youth work as a risky agent in the VFMPR text is significantly underpinned by NPM knowledge. This rationality is evident in attempts to recast the relationship between voluntary youth work organisations and the state as one of P/A, as well as in the focus on management issues in the text. By invoking the P/A distinction, the VFMPR text installs risk thinking because youth work is made to acquire all of the suspicion and assumed deficiencies that are attributed to 'agents' within P/A theory. The VFMPR also represents a technology for managing assumed P/A risks in youth work programmes, given its interest in gathering data about youth work agents (information asymmetry); its assessment of alterative evidence-based providers and methods[42] (adverse selection); and its significant interest in youth work outcomes and performance[43] (moral hazard).

The VFMPR text itself embodies P/A assumptions where the taxpayer as principal is invoked to rationalise the need for value for money reviews, seeking accountability from all agents (both state and non-state). The policy context for this can be traced to the beginnings of Irish NPM thinking, where 'value for money' got its first airing under the SMI. However, recent austerity inspired public-sector reform commitments have sought to harness VFM as a 'core value', for example:

> *Achieving better **value-for-money for the taxpayer** must be further embedded as **a core value** across the entire Public Service. That requires the further development and deployment of **an evaluation perspective** that continues to ask key questions about what is being achieved and how costs can be driven down in all of our categories of public spending (*Department of An Taoiseach, 2008:6*).*

In Power's (2004a:10) view, risk management is now 'centre stage [in] public service delivery and is a model of organisation in its own right'. He provides an analysis of the state as a 'risk manager' and suggests that NPM now extends out to combine risk management with governance into a 'wider management control framework' (ibid:40). Zhivitskaya and Power (2016:91) suggest the 2008 banking crisis heightened risk consciousness by focusing on the failures of governance and risk oversight. Risk management allied with governance and accountability concerns have featured in many public-sector documents since 2008

[42] See Chapter 6
[43] See Chapter 7

including*: Transforming Public Services* (Department of an Taoiseach, 2008); *Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes* (McCarthy Report, 2009a,b); *The Role and Responsibilities of Accounting Officers* (DPER, 2011b); *Risk Management Guidance for Government Departments and Offices* (DPER: 2016a). The 2011 Reform Plan states that through reform *'we will **embed** a strong culture of innovation, change and **managed risk** across the Public Service'* (DPER, 2011a:5). The *Public Spending Code* (DPER, 2013), a core document informing VFM's, devotes a whole section to dealing with 'risk and uncertainty'.

The centrality of risk rationality within public sector reform is reflected in DCYA's own policy commitments to ensuring that appropriate governance arrangements are in place for service provision areas, including youth work. The governance role of DCYA involves risk managing the funding schemes as well as the 'agents' who deliver services on its behalf, saying:

> *While the arrangements for the local management and delivery of these responsibilities vary, there is clear Departmental **governance accountability** to ensure that day-to-day services are fit for purpose and that **risk is adequately managed**. (DCYA, 2012a:17)*

Applying Power's (2004a:53) analysis, risk rationality intertwined with NPM and P/A concerns in the VFMPR can be thought of as illustrating attempts to externalise the risks faced by DCYA's own internal control system. For Dean (1999), this is characteristic of neoliberal efforts to problematise forms of 'centralised risk management' and to shift risk away from the state and disperse it onto individuals and collectives (e.g. the network of voluntary organisations delivering services). While this implies a need for youth work to see itself as risky so that it can take responsibility, this does not equal autonomy. The VFMPR is equally interested in assessing the risks posed by DCYA's own governance system, which it judges to have 'potential structural weakness' that has resulted in a 'governance gap', leaving youth work to have 'excessive discretion' (p48). In the VFMPR text, youth work's construction as a risky agent also draws in part upon the view that it is currently ungoverned because of public sector failures which can be remedied by means of governing from a distance, through NPM reforms and new governance arrangements. In this view, youth work needs to be risk managed.

Social Investment

The social investment (SI) paradigm is an emerging feature of Irish social policy and welfare provision (Dukelow and Considine, 2017). This approach to social policy involves inverting older notions that saw economic growth and taxation as a way to fund social development

and instead sees the potential to activate social policy in the service of the economy. Welfare expenditure can be recast as an investment in economic development. McGimspey (2017a:64) regards social investment as a characteristic of late neoliberal rationality that sees a move away from concerns with market making, towards concerns with following the logic of financial capital, and consequently reconstituting the meaning of 'value'. In this way of thinking, an investment is no longer a straightforward expenditure, an investment is made for the purpose of a return. McGimpsey (2017b) has charted the emergence of a 'financial capital imaginary' or SI paradigm in English youth work, which he suggests represents a move by government away from purchasing services to instead, investing in future oriented outcomes. Analysing the VFMPR reveals that the understanding of investment in targeted youth programmes is not an investment in the provision of youth work services, but an investment for a return on outcomes for 'at risk' young people:

> *…the focus of this examination from both efficiency and effectiveness perspectives relates to the **intended positive change** brought about with and **for a young person** (the policy objective) as a consequence of the **Exchequer investment** in these targeted schemes, as **opposed to** limiting its focus to an analysis of **service output** (p18).*

While investment generally links the present to the future, in the context of youth work, the social investment paradigm takes on further significance. Firstly, social investment rationality offers a means to justify social policy in a neoliberal climate that is averse to welfare spending (Dukelow and Considine, 2017). Targeted youth work programmes can be justified as an investment if there is evidence of future savings, calculated as a result of fewer young people going to prison or claiming social welfare (financial return). It can also be justified as an investment if there is evidence of 'better outcomes' for 'at risk' young people thus producing human capital gains in support of national competitiveness (ibid, 2017). This is supported by a new set of social science expertise for sustaining investment in youth and youth work through ideas and technologies, such as those promoted by the Young Foundation in the UK. This has included reports on 'informing investment in youth work' and the production of 'value' calculations, as well as a set of seven measurable outcomes to act as the basis for such calculation (see Moullin et al, 2011; McNeil et al, 2012). Investment ideals are also promoted and sustained by the psychological knowledges bound up in prevention science (discussed in Chapter 6), which suggest that preventing risk in early childhood or adolescence[44] is cheaper and more effective than intervention (Churchill, 2011; McGimpsey, 2017b).

[44] Adolescence here is often treated as another foundation (like early childhood) for adulthood.

Analysis of the VFMPR reveals similar concerns, informed as it is by an underlying 'economic discourse of risk' which seeks to ensure that young people transition to future adulthood in as cost-effective manner as possible (Kemshall, 2009:157). The VFMPR text engages in a cost-benefit analysis of the current provision of youth work and it attempts to weigh up alternatives (see p121 – 126 and p181), including that of a 'market solution'. Cost-benefit analysis is, as Kemshall (2009) says, a good example of economic risk rationality, as it seeks to weigh up the costs (including costs of non-intervention) versus benefits of youth programmes.

Secondly, SI thinking is significant for youth work because it implies a new relationship between young people and youth work. In this way of thinking, young people represent a way of 'governing the future' (Ryan, 2017) from the present. A 'financial capital imaginary' (McGimspey, 2017a,b) involves imagining young people as investment vehicles: the return rests on their future capacities, on who they will become. It involves imagining youth work as a risk broker, whose primary responsibility is to the investor (not young people), to maximise their investment return. Future outcomes predefined by the investor and imposed on young people, are to become both a risk management device for the investor (to guarantee their return) and a performance metric for the broker (youth work). For de St Croix (2016:27), SI rationality is a feature of neoliberal youth policy where young people are primarily treated as economic subjects within the meta policy of international competitiveness and human capital.

The ultimate policy objective imagined by the VFMPR is not a youth work that offers continuing support to 'at risk' young people or indeed a youth service that challenges the structural causes of risk, rather it is that 'at risk' young people can become their own risk managers. For example, the VFMPR text suggests:

> *…the route for them achieving improvements in their lives invariably related to the acquisition of soft skills and attributes…the ability to stop and reflect (e.g. about current **behaviour**), to take **responsibility** (motivation to change), to problem-solve (**self-governance**) and to execute decisions (agency). The intention is that these types of changes become **hardwired** and support the young person in **negotiating the many risks** and opportunities that they face* (p106).
>
> *The intended ultimate impacts of these programmes are often far more distant– outcomes such as…becoming **a self-governing**, reasonably content and **productive** member of society and a **contributor** to the formal economy* (p86).

Within the investment rationality of the VFMPR, youth work is imagined as a risk broker, whose intermediary role is to take state investment and return a young subject who is a self-

governing risk manager – this is what represents 'value for money'. The VFMPR attempts to govern the conduct of youth work through the construction of the 'problem' of risk, particularly economic risk. The discursive efforts to disperse risk onto individual young people and to assert an image of the self-governing subject, is indicative of attempts to produce youth work as a site of neoliberal governmentality.

5.4 Analysing Silences and Effects: Youth Work as a Responsible Risk Broker

In this section, using WPR analysis[45] I critically analyse some of the silences, limits and contradictions involved in the problem representation of youth work as risky. I also consider some of the governing effects of this 'problem' and the implications this has for democratic youth work.

Producing Risk Through Silence

One of the most paradoxical aspects of the problematisation of risk in the VFMPR is that in order to produce an image of risk, it must both call upon and deny youth work. In effect, it assesses practice in youth work organisations whilst denying the knowledge base of that practice, so that elusive and engimatic qualities can emerge. Youth work practice stripped bare of its philosophy and knowledge base, looks uncertain. For example, the text points out:

> *It is important to note that this VFMPR* ***deals with 'youth programmes'*** *(i.e. the effective and efficient achievement of policy objectives) and* ***not*** *the effectiveness and efficiency of* ***'youth work'****, which is essentially a professional/policy consideration outside the scope of this review* (p3).

But goes on to state that:

> *The programmes under review* ***are delivered*** *by and large* ***by voluntary youth work organisations*** (p24).

In fact, all site visits and observations undertaken by the VFMPR team were in *youth work* organisations. The paradox continues when the VFMPR uses the implied risks of elusiveness to legitimse 'shining a light' on youth work practice through site visits, whilst at the same time *producing ambiguity* by installing an imaginary, generic 'youth professional' figure throughout the VFMPR text. For example, note the absence of the preface 'youth work' in the following:

[45] This section addresses Q.4, 5 and 6 in the framework.

> … *'**the relationship'** or the professional bond that is engineered between the **youth professional** and young person or groups of young people* (p109).

The loudest silence in the VFMPR is the denial of a youth work identity for the practice that is being assessed. Despite the claim that the VFPMR is not about youth work (it is rather about 'youth programmes'), the term youth work is mentioned 72 times in the text. This may seem to contradict my own assertion here that a youth work identity is denied within the VFMPR. However, with the exception of the commissioned literature review written separately by the CES but appended to the document, there is only one place in the VFPMR (see page 73) where the evaluator uses the term 'youth work' in direct reference to the 'youth programmes' under evaluation. The contradiction lies in the multiple abstract[46] uses of the term 'youth work' within the VFMPR. The VFMPR attempts to assess youth work practice, without having to acknowledge that it is *youth work practice*. It attempts to evaluate youth work without reference to its base assumptions, its own aims or principles. For example, in the following extract the youth work relationship is discussed in a way that strips it bare of any theoretical and philosophical location[47]:

> *However, 'the relationship' has retained an indefinable, enigmatic quality in terms of what it is and what it does. Data secured from interviews indicate that professional relationships are key to the process of 'co-producing change' by the professional and the young person. As such, the relationship is defined by what it delivers rather than what it is, i.e. being goal-centred and having 'clear objectives'. Though the relationship needs to be developed naturally and humanely, its value, similar to any more formal programme input, is required to be gauged by whether the young person experiences beneficial outcomes. However, according to many of the young people interviewed, the genuineness of the relationship – 'feeling cared for' and generally feeling that a youth professional was willing to pull out all the stops in pursuit of improving a young person's situation (even if this meant challenging inappropriate behaviour) – appears to have been a significant 'affective' mechanism, predicting change, inferring that the engagement needs to be professional, but also genuine.* (p109).

By installing a nebulous replacement practice, the VFMPR avoids engaging with a variety of knowledges and discourses produced by youth work, some of which present alternative ways of knowing (e.g. Young, 1999) that challenge the positivist and instrumental rationality

[46] E.g. when discussing the purpose of the NQSF or the role of ETB officers or in bibliographic references.
[47] In the literature youth work relationship is a core feature of the youth work process and has received extensive theoretical attention (e.g. Sapin, 2013, Ord 2007, Jeffs and Smith, 2010, Young, 1999).

that informs the VFM evaluation itself, and some of which seek to embrace uncertainty as important elements in reflective practice (see Lorenz, 2009). This dividing practice has as its aim the desire to avoid having to engage with youth work as a professional discourse:

> *A '**programme'** as **opposed to** a **'professional'** focus permits examination of efficiencies and effectiveness in securing objectives **irrespective of the particular philosophical, practice and professional make-up** of any one organisation within the large number and range of providers receiving grant income …(p18).*

This dividing practice also makes it possible to imagine that it is legitimate for financial and economic expertise, in the guise of the VFMPR steering group, to be brought to bear upon the meaning of 'value' in youth work practice and in authorising what can be regarded as a valid application of theory in practice. For example, here the evaluating team provide an assessment of the use of theory in youth work practice:

> *The interviews in site visits indicate a far more eclectic, reflexive and possibly ad hoc adoption of theory. However, it is also clear that alongside more conceptual theoretical references disclosed via semi-structured interviews, more routine application of theory is adopted and directly applied by some providers* (p95).

This represents knowledge/power struggles where youth work as a site of expertise is vulnerable to being overwritten by economic and auditing expertise. As a point of contrast: evaluations of teaching practice in a previous *Value for Money Review of Youth Encounter Projects* (DES, 2008) were carried out by DES School Inspectors, in other words, people with relevant educational expertise and not by the economic evaluators of that VFM.

Producing Self-Interested Agents

The issue of targeting is a core concern for the VFMPR, given that the three funding schemes being assessed are 'targeted' schemes. This means they are funding packages that are to be used locally for working with young people who are categorised as 'at risk'. The assessment of the VFMPR was that targeting was one area where there was a 'governance gap', and it is implied that some youth work agents took local interpretations of who the target groups were:

> *the **treatment of targeting** and disadvantage are **particular points of interest** and possible departure. …in the service provision examples selected they are interpreted as 'may' in the case of Foróige and there is no reference to either 'targeting' or 'disadvantage' in the Youth Work Ireland example. **The inference here** in these examples is that **the scheme has been interpreted locally*** (p48).

Also, it is suggested that some agencies used open access approaches instead of targeting young people according to scheme rules, leading to concerns in the VFMPR that young people 'at risk' might be overlooked:

> *…engagement for many providers was still **biased** toward **self-referral and open access**…such a strategy still **runs the risk** of young people within a community who may need the service most being **overlooked*** (p97).

Here one of the key principles of democratic youth work, the commitment to open access and voluntary participation (Taylor, 2010, Kiely and Meade, 2018), is being problematised. Risk rationality is used to constitute this principle of self-referral/open access as potentially harmful to some young people – those young people who don't come forward to engage in youth work. The VFMPR discourse makes it possible to think that a principle that was once regarded as empowering is now harmful. This also helps to highlight the 'problem' of information asymmetry between youth work and DCYA. When information asymmetry exists, DCYA cannot know if youth work is aligned with policy objectives or whether it is following its own mission, and thus cannot be fully trusted with taxpayer's money.

The conceptual logics behind attempts to produce the 'problem' of risk in the VFMPR relate to economic knowledges about human nature. At the heart of NPM rationality is the idea of 'methodological individualism', a core assumption that human action is based only on individual self-interest (Schedler & Proeller, 2010). But such assumptions are contestable. Economic knowledges, while tending to assume 'man's [sic] natural state is opportunism rather than trust', fail to acknowledge the role of social relations rather than contracts, in promoting the trust necessary for 'economic life'; that is, economic knowledge generally under-socialises human action (Ferlie et al,1996:70). Clarke (2003) too is critical of the 'economics of mistrust', the reification of economic thinking to undermine ideas of public value as well as altruistic, professional or ethical behaviour, by reference to assumptions of 'venal, self-interested and self-seeking motivations' in the actions of politicians, public servants and welfare services. For Sercombe (2015), this indicates the epistemological limitations in NPM rationality: as a way of knowing it cannot explain certain types of human action. The economic assumptions that underpin the 'problem' of youth work as a risky agent are significantly at odds with the ethical assumptions of democratic youth work. Ideas of self-interest 'clash' with those of ethical youth work which sees its relationship with young people as 'other directed' and 'asymmetrical' in favour of young people (Sercombe, 2010, 2015). For Banks (2011) renewing interest in ethics amongst the social professions is one way of critiquing the inadequacies of NPM assumptions about human action. She suggests that:

> This “progressive model” of a situated ethics of social justice would see ethics as essential to justifying and enabling resistance in professional life – whether that resistance be the “quiet challenges” of the youth worker in the youth offending team refusing to close his cases after 12 weeks, or the more noisy challenges that accompany a campaign to save a youth service…(Banks, 2011:19).

Youth work has a long history of commitment to young people, voluntary actions, associational and collective based work, as well as engaging in global development and sustainable development work that cannot be explained or reduced to economic self-interest.

Producing O*nly* Individual Economic Agents

Brown (2015) asserts that neoliberalism as a dominant rationality differs significantly from classic liberal economic thinking of Adam Smith. In classic liberal thought, human action was seen as economic in the market but not elsewhere, thus separating space for social and political relations. Today’s economic subject, shaped as ‘financialised human capital’, is allowed to be *only* a subject of economics in *all* parts of life. Brown’s argument is that this is detrimental to the democratic imaginary because liberty is recast to mean market freedom, rather than political participation and rule by the people. Ultimately, she suggests, democracy is undermined by neoliberalism’s economic assumptions of methodological individualism.

The VFMPR installs a relatively new economic rationale for thinking about the relationship between voluntary organisations and the state in Ireland. In the text the relationship is redrawn as a new contractual arrangement where:

> *In these types of arrangements, the **line department is principal** in the relationship, acting on behalf of the taxpayer, and **intermediary organisations act as agents**, designing, developing and **delivering services*** (p41).

This new relationship silences the previous 20 years of ‘social partnership’ discourse laid down in the *White Paper: A Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity and for Developing the Relationship between the State and the Community and Voluntary sector* (Dept. Social, Community & Family Affairs, 2000), that saw state support for voluntary organisations as vital to democracy and citizen participation:

> *This Government is making it clear by publication of the White Paper that we have moved far beyond the attitude that statutory agencies fund voluntary organisations merely for utilitarian reasons ….An active Community and Voluntary sector contributes to a democratic, pluralist society, provides opportunities for the development of decentralised and participative structures and fosters a climate in*

> *which the quality of life can be enhanced for all* (Dept.of Social, Community & Family Affairs, 2000:4).

Since the P/A binary is associated with delineating clear roles between policy makers and implementers, it also silences the previous policy role accorded to voluntary organisations under social partnership (see Boyle, 2002b) and leaves them delimited as 'service providers' only. Thus, the most prominent identity given to youth work within the VFMPR is a narrow service 'provider' role (95). Its legally defined identity as 'youth work organisations' or 'youth work services' is relatively silenced, appearing only four times. Despite there being over 150 references to education, the legal function of youth work as a form of education is not mentioned at all. This new economic and utilitarian image is at odds with the White Paper's view of the voluntary sector's role:

> *This is a key point. The Government regards statutory support of the Community and Voluntary sector as having an importance to the well-being of our society that goes beyond 'purchase' of services by this or that statutory agency*. (Dept.of Social, Community & Family Affairs, 2000:10)

In the VFMPR, there is no reference to the idea of association that is core to democratic youth work (see IDYW, 2009), nor is there any consideration of young people's involvement in political action. There is no reference to the idea of youth groups as the basis for informal learning amongst and between young people and youth workers (see Hurley and Treacy, 1993). The only group that young people are allowed to occupy in the VFPMR is a 'target' group (43). Instead, individualisation is imagined as preferable and indeed to be accorded greater 'weight' in calculating effort as the following quote illustrates:

> *Units of output misleadingly inferred equal weight to **individual high input** activities (e.g. 1:1 work) and **collective** (or groupbased) **low input** work (e.g. youth cafés and events) (p49).*

The dominant subject positions available in the VFMPR risk discourse are economic ones: young people as targets for investment in human capital; youth work organisations as 'providers' and brokers; DCYA as investor. The governing effects of this type of economic risk rationality is clear in publications like NYCI's (2012) *Assessment of the Economic Value of Youth Work*. An example of the voluntary youth sector's own production of an image of itself as a risk broker; as it produces a neat calculation to inform policy makers that €1 invested in youth work results in €2.22 of future welfare savings[48]. The subjectivising effect is

[48] The report is cross-referenced by the VFMPR and has been well received by politicians, getting numerous mentions in parliamentary debates e.g. Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald acknowledged the report as 'useful' (Dail Debates, 16th April 2013).

that youth work begins to see itself as risky and tries to make itself appear less risky by 'selling' itself as a good investment[49]. These effects are potentially detrimental to the democratic vision of youth work that sees young people 'in the here and now' and 'the importance of association, fostering supportive relationships, encouraging the development of autonomous groups and 'the sharing of a common life' (IDYW, 2009).

Producing Re-Form: Youth Work as a Responsible Risk Broker

Governmentality perspectives see risk as a key characteristic of a neoliberal mode of governing (O'Malley, 2009). Risk has a strategic purpose, helping to represent certain events and conduct 'so they might be made governable in particular ways, with particular techniques and for particular goals' (Dean, 1999:177). Risk rationality helps to bring into view what needs to be governed. As Joseph (2012:165) says: 'Before one can act, one must frame those objects of intervention and risk is a way of ordering reality and rendering it in a calculable form in order to govern it'. In the broadest sense, the VFMPR remakes the division between 'targeted' and 'universal' youth work and this is a reminder that the governing of youth work requires constant attention. Kiely and Meade (2018:2) have noted that 'it is predominantly targeted youth work, which is being reconfigured' in contemporary youth work policy. This analysis of the VFMPR demonstrates this also, the policy is actively working to reassert this artificial dividing practice in efforts to make youth work governable.

The governing effects of the problem representation of youth work as risky become manifest in material changes that are proposed in the re-forms advocated by the VFMPR. By constructing the 'problem' of youth work as one of risk, the proposal for reform of the evaluated programmes becomes necessary and logical. These proposals provide DCYA with an opportunity to redesign governance structures and place boundaries on the discretion 'enjoyed' by youth work:

> ***Reform*** *in this area provides for the* ***construction of*** *a single framework to gauge performance and in parallel* ***bounds discretion*** *in the context of NQSF-related bottom-up local planning.* (p128)

Risk is then both produced and productive in the VFMPR. It is produced using financial, economic and management knowledges to construct various risk 'problems' like information asymmetry. It is productive, in that it helps to construct youth work as a site of dispersed risk. As a characteristic mode of neoliberal governmentality, risk also demands responsibility

[49] At the time of writing, NYCI's 2019 pre-budget submission is called 'Future Proof with Investment in Youth'.

(Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins, 2004). A key shift in neoliberal governing is to encourage self-responsibility and the production of 'prudent subjects' or 'calculating subjects who attempt to avoid risks' (O'Malley, 2009). This responsibilisation strategy seeks that youth work might come to see itself as responsible and self-governing. For example, the VFMPR recommends that improvements in the governance system should '*require service* ***providers to play their part*** *in supporting appropriate oversight and stewardship*' (p51). In its overall conclusions and recommendations, the VFMPR suggests that reforms should be based around a 'deliberative model' of governance, that involves youth work organisations along with others, in a seemingly bottom up type of approach, to 'arrive at workable interpretations' (p132) for both policy and practice. Youth work becomes responsible (and less risky) when it is drawn into its own governance. Youth work must conduct itself prudently by taking part in re-form initiatives. On page 126 of the VFMPR, under the heading '*Assessment of whether programmes warrant the allocation of public funds*', the final conclusion is that:

> *The preferences suggested, therefore, in terms of both performance governance and deliberative problem-solving, are delivered as a challenge rather than a solution. The suggestion is premised on the* ***readiness for change*** *on the* ***part of each element*** *of the existing governance system* ***to participate in*** *an improved accountability structure in line with the demands of a publicly funded programme of this magnitude. If the DCYA accepts these proposals, the alternatives should be kept under review* (p126).

The final statement suggests that governing too carries disciplinary potential: a lightly veiled threat, that alternative options for governing be kept 'under review', is attached to the requirement that there is 'readiness for change' amongst all the stakeholders. Thus, youth work is at risk if it doesn't act responsibly. As Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins (2004) found in relation to rural community development, governing practices that produce binary divisions (risky/responsible) between organisations have real and material effects. Producing organisations as risky or responsible has profound implications for funding decisions.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the VFMPR policy works to deploy risk as a discursive strategy for governing youth work. Using a WPR analysis, the VFMPR can be seen as a policy technology that creates young people and youth work as 'problems' of risk, that require governing and re-form. By deconstructing the VFMPR problematisation of risk, I revealed the underlying conceptual logics and assumptions that help to create the risk

‘problem’. The VFMPR invokes images of risk in ways that assume ‘risk’ is real, instead of a discursive construction. It assumes it is possible to govern such ‘real’ risk and that its own policy contribution as an economic assessment of value for money supports the governing *of* risk. However, using a governmentality lens, the VFMPR policy can be analysed as governing *through* risk. The VFMPR itself produces and disseminates a risk discourse that draws on authorised knowledges like economics, social investment and NPM. The production of risk in the policy discourse of the VFMPR has implications for how youth work is made visible as a risky agent/provider; a possible risk broker; and a self-governing responsible risk broker. But it also constrains or delimits how youth work can be understood; in particular, the open, educational and democratic potential of youth work is silenced. The efforts to re-form the governance arrangements for managing risk associated with targeted youth work programmes is also instructive. Risk and responsibility are dispersed away from the state, through images of the young person as self-governing and youth work organisations as part of ‘deliberative governance’, and this is indicative of neoliberal governmentality. Youth work is made more amenable to governing through being represented as risky. Risk thinking produces space for action and in the context of the VFMPR, it provides space to legitimise efforts to make youth work governable.

Chapter 6: Youth Work as Underperforming

'I cannot disguise from you, Jupe,' said Mr Gradgrind, knitting his brow, 'that the result of your probation there has disappointed me; has greatly disappointed me. You have not acquired…anything like that amount of exact knowledge which I looked for. You are extremely deficient in your facts. Your acquaintance with figures is very limited. You are altogether backward, and below the mark.' (Dickens, 1854)

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the problem representation of youth work as underperforming. The concern here is to interrogate the work of the VFMPR policy to connect voluntary youth work organisations to the concerns of public sector reform, through the rationalities and techniques of performance. The chapter follows a similar structure to the previous one and keeps the WPR analysis tasks as key organising sections. I begin by outlining the various ways the policy discourse of the VFMPR constructs the problem of youth work underperformance and opens up solutions in the form of performance governance. Following the WPR format, I then examine the rationalities that inform the problematisation of underperformance including NPM, market and measurement rationalities as well as the theory of x-inefficiency. I then explore the effects of constructing both the problem of and solutions to youth work as underperforming, by considering the implications these have for open and open-ended youth work.

6.2 Clarifying 'Problems' in the VFMPR: Youth Work as Underperforming

Performance (162) is presented as a significant 'problem' within the VFMPR, bringing together concerns about the effectiveness (94) and efficiency (109) of both youth work and the statutory governance system overseeing it. In this section, I demonstrate how the VFMPR text problematises the performance of youth work. In the main, this involves establishing the possible risk that youth work is underperforming.

'Undetected' Underperformance

Use of the term 'underperformance' appears only once in the VFMPR text; however, as the following quote indicates, an underperforming youth work can be assumed if not actually detected:

*No specific criteria appeared to be in place regarding **underperformance**…The Youth Affairs Unit indicated that in recent years there had been no movement in*

> *terms of new entries nor had there been exits from any of the programmes due to poor performance. Given the scale of investment in these programmes and the breadth of deliverables, it is **plausible to assert** that there had been variable performance, but that any distinctions remained **undetected** (p49).*

Underperformance is also implied in the many references to assumed high 'performers' and poor 'performers' amongst Irish youth work organisations. The VFMPR text is significantly preoccupied with establishing youth work organisations as types of 'performers', based on some form of judgement about their 'effectiveness'. A variety of terms are used to classify organisations as relative 'performers' including: that '*poor performers can be distinguished from satisfactory and exemplary performers'*(p43); the need to be able to '*discern between weaker and stronger performers*' (p129); and that '*inevitably, there were higher and lower performers'* (p111). The current governance system is criticised for its inability to distinguish '*between poor, satisfactory and excellent service provision'* and the lack of '*exit[s] from the programmes as a consequence of **poor performance** perhaps further indicates this **structural incapacity'*** (p6).

The VFMPR text indicates concern about loose output counting rules in operation within the current funding schemes. Underperformance is implied by exaggerated and 'incorrectly calculated' (p153) participant numbers reported to DCYA. Increased participant numbers were reported by many organisations; but the text implies this could be a form of shirking, because figures could be reported by blending attendance at large one-off events with weekly session figures (p131). A shirking and underperforming youth work is also suggested in the text when it refers to the possibility that youth work '*conflates high numbers with effective targeting*' (p98). Underperformance here suggests that youth work is not meeting the needs of young people 'at risk' if it concentrates on the mainstream population. Youth work, incentivised by a loose, non-weighted counting system, may also be 'creaming' (doing easier and cheaper work than expected) when organisations tend towards 'less complex engagements', by doing universal work such as running a youth café rather than doing 1:1 work with higher risk young people (p131, p98), or when it blends universal and 'at risk' young people in groups, since universal young people are assumed to be less costly to work with (p91). Clearly, these types of assumptions about underperformance derive from principal/agent suspicions, summed up by the assessment that '*not only should programmes continue to be targeted, but that **they need to perform better with the more intransigent areas of work***' (p121). In its final conclusions, the VFMPR asserts the continuing relevance of targeted youth work and sees it as deserving of public funding, but that performance improvements are required in terms of increased numbers of targeted youth in local programmes and, by implication, reductions in any universal work.

'Measurability Complexities' and 'Unreliable Data'

The VFMPR also problematises the system failures that have facilitated 'undetected' underperformance in youth work. Problems relating to measurement (161) dominate throughout the VFMPR text. This involves concerns about the measurability of youth work performance; the absence of an overall performance measurement system; and a resulting lack of reliable data for judging performance.

The general 'measurability' challenges and complexities of evaluation in human services cited in 'international literature' is reiterated numerous times (19). The text declares that human services are '*regarded as an area of activity that presents **inherent** evaluation **problems**, particularly in relation to **performance measurement***' (p2). In fact, the VFMPR establishes that these '*'measurability' complexities'* were one reason why youth programmes were selected for VFM evaluation (p2), in order to learn lessons that could be applied to other human services areas within DCYA. Youth programmes are a specific interest, and the text problematises youth work because it is not '*uniformly codified'* (p128). Local discretion and a complexity of diverse youth work practices used across the country are identified as an obstacle to *'**simple performance calculations'*** needed to help distinguish good and poor performers (p87). The implication is that currently youth work lacks measurability because of its diversity:

> *Study in the area of human services evaluation presents **inherent complexities** in relation to performance measurement. These measurement problems become further complicated where programmes, such as those under examination, enjoy high levels **of local discretion** and are not uniformly codified…. a secondary complicating feature**, poor data quality**, presented the review with additional, and in parts **insurmountable, analytical challenges** (p11).*

The overall performance governance system is identified as a key problem by the VFMPR. Firstly, DCYA is seen to have inherited a number of targeted programmes, each with its own stated objectives, making any performance measurement effort complex and costly, having to be adjusted for each of the three programmes (SPY, LTDF, YPFSF). Secondly, DCYA is seen to have failed to set out what the expected outcomes were for each of the programmes, meaning there was no baseline to measure performance against: *'It was clear from the outset that conclusive data on outcomes were not available*' (p90). Some progress is reported to have occurred as DCYA had made greater efforts to shift annual reporting towards outcome reporting and had provided organisations with guidance on how to do this (p99, p111). Thirdly, and relatedly, the VFMPR identifies impact and outcome measurement (69) as a significant challenge given that the use of programme outcomes had been limited,

systems were not in place to capture outcomes data (p102). Outcome measurement itself is also acknowledged as problematic:

> *The essential ingredients to achieving successful outcomes for young people…have been widely regarded as* ***extremely difficult, if not impossible, to quantify****, measure and evaluate, especially in terms of financial cost* (CES Literature Review p160).

Finally, the VFMPR reflects on the absence of relevant and robust measurement tools (14) amongst providers and DCYA.

The VFMPR identifies numerous data problems (15) as a key obstacle to facilitating effective judgements of youth work performance. The lack of outcome measurement and the '***paucity** of outcomes-related data*' (p96) is seen to emerge from governance failures, but the role of youth work 'providers' in submitting '***poor and unreliable data'***(p2) is significantly problematised:

> *However,* ***data consistency*** *(which a governance system involving contractual partners relies on to indicate performance levels) was generally* ***poor*** *over the examination period. Given that judgements regarding performance in these circumstances are so data-reliant,* ***the poor quality and reliability of data submitted*** *rendered those with governance responsibility unable to make judgements regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the programmes* (p6).

The nature of the data submitted by providers to DCYA is problematic because it lacks objectivity and verifiability as it is based on self-reporting:

> *The* ***absence of objective performance data*** *and lack of suitable tools to measure performance means that an improved outcome for a young person is* ***neither easily decipherable*** *nor can it be convincingly* ***attributed to particular service efforts*** (p102).

Youth work data is regarded as voluminous in its qualitative nature, causing problems for YAU, who lacked the resources to review such data. The text refers to the volumes of unstandardized data, and the length of reports and entries as having '***obscured** performance analysis'* and '***frustrated*** *attempts to make important comparisons between service providers'* (p101). The 'unreliable' nature of 'provider data' is a problem for governance:

> *In order for the type of governance arrangements in place for youth programmes to operate effectively, 'reliable' data are required.... Suffice it to say that this VFMPR*

> *review found that despite the* ***significant volume of data held by the DCYA regarding programme activities, it was largely unusable in terms of making efficiency and effectiveness judgements. Critically, this situation precluded respective line departments from making decisions about acceptable and unacceptable performance with respect to individual providers*** (p49) (emphasis in original).

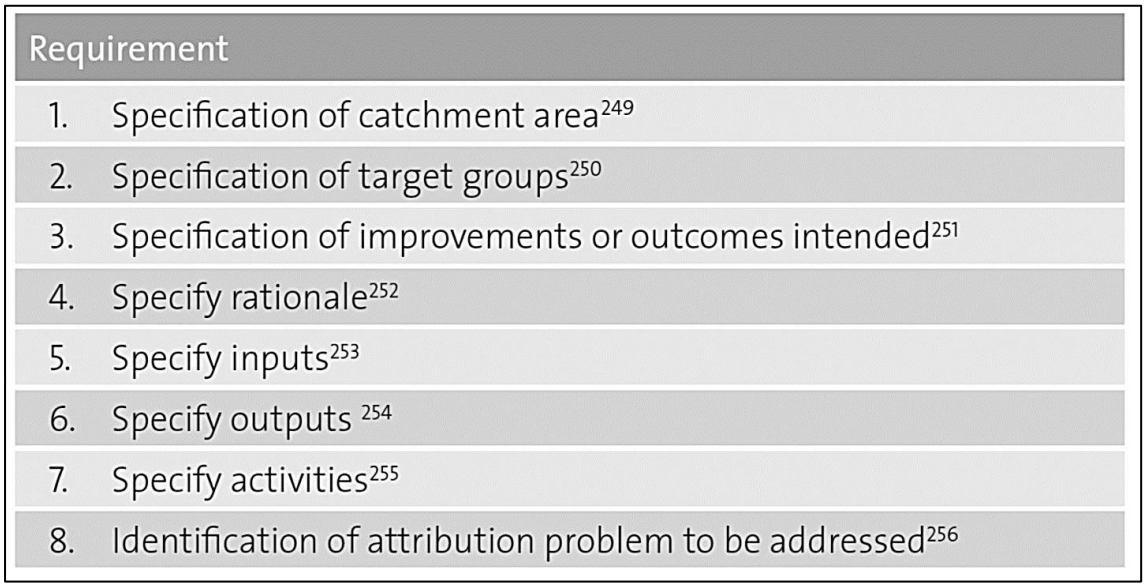
The conclusion is that the measurement of youth work is so challenging that it requires '***considerable oversigh***t' from a variety of governance layers, including local management and DCYA (p129).

Opening Solutions: Making Youth Work Perform

A host of solutions are proposed by the VFMPR in order to make youth work 'perform' through re-form. At least eight of the twelve VFMPR recommendations are geared towards addressing performance issues. These proposed reforms are focused upon remaking youth work through a variety of 'technologies of performance' (Dean, 1999), including: an overall system for monitoring and managing youth work performance that runs from local to national level; the use of proximal outcomes to act as a linchpin in a system for measuring performance; and the creation of market-like mechanisms for imagining improvements to youth work performance.

In overall terms, the VFMPR judges the DCYA system for performance governance of youth work organisations as 'inadequate' (p10) and in need of reform (Recommendation 3). A new 'performance framework' is proposed (see Figure 4) that will align all elements of targeted youth programmes with government policy objectives and that will ensure clear mechanisms for monitoring the performance of youth work in accordance with these.

Figure 4 Recommended Performance Framework for Youth Work (p119)



Requirement
1. Specification of catchment area[249]
2. Specification of target groups[250]
3. Specification of improvements or outcomes intended[251]
4. Specify rationale[252]
5. Specify inputs[253]
6. Specify outputs [254]
7. Specify activities[255]
8. Identification of attribution problem to be addressed[256]

In this figure taken from the VFMPR, youth work is inscribed as a set of eight performance elements, divided into aspects of organisation and practice, to be plotted across knowledge of the local youth population. The specified reforms are intended to discipline youth work via performance evaluation:

> *…reform areas relate to the development of a robust performance evaluation framework to inform the way that the DCYA **offers incentives** for high programme performance and **issues sanctions** for poor programme performance* (p126).

Alongside the development of a new performance system, a range of administrative reforms are suggested. The transfer of data from local sites to the centre is facilitated by mundane forms and reports that are required for monitoring to enable governing from a distance (McGrath, 2015), indicated by the following extract:

> *This policy objective is **mediated** through a range of key actors in line departments, regional bodies and youth organisations. Given that it is not directly involved, the **line department requires accurate data** to indicate whether the **system is delivering** on its expectation*s (p5).

The performance evaluation framework (Figure 4 above) offers eight locations within the youth work programme where data can be produced and translated back to the governing centre, in a format that is quantified, calculable and database friendly. Annual reporting forms are also to be reformed to take account of performance measurement in efforts to

create standard data, to design out complexity and variation, and improve the quantification of data.

Part of the VFMPR's idealised evaluation framework includes the desire for the means to measure the performance of targeted youth programmes nationally and of each youth work site locally. To facilitate the production of performance metrics at a national level, youth work provision is to be linked to demographics and statistical knowledge about the needs of the youth population (Recommendation 5), and local provision is to be geo mapped onto CSO small area statistical units of measurement. Over time, the intention is that the performance of youth work can be tracked in relation to 'improvements' across geographical areas, by making youth work visible through inscription on a map (Recommendation 8) and by comparing local deprivation data available through the Pobal Map system[50]. Presenting these inscriptions of youth work on the Pobal Map system is meant to assist deliberation about the 'fairness' of funding at local level, and act as a mechanism for supporting political decision-making using 'evidence'. It also provides a performance measurement system that allows 'weak performers' to be identified and replaced, since it facilitates the establishment of national norms against which each individual organisation can be compared.

The recommendation to collapse three funding schemes into one (Recommendation 2) also has the appearance of logic since the schemes share much in common but this structural reform also has a performance ideal to offer. By reducing schemes to one[51], the plethora of local youth programmes offering very diverse practices across the country can be reformed and standardised under one mechanism, thereby designing out some of the complexity for 'human service' evaluation. This can facilitate a singular performance gaze, that can discipline and govern hundreds of different projects by using one set of performance indicators to establish who the 'weak' and 'exemplary' 'performers' might be.

Further to this, the VFMPR attempts to create a mechanism for assessing the performance of each individual youth work site. Having found 'weak' and unquantifiable data in relation to measuring the outcomes of youth work (p111), the VFMPR recommends adoption of the seven proximal outcomes that have the power '*to indicate evidence of effective practice*' (p9) and that could act as '*the* ***focus point for service provider performance'*** (Recommendation 11). These outcomes are to act as a universal measurement tool for all targeted youth programmes, again reducing complexity and the problems of diversity and variation in youth work practice. So not only are the seven proximal outcomes envisaged as

[50] Pobal Maps is a geographical information system based on the Hasse Deprivation Index https://maps.pobal.ie/. It is freely available and allows any consumer citizen to look up local services. It can also be used for service planning and monitoring.
[51] Since publication of the VFMPR, a proposed TYFS has been suggested to replace the three schemes.

a technology for governing the conduct of young people (see Chapter 7), they are also to be used to govern the performance of youth work. In providing a rationale for the selection of these seven outcomes, the VFMPR points to the need to address the '*loose policy objectives*' associated with the current DCYA funding schemes and *'the need to operationalise overall programme objectives into evidence-based and measurable outcomes'* (p105).

Thus, the technology of outcomes can act as a virtual linchpin to secure the adherence of an uncertain and risky youth work to the national policy objectives of achieving internal, behavioural change in risky young people. The need to define and measure outcomes is regarded as central to the DCYA performance measurement system because '*judgements about effectiveness and efficiency are two very basic requirements in making any evaluations of value' (*p117). Outcomes offer a means to join the local to the national and join metrics to measurement tools: *'once programme outcomes are made clear (and align to overarching policy objectives), then it is possible to develop metrics and measurement tools (irrespective of how apparently intangible the outcomes are)'* (p126).
By establishing a universal set of outcomes, it is also easier to make youth work imaginable as something that is capable of '*the translation of policy objectives into intended outcomes*' (p162).

Youth workers' performance is regarded as central to state investment in targeted youth work and in the achievement of 'improvements' for 'at risk' young people. Youth workers are constituted as a set of 'costs' and from a value for money perspective:

> ***How frontline staff use their time*** *(effectively or ineffectively, efficiently or inefficiently) in this key interaction with a young person (or young people) is therefore* ***a key 'economic' consideration*** *in terms of how 70% of the schemes' funds were used* (p184).

It is imagined then, that to improve youth worker performance, management capacity within voluntary organisations may need to be enhanced. Alongside this, the specification of 'intended outcomes' for young people are installed as mechanisms for aligning and disciplining youth worker performance (Recommendation 11).

6.3 Deconstructing Youth Work as Underperforming: Rationalities, Policy Context and Expertise

I now turn to an analysis of the rationalities that underpin the problem representation of youth work as underperforming. I pay attention to four dominant rationalities that make it possible to problematise youth work in this way. These include: NPM rationality; market and

competition rationality; the theory of x-inefficiency; and measurement rationality based on management accounting.

NPM: Performance, Outcomes & Public Sector Reform

In the following chapter I deal with ideas about outcomes and evidence under a genealogical strand concerned with the influence of philanthropy and the role of prevention sciences underpinned as they are with a developmental psychology rationality and the view of young people as subjects in development. Outcomes in that context play a part in the attempted discursive remaking of youth work as a scientific intervention (see Chapter 7). In this section, I want to pay attention to a different genealogical strand in relation to the discourse of outcomes in Irish youthwork, that of managerialism and performance. The production of youth work as a 'performer' and as having problems of 'underperformance' in the VFMPR draws heavily from knowledges and assumptions informing NPM. I give an abbreviated account of the recent policy context that emphasises outcomes and performance concerns via public sector reform.

Performance improvement has been a key focus of reform since the first efforts to modernise public sector management under the SMI in 1994 (Corbett, 2016; Hyndman and McGeogh, 2008). Under NPM assumptions, better management can bring about greater performance and productivity in public sector organisations. Though attempts were made, by 2007 performance had not been embedded sufficiently in the Irish public sector (McGeough, 2014). In response to an OECD evaluation, a new public service reform plan was published in 2008 called *Transforming public services: citizen centred - performance focused* (Department of An Taoiseach, 2008).

The plan placed the management of governance and performance as central drivers in proposed reform. Performance was to be 'embedded' in the culture of the public service with mechanisms that allow for its measurement and management, including outcomes. Performance of the individual organisation and person was to be made visible and there was a particular concern with exposing and challenging underperformance:

> We believe that a major cultural change is needed to tackle underperformance, both at the level of the organisation and the individual, to provide value for money to the citizen and taxpayer, and in the interests of equity and morale (Department of An Taoiseach, 2008).

Voluntary organisations were not directly mentioned, but the intention to examine value for money in state grants implies a concern about performance in this sector too.

The earliest efforts to embed performance were focused internally on the public service itself, with no reference to the voluntary sector. A series of research papers produced by

Richard Boyle[52] in 2002 (Boyle, 2002a, b, c) for the Third Sector Research Programme, funded after publication of the *White Paper on Supporting the Voluntary Sector*, did however begin to imagine how NPM performance might extend out to publicly funded voluntary agencies, through 'performance contracting':

> From the perspective of the state, management reforms and in particular the growth of performance contracting are shaping thinking about the nature of the relationship between government agencies and voluntary and community organisations (Boyle 2002a:4).

In his work, Boyle focused on accountability issues in the Irish voluntary sector and pointed to changing rationalities impacting on state and voluntary sector management. These papers opened up a new way to think about the funding relationship between the state and voluntary sector at a time when consensus policy-making under social partnership meant that embedding performance culture even with the public sector itself was challenging (Corbett, 2016). His linking of the role of performance in helping to govern networks of voluntary providers was prescient of the arrangements to be laid out in contemporary reform policies.

The *Public Service Reform Plan 2014 – 2016* (DPER, 2014a), sees a much more detailed set of reforms than those set out in the 2011 plan. Governance and accountability are centre stage and 'better outcomes' are seen as crucial to the reform agenda. This plan states that it represents a new phase of reform, one that is still concerned with expenditure but with a focus on 'better outcomes' that gets assembled with performance, problem solving and evidence:

> A stronger focus on outcomes will mean a change in how the Public Service designs and delivers services, and in how it approaches problem solving. This will apply across all sectors of the Public Service and will involve a significant cultural shift. The focus must be on more evidence based, longer-term and strategic policy-making (ibid:14).

In the policy discourse of this reform plan, a central focus on outcomes gives way to the possibility of reforming service delivery in radically new ways that have implications for voluntary organisations. The proposals to reform public service delivery are to involve exploration of 'alternative models of service delivery', such as 'partnerships with private enterprise, voluntary organisations and community groups', an emphasis on competition and a move away from traditional grants to purchasing outcomes and a new commissioning model:

> Central to this strategy [outcomes] will be the creation of a new framework of competition for public services. The Public Service must begin to transition away from the traditional system

[52] Richard Boyle is a prolific writer on issues of performance and evaluation in the Irish public sector. He contributes to the IPA which is an important educator of public servants. He was also a member of the VFMPR Steering Committee.

> of block grants to organisations providing public services and move instead to a new approach based on releasing funds in return for delivering specified outcomes. (ibid:15)

The reform plan also specifies the importance of performance measurement and management, and the role of impact evaluation for public spending (including grants to voluntary agencies). The issue of increasing accountability across public services was prompted by discussion in the consultation paper *Strengthening Civil Service Accountability and Performance* where it is propose that 'stronger accountability goes hand in hand with improved performance' (DPER, 2014b). In the same year *Circular 13/2014 The Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds* (DPER, 2014c) was issued to improve the rules for regulating the accountability of grants to the voluntary sector. The Comptroller and Auditor General (2014) commends a new relationship between grant funding, outcomes and performance:

> The circular places emphasis on relating payments to (desired) outcomes. In awarding grants, particularly larger scale grants in personal and social services, applicants providing evidence of best outcomes for end-users should be prioritised. Grants should be allocated on a competitive basis where appropriate with an assessment made of projected outcomes, efficiency of proposed approach and evidence of effectiveness and prior performance of each applicant (C&G, 2014:73).

The search for 'alterative models of service delivery' means that the Irish public service needs to find ways to govern the performance of a complex network of 'providers' from a distance, resulting in considerable attention to reforming the funding relationship between the voluntary sector and the state. The performance of voluntary organisations is linked to that of Government and raises issues of risk management and governance:

> Moving services to alternative methods of provision does not alter the fact that Government is accountable to the public for the overall performance of a service. The State retains an essential role in deciding how and to what extent services are funded and in regulating the behaviour of service providers…(DPER, 2014a:16).

This short overview of public sector reform plans reveals how the discourse of performance central to NPM has increased over time and has come to have a sharper focus upon governing publicly funded voluntary organisations through technologies that include outcomes, evidence and contracts. This is particularly evident within the evolution of DCYA.

The setup of the DCYA in 2011 was regarded as a model of modern public-sector reform as it was to involve significant reassembling of child and family services (DPER, 2012a). Since its set up, DCYA policy developments have displayed strong commitments to an 'ambitious programme of reform' (DCYA, 2012b). Commitments to public sector reform objectives including accountability, performance and governance feature in all of the Department's annual reports. Its first *Statement of Strategy* commits to: 'Monitor and evaluate performance through strong governance and accountability systems in respect of the responsibilities of the Department and its agencies' (DCYA, 2012a:26). The Strategy utilises a strong

outcomes discourse noting that one of its core values is to: 'Place outcomes for children and young people in Ireland at the centre of policy and service delivery, informed by evidence' (ibid:12). It also commits to reorient funding streams for youth work to ensure they 'maximise outcomes' and align with government policy objectives (ibid: 25, 30). For a department like DCYA which is heavily reliant on a network of autonomous voluntary agencies for service delivery, there arises a significant need to be able to control the behaviour of these agents, if its own performance is to be deemed successful. Thus the performance of voluntary youth work organisations is tied to the performance of DCYA and outcomes offer a vital technology for achieving this. This policy context constitutes a new subject position for youth work as a 'performer' for public sector reform.

Market and Competition Rationality

Powell (2017) places Ireland within a 'competitive market model' that diverges from both the EU and UK social models by the 'adoption of productivity welfare capitalism' (2017:228). This is characteristic of a competition state where social expenditure is used to support national competitiveness (Cerny, 1997). Kirby and Murphy, (2011) argue that Ireland displays strong competition logic in the contemporary reshaping of Irish social policy. Children and young people are particular targets of the 'human development' assumptions that underpin ideals of a competitive labour force. Imagining youth work as a risk broker (Chapter 5) suggests that within the broader social policy landscape, a remade, neosocial youth work can be seen as having a role in enhancing national competitiveness by supporting 'at risk' young people to face the market and prepare for the labour force. The VFMPR suggests that employment and retention in education and training are some of the 'loose' policy objectives of DCYA targeted youth funding schemes.

Neoliberal restructuring of the Irish welfare state has meant that there is increasing emphasis on marketisation in welfare services (Powell, 2017; Dukelow and Murphy, 2016). Marketisation involves attempts to make public and social services behave more like markets. This can include: creating quasi internal markets; costing services using a per capita formula; introducing targets and writing these into service level agreements; and measuring performance based on these predefined targets (Dean, 2012:117). Underpinning this process is an assumption that introducing market behaviour produces competition that ultimately increases performance and productivity. Competition is created when organisations are forced to tender for contracts using cost price mechanisms, but performance technologies can also be used to produce competition (Dean, 2012). Despite analysis of marketisation in youth work in the UK (e.g. de St Croix, 2016), there has been little reference to this process in Irish youth work analysis.

In the same year as the publication of the VFMPR, the new *Public Service Reform Plan* (DPER, 2014a) committed to the 'creation of a new framework of competition for public services' and the use of commissioning models that align with greater 'competitive process' in funding alternative providers, including voluntary agencies. The VFMPR's concern to compare voluntary youth work provision against alternative delivery options (p121-122) is indicative of an interest in opening up a 'market' in the provision of services to young people and installs an image of competition that extends out beyond the voluntary youth work sector. This is most evident as the text explores the possible purchase of EBPs as an alternative to funding youth work:

> *… a reasonable approach to delivery is for the DCYA to* ***go to the 'programme' market*** *for the best price for proven targeted youth programmes. In this scenario, the DCYA would select a limited range of programmes with proven efficacy, competitively tender for services and design contract incentives and sanctions to yield optimum performance* (p123).

There is also a distinct market rationality that runs through the assumptions about how to improve youth work performance. The idea of using market-like mechanisms to increase the productivity of youth work is implied in various references to 'contractual obligations', 'unit cost' and 'rewards', 'sanctions' as well as 'incentives'. Most significantly, the repeated concern to make youth work comparable (25) indicates a clear rationality of competition.

The Theory of 'X Inefficiency'

Assumptions about inefficiencies in the labour process of youth workers is indicated in the text by concerns about 'unit cost' and 'value for money'. Constructing youth work as underperforming draws upon the claim that during the period of the VFMPR evaluation, overall efficiency in targeted youth programmes improved; as represented by a decrease in median unit cost:

> *Total* ***expenditure*** *on the programmes* ***declined*** *by approximately 16% between 2010 and 2012. Estimates of overall* ***staff salaries*** *and non-pay costs for local services under the programmes both* ***declined****. The estimated total* ***number of staff*** *in local services was relatively* ***unchanged*** *between 2010 and 2012, which suggests that staff salary levels are likely to have declined over the period. Median* ***participant numbers*** *appear to have* ***increased*** *between 2010 and 2012, while funding has decreased, which means that the corresponding* ***median unit cost per individual young person has decreased*** *over the period* (p8).

An underperforming youth work is also implied when the VFMPR finds that during a time of funding cuts, '*An analysis of a sample of services showed that outputs remained constant as funding was reduced*' (p181). While the VFMPR recognises the 31% cut to funding in these schemes from 2008 to 2013, it implies that this had no detrimental effect on participant numbers. It also implies that austerity cuts basically exposed an efficiency underperformance in youth work. Cuts to staff salaries during the period are noted but not problematised. Though the VFMPR notes that staff numbers stayed stable, it ignores the redundancies, short time working contracts, shorter opening hours of projects and summer closures that replaced full time hours (see Harvey, 2012, NYCI, 2011).

Law and Mooney (2007) explore the impact of welfare reform upon welfare workers in the UK. Their analysis points to the way the labour process of welfare workers has been restructured under a neoliberal 'do more with less' approach, leaving workers carrying the burden of 'strenuous welfarism' in efforts to enhance national competitiveness. They attempt to draw out the rationalities that underpin this, including the neoliberal critiques of the welfare state that are facilitated by public choice theory and behavioural economics, summed up by models of 'x-inefficiency' which they suggest lie 'at the heart of restructuring the welfare labour process' (ibid:26).

X-inefficiency is an economic model developed by Leibenstein (1966) to explain problems associated with the efficiency of production in cases where there is no competition. The assumption is that without competition, producers allow inefficiencies to occur because they do not have to drive down costs. The model focuses on cost minimisation rather than concerns about quality or effectiveness, so that X represents 'an unknown magnitude of failure' to increase productivity and reduce costs (ibid). The theory suggests that inefficiency emerges from: an absence of competitive pressure to motivate performance; ineffective management practices capable of improving performance; and too much worker discretion over their own performance (Law and Mooney, 2007).

Both public and voluntary sector organisations thus might be assumed as 'x-inefficient' and are open to the critique of 'producer capture' by public choice advocates (Talbot, 2005:509). Producer capture refers to the assumption that the goals of a welfare organisation will reflect the producers' interests (e.g. youth workers) rather than customers' (e.g. young people) or funders' (e.g. government). In this, welfare professionals are treated with suspicion that they are self-serving, represent sectional interests and create an inefficient production monopoly (Law and Mooney, 2007:32). This assumed professional inefficiency, is in marked distinction to the era of welfarism, when social professions grew and their expert judgment and discretion was regarded as efficient (Dean, 1999, Law and Mooney, 2007:33).

The VFMPR discourse of performance and problematising of youth work as underperforming draws upon these ideas of 'x-inefficiency' and 'producer capture'. The former can be seen in the assumptions that austerity cuts made youth work more efficient – an assumption that refuses to problematise cuts in pay to youth workers and silences the contribution of voluntary work provided by volunteers (NYCI, 2011) as well as labour donated for free by paid youth workers in their own jobs in order to make up for the cuts and avoid closing services to young people[53]. Baines et al's (2012) study of social services in four countries found evidence of this labour donation during austerity. Melaugh (2015) also noted that Irish youth workers were pressed 'to do more with less' at this time. These forms of 'strenuous welfare' (Law and Mooney, 2007), where youth workers carried the burden of 'lean care' (Baines et al, 2014) remain unacknowledged in the VFMPR's evaluation, underwritten as it is by economic assumptions that have no way to account for human behaviour motivated by anything other than price.

The need to break 'producer capture', I suggest is implied in the artificial attempts to divide youth programmes from youth work in the VFMPR's terms of reference. These ideas are also to be found in the determined attempts to silence references to youth work within the text and when referring to a generic 'youth professional'. This thinking helps to explain attempts to what I term as 'looking beyond youth work' in the VFMPR, to open up the market possibilities for targeted work with young people and break the 'producer capture' of professional youth work and youth work sector. The VFMPR's concerns about 'excessive' local discretion and the proposal to investigate the management arrangements in voluntary organisations are further examples of assumptions about x-efficiency, since effective management is regarded as key to replacing professional knowledge. In governing through performance, management and accounting expertise replaces that of professionals such as youth workers, with contracts and performance targets used to 'control and manipulate the autonomy of welfare professionals' (Law and Mooney 2007:37). Shore and Wright (2015:430) point out that the quantification and ranking that occurs through performance audit 're-orders society', it has classificatory effects that 'shifts power from professionals to managers and administrators'. As Kurunmaki and Miller (2006:102) argue, in relation to public sector reform in the UK, breaching professional enclosures is 'fundamental to the task of performance measurement'.

[53] I saw this happen in the youth service I worked with.

Accounting Rationality: Numbers and Counting

A further rationality that underpins the problematisation of performance in youth work is that of accounting. The VFMPR installs accounting thinking about youth work indicated by the many efforts in the text to make youth work calculable through the technologies of numbers, counting and ranking (see de St Croix, 2017). Governmentality scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the role of accounting, calculation and data as governing technologies in society (e.g. Miller, 2001; Miller and Rose, 2008; Power, 2004; Kurunmaki and Miller, 2006; Ozga 2009; Lynch 2015). For Miller (2001), accounting helps to constitute both the economic and social world. Management accounting has been used to shape all forms of organisation as an enterprise and in the process shapes subjectivities too. The production of the calculating subject is a key resource for liberal governing; accounting helps to establish a reciprocity between personal identity and economic calculation (Miller, 2001:381). Through freedom (e.g. being allocated a budget to spend) the individual chooses to act in a way that involves doing their best to spend/save money appropriately. The main feature of accounting is its capacity to translate complex processes into 'a single financial figure' such as a unit cost. The 'elegance' of a single figure is that is makes complex activities visible and comparable in a seemingly objective fashion (ibid).

The problematisation of youth work as too diverse to allow sufficient assessment of economic value produces what Miller (2001:384) refers to as the 'standardising ambition' of unit cost. The VFMPR text introduces the concept of 'unit costing' as a means to assess the economic value of youth work but also as a means to create performance metrics that allow comparisons between providers. The technology of 'unit cost' aims to render youth work performance knowable and comparable. Both young people and youth workers are subjugated/imagined as 'units of cost' that can be added and divided in a mathematical formula. Efficiency measurements can also facilitate competitive comparison between individual youth work sites. Unit cost is produced through establishing a norm across the body of youth work provision (by collecting national data and looking for an average by which individual performance can be compared). Unit cost measurements undertaken by the VFMPR were used not only to compare individual youth work sites but also to establish the cost differences between models operated in various youth work organisations (e.g. Youth Work Ireland, Foróige). Reforms propose continuous collection of such data as well as establishing 'counting rules' that will standardise the way each youth work organisation reports participant data, to '*ensure fair comparability*' about '*how and where service effort is deployed*' (Recommendation 7).

A risk rationality also combines with accounting rationality to play a part in shaping improved efficiency performance metrics:

> *In order to conduct a meaningful **analysis of efficiency** by comparing different services, it is **necessary** to discriminate **outputs by the risk level of participants** and possibly by activity/ intervention type* (p119).

The VFMPR advocates the potential of the Hardiker Model (see Chapter 7) to turn young people into units of data, weighted by risk (level 1 – 4), by which the efficiency of youth work can be costed and calculated. This data can be used to cross reference the cost efficiency of youth work services based on the assumption that young people at level 4 ('high risk') will cost more to work with than those at level 1 ('low risk'). Thus, through dividing and categorising young people through a lens of risk, the efficient production of youth work can be imagined and calculated (Recommendation 6). The production of a 'unit cost' also has the effect of helping to govern the future behaviour of youth workers as 'calculating selves', as it becomes possible to imagine that each individual bears a responsibility for efficiency scores through their performance to a norm (Miller, 2001:385; de St Croix 2017).

Clarke et al (2000:257), analysing the evaluation of performance, pay attention to 'the constructed character of competition' and how competition must be created through various strands of oversight, comparison and the defining of success and failure. They illustrate how numbers are used to produce what success and failure mean and to help rank performance from top to bottom. They argue that rankings will always produce poor performers even if the policy aim is to improve or eliminate poorly performing organisations. In other words, quantification and ranking have the effect of *creating* poor performance. The VFMPR text also makes visible how outcomes might be used as a means to quantify the performance measurement of youth work and how these calculations could be used to rank the performance of different youth work sites. On p100, the VFMPR text produces the first performance table of Irish youth work by using outcomes data from the 13 sample sites visited (see Figure 5).

		No. of entries in Outcomes column of progress report	No. of entries that are outcomes	Percentage of entries that are outcomes (%)	Direction of change 2010-2012	Number of outcomes that are quantified	NQSF Yes/No
Site 1[161]	2010	21	6	29	↑	0	No
	2011	36	13	36		2	
	2012	29[162]	18	62		3	
Site 2	2010	24	4	17	→	0	No
	2011	24	4	17		0	
	2012	*n/a*[163]	*n/a*	*n/a*		*n/a*	
Site 3[164]	2010	6	3	50	↑	3	Yes
	2011	8	4	50		3	
	2012	8	8	100		0	
Site 4[165]	2010	22	1	5	↑	0	No
	2011	68	3	4		0	
	2012	13	5	38		0	
Site 5	2010	16	4	25	↓	0	No
	2011	15	3	20		0	
	2012	5	0	0		0	
Site 6[166]	2010	8	1	12	↑	0	Yes
	2011	7	1	14		1	
	2012	19	9	47		0	
Site 7	2010	*n/a*	*n/a*[167]	*n/a*	↑	0	Yes
	2011	32	13	40		0	
	2012	23	12[168]	52		0	
Site 8	2010	12	0	0	↑	0	Yes
	2011	6	3	50		0	
	2012	6	4	66		0	
Site 9	2010	136	19	14	↑	2	Yes
	2011	214[169]	91[170]	42		0	
	2012	54	40	74		0	
Site 10[171]	2010	11	5	45	↑	0	Yes
	2011	12	6	50		0	
	2012	12	7	58		0	
Site 11[172]	2010	7	5	71	↑	0	Yes
	2011	5	4	80		0	
	2012	5	5	100		0	
Site 12	2010	20	15	75	↓	0	Yes
	2011	8	4	50		0	
	2012	25	0	0		0	
Site 13	2010	86	28	32	→	11	Yes
	2011	156	51	33		29	
	2012	141	45	32		19	

Figure 5 Performance of youth work sites in relation to outcomes, (p100)

This VFMPR table, renders youth work visible as a set of numbers, whose performance can be tracked over time (2010 – 2012) and judged to have improved, stayed the same or dis-improved. The table serves to *compare* 13 youth work sites with each other and produces the image that most organisations are improving whilst two, due to the inevitable creation of poor performance generated by the table itself, are not. Despite quite a range of caveats and limitations declared in the production of the assessments in the table, the VFMPR still sees merit in its publication.

6.4 Analysing Silences and Effects: Youth Work as a Performer

The production of 'problems' of performance in the VFMPR text represents one of the most practical and apparently commonsensical efforts to govern the conduct of youth work. For governmentality scholars, performance is a technique of disciplinary power (Stacey, 2012, Ball, 2012). Techniques of discipline include hierarchical observation, normalising judgement and examination. These techniques characteristically lend themselves to the 'partitioning of individuals' for the purposes of monitoring their conduct and making this measurable and comparable against norms. Punishment is another feature of discipline and includes 'corrective training' that remoulds subjectivities in line with established norms (Stacey, 2012:70). The attempted disciplining of youth work as a performer has a number of possible effects for open and open-ended forms of youth work

Producing Panoptic Performance

As an economic evaluation, the VFMPR functions as 'an examination'[54]. Examinations, in the Foucauldian sense, refer to types of research that help in 'embedding panopticism and facilitating governing' (Duffy, 2017a:83). Evaluations are overtly about establishing systems for ranking and judging: ranking makes individual sites visible and judging establishes conduct that's desired or undesired (ibid:83). Additionally, examinations are future oriented, concerned with 'conditioning what will happen' (ibid:84). Duffy argues that examinations as forms of knowledge production draw upon scientific truth claims, giving them a technical appearance that makes them less likely to be resisted.

Panopticism, which refers to the ability to make the subject's conduct visible but the conduct of power invisible, has been used to analyse ways in which inspection, audit and evaluation act to produce discipline, and also how it constitutes a self-regulating subject (Duffy, 2017a). In relation to performance re-forms proposed in the VFMPR, panoptic surveillance involves a

[54] The VFMPR refers to itself as an examination many times in the text.

range of possibilities. It allows remote central surveillance of local practices through outcomes reporting. One of the reforms proposed by the VFMPR is to introduce a new oversight layer, using ETB Officers to bring central state surveillance closer to local youth work sites, with such local intelligence regarded as a 'premium' (p126). The construction of a hierarchy of 'performers' viewable to all, helps to install competitive performance leveraged from the visibility associated with hierarchical ranking. In an effort to compete, organisations are more likely to self-regulate and ultimately require less actual monitoring from the centre. The disciplinary intent of 'performance governance' in the VFMPR text is clear in references to increasing the 'oversight' of youth work and by making this surveillance more 'overt' (p133), something that has already been attempted in state governance of English youth work (de St Croix, 2010:145). The proposals for reform involve extending out the monitoring capacity of the state to local Youth Officers in each ETB area around the country, *'permitting the DCYA enhanced capability to deal directly with service providers*' (p123).

The VFMPR text pays significant attention to ways in which individual youth work sites can be made visible and comparable in order to create new subject positions as various kinds of performers. This dividing practice produces 'good' and 'bad' performers and it has potential material effects. 'Good' performers will be rewarded and 'bad' performers will be punished: '*ultimately by replacing poorly performing service providers with better performing service providers'* (p49). One of the effects of constructing youth work as underperforming is to produce even more competition between voluntary youth work organisations for scarce resources. Performance measurements are to apply to each individual site, thereby making performance visible between sites within one youth service (internal competition) and between different organisations nationally (external competition). Competition and rivalry in the sector are not new (see Harvey 1994:60; Kearney 2009:3) but performance measurement is likely to normalise this, add an intensive individualising dimension, and undermine collective identity within the sector. Clarke (2008:136) suggests that the 'comparative – competitive model of performance' is constitutive of images of 'winners and losers'. The model produces governing effects by installing desires to compete and 'self' improve because 'success' is a valuable resource in a competitive system of service provision. A 'fractured youth work landscape' is also more 'easily controlled from the centre' (Powell et al, 2012:122) as individual sites are produced as performers and competitors.

Producing *Measurable* Youth Work

By creating the problem of 'undetected' underperformance, the VFMPR policy makes it thinkable that youth work should be measured. It further problematises youth work as currently unmeasurable due to its diversity. The VFMPR seeks to cast a standardising

performance gaze across youth work programmes. Pre-authorised 'proximal outcomes'[55] are the main technology envisaged by the VFMPR for making such calculation possible and practical. But what is lost when youth work becomes measurable?

One ambition of the VFMPR is towards '*improving the performance of the programmes as a whole by clearer expectations of outcomes'* (p122). Proximal outcomes are to act as a mechanism for steering youth work effort:

> *The proposed* ***outcomes are intended to act as policy-led incentives for services*** *to mobilise their resources and effort around, and to delineate where input effort should be applied and relative performance would be measured* (p116).

Outcomes as a form of incentive (built into the contract) are meant to focus the gaze of youth work towards a desired set of actions, in the knowledge that others (competitors) will equally direct their focus to these. Thus, while outcomes are used purportedly as techniques for improving the future, by changing the behaviour of young people so they can have 'brighter futures', Stacey argues instead that outcomes generally function as managerial tools that primarily act to discipline (2012:68) workers and organisations.

Using outcomes to measure youth work has effects that damage the principles of democratic youth work including how young people can be thought about (Taylor, 2013; 2017). It likely means directing the practice gaze to outcomes that emphasise the 'ethical reconstruction' (Rose, 2000) of young people's' internal psychological selves[56]. Older versions of youth work's governing capacity which included ideas of young people as 'critical participants in society' (see the *Costello Report* (National Youth Policy Committee, 1984), *National Youth Work Development Plan* (DES, 2003) are silenced here. Using pre-authorised outcomes also involves closing down the principle that youth work should be an open-ended process negotiated with young people in the here and now (IDYW, 2009). However, the overall effects of making youth work measurable are to produce *measurable youth work*, a type of youth work that is reduced to *only* authorised outcomes. For some, measurable youth work can be regarded as the 'antithesis' of democratic youth work since the effect is to narrow down the possibilities of what youth work can be (see Taylor, 2013, Kiely and Meade, 2018). For others, producing youth work as measurable has the effect of making it vulnerable to marketisation and market appropriation (see de St Croix, 2016:83).

The attempts to make youth work calculable in the VFMPR are emblematic of what de St Croix calls 'numbers *as* policy'. Numbers are, she suggests, a central element of neoliberal

[55] See Appendix 6 for this list, they are the same social and emotional capabilities described by the Young Foundation (McNeil et al, 2012). See Chapter 7 for further discussion.
[56] See Chapter 7 for further discussion.

governmentality and in youth work, this is played out in all kinds of efforts to audit and measure practice (2017:2). Numbers and accounting rationality can have the effect of distorting youth work practice when it becomes oriented to 'getting paid for numbers' via outcomes linked to state funding (ibid). Whilst accountability is important in youth work, the shift away from qualitative evaluation to instead quantification as a means for establishing youth work's value becomes highly problematic in that it not only ignores key aspects of democratic youth work as an informal process, but it shifts managerial and practice attention away from these values in favour of things that can be counted (de St Croix, 2017). Principles and ethical commitments must be suppressed in order to produce number-based accounts of youth work's performance.

Producing Performativity

Reshaping youth work as something that is measurable can have perverse effects too. Power (2004b:774) argues that 'against this Benthamite dream…the extension of the quantifying spirit to the social and organizational world is at best ambivalent and at worst dysfunctional'. Performance measurement can, he suggests, 'undermine the very activity being measured, making social agents focus on measures themselves as targets to be managed and 'gamed'' (ibid).

In attempting to produce measurable youth work, there are a number of significant tensions in the VFMPR text between recognising the inherent complexities of 'human service' measurement, but still needing to find ways to measure it. There are contradictory efforts to both codify youth work and still retain some local flexibility. These are emblematic of modernist evaluation struggles for 'small certainties' in a highly complex and uncertain context (Fawcett and Featherstone, 1998). The so called 'enigmatic' relationship between the young person and the youth professional provokes a particular difficulty for VFMPR assessment and for performance monitoring. The VFMPR regards the 'relationship' as central to the behavioural change process in young people (and therefore the policy objective). Whilst it is recognised that this 'relationship' pivots on affective dimensions (that the young person feels cared for) and genuineness (p99), it is also recognised that these things cannot easily be explained or measured in the VFMPR's own discursive terms. As Mackie et al (2013) point out, the disciplining of undisciplined social professionals like youth work, previously characterised by informality and charisma, is a key target of NPM rationalism. Yet, as they say the contradiction inherent in this rationalism is that it has 'no register' for what is at the core of practice, 'the transformative quality of the relationship between practitioner and constituent' (ibid:407).

The challenge remains that welfare production depends on the 'unknown and unknowable' elements of '*X*-inefficiency' (Law and Mooney, 2007:44). Youth work performance is simply not fully knowable or measurable and the insistence on performance measurement can have perverse effects that 'risks counterproductively eroding professionals' commitment to perform their recognised welfare function as embodied 'sentimental' or 'emotional' or 'intellectual labour' (ibid:33). The 'moral economy of effort' put in by committed and dedicated workers (ibid) can be undermined by the suspicion of underperformance that is implicitly suggested through the introduction of performance measurement in the first place. Perversely, commitment can be undermined by measurements that fail to acknowledge the value of the work as seen through the eyes of the principled, autonomy seeking professional (Mackie et al, 2013).

Performance ideas are 'performative', that is, performance 'enacts or brings about what it names', particularly impacting on identity (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:29). Ball (2003) analyses increasing performativity culture in UK education and the impact this has for teacher's identities and 'souls':

> Performativity, it is argued, is a new mode of state regulation which makes it possible to govern in an 'advanced liberal' way. It requires individual practitioners to organize themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations. To set aside personal beliefs and commitments and live an existence of calculation. The new performative worker is a promiscuous self, an enterprising self, with a passion for excellence. For some, this is an opportunity to make a success of themselves, for others it portends inner conflicts, inauthenticity and resistance (Ball, 2003:215).

In effect, the subject governed through calculation becomes calculating and shifts their efforts towards the things that are counted (targets) at the expense of the things that are not so easily measured. The effects of performance measurement as managerial data has the likely unintended effect of reducing innovation, since the risk of failure means workers are likely to stick to scripted requirements (Taylor, 2013).

Duffy (2017a: 83) draws attention to the subtle invisibility of this mode of governing. The reshaping of individual subjectivity occurs not by using highly visible authoritarian rules, but instead attempts to cultivate norms and desires to be taken up by the subject. For example, in the VFMPR text youth work organisations are 'invited to rethink themselves' (Shore and Wright, 2015:430), to plot themselves along a continuum: '*For now, individual organisations and providers will be able* ***to position themselves*** *more accurately on the ineffective–effective continuum'* (p111).

Tania de St Croix (2017) writing in England explains how quantitative monitoring associated with impact evaluation performance establishes a culture of performativity in youth work. Her

interviews with youth workers explored how their identities were shaped through engaging with quantified performance reporting formats and monitoring outcomes:

> Performativity works effectively as a technology of governmentality because monitoring outcomes is satisfying as well as unsettling, pleasurable as well as frustrating, easy as well as challenging…the monitoring of young people's outcomes becomes an entrepreneurial project of self-improvement. (de St Croix, 2017:14)

Performativity involves a subtle governmental power where youth workers appear to freely engage with the mechanisms of measurement and competition, but it also involves disciplinary power by way of the threat of loss of funding or a job (ibid).

Thus, there are important subjectification effects related to the production of youth work as under/performing. In attempts to govern through performance, youth work organisations and youth workers may set aside values and internalise the regulatory ideals of outcomes and unit costs so that they can 'succeed' and 'improve'. This can have implications for how youth work might be practiced. As de St Croix (2017:17) points out, performative systems favour certain kinds of practitioners and young people – those who are willing to seek improvement and 'willing to be worked on'. She argues that the 'impactful youth organisation relies on self-improving youth workers and self-improving young people – ideal entrepreneurial, neoliberal subjects' (ibid). In these accounts, individual youth workers also become responsibilised or 'held to account' (ibid:15) for the success or failure of reaching outcomes with young people while the ongoing damage of poverty and inequality on their lives is ignored.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the problem representation: youth work as underperforming. In it, I have demonstrated how the policy discourse of the VFMPR creates the 'problem' of youth work performance and how this opens up new ways to govern and re-form the conduct of youth work. An analysis of this problem representation reveals further neoliberal economic rationalities that underpin the policy discourse of the VFMPR. I illustrated the public sector policy context that gives rise to performance thinking in youth work via the VFMPR. I indicated the market and competition rationality that underpins performance thinking in the VFMPR. This particularly underscores the dominance of a neoliberal rationality in performance, since one of its key reform characteristics is to reshape individual and institutional conduct so that it becomes more competitive and efficient (Dean, 1999). The assumptions of x-inefficiency were also discussed, and I argued that the VFMPR's problematising of performance also draws upon concerns about 'producer capture'. This theory may help to explain the curious silencing of direct references to youth work throughout the text. The effects of this problem representation are to construct new subject positions for youth work as various types of performer/competitor, dependent on the

normalising judgements of external accounting expertise for expressions of what might make youth work valuable or successful. Ultimately performance is performative and has the capacity to discipline youth work. Youth work organisations and youth workers, disciplined by a performance gaze, act to succeed within the bounds of predetermined outcomes and unit costings. Without critical attention, this is unlikely to be the open-ended, creative, improvisatory art at the heart of a democratic youth work.

Chapter 7: Youth Work as Unproven

You are to be in all things regulated and governed,' said the gentleman, 'by fact. We hope to have, before long, a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact, and of nothing but fact. You must discard the word Fancy altogether. You have nothing to do with it. You are not to have, in any object of use or ornament, what would be a contradiction in fact… You must use,' said the gentleman, 'for all these purposes, combinations and modifications (in primary colours) of mathematical figures which are susceptible of proof and demonstration. This is the new discovery. This is fact. (Dickens, 1854)

7.1 Introduction

In this final analysis chapter, I examine the third VFMPR problem representation; that youth work is unproven. The focus of this chapter is to consider the power/knowledge struggles that lie at the heart of contemporary attempts to govern the conduct of youth work. The chapter follows a similar structure to the other analysis chapters and uses the WPR analytical tasks of clarifying, deconstructing and critiquing problem representations as an organising device. I begin with clarifying how the discourse of the VFMPR constructs the 'problem' of youth work as unproven and I use extracts from the text to demonstrate this. Following on, I examine the policy context as well as the scientific and psychology rationalities that make it possible to construct this way of thinking about youth work at the present time. To critique this problem representation, I analyse its productive effects, including attempts to remake youth work as a scientific intervention and I address what this might mean for democratic youth work. The chapter points to the role of scientific knowledges and technologies in attempting to make youth work governable.

7.2 Clarifying 'Problems' in the VFMPR: Youth Work as Unproven

I open the WPR analysis of youth work as unproven by identifying the way in which the VFMPR discourse constructs 'problems' of knowledge. I demonstrate how the problematising efforts of the text can be found in explicit references to 'problems' such as proof of impact and can be found implicitly in the proposed solutions for making youth work knowable. The VFMPR constructs youth work as unproven by reference to a variety of

related problems. It relies on two nested[57] 'problems': that youth work fails to provide proof of its impact on young people; and that youth work lacks a clear knowledge base.

'Insurmountable Challenges': Proof of Impact

The rules for conducting VFMs (CEEU, 2007, DPER, 2013) include that evaluated programmes must be assessed for their impact. In the VFMPR this meant that for youth programmes: '***Proof of impact*** *requires that* ***programme beneficiaries*** *should* ***show*** *demonstrably and significantly* ***better outcomes*** *than young people who have not been* ***engaged'*** (p34). Proof of impact also involves establishing causality (18), determining the nature of '***cause and effect***' (p87) between youth work practice and young people's conduct. The VFMPR text indicates considerable frustration that *'****impact analysis*** *elements of the PLM presented* ***insurmountable challenges****'* (p34). Having evaluated the targeted youth programmes and youth work practice therein, the VFMPR argues that it: '***cannot****, by and large,* ***provide proof of impact'*** (p86) and that determining an '*improved outcome for a young person* ***is neither*** *easily* ***decipherable nor*** *can it be convincingly* ***attributed*** *to particular* ***service efforts'*** (p102).

To bolster its own findings, the VFMPR draws on a quasi-systematic literature review of youth work conducted by the EPPI Centre[58] for DCYA, which said: *'Although we are able to* ***describe*** *the different types of* ***youth work activities*** *and the range of outcomes measured…it was* ***not possible*** *to ascertain causality'* (DCYA, 2013:43 quoted in the VFMPR p183, Footnote 32). In Appendix 4 of the VFMPR, the CES literature review also reiterates the difficulty in trying to '***conclusively prove*** *the* ***causal links*** *between interventions and success in terms of achieving outcomes'* (p162). Added to this, the VFMPR text problematises claims being made about the impact of youth work for young people, for example:

> ***Profound impacts are sometimes advanced*** *in terms of the efficacy of community interventions for youth. For example, one respondent to the VFMPR Survey for the present review claimed that children in the area not going to prison over a 5-year period was the consequence of a youth intervention…. **However, caution is advised** (p*86).

[57] Bacchi (2009) uses this concept to illustrate that policy problematisations draw upon and produce sets of problems, some of which 'nest' together, drawing different rationalities together in support of a dominant 'problem'.

[58] The EPPI-Centre located in the Social Science Research Unit of the University College London, specialises in conducting systematic reviews.

> *…the **majority of tools** advanced by survey respondents do **not** appear to be **capable** of providing robust **impact judgements**…which to some degree **questions the volume** of impact measurement **claims**…* (p102).

The text works to establish that youth work remains unproven in the VFMPR itself and across a number of recent studies commissioned by Government departments. But it also works to establish that as a 'human service' it is also unprovable, that youth work belongs in a policy area with '*significant difficulties in attributing impact' (p123)*; where '*proof of impact **is extremely difficult** to substantiate…and reliable **outcome metrics** are significantly **limited**' (p*35); and where '***proving cause and effect** in terms of **social programmes** is **always problematic**'* (p103).

'Only Presence of Theory': The 'Imperfect Evidence Base' for Youth Work

Given the assessment that the evaluated youth programmes could not provide proof of impact, the VFMPR adopts '*programme design' 'as a secondary, but important indicator of effectiveness'* (p86). Assessing programme design involved three areas:

> (*a) **programme focus** – ensuring that effort devoted to the delivery of local programmes aligns with national policy intentions; (b) **evaluation design** – gauging the degree to which programmes can deliver outcomes-related data; and (c) **interventions** – the degree to which the type of engagements utilised with young people fit with an emerging, but imperfect evidence base'* (p86) (emphasis in original).

Here the VFMPR crosses the boundary from what it claims is an evaluation of youth funding programmes into an evaluation of youth work. Under the broad banner of assessing 'programme design', it becomes possible to examine how 'programmes' are designed and put together at a local level (evaluation design). By using an obscure reference to 'interventions', it is also possible to assess youth work practice without naming it as such.

Under programme design evaluation, the assessment of 'theoretical underpinnings' (p10) in youth programmes becomes a proxy indicator of 'programme efficacy' (p10). What and how knowledge is used to inform youth work practice becomes an intense interest of the VFMPR examination. The knowledge base, or as it is termed in the text the 'evidence base' (23) that lies behind practice is problematised, as is the use of that evidence in practice work with young people. The VFMPR points to various efforts to improve this knowledge base:

> *One example of such **progress** is **Foróige' Best Practice Unit**, which has been involved in a significant number of research-related outputs. This example is merely*

*intended to illustrate **increased** activity across the sector in Ireland in terms of **knowledge building activity*** (Footnote 31, p183).

These efforts are seen as crucial developments by the VFMPR because of the current '***imperfect evidence base**' in terms of youth **programmes** more generally and in terms of **interventions** designed to bring about **behaviour change** in particular'* (p27). However, despite an overall view that the knowledge base relating to youth programmes is improving, the VFMPR significantly problematises the application of this knowledge at practice level, saying it found '***only 'presence of**' theory as opposed to widespread and **deep** application of **theory to practice** across programmes'*(p95) and that '*interviews in site visits indicate a far more **eclectic**, **reflexive** and possibly **ad hoc** adoption of theory'* (p95). The text recognises that its findings are contestable due to the small sample size (13 site visits) and concedes that '*more routine application of theory is adopted and directly applied by some providers*' (p95). In addition to questioning the theoretical base of youth work practice, there is a suggestion that youth work may not know its own impact: *'In at least two site visits, the respective youth professionals were **unaware** of the profound positive impact that their efforts had made with young respondents'* (p125).

This enables the VFMPR to call into question programme effectiveness because local practice needs to be able to '*demonstrat[e] the **design discipline** of substantiating the evidence base for a particular intervention or approach in the context of an **imperfect 'what works' evidence base'*** (p96). Thus while the improvements in the knowledge base are noted, it is problematic too because there still remains a contested field of uncertain, emergent, 'imperfect evidence' that must be translated by practitioners. The text points to some examples of organisations who '*had developed clear theoretical underpinnings for their work and transferred this into **expectations** regarding **individual staff practice'*** (p96). It again points to the work of Foróige[59] as a good example of '*routine application of theory*' through the use of '***manuals of practice** for its staff which are devoted to targeted interventions, incorporating cognitive behavioural approaches and utilising motivational techniques'* (p96).

[59] Foróige is a youth work organisation that has adopted a strong commitment to evidence based programmes (EBPs), including the use of EBPs from other jurisdictions such as Big Brother, Big Sister Programme and a programme of research work to develop its own Irish based EBPs.

Knowledge Solutions

In relation to establishing proof of impact the text suggests that Randomised Control Trials (RCTs)[60] are the 'pinnacle' instrument for achieving '***conclusive evidence*** *regarding impact'* (p122). The text considers '*that RCT, experimental methods and 'proven' programmes offer a degree of* ***certainty****'* and recognises that they are *'undoubtedly* ***easier to monitor*** *from the centre'* (p123) but that such '*elaborate evaluation machinery'* also '***has its limitations'*** (p86). This rules out the solution of the state purchasing and rolling out EBPs in targeted youth programmes, unless they have been demonstrated to work in the Irish context (p123). Instead, the VFMPR recommends that since '***knowledge*** *in the area of effective programmes is growing, but still* ***limited****'* it requires '*a more cautious* ***'deliberative'*** *(as opposed to purchaser/ provider) approach to* ***governance****'* that will aim '*to yield better value from* ***reforming existing arrangements****'* (p124). The problem of limited knowledge and an 'imperfect evidence base' provides space to produce knowledge solutions in the form of two main technologies: Theory of Change (ToC) and proximal outcomes for use in a '***reformed*** *scheme*' (p180).

The VFMPR recommends the adoption of '*a Theory of Change/Logic Model type approach'*[61] [62](p9) for DCYA funded youth programmes:

> *Recommendation 10* ***-*** *The DCYA should construct a* ***coherent logic model*** *for targeted youth programmes, identifying the* ***theory of change****, specifying data collection points and giving clear direction in terms of methods of* ***measurement*** (p180).

Despite the fact that this approach '*possibly fall[s] short of a developing international Gold Standard of evidence'* it offers *'a coherent* ***evidence informed*** *practical approach'* and helps to *'determine whether* ***resources*** *are being used effectively'*(p9). Without certain knowledge, in the form of an RCT, that youth work can be '*guaranteed to secure the requisite improvements',* a ToC approach is regarded as *'critical' (p89)* and as a *'suitable proxy'(p96).* Youth work and all of its 'transactions' (14) can be inscribed as a series or sequence of

[60] RCTs are described in the text as experimental research design, based on random allocation of individuals to either a treatment or control group to determine if an intervention works and how well it works compared to other interventions (effect size) (p122). Interventions that are 'proven' using an RCT acquire the status of an EBP.

[61] Theory of Change and the Programme Logic Model (PLM) are closely related tools. Though they are not the same thing the VFMPR appears to use the terms interchangeably. ToC is a big picture strategy that includes complex assumptions for change; PLM focuses on smaller aspects of an overall change process and is usually presented in a simple, linear fashion (Clarke & Anderson, 2004).

[62] PLM is also the evaluation framework for VFMs (CEEU, 2007) and was the main methodology used in the conduct of the VFMPR.

activities (from inputs to outcomes), thus making youth work visible and knowable as a 'programme' that can have all of its elements laid bare for judgement and comparison:

> *In basic terms, an **overt theory of change** encourages **transparency** in terms of presenting the assumptions under which **resources** are being deployed by service providers. Theoretical propositions can also be **scrutinised, challenged and compared** in relation to other available (and possibly more effective) theoretical approaches* (p89).

The ToC approach also implies that youth work needs to demonstrate the theoretical assumptions underpinning its work with young people, by '*substantiating the evidence base for a particular intervention or approach*' (p96); in other words, by drawing upon knowledge from proven methods and programmes. ToC and PLM draw upon the assumption that it is possible to construct the 'logic' of work with young people, depicting it as a sequence and aiming to outline a causal pathway from intention (assumed as the policy objective) to eventual outcome or change in the young person's behaviour (Taplin et al, 2013). It is interesting to note that 'theory' is assumed to be a neutral form of knowledge and that it is possible to compare one theoretical 'proposition' with another to determine which might offer a more cost-effective means to work with young people. Yet theory is produced from many different ontological and epistemological perspectives (Howell, 2013). Indeed the CES, a key knowledge broker for both the DCYA and the VFMPR process, produced a text called *In Theory: Ideas in Action in Youth Work* (CES, 2014) that explains how youth work theory is contested and can draw from different ideological positions.

ToC is put forward as a solution to the problem of an unknown and unknowing youth work. It can be used instead of 'elaborate' RCT machinery, to establish the effectiveness of youth programmes. It can introduce 'design discipline', meaning local programmes and practices will need to be transparent in their intentions, clearly showing the relationship between practices and what the intended change is in young people. It will also provide a programme logic that then illustrates the relationship between resources (inputs) and what is achieved i.e. what is changed in young people (outcomes). It represents then both a knowledge *and* managerial solution, allowing practice to be represented as a series of inputs, outputs and outcomes, and can be costed and compared with others using this same plotted approach.

The second knowledge solution advocated in the VFMPR is the use of proximal outcomes. Outcomes are component parts of a ToC/PLM, they represent '*the effects of the outputs on targeted beneficiaries*' (p32) and in human service programmes '*may relate to cognitive changes (e.g. behaviours and attitudes), skills or circumstantial improvements (e.g. getting a job) that can be directly attributable to programme effort*' (p34). Outcomes are suggested as

a suitable proxy for 'proof of impact' since '*proximal **outcomes** are significantly **more amenable** to specification and measurement than impact'* (p34) and they '*can be linked to overall impact using robust evidence-based theories of change*' (p36).

As part of the VFMPR process a set of seven proximal outcomes[63] were produced by the CES who were tasked with '*identifying the types of proximal outcomes which could 'contribute' effectively to improved outcomes for targeted youth'* (p37) and were '*relevant to DCYA policy objectives'* (p163). Key terms agreed with DCYA for the production of the supporting literature review included '*youth, interventions, programmes, activities, outcomes, and measurement*' (CES Review, Appendix 4, p159). 'Youth work' is not included in review criteria. The CES assessed what it termed '*an emerging evidence base*' to select the outcomes '*relevant to youth intervention programmes'*. The evidence base consulted by CES consisted of: the Horwath Review of YPFSF (DCRGA, 2009)[64]; the report *Youth Work: A Systematic Map of the Research Literature* (DCYA, 2013b); the Young Foundation Study (McNeil et al 2012) and a total of 26[65] other references that were a mix of evaluation studies, theoretical perspectives and reviews of measurement tools. The process for selection of this 'evidence base' was not outlined, the standard of 'evidence' was not clarified and the selection of the seven proximal outcomes from this evidence base was not explained.

As a knowledge solution offered in response to the problem representation that youth work is unproven, these set of seven outcomes were used in the VFMPR process to help conduct the evaluation of youth work practice in 13 sites. Further to this, the outcomes appear to offer a way to address the problem of how a practitioner might select evidence for practice from an 'imperfect evidence base'. The use of CES as knowledge experts takes the place of practitioner decision-making, and their pre-selected outcomes are to be inserted into the VFMPR proposed 'reformed scheme':

> ***Recommendation 11*** *The DCYA should adopt the seven outcome mechanisms identified in the literature review as a preliminary package of proximal outcomes for deliberation and which could form the focus point for service provider performance (p180).*

[63] See Appendix 6 for the full details.
[64] The VFMPR references the Horwath Review 39 times and suggests it was a Value for Money Review of the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF). All searches for this Review on various Government Department websites returned no results. I requested a copy of the Horwath Review from DCYA but was told it could not be located, so I was unable to verify the methods it used. Within the context of this VFMPR it suggests a reliance on quite an obscure source of 'evidence'.
[65] Only 4 of which are Irish.

Through noting the explicit problematising and the various proposals for change recommended in VFMPR, I have demonstrated how the policy discursively constructs the problem of youth work as unproven. This problematisation centres on issues of knowledge and it is indicative of a concern to make youth work knowable and thus governable. This problem representation creates space for mobilising solutions for governing re-form using the technologies of ToC evaluation and outcomes.

7.3 Deconstructing Youth Work as Unproven: Rationalities, Policy Context and Expertise

In this section, I consider how the problem representation of youth work as unproven is thinkable and sayable at the present time. This involves paying attention to the rationalities that underlie the problematisation and in this case includes[66] rationalities of science and psychology. I also trace the role of policy and philanthropy as part of the dispersed nature of expertise and governing involved in supporting and sustaining the thinking about youth work as unproven.

Scientific Rationality: Positivism and Evidence

Positivism, established by Auguste Comte in the mid-19th century, aimed to build a science of humanity that followed the methods of the natural sciences (Howell, 2013). This 'empirical realist' perspective of knowledge (Bryman, 2012:33) assumes that: there is a singular reality that it is possible to discover; universal laws can be discovered and used for prediction, prevention and control of human behaviour; neutral value free knowing is possible; and that researchers can be objective. Methods of knowing associated with positivism include the: observation of human behaviour; establishment of cause and effect; and the use of objective quantification (Howell, 2013). These various assumptions can be found running throughout the VFMPR as it commits to positivist methodology like RCTs and evidence-based research (EBR), though these are never made explicit. This is common in positivist research, the assumption is that as the dominant rationality it does not need to be explained (Locke et al, 2004:96). In this way, the VFMPR inserts a scientific rationality that is very specific, has a delimited view of knowledge and assumes this way of knowing to be the 'best' (see St Pierre, 2006; Parra Saiani, 2018). A core feature of positivism is its 'exclusionary impulse' that is, as a knowledge system it can only work by excluding other forms of knowledge. It is a system that 'can only function by reducing complexity' (Lyotard, 1979: 61 in St Pierre,

[66] NPM rationality also plays a role here regarding evaluation and outcomes for measuring performance, but this is dealt with in Chapter 7.

2006:250). Positivist science produces the appearance that there is only one science (ibid:256).

The evidence-based practice movement (EBPM) emerged initially in medicine but has been taken up in the social sciences and in areas of practice like social work (Soydan and Palinkas, 2014). The approach assumes that the best available evidence should be used to shape 'interventions' between practitioners and clients. The best available evidence refers to the use of an evidence hierarchy: a tool for listing types of evidence in hierarchical order. At the top of the hierarchy are systematic reviews and RCTs (ibid). In practice contexts, this translates into the development and use of programmes that are 'proven' to address certain problems in an effective manner. For practitioners, using such programmes in practice means following a manual that describes the way the programme should be run and there is an onus to maintain 'fidelity' to the programme that has been proven to work (ibid).

The problem representation of youth work as unproven, draws upon the assumptions of positivist science. The *need* to make youth work knowable is a central assumption within the VFMPR as is the possibility that youth work *can* be made knowable in a positivist, scientific manner. Attempts to liken youth work's relational practices to scientific practices like medicine appear in mentions of 'potent' (12) outcomes and 'active ingredients' (4), for example:

> *by making explicit the **active ingredients** in the exchange relationship between workers and young people. In other words, 'the component or components that are really necessary for the intervention or policy to be **efficacious** or effective (Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2013)* (p162).

The VFMPR text also expresses commitment to evidence-based research, practice and policy and evidence (96) is a key discursive theme. The assumption that RCT research (13) represents the 'gold standard' (2) in social research continues into the VFMPR, though it is acknowledged in a Footnote on page 183 that this 'hierarchy of evidence' perspective is contested in some of the literature. The lack of experimental research in youth work is regarded as a deficiency, as an 'uncertain evidence base'. As a way of addressing the absence of scientific evidence in youth work, alternative 'proven' solutions such as ToC and proximal outcomes are offered as a next best option. The 'evidence base' of scientific knowledges presents a way of offering certain knowledge for governing young people's conduct and thereby also offers policy makers a way of thinking about what 'service providers' need to do.

Psychology Rationality: Prevention Science and Positive Youth Development

Nikolas Rose's work traces the emergence of psychology in the 19th century to its dominance in liberal democracies during the 20th century. He historicises psychology as a dominant rationality, a systematic way of thinking about human action (see Rose 1985; 1999b; 2008). In this, he illustrates how the thinking and language of psychology pervades all parts of life from schools to prisons, parenting to marketing and the social professions. Psychology, he suggests, has helped to construct society and 'the kinds of people we have become' (Rose, 2008:1). The history of psychology reveals it as a technology of individualisation based on positivist science and experimental methods. In other words, psychology emerged not as a philosophy but as an applied science that sought to offer practical solutions for the 'creation of calculable minds and manageable individuals' (Rose, 2008:3). Psychology was to play a key role in the administration and ordering of society; in classifying individuals based on their differences. St. Pierre (2006:244) argues that psychology knowledges have also helped to develop and support the dominant scientific rationality that now pervades EBP and practice contexts.

Both prevention science and PYD are based in psychology (see Israelashvili and Romano 2016; Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2016). Both have emerged from the USA and have a significant interest in the psychological development of children and young people. The focus of prevention science has been to prevent maladaptive and problem behaviour in children by drawing from areas of psychology such as developmental psychopathology and cognitive behavioural therapy (Israelashvili and Romano, 2016). Prevention science rationality has led to the widespread development of risk factor models to help predict and prevent negative development. Prevention science is now shifting to a new focus on protective factors, based on ideas that negative development can be overcome by strengths. Fostering individual strengths can be more powerful than trying to avoid risks (ibid:10) leading to a view that with enough positive development young people can be made resilient and risk ready. Notable features of prevention science according to its proponents are that it: is based on 'rigorous methodology' using controlled research designs; has a strong relationship with policy concerns; offers strong arguments for prevention based on economic utility; has a growing awareness of the need to look beyond the individual to the ecology of the individual (ibid:12-13). For proponents, the utility of prevention should be thought about in two ways: firstly, in investment and cost/benefit calculations; and secondly by 'the extent to which a prevention program facilitates feelings of and possibilities for freedom and liberty' (ibid:12).

PYD places an emphasis on a strengths based, positive development view of young people by offering 'supports for positive growth' (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2016:189). Theoretically

PYD differs from prevention science by placing greater emphasis on adolescent developmental psychology (Catalano et al, 1998). Features of PYD include: that it is understood as a programme; it promotes positive development in programme goals; its programme atmosphere supports positive relationships with adults and peers; and positive programme activities should build skills (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2016). Current interests in PYD suggest a focus on further developing it as an evidence-based practice and as part of this effort ToC evaluation is now regarded as a vital component in PYD frameworks (Arnold and Silliman, 2017). The success of PYD programmes are judged on their validity (their use of science and evidence); their utility (level of use amongst organisations); and their universality (widely applicable to many contexts) (ibid).

Prevention science and PYD have been converging since the late 1990s to place an emphasis on 'expanding programs beyond a single problem behaviour focus' to a broader range of behaviours (offered by PYD), and improving the evidence base for this (offered by prevention science) (Catalano et al, 1998). In both cases the individual young person is the target for intervention, either in preventing 'problem behaviour' (e.g. teen pregnancy) or promoting positive behaviour (e.g. communication skills). Current literature encourages a relationship between the two (e.g. Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2016). Today, PYD describes an approach to work with young people that combines prevention and promotion theories of adolescent development.

The problem representation of youth work as unproven and as lacking evidence is made thinkable by comparing research developments in prevention science and PYD with that of youth work as noted in the preface of *Youth Work: A Systematic Map of the Literature*:

> While there is a high level of research activity in areas such as prevention science and work with children…the same level of attention has not been placed on developmental activities in youth work. (DCYA, 2013b: Preface)

As comparators, prevention science and PYD offer a means for economic evaluators to imagine youth work as deficient in knowledge and evidence. In the space offered by problematising youth work as deficient, PYD also suggests itself as a potentially attractive replacement for policy makers interested in the depoliticised and utilitarian bent of its apparently pragmatic nature.

Policy context: Reform and Philanthropy

Psychological knowledges for understanding children in Ireland, particularly the 'delinquent' or 'at risk' child, go back to the *Kennedy Report on the Reformatory and Industrial School Systems* of 1970 (Sargent, 2014). The report criticised the system of institutional care for disadvantaged children in Ireland and promoted community-based care as an alternative.

The use of a psychological understanding of children was strengthened in the *Report of the Task Force on Child Care Services* (Department of Health) in 1980 (Sargent, 2014). The first *National Children's Strategy* (Department of Health, 2000) which set a course for a children's reform agenda, consulted with an international expert panel of child psychologists and was strongly informed by the discourse of developmental outcomes for children. As the children's reform agenda progressed, the discourse of 'better outcomes' for children can be found in the annual reports of the OMC, OMCYA and DCYA from 2006 onwards. A commitment to 'prevention and early intervention' and an associated interest in EBP also emerges at this point:

> The Prevention and Early Intervention Programme was established by the Government in February 2006. It is being managed and administered by the OMC and will run for a 5-year period, with funding of €36 million — €18 million provided by Government and €18 million provided by the Atlantic Philanthropies. The purpose of the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme is to examine innovative methods for improving outcomes for children in an integrated way. The model of approach underpinning this programme is based on evidence of need in the community and an evidence-based approach to what works. The initial focus is on a small number of projects in severely disadvantaged communities. (OMC, Annual Report, 2006:8)

Thus, an interest in development psychology and outcomes, prevention and evidence, was part of the policy context in children's reform before youth work policy was brought under the remit of the OMCYA in 2008.

Philanthropy has played a significant role in promoting a scientific, evidence rationality in child and youth services; here, I outline the work of Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) in Ireland as an example[67]. Little and Abunimah (2007) chart the work of the AP *Disadvantaged Children and Young People Programme*[68] beginning in 2004. The programme was supported by Dartington Social Research Centre in the UK who helped to devise the investment strategy[69] based on a programme logic model. The ultimate aim of the programme was to achieve better developmental outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. AP's strategy for investment in children's reform in Ireland assembled various strands: at its core, the setup of experiments to test out proven and new programmes to see 'what works' in an Irish context; around this, to establish a network of indigenous capacity in the science of evaluation and RCTs; to persuade the Irish government to adopt an evidence based gaze in its policy-making for children and young people by acclimatising Irish policy makers to this view

[67] ONE Foundation has also made a significant impact in Ireland with a spend of €42 million in child, youth and family. It too supported PLM and ToC evaluation (see Boyle, 2014 and ONE, 2014).
[68] AP invested $200million in this programme from 2004 – 2014.
[69] Strategic philanthropy is a label used to refer to large philanthropic investments that use a business-like investment strategy approach to their work.

(Keenan, 2007; Little and Abunimah, 2007; Little, 2007). The strategy also include drawing upon various expertise:

> The original plan allowed for high levels of expert advice and given the focus on child development and experimental evaluation it is unsurprising that much of that advice has come from North America. The potential to mount between 35 and 50 experiments in a tightly bound geographical area has led to the participation of some of the world's leading economists (e.g. Nobel Laureate James Heckman) and prevention scientists (e.g. Richard Tremblay). (Little and Abunimah, 2007:63)

This is acknowledged in the VFMPR when it points out that '***improvements*** *have occurred…. often involving new* ***partnerships*** *between service providers, academic institutions and the* ***philanthropic sector*** (p4).

An evaluation of the role played by AP in influencing developments in the child and youth field in Ireland found that their work had helped to embed: prevention and early intervention in policy and practice; the use of outcomes and evidence in policy and practice; implementation science with attention to research-practice gaps; and improvements in expertise amongst social scientists (Rafferty and Colgan, 2016). The report also welcomes improvements in youth policy and youth work saying:

> The language of outcomes and evidence now underpins policy, culture and practice. Within the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the focus on evidence and outcomes is well established…. The strategic focus on prevention and early intervention is now well established and integrated into Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (ibid:9).

Through the influence and funding of AP in recent years the practices of outcomes, evidence, evaluation, PLM and ToC has been dispersed across the Irish youth work sector (see for example Brady et al, 2011; Bamber et al, 2014). In her analysis of English youth work, de St Croix (2017:8) has similarly noted the role played by philanthropy in normalising what she refers to as the 'impact agenda', that is the drive for targets/outcomes, measurement and evidence.

Austerity and public sector reform are also part of the policy context[70] that made the problem representation of youth as unproven, sayable within the VFMPR discourse[71]. In the context of austerity, strategic philanthropy promised that evidence that could be put to use not only in helping children reach better developmental outcomes, but also in helping policy makers make better decisions in their quest for reform and value for money. Thus I suggest, a marriage of EBPM and NPM rationalities can be seen as crucial in forming a view that 'unproven' practices are a poor investment:

[70] I have discussed this in Chapters 2 and 6 so I do not repeat it here.

[71] For example, Kiely and Meade (2018) locate austerity as the backdrop to an increased emphasis on the measurement of performance and efficiency for the purposes of top down accountability in public and publicly funded services including youth work

> An overarching legacy of Atlantic has been to open up the discourse about the need to invest scarce resources in good programmes, and the need to interrogate the difference between good and poor programmes as measured by outcomes for children, using insights from research-based concepts such as fidelity to help build an understanding of what works and why. (Rafferty and Colgan, 2016:13)
>
> Atlantic provided significant resources and used that money to demonstrate effectiveness. This evidence was then leveraged to influence the distribution of resources away from unproven practice and towards practice and services delivering measurable outcomes (ibid:20).

Indicative of the way in which philanthropy helps to sustain an evidence rationality (and form a view that youth work is unproven) can be found in the conclusion that despite improvements in Ireland, AP and its partners remain concerned 'that practice for which there is no evidence continues to be funded and delivered because of familiarity, inertia or lack of capacity to 'de-implement'' (ibid:18).

The VFMPR attempts to construct youth work as unproven and unknowable in its current form by drawing on discourses of positivist science. Solutions to re-form youth work come into view also using science and psychology rationalities. These solutions such as ToC evaluation and proximal outcomes offer means by which to make youth work knowable, calculable and thereby governable from a distance. A host of expertise is implicated in achieving this re-form agenda, including knowledge brokers such as EPPI Centre and the CES, universities and social scientists who have refocused their expertise towards evidence-based work and practitioner-based initiatives that have taken up the use of various technologies such as logic models. In the Irish context, it is the role of philanthropy in governing beyond the state, that has had significant influence in attempting to guide and shape the conduct of youth work at the present time.

7.4 Analysing Silences and Effects: Youth Work as a Scientific Intervention

In this section I analyse the effects of the problem representation of youth work as unproven. I explore the implications that this 'problem' construction has for imagining young people and remaking youth work as a proven, scientific intervention.

Producing *Some* Young People as Psy Subjects

The policy discourse of the VFMPR reproduces the binary distinction of 'at risk' young people and 'mainstream' young people by its recommendations to continue funding targeted youth programmes[72]. Further to this, the VFMPR introduces the Hardiker Model as a new

[72] Recommendation 2 to collapse three schemes into one 'targeted' funding scheme reinforces this distinction. (see p169).

technology for categorising young people according to their risk level. These efforts to order young people through risk have a number of effects, in particular they help to identify some young people as in need of intervention. Within the VFMPR, young people are imagined as risk levels that can be profiled using the Hardiker model, and on that basis they can be made eligible for targeted youth programmes that will use the recommended 'proximal outcomes' to guide the re-form of young people's internal selves. In this way the VFMPR discourse produces some young people as psychological subjects.

The Hardiker Model: Dividing Practices and Risk Subjects

Recommendation 6 of the VFMPR suggests that '*the DCYA may wish to adapt the Hardiker Model as an overall frame of reference*' (p179). The Hardiker Model was published in the UK (see Hardiker et al 1991a) where it was to be used by local authorities as a managerial tool for planning services. In Ireland, the Hardiker Model is widely advocated by the CES for use amongst statutory and voluntary sector providers, including youth work (see Owens 2010; Morgan et al 2016) and by TUSLA (see Tusla 2014; Gillen, 2013) for use in child and family services. As a planning tool, the model divides service provision into four levels: Level 1 representing universal services and Level 4 representing specialist services. The youth population is plotted in reference to these service provision bands. Level 1 includes all young people, based on a set of assumed universal developmental needs whereas Level 4 includes a small subset of young people with highly complex needs (see Figure 6). The model bases its assumptions about young people's needs on developmental psychology, particularly the ecological model (Owens, 2010).

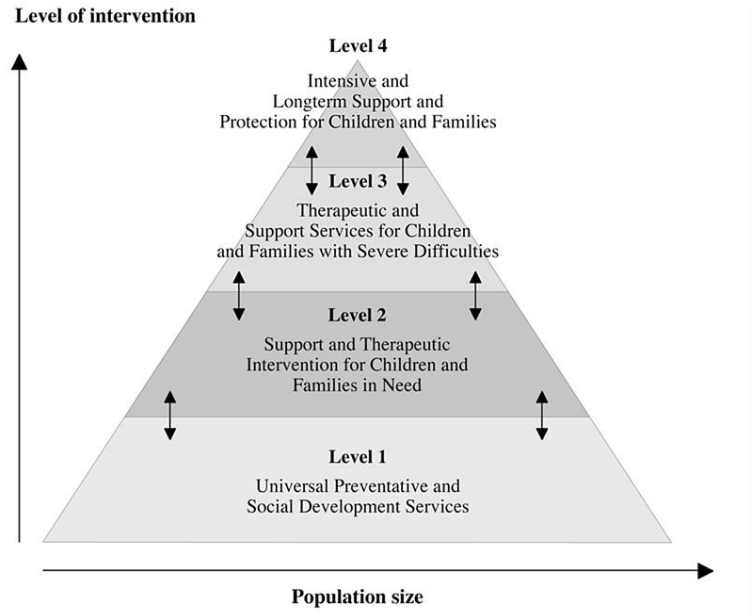


Figure 6 Hardiker Model (Owens, 2011)

While the purpose of the model is to describe different services, it also has the effect of facilitating the division of the youth population into levels of need that fit in with the described intervention levels. Within the discursive work of the VFMPR, this managerial tool also becomes a proxy risk assessment tool. It becomes a 'scale' (p189) that can be used to assess 'risk levels' (p186), and as such it can be used by local practitioners to categorise young people so that their *eligibility* for access to a *targeted* youth programme can be established (the young person must be Level 2 or upwards to be deemed 'at risk'). In other words, it has the effect of forcing youth workers to gaze at young people using a risk ordering lens, to assess their suitable for entry into targeted youth programmes.

The promotion of the Hardiker Model as a risk technology means that it has an effect of constituting young people as risk subjects. In the VFMPR, young people are variously imagined as: at risk; as a risk level; as engaging in risky behaviour and as having the potential to be their own risk managers. The 'at risk' young person appears over 40 times in the VFMPR for example, as a member of a target group of the evaluated funding schemes: *The SPY and YPFSF programmes target young people who have been involved in crime or are at risk of becoming involved in crime (p*64) and when discussing role of outcomes that help to predict the '*prevention of risky behaviours'* (p161). However, the *Hardiker Model* (17)[73] best exemplifies the discursive efforts to construct this subject position since it is consistently promoted (17) as a mechanism for categorising young people into levels of need using the number designations 1, 2, 3 and 4; for aiding the 'effective targeting' of 'at risk' young people; and for better profiling:

> *This exercise need not be overly technical or bureaucratic. For example, the Hardiker framework, which formed the basis for need-related questions in the VFMPR, offers a significantly improved option for profiling the work than is currently in place. Distinguishing need using the Hardiker Model also provides the DCYA with the opportunity to graduate its information demands. For example, while minimum baseline data should be collated for all young people engaging with a youth programme (e.g. Hardiker Level 1), enhanced levels of data should be required for young people who are engaged as presenting with more complex needs (e.g. Hardiker Level 2+).* (p190)

[73] Numbers in brackets designate the number of times the term or phrase was found in the VFMPR document. It is important to note WPR analysis is not linguistic or content analysis so the number of mentions are given for context purposes, also absent phrases and terms are just as important.

When discussing counting rules in annual reports the young person is to be imagined as risk level. In many instances within the VFMPR 'needs' (the original wording in Hardiker Model) can equate to 'risks':

> *The information required of providers in annual reports should include participant numbers and costs at least cross-referenced by* ***the risk or needs level*** *of the young people engaged.* (p118)

The idea that young people should be regulated through 'powerful narratives of risk, fear and uncertainty' is prevalent in 21st century liberal democracies (Kelly, 2000:301). Risk rationality has become a 'preoccupation' of social policy related to young people (Turnbull & Spence, 2011; Kemshall, 2009; Bessant, 2003). The treatment of young people as objects and subjects of risk in youth policy has implications for youth work and Powell et al (2012) argue that a 'risk paradigm' now pervades Irish youth policy and youth work. The implications of constructing young people in this way is damaging to open youth work, youth work that is available to young people without labels or criteria that turn them into 'risks' or 'needs' to be worked on (IDYW, 2009).

Further to this, Hardiker promoted as a risk scale in the VFMPR also represents a dividing practice that allows *some* young people to be identified as in need of 'intervention'. Dean (1999: 167) suggests that divisions created between those who are deemed able to govern themselves and those who are not, is one of the main effects of neoliberal governmentality. Such divisions offer a means to identify groups to be targeted for expert intervention, where classification is calculated on the basis of risk. In this case, Hardiker can be seen as a dividing practice for categorising young people as risk levels that gain them access to a local youth work programme, where they are then to become subjects of ethical reconstruction using the seven proximal outcomes also recommended by the VFMPR. It is important to note that the Hardiker Model was also used by Indecon, on behalf of NYCI, as a basis for calculating the economic benefits of youth work in Ireland (see Indecon, 2012). These calculations and methods also relied on producing young people as segments of population distinguished by their risk level. This is a reminder that the voluntary youth work sector has also played a role in producing young people as 'risk levels' in need of governing and in need of 'targeted' youth work intervention.

There is a curious silence to be found in the VFMPR's translation of the Hardiker Model. Philosophically the model is grounded in a prevention approach where:

> …good generic Level 1 services would be the preferred approach, supported with preventative services at Level 2, whereby all difficulties are dealt with in mainstream education, health and community. The more needs addressed at levels 1 and 2 the better. (Owens, 2010:18).

As such, the Hardiker model promotes 'progressive universalism', also a proclaimed central tenet of *Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures* (DCYA, 2014a). This principle means that more young people should have their needs met within well-resourced Level 1 universal services, the idea being that the more comprehensive universal services, the less need there will be for targeted services. Yet this service planning tool has somehow transmuted to become a proxy risk assessment tool to support targeted youth work services. It is further promoted in the VFMPR as a simple way to provide a weighted counting approach for the 'profile' of young people actually in services so that services working with higher risk participants get a higher weighted count. The VFMPR application of this model emphasises working beyond universal services, thus the principle of 'progressive universalism' is contradicted by policy commitments that result in many more millions of euro for targeting 'at risk' young people than for universal youth services. The silence in the VFMPR is that Hardiker is really a model for promoting the merits of universal services not targeted ones.

Proximal Outcomes: Ethical Reconstruction and New Paternalism

As mentioned above, Recommendation 11 suggests the seven proximal outcomes identified in the VFMPR should be a focus for youth work service provision. The VFMPR announces the introduction of outcomes as follows:

> *However, this **undoubted vagueness** needs to be balanced against **what is known**. The focused literature review commissioned for this study identifies **7 potent mechanisms**, or outcomes, that appear to possess efficacy potential in the needs domain areas covered by the programmes. In short, **these attributes** should help young people to be more employable, less likely to engage in problematic drug-taking or alcohol misuse, and less likely to drop out of school and/ or engage in anti-social behaviour. These mechanisms are: **communication skills; confidence and agency; planning and problem-solving relationships; creativity and imagination; resilience and determination; emotional intelligence*** (p115).

The outcomes are announced under the banner of '*what is known'* (emphasis in original) and against a background of uncertain evidence and 'undoubted vagueness', providing the outcomes with the appearance of certainty. The six-page literature review which authorises these outcomes acquires a truth status beyond what its weak methodology suggests. In fact, these seven proximal outcomes are the *same* as the set of 'social and emotional clusters' generated by the Young Foundation in the UK in (see Table 4). Tracing the emergence of these social and emotional capabilities as desired outcomes for English youth work, de St Croix (2017) establishes that it was the House of Commons 2011 inquiry into youth work

services that prompted the commissioning of the outcomes framework. This inquiry was key in problematising youth work as unproven, requiring more evidence and outcomes measurement in the UK context (see House of Commons, 2011; Ord 2014). The introduction of these seven social and emotional capabilities has been critiqued by a number of youth work commentators there (see Taylor 2013; 2017; de St Croix, 2017; Ord 2014; IDYW, 2014) with Taylor (2015:91) describing the Framework as 'neoliberal to its core'. The Young Foundation's outcomes framework (see McNeil et al, 2012) is set out within the context of a social investment paradigm that mixes outcomes as measures of effectiveness and VFM (NPM rationality) with outcomes as indicators of positive development for young people (psychology rationality). In the following table I aim to demonstrate that the proximal outcomes advocated by the VFMPR can be mapped against features of PYD:

Table 4 Policy Travel to PYD

US, 1998	***UK, 2012***	***Ireland, 2014***
Positive Youth Development (Catalano et al 1998)	***Young Foundation Framework (McNeil, 2012)***	***VFMPR (DCYA, 2014b)***
Features of PYD	**7 Social & Emotional Capabilities**	**7 Proximal Outcomes**
Social competence, opportunities for prosocial involvement	Communication	Communication skills
Self-efficacy, belief in the future, positive identity	Confidence and agency	Confidence and agency
Self-determination, cognitive competence	Planning and problem solving	Planning and problem-solving
Social competence, opportunities for prosocial involvement, bonding, prosocial norms	Relationships and leadership	Relationships
Resilience, recognition for positive behaviour	Resilience and determination	Resilience and determination
Emotional competence	Managing feelings	Emotional intelligence
----------	Creativity	Creativity and imagination
Behavioural competence	----------	----------
Moral competence	----------	----------

Whilst these seven proximal outcomes appear benign and as Taylor (2013) suggests might even have been put together on any given day in a youth work seminar, it is the rationalities of psychology that inform them and various silences that surround them that creates damaging effects for democratic youth work and for young people.

The proximal outcomes are drawn from an evidence base that relies heavily on prevention science and PYD studies. These studies are informed by psychology knowledges that prioritise an understanding of young people as individuals. The influence of psychology in the study of youth reveals as Ayman-Nolley and Taira (2000) suggest an 'obsession with the dark side of adolescence'. Their study of youth studies journals revealed the bias towards the study of 'turmoil, instability and abnormality' producing 'a negative portrayal of adolescence' (ibid:42). They also pointed to the silences such as cognition, intelligence, language, creativity, art and leisure that were seldom studied from a psychology perspective. For example, they say that both Erikson and Piaget identified the development of philosophical and personal ideology during adolescence, yet this was rarely a focus of psychology studies. In addition, they found that psychology studies rarely paid attention to identity development amongst minority youth. Payne (2001) also provided a searing critique of adolescent psychology studies, identifying poor scientific standards as well as an absence of critical psychology perspectives including a complete avoidance of issues of power. As Kelly (2000) points out, youth is a creation of the way in which knowledge is produced about young people and Payne (2001:175) argues that poor psychological research 'function[s] to sustain disturbingly unsophisticated, and frequently prejudicial, developmental discourses' of young people.

As noted, the proximal outcomes have a provenance that locates them closely with PYD rationalities that include a new emphasis on building protective factors or strengths in young people. This understanding, while appearing to take a 'positive' view of young people still requires us to imagine 'targeted', 'at risk' young people, as deficient, lacking these capacities that other 'non-targeted' young people are assumed to have. Further, these rationalities and techniques locate responsibility for risk within the internal makeup of individual young people, made clear in the following VFMPR quote:

> *there will always be **external determinants** beyond the scope of a programme and beyond the control of a young person (e.g. job or training availability, local neighbourhood factors in relation to norms for drugs misuse). This proposal focuses on **internal mechanisms** (attitude, cognition and skills) that should help **young people both manage risks and seize pro-social opportunities**. Based on the review of the evidence …the VFMPR identifies 7 'proximal' outcomes which, on the*

> *balance of evidence, should yield improvements across the range of needs domains covered by the schemes…(*p105/6)

The VFMPR presents proximal outcomes then, as a means to adjust the psychological subjectivities of young people so that they can face inevitable risks. The question of structural inequality and the politics of 'disadvantage' are acknowledged, but then deftly avoided as 'beyond the scope'.

Within the VFMPR, the 'loose policy objectives' (p105) associated with previous iterations of targeted youth schemes are recast with the internally changed young person becoming the 'ultimate policy objective'(p20) of targeted youth programmes[74]. Behavioural change (60) is a significant interest within the policy discourse of the VFPMR and it promotes a wide range of psychological intervention methods including Motivational Interviewing and CBT. Psychology based practices like personal development and counselling receive positive judgements from the VFMPR team, but activities like arts and outreach work are put into question (p104).

Once ordered through the risk lens of the Hardiker scale, 'at risk' young people are to be governed through youth work in a different way than 'universal' or 'Level 1' young people. The VFMPR produces a view of 'at risk' young people as subjects in need of what Rose (2000) refers to as ethical reconstruction. Rose (2000) in his analysis of the risk management inspired governing of excluded, problematic and risky populations, notes the delicate balance that must be struck between control and freedom in advanced liberal societies. The challenge is how to control through freedom, how to manage these populations in the community as opposed to institutions. He suggests that 'moral reformation and ethical reconstruction' (ibid:335) offers one solution:

> Within this new politics of conduct, the problems of problematic persons are reformulated as moral or ethical problems, that is to say, problems in the ways in which such persons understand and conduct themselves and their existence. This ethical reformulation opens the possibility for a whole range of psychological techniques to be recycled in programmes for governing 'the excluded' (Rose, 2000:334).

Through psychological interventions that can include the 'language of empowerment' and the 'skills of self-management', problem individuals can be re-formed, re-constructed, responsibilised. This mode of governing appears to reject patronising approaches of the older welfare state because individuals choose it themselves and 'work on themselves' so that they can be 'reattached to a virtuous community' (ibid:335). But, these are 'moralising techniques' that work by 'shaming, naming, blaming' and that target subjectivity as a mode

[74] The VFMPR text refers to generic 'improvement in young people's situation' (see p40). However, Recommendation 11 of the VFMPR advocates the use of the seven outcomes as a basis for assessing youth work performance in meeting government policy objectives. So 'improvement in young people's situation' can be read as meaning the achievement of the seven social and emotional capabilities.

for guiding conduct with the aim of reconstructing 'ethical self-steering' in risky individuals (ibid:336). These 'technologies of the self' generated by 'socio -psychological interventions' are the hallmark of efforts to control risky young people (Besley, 2010).

Thus, neoliberal governmentality is promoted and produced in the policy discourse of the VFMPR as it advocates the adoption of proximal outcomes as a means to re-form *some* young people's 'internal mechanisms'. In its advocacy for a 'neoliberal ethic of self', the policy discourse of the VFMPR helps to 'obscure structural inequality' (Ansell et al, 2012). Young people as political agents or youth work as a possible site for political or social analysis or for collectivising efforts to protest or campaign for equality, are simply not options under 'proximal outcomes' thinking.

The technology of proximal outcomes that takes centre stage in the VFMPR to produce governing solutions for the conduct of 'at risk' young people has implications for the conduct of youth work too. By binding youth work provision to these outcomes (Recommendation 11) the desired behaviour change in 'at risk' young people can be achieved. By adopting the 7 proximal outcomes as a proven technology for working with young people, youth work is produced as a possible site for neoliberal governing. Youth work practice becomes narrowed to its value in delivering a very particular set of outcomes and a very particular self-regulating young person. Under neoliberal governing, non-state actors can 'help to depoliticise and render populations amenable' to government (Ansell et al, 2012:47). Youth work is remade as a control agency, a risk broker with 'a revised governmental role …to manage dangerous sites and dangerous persons on the territory of the community, under the threat of being held accountable for any harm to 'the general public'' (Rose, 2000:333). In the production of predefined end points that close down 'starting where young people are at' and the pathologizing view of young people that this thinking gives rise to, the basics of a democratic youth work are assaulted (IDYW, 2009).

This is not to claim that youth work itself is innocent: the thinking behind targeting 'at risk' young people; ideas about 'keeping kids off the street'; and the use of psychology as an informing rationality in most youth work technologies (e.g. teamwork, educational activities, group work, mentoring, peer education) are certainly not new. Bradford (2014:187) argues that youth work as a site for managing both the bodies and minds of young people goes back to the mid-20th century. The list of proximal outcomes also finds continuities with youth work discourses and share ideas about the personal development of young people that are prevalent in youth workers' own accounts (see Devlin and Gunning, 2009). But, there are also tensions with the scientific and psychology rationalities of the VFMPR silencing earlier

social democratic, ‘romantic humanist’ images of governing young people through association and solidarity (Bradford and Cullen, 2014).

The attempted remaking of youth work hybridises old and new forms of governing. This is one of the innovations of neoliberalism as a dominant rationality (Larner, 2000). But it equally raises questions about other contradictory political rationalities at work alongside neoliberalism. For example, Davies (2012) explores the increasing role being played by neocommunitarianism in UK policy. ‘Nudge’ politics brings psychology and economics together as a way to govern people’s conduct. Nudge work is a new form of ‘behavioural paternalism’ and is underwritten by a contradictory set of assumptions to neoliberalism. Neocommunitaranism reintroduces a set of normative values for deciding how people should behave, contradicting the core assumption of neoliberalism that people are self-interestedly rational and make decisions only as economic agents. The increasing reliance of policy makers on ‘nudge’ is an acknowledgement that the neoliberal economic subject can no longer be assumed as ‘rational’ in the face of market price alone and must learn to be rational though social relationships. For Davies (2012), neocommunitarianism is not an emerging replacement for neoliberalism, instead ‘it fills its gaps’ and helps to sustain it by addressing some of its weaknesses. Larner (2006) has defined new techniques aimed at encouraging people to act relationally as ‘neosocial’. The increased emphasis on behavioural change within the VFMPR suggests something of these contradictions between an emphasis on the responsible individual allied with the need to engage in collective social learning, so that individual subjectivity can be nudged towards the desired conduct. In that, maybe youth work offers itself as an excellent neosocial technology (Kessl, 2006), one that helps to ‘activate’ the human capital potential of young people as investments in the future whilst at the same time engaging in a paternalistic programme of moral reconstruction.

Producing Youth Work as a Scientific Intervention

In the policy discourse of the VFMPR, the production of the ‘problem’ of youth work as unproven, opens up its potential remaking as a scientific intervention. This remaking involves: installing replacement discourses such as PYD that are thought to represent more ‘scientific’ ways of working with young people; as well as using evaluation technologies to render practice visible as a linear cause and effect process. Attempts to produce youth work as scientific intervention risks the loss of many core principles that delineate youth work as a distinctive practice.

Remaking youth work as PYD

There are many indications throughout the VFMPR discourse of attempts to remake youth work as PYD. This is most observable in the CES literature review (Appendix 4 of the VFMPR) that is used to produce the list of proximal outcomes. On p161, the CES attempts to discursively construct a similarity between the ethos of Irish youth work and US PYD, by referencing the work carried out by EPPI who conducted a 'systematic map' of youth work literature:

> *The map makes a particular reference to the ethos of youth work in Ireland, which is said to emphasise collaboration, empowerment and personal and social development.* ***This ethos is shared by much of the international research literature across a range of different types of youth work activities, including youth provision which falls under the umbrella of 'positive youth development'****. This is apparent not from the terms employed in evaluations, particularly those conducted in the USA (e.g. 'out-of-school time', '4-H clubs'), but 'from closer inspection of the theoretical approaches, aims and activities of youth work' (2012, p. 43) (p161).*

The literature review also engages a PYD rationality when it: locates the impact of youth intervention as requiring a focus on social and emotional capabilities (p161); frames youth intervention alongside investment and cost utility; draws from prevention and PYD studies as an evidence base (p161-162). The actual selection of the seven proximal outcomes also indicates a certain 'policy travel'[75], in the direction towards PYD (see Table 4).

In addition, throughout the VFMPR text terms associated with PYD including 'programme' (303) and 'intervention' (65) are widely used. In some cases these terms are employed instead of making a direct reference to youth work. 'Intervention' is not a term commonly used in youth work. A text search analysis of 106 Government youth policy documents from 1984 to 2018 reveals that 43 of the 55 documents that mention intervention at least once, were published from 2011 onwards. The most frequent usage is in the VFMPR (69). Within the VFMPR, 'intervention' has multiple meanings though it is used many times (18) to obscure reference to previously used terms such as youth project, youth work programme, youth work sessions. The overarching programmatic focus of the VFMPR is made clear from the start when it says: '*A 'programme' as opposed to a 'professional' focus permits examination of efficiencies and effectiveness* (p3). The focus on 'youth programmes' throughout the VFMPR is a means to silence youth work as a set of values that might

[75] Bacchi (2009) suggests that studying 'policy travel' is useful in identifying how policy ideas come to dominate in particular places and times.

complicate the evaluation of effectiveness. A programme focus seeks to produce an understanding of youth work as something with a defined end, particularly in relation to facilitating the production of proximal outcomes. A programme focus also implies that youth work can be reconfigured as something short term and possibly branded (Kiely and Meade, 2018).

Alongside the absence of youth work in both definition and philosophy in the text, these developments indicate a shift in policy discourse to one that is more aligned with PYD. It is important to draw attention to this discursive work because as Davies et al (2015:86) note, generic forms of working with young people featuring behaviour modification have 'hesitated to give themselves an identity, preferring the pretence of still defining themselves as youth work'. I have demonstrated here the clear shift in Irish policy discourse to PYD, and I suggest this offers cause for concern for anyone committed to youth work as a distinctive and democratic practice. The attempted shift away from youth work and towards PYD in the UK has been criticised by many youth work commentators there (Smith 2003; Taylor 2012; Davies et al 2015). Taylor (2012) charts the emergence of the shift towards PYD under New Labour who initially 'all but deleted the term "youth work"' before 'imperceptibly and surreptitiously, ideas drawn from the American tradition of positive youth development (PYD) were smuggled into the thinking of both managers and workers' (ibid:123). Taylor critiques the science of PYD as relying on a mythical adolescent psychological subject who has been socially constructed through an array of experiments and tests. But it also, he suggests, holds out a seductive fantasy for both policy makers and practitioners alike: the normative, model adolescent and in parallel the 'scientifically predetermined programme of social integration' (ibid:124).

ToC Evaluation: Youth Work as Scientific Cause and Effect

Recommendation 10 of the VFMPR suggests that DCYA should produce a Theory of Change for targeted youth programmes. ToC is consistently promoted in the text as a suitable model to help to construct the causal relationship between youth work and intended changes in young people: in other words, to prove the impact of youth work. Biesta (2007:8), in his analysis of why scientific rationalities and technologies are an inappropriate fit for the practice of education, argues that they attempt to reduce 'symbolically mediated interaction' into a simple intervention that has a cause and an effect. Instead, educational interactions are premised on a dynamic between teachers and students that are not predictable. Education is a 'noncausal' practice. Similarly, Duffy (2017a, b) has provided an extensive critique of ToC and its application to youth work in the UK. She points to the reductionist attempts of ToC to produce youth work practice as a simple, closed system so that it can be

'evaluated' for its effectiveness. Crucially, closing the system involves the use of predetermined outcomes – this is what the logic of ToC and its claims to causality rely upon (see Weiss, 1995). However, in efforts to find ways to produce youth work as a scientific system a great deal of the 'integrity of youth work *as youth work'* (Kiely and Meade, 2018:1) may be lost.

Firstly, its closed and prescribed logic undermines the democratic intent of youth work. The principle that young people are central in shaping youth work's process and ends is utterly silenced by the discourse of cause and effect. Instead youth work is limited to only 'what the evidence permits' (Kiely and Meade, 2018:8). The effect of silencing young people's voices in determining what their youth work process should be about directly contradicts DCYA's own participation policy (DCYA, 2015a) and its best practice guidelines on the participation of seldom heard young people that states in contrast to a youth development (i.e. PYD) approach, a youth involvement approach (i.e. youth work) offers 'the strongest potential to develop effective and meaningful participation practice with all young people, but particularly those who are seldom heard' (DCYA, 2014d:45).

Secondly, its search for predetermined certainty undermines the creativity and professional discretion of practitioners. Youth work practice is regarded to be much more an improvised art than a science (see Young, 1999; Williamson, 2002; Coussée et al, 2009), and one where the youth worker plays a key role (with the young person) in shaping the process (IDYW, 2009). This process involves working with and through uncertainty (Taylor, 2013). For many (see Lorenz, 2009; Coburn, 2011; Bright and Pugh, 2015) uncertainty, ambivalence and paradox are the central point of reflective youth work practice and the central point of its potential creativity and innovation (Duffy, 2017a). Attempts to produce youth work as a science, as a certainty-based practice, fit with the risk paradigm discussed in Chapter 5, but puts youth work as a distinctive practice at risk (Bessant, 2003, Kiely and Meade, 2018). Biesta (2007) warns against the dangers of allowing science to trump democracy when practitioners too are made subject to predetermined means and ends in practice. It is important to note that the VFMPR recommendations[76] do include space for a 'deliberate forum' to consult with practitioners and young people, and this is welcome. However, despite much consultation with young people and youth workers, much of which endorsed the importance of an open-ended youth work (see Roe, 2017; CES 2017; 2018b) in recent tender documents for new VFMPR projects (Limerick/Clare ETB 2018; Kilkenny Carlow ETB, 2017) prescribed outcomes remain.

[76] Recommendation 9

Thirdly, producing youth work as a positivist science has the effect of undermining youth work as a way of knowing and practitioner knowledges are subjugated and silenced. Ord (2014:63) argues that youth work knowledge is phronesis which refers to 'the ability to judge or have insight'. He links this form of knowledge to the idea of youth work as a practice of art; art in conversation and association, based on the practice wisdom of the youth worker (Smith 1994 cited in Ord, 2014:63). A 'phronetic understanding' of knowledge sees that context is important and focuses on the particulars of each unique young person and situation. It harnesses 'fluidity and unpredictability' in parallel with the reality of young people's lives (Ord, 2014:67). But this commitment to open-endedness, uncertainty and unpredictability 'has not fitted well with an increasingly instrumental and behavioral neoliberal agenda' (Davies et al, 2015:86). An analysis of the bibliographies of VFMPR, the accompanying CES literature review and the *Systematic Map of the Research Literature* (DCYA, 2013b) reveal how American and UK sources are cited more often than Irish youth work texts, and mechanisms for selection excluded small scale, locally based evaluation studies. The subjugation of practitioner knowledges in Irish youth work allows for claims such as 'Irish youth work suffers from a lack of 'evidence', and there are increasing calls for youth work to 'substantiate' itself' (Bamber et al, 2012). In the claim that youth work must substantiate itself, there lies an implication that the problem of youth work as unproven lies with youth work itself; yet the way in which policy as a governing technology authorises what is to be regarded as valid knowledge is taken for granted. Over 100 years of youth work literature and theorising are completely sidelined by the VFMPR team. Efforts to produce scientific knowledge to shape youth work practice are underwritten by an arrogant 'scientism' (Biesta, 2007; Duffy, 2017b) a belief that the expertise of others (e.g. EPPI Centre, CES) should overwrite practice wisdom. Producing youth work as a science only works by subjugating these other forms of knowledge.

Despite the rhetoric of ToC as an evaluation tool, the attempted remaking of youth work as a scientific intervention with a cause and effect is really an effort to produce youth work as knowable (involving a reduction to a simple closed system). The concern to problematise the nature of evidence in youth work is linked to attempts to make youth work governable. For example the VFMPR states: *Better evidence helps to inform and develop a closer alignment between national policy and local delivery* (p160). Youth work is governed through science neatly eliding any obvious political intent in the process (Duffy, 2017a, b). The ultimate aim of governing through science is to produce certainty, to 'guarantee 'requisite improvements' (p89) in the already defined ends, the ultimate policy objective to reshape risky young people as ideal neoliberal subjects. Both outcomes and ToC have the capacity to govern the

dispersed network of risky voluntary agents, responsible for delivering youth work and for returning the 'value for money' prize of the self-governing young person.

However, Irish youth work's engagement with the scientific efforts of youth development and American philanthropy are not new (e.g. Harvey, 1994). For example, Foróige: The National Youth Development Organisation, has had a long history of American philanthropic investment beginning in 1958 (Foróige, ND) [77]. Foróige set up a Best Practice Unit in 2009 and is well known as being committed to the use of EBPs. As Kitchen et al (2012:1308) argue, neoliberalisation varies in from place to place, in Ireland it can find 'path amplification' in 'prior institutional histories', that is 'in some cases pasts can serve as catalysts, lubricants, and wellsprings for neoliberal reforms'. This is a reminder that neoliberalism as a form of governmentality is not a singular thing, it takes different forms, in different locales and sectors. For Larner (2000:21), acknowledging this complexity is part of what can help to 'advance social justice aims in a new context'.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have produced a critical analysis of the problematisation of youth work as unproven. In this, I have demonstrated how the VFMPR policy works to both construct the 'problem' of proof and install science-based solutions including proximal outcomes, evidence-based approaches and ToC evaluation. Through the discursive and problematising work of the VFMPR, youth work is opened up to government through science. This has the discursive effects of making ideas of proof appear common-sense. But the idea that youth work *needs to be proven* is a new way of thinking. This new desire for proof and evidence of certain kinds, indicates a change in governing rule and a new role for knowledge in helping to govern youth work and ultimately young people. By pressing youth work to substantiate itself, there are pressures for youth work to reveal itself, make its inside workings visible and auditable, so that it can be steered and aligned with Government objectives.

I have also shown how the 'problem' of proof is sustained by scientific and evidence rationalities and has the effect of trying to re-form youthwork as a scientific, psychological intervention. I outlined how the governing technology of outcomes becomes visible through the work of the VFMPR. These outcomes seek to reduce both the risks posed by 'at risk' young people and the risks of unproven and uncertain youth work. Youth work is less risky and more responsible when it adopts a scientific rationality and seeks to become evidence oriented. In this way, the VFMPR attempts to provide 'solutions' to make youth work, as a

[77] Foróige was supported by W.K. Kellog Foundation in America in 1958, £30,000 and 1969 £62,000, 1981.

risk broker, more effective and more certain in terms of how it might govern young people's conduct.

My analysis of this problem representation indicates the power/knowledge struggles that lie at the heart of the work that the VFMPR policy does. By constructing youth work as a problem of proof and evidence, the VFMPR carves out a space for authorising new knowledges and evidence as 'truth' that can be used to remake older versions of youth work. By authorising 'proven' knowledges the VFMPR constructs new ways of thinking about working with young people to conduct their ethical reconstruction by reconfiguring their social, emotional and behavioural capabilities. But the authorisation of new 'truths' depend on the silencing of others. I have shown that the VFMPR text actively works to silence youth work by avoiding the use of the term 'youth work' and insisting on a reference to youth programmes. This approach subjugates youth work's history and associated knowledge to the margins and opens up a generic space to be occupied by the science of PYD.

Attempts to remake youth work with psychology and science, however, do have continuities with the past. Neoliberal forms of rule sometimes take inspiration from past practices in a process of 'path amplification'. There are contradictory neocommunitarian modes of rule to be found in the emphasis on behaviour modification and the use of proximal outcomes to project young people as ideal subjects. Within the VFMPR text these new paternalistic values live side by side with neoliberal values of freedom and self-government. Analysis of the problem representation of youth work as unproven also reveals that governing the conduct of youth work is a shared project across an array of governing actors, including expertise in the form of evidence proponents, policy makers, philanthropy, and the voluntary youth work sector itself.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Dear reader! It rests with you and me, whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. (Dickens, 1854)

8.1 Introduction

The VFMPR was published by DCYA in 2014 and received, at best, a muted response from the Irish youth work sector. It is a rather long and mundane text that does not invite easy reading and its intended audience was DCYA not the youth work sector. However, within the text there are many proposals for change that are having and are likely to have, consequences for the funding, organisation, delivery and practice of youth work. This study sought to give critical attention to the governing work of this mundane policy text.

This concluding chapter is made up of two parts: firstly, I complete the WPR analysis and; secondly, I provide a review of this study. To complete the WPR analysis I address the analytic task of challenging[78] the underlying rationalities of the problem representations of youth work contained in the VFMPR discourse and I engage in a self-problematisation[79] process that reflects on the proposals I put forward. The second part of this chapter reviews the work of this study: its focus and method; its research questions and operational map; its contribution and limitations.

Part 1: Completing the WPR Analysis

8.2 Challenging the VFMPR Problematisations

Challenging: Youth Work as Risky

A reproblematisation of youth work as risky, might be to argue that youth work is *at risk* because of the efforts of neoliberal policy to re-form it from the inside out. If youth workers and youth work organisations internalise the image that youth work is risky, that it must perform as a good investment and as a responsible self-governing risk broker, there is a danger of losing its core values. If the democratic aims and wider ethical commitments to young people are lost in the subjectification of youth work as only an economic agent and

[78] This addresses Q4b and 6b of the WPR framework.
[79] This addresses Q7 of the framework.

subjugation of youth work expertise to economic expertise, does this result, as Kiely and Meade (2018) have argued, in undermining the 'integrity of youth work as youth work'?

I suggest there are various spaces in the broad policy landscape of youth work and amongst these competing discourses that offer possibilities for resistance and contestation. Despite various criticisms of the *Youth Work Act* (McMahon, 2009; Spence, 2007), I would suggest that it now offers a means by which to challenge[80] the narrow interpretation of youth work as a risky agent. There are opportunities in the mixed lines of governance responsibility for youth work between ETBs under the *Education and Training Board Act*[81] (2013) and DCYA. ETBs now have a clear responsibility to uphold the legal definition of youth work as educational and as voluntary. This is something that youth work representative bodies might exploit in seeking to defend core values in youth work.

Also, there are opportunities to be exploited in the many tensions and contradictions that exist in contemporary European youth policy developments. A variety of policy developments have sought to advance the status of youth work by outlining its 'value' and contribution in Europe (e.g. Council of Europe 2013; 2017; Dunne et al, 2014; European Union, 2015; Ord et al, 2018). Though this policy landscape also advances neoliberal rationalities interested in human capital development and entrepreneurship (e.g. European Commission, 2017), they are hybridised with significant concern with the promotion of democracy amongst young people (e.g. Council of Europe, 2017). Williamson (2017a:206) urges that 'it is important to seize the moment when the European institutions concerned with "youth policy" (primarily the European Commission and the Council of Europe) are both proclaiming the imperative to strengthen youth policy and the place of "youth work" within it'.

In addition, I suggest that it is important to contest narrow and instrumental understandings of youth work through the production of alternative knowledge. Two recent examples from the UK are interesting given that they focus research on open and universal youth work. McGregor (2015:6), on behalf of the Edinburgh Youth Work Consortium, produced a literature review of universal youth work to: 'illuminate the distinct purpose of universal youth work; demonstrate the rich array of methods and approaches to youth work and its evaluation; and reveal the diverse outcomes of universal youth work practice'. Ritchie and Ord (2016) focus on highlighting the experiences of young people in open access youth work. Also, at a European level, new research and publications are challenging policy notions of simple codifications and pre-scribed notions of what youth work should be. The Council of Europe's 'History of Youth Work' series (see e.g. Coussée et al, 2012) documents

[80] Indeed, this might be one reason the VFMPR was so coy about using the term 'youth work' in the text.
[81] The ETB Act reconfirms the Youth Work Act of 2001 (see Devlin, 2017).

the rich diversity of youth work right across Europe, prompting reflection on the 'thousands of youth work initiatives that are meaningful to children and young people, and which are as relevant to their lives as formal education' (Schild et al, 2017:7). A recent Erasmus + project has researched the impact of youth work (utilising a broad open access and open-ended definition) across five European states (Ord et al, 2018). The research used transformative evaluation methods that highlighted young people's stories as a means to 'measure' impact. These alternatives to positivist knowledge production offer inspiration for producing Irish youth work knowledge that supports and reaffirms a democratic understanding of youth work.

Challenging: Youth Work as Underperforming

An important challenge to the production of youth work as a performer is to ask ourselves who does it/should it perform for? Earlier visions of accountability saw young people, volunteers and local communities as 'primarily' who youth work performed for. The policy work of the VFMPR constructs youth work as performing for the public sector (as principal) and for the taxpayer. Again, using DCYA's own participation discourse there is space here to contest the need for youth work to have greater democratic accountability to young people.

One way to reproblematise the 'problems' of an underperforming youth work is to suggest that they are themselves the *result* of performance and counting frameworks. The creaming and shirking agent may be part of the unforeseen consequences of governing through performance (Power, 2004b). Though the VFMPR gives rise to new ways of measuring youth work, this too has a long history. Decades-old youth work policy documents both from voluntary youth work organisations and the state illustrate attempts to govern the conduct of youth work through concepts such as 'effectiveness', 'accountability' and 'evaluation', for example. Such documents in fact, exhort the state to undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of youth work practice. The NYCI document *The Development of Youth Services* (NYCI, 1974) called for a 'professional approach to youth work' that involves statutory employment of workers who would be responsible for evaluating local youth work services. Four years later, in *A Policy in Youth Work Services,* they give further details on evaluation suggesting:

> The work of the organisation would be evaluated on its effectiveness in meeting stated objectives and on the results it achieves. More specifically it might examine the outcome of the programmes with regard to skills development and behavioural change (NYCI, 1978:12).

These early attempts to make youth work measurable do contain different concerns from those of today. In particular, it is evident that it would be controlled by professional youth work expertise as a means to govern voluntary workers and organisations:

> Professional youth workers have a crucial contribution to make in terms of expertise in assisting the development of voluntary organisations and in improving the effectiveness of the voluntary workers. The development of programmes with clear objectives and evaluation…call for appropriate professional input (ibid:3).

There was also a clear concern to respect the autonomy of voluntary organisations and the open-ended nature of the work underwritten by the rationality of subsidiarity:

> Youth organisations see themselves as accountable primarily to their members and leaders and to the local community. In receiving State grant aid, voluntary organisations must not contract away their freedom to pursue their own particular objectives and methods under their own particular inspiration and according to their understanding of the real needs of young people (ibid:11).

These are reminders that attempts to measure youth work's efficiency and effectiveness are not new, though they were of a different character. They remind us that current efforts to use scientific and accounting rationalities are not 'common sense' or natural but are socially constructed by the discourses and knowledges of our era. As such, they are contestable and are open to being reformed. Batsleer (2010:159) suggests the importance of drawing upon youth work history and 'inherited accounts' of youth work to find 'powerful counter narratives' against current policy trends and in favour of 'a developmental, associative, democratic social education practice'. Counter discourse in this context might include the development of alternative measurements of the value of youth work including its democratic, participatory and public value (Bowden and Lanigan, 2011). The work of O'Connor (2016) in producing a framework for understanding the societal value of the Irish voluntary sector in the face of oncoming commissioning models is a useful starting point.

This study does not have insight into the 'messy actualities' (Larner, 2000) of governing youth work. There are undoubtedly acts of refusal and resistance that organisations and youth workers engage in to complicate these governing efforts. However, collectivising amongst youth workers and youth work organisations is weak in the Irish context; no doubt years of competitive funding pressures have not helped. But youth work is made more amenable to governing when it can be individualised and when youth work ends up as a performer/competitor, performing competitively against other youth work organisations and workers. There is a need for greater efforts to work together alongside other organisations who must operate under the same performance gaze. Batsleer (2010:159), an advocate of democratic youth work suggests that 'there is a need to bring hope of the possibilities of collective voice' particularly for practitioners who feel marginalised from 'current power flows' and who seek to 'defend critical practice'. For practitioners who seek to defend democratic youth work, they will require the solidarity and support of others who think as they do so that they might 'share dilemmas' and engage in critical reflection (de St Croix, 2016:184).

One final point of challenge here is to reproblematise underperformance by addressing the possibility of redirecting the performance gaze back onto the 'principal'. One new development that I think offers just this opportunity to 'gaze back' is Article 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act (Government of Ireland, 2014). Article 42 of the Act refers to the 'Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty' where public bodies must eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights of all their stakeholders and in all of their work including as a policy maker. The implications of this legal duty to embed a human rights and equality culture in the public sector has significant potential if those interested in social justice can use it to pushback or gaze back. There is even a possibility that the duty might extend to services using public funding, though this is at the discretion of the Minister for Justice. The implementation of the duty is just starting to be discussed and I think there are opportunities to use this to argue for better performance (from the principal) in relation to young people's participation in deliberating on outcomes, service design and delivery (see HSE 2008).

Challenging: Youth Work as Unproven

The problematisation of youth work as unproven and requiring greater evidence is contested by many youth work authors in the UK (e.g. IDYW 2012; Issitt and Spence 2005; Spence, 200; Ord 2014; Davies 2011b). These writers and activists have reproblematised this 'problem' by examining the failures of positivist approaches for capturing youth work as a complex relational process. Instead, alternative ways of knowing youth work are put forward including storytelling approaches (Davies, 2011b; IDYW 2012; Spence et al, 2006), and attempts to reclaim evaluation as participatory and transformational (Duffy 2017a,b; Ord, 2014; Cooper 2011; 2012; de St Croix, 2017). Yet others have sought to underline the importance for practitioners of 'not knowing'. Both Lorenz (2009) and Coburn (2011) discusses the important role served by ambiguity, contradiction and uncertainty in youth work. For them, uncertainty is what drives constant reflection and assessment of youth work practices and offers a catalyst for learning. Their suggestions chime well with a poststructural position that youth work, like knowledge, is always in flux, never stable so that efforts to 'fix' youth work into manualised programmes make no sense when set in the dynamic reality of social relations.

In the Irish context, my concern is that contributions to the discussion about outcomes and evidence in youth work are mostly from researchers and organisations with a declared interest in evidence-based approaches (e.g. Bamber for CES, Forkan for Child and Family Research Centre in NUIG, Redmond for Foróige Best Practice Unit). These are advocates

for an ‘evidence industry’ and they are eager to evangelise on the methods and means to achieve ‘best practice’, but they fail to engage with the political context for EBP (see Bamber, 2013, see Forkan 2012). They attempt to separate evidence approaches, as just pragmatically being interested in ‘what works’, from what Denzin and Giardina (2008) describe as the ‘politics of evidence’. Many contributions from the youth work literature also seek to promote EBP without any obvious questioning about outcomes and evidence approaches and the creeping instrumentality inherent in such practices (e.g. Youth Work Scene 2013, Special Edition on Evidence).

However, there are some small openings for possible contestation that require attention. In 2013 a Working Group on Evidence was set up through the City of Dublin Youth Services Board (CDYSB) to encourage an ‘evidence conversation’ within the sector and promote the importance of harnessing practitioner knowledge (YNOW, 2013:40; CDYSB, 2013). This invitation for collective dialogue did not gain traction and further attempts are needed so as to attract support for critical examination of how best to engage with evidence approaches in Irish youth work. Rather than setting up a national forum, more locally based action learning groups might be worth considering.

As already stated, a deliberative forum was recommended in the VFMPR to bring together ‘officials, service providers and academics to weigh up the evidence and arrive at workable interpretations of the key messages that should inform policy’ and to ‘actively consider means of engaging young people in these deliberations’ (p 180). This forum has been operating but in a very controlled fashion. The manner in which ‘consultations’ have taken place and the controlled release of information from these processes is very troubling and requires challenge. We have to find the spaces in the contradictions of neoliberal governmentality to contest and challenge the undermining of open and open-ended youth work, as Rose points out:

> …a whole variety of spaces and practices of control are open for contestation, not in the name of universal principles of justice and the rule of law, but in the name of the capacities and obligations that have been conferred upon us by those who claim to govern us as ethical subjects of freedom. (Rose, 2000:337)

One final point here is to look to the possibility of creating, using and promoting alternative forms of evidence and outcomes. For example, members of Recovery in the Bin, have devised the ‘UnRecovery Star’ as a tool to undermine the use of narrow outcomes stars for measuring mental health recovery. They see the tool as promoting social justice and critical understandings of mental health, producing a political not just a personal analysis (Recovery in the Bin, 2017). Carter (2015) has produced a review on the political and social inclusion outcomes for young people. Marcus and Cunningham (2016) devised an ‘evidence gap map’ in relation to young people as agents and advocates of development. These are examples of

producing counter discourse to the narrow evidence and outcomes approach currently favoured by policy makers.

8.3 Self Problematisation

I have engaged in a process of reflexivity in this work in a number of ways. Wetherell (2001) identifies the following as contributions to reflexivity in critical discourse analysis studies: acknowledging normative stance (see Chapter 1); taking a perspective of the 'status of data and findings' as partial (see Chapter 1); using other genres of writing (see quotes from the novel, Hard Times throughout); reflective commentary on what this thesis does (see concluding remarks below); and self analysis (this section and research diary (see extracts in Appendix 7)). As part of the analysis process, the WPR researcher must engage in a 'demanding *activity*- subjecting one's own recommendations and proposals to a WPR analysis'. This 'self-problematisation' marks the final task of WPR (Bacchi, 2009). The aim of self-problematisation is to encourage the researcher to check that their own proposals, acting as means to govern, do not cause harm. This task is difficult. It requires acknowledging that as the researcher I am bound up in the same discourses that inform the VFMPR and I cannot step out of these to observe myself or my proposals from some innocent place. It requires acknowledging the contradictions in this piece of work that at one and the same time is part of taking up neoliberal subjectivity to 'improve' myself, be more 'productive' and yet seeking to work against these ideals as they might apply to young people and youth workers through the governing work of policies such as the VFMPR. Also, as I make proposals for challenge and change above these too silence other alternatives.

In the main I have advocated for a democratic model of youth work. Aristotle saw democracy as a means for maximising human potential through a commitment to shared rule by the people. Democracy is a cherished principle of liberal western societies, though it has been weakened by neoliberal rationality where liberty becomes equated with market freedom rather than political participation (Brown 2015). As the economic replaces the political and social domains, the demos is fragmented into 'only individuals and marketplaces' (ibid). For Brown, democracy is worth defending though she does not romanticise that existing democracy as perfect, rather it is always 'short of its promise'. In advocating that youth work might play a role in defending democratic principles, I am promoting ideals of association, conversation and participation – ideals that can be shut down by narrowly defined and state/expert prescribed outcomes. I am also envisioning the wider role that youth work can play in the political and policy domain – ideals that may be shut down by orientating youth work as only an economic agent, a 'service provider'. Following Brown, I do not imply that

previous iterations of youth work have always lived up to these ideals. Indeed Irish youth work has often governed young people in line with the conservative nature of Irish society (Jenkinson, 2013:14). The aim of enabling youth participation, real involvement of young people in decision making has often faltered too. But the potential, the *possibility* for such was stronger. Indeed the democratic youth subject was a key ideal of the Costello Report and these ideas influenced youth work policy until quite recently, this is worth remembering and defending.

In problematising and challenging the problematisations of youth work as underperforming and unproven, I do not wish to imply a naïve belief that standards of youth work and youth work practice have always been exemplary. Following many other youth work commentators (e.g. de St Croix, 2017; Duffy, 2017a, b; Cooper, 2018) I believe that evaluation and accountability in youth work is important but that the current emphasis on tight measurement is damaging to open-ended youth work. Accountability should primarily be to young people, communities and our youth work peers (see Appendix 8 for a framework I developed to explain this elsewhere) and evaluation as well as reflective practice has a role to play in supporting this and in helping to improve youth work. Both Duffy (2017a,b) and Cooper (2018), building on a long history of efforts to support youth work evaluation that adheres to youth work principles, offer new means to imagine participatory and transformative evaluation ideals and technologies. However, as de St Croix (2017) reminds us, all accountability systems are performative, though here I am suggesting approaches that might produce less harm.

Reviewing the challenges and proposals I have just set out, I ask who am I responsibilising? It would appear that many of my suggestions responsibilise the youth work sector, youth work organisations, youth workers and youth work advocates and academics. I wonder about this now. Is it harmful to lay the responsibility for resistance of neoliberal rationality at the door of people and organisations already vulnerable to the policy changes outlined in this work, after all, as Ball (2016) suggests, refusal is risky? I realise now, in this exercise, that my proposals do not directly challenge policy makers, philanthropic actors or knowledge brokers and this may be read as harmful, though I do argue that this work itself is a direct challenge to the policy makers who have produced and promoted it. On the other hand, I do not wish to produce an image of the youth work sector as weak or unable to engage in the politics of resistance or refusal. Sites of government are also sites of power and therefore sites of resistance (Ball, 2016). The sector has a long history of contesting policy, though mostly led here by national organisations. Nor do I wish to imply that resistance and refusal is not already happening in youth work practice, no doubt it is in many individual sites but as Ball (2016:1143) suggests, the challenge is to intensify and mobilise these. For many youth

work commentators, especially those defending democratic youth work, this means refusing to be individualised and creating alliances and collectives in support of alternatives ways of being (see IDYW, 2009; 2014).

Part 2: Reviewing this Study

8.4 Study Focus and Method

This research focused on critically analysing contemporary youth work policy in a context of neoliberal reform. It specifically focused on analysing one particular policy text – the Value for Money and Policy Review of Youth Programmes (VFMPR) (DCYA, 2014b). This text was chosen because of its intense interest in the conduct of youth work which included an 'examination' of youth work practice in 13 sample sites. This study sought to understand how the VFMPR policy attempts to govern the future conduct and shape of youth work and how this might be challenged. To achieve this, I drew upon governmentality perspectives to conceptualise policy as a governing technology that works through constructing problems and opening certain solutions. Policy as a governing technology also works by disseminating governing through its discourse which has both symbolic and material effects. Using governmentality theory also allowed me to pay attention to neoliberalism as a dominant rationality and I sought to understand the influence of this rationality in the work of the VFMPR policy discourse.

In support of the study aims I engaged the analytical framework called 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) (Bacchi, 2009, Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016) which has specific application to social policy analysis (Lister, 2010). This framework is theoretically informed by governmentality concerns and it supports a form of policy research that questions policy and the role it plays in ordering society. It starts from the assumption that all policy governs, not just by its content, but by the way it constructs the problems that require governing. It follows that policy as a governing technology also works by problematising its territory in particular ways so that solutions appear logical and inevitable. I applied this framework as a means to critically examine how policy governs youth work through problems. More specifically I applied this framework to an analysis of the VFMPR to analyse how this policy works to re-form youth work at the present time.

8.5 The Research Questions and Operational Map

Drawing from the study aims and the WPR framework I framed a set of research questions to shape the study. The main research questions were:

- How is youth work governed through problems constructed in policy? Specifically, how does the VFMPR policy work to govern and guide the conduct of youth work?

The sub questions that helped to guide the study towards answering these were:

- What are the problem representations of youth work within the VFMPR?
- How are these representations of youth work as problematic, constructed in the VFMPR policy discourse? What underlying rationalities give this discourse its legitimacy?
- What effects do these problem representations have for youth work?
- How can these problem representations of youth work evident in the VFMPR be challenged?

To operationalise the study, I created a map linking together the research questions, theoretical, conceptual and methodological aspects (see Appendix 9).

8.6 The Research Contribution

Youth work practitioners are struggling to keep pace with required changes and new technologies for practice such as the use of logic models, outcomes tools and the provision of 'evidence' (see YWI, 2013; 2016; Youth Work Scene, 2013). Practitioners have little time for constructing analysis of the policy shifts that have given rise to these new practice challenges. There are few academic contributions available in the Irish context, from which practitioners can draw to help either understand the nature of changes or to support policy advocacy on behalf of youth work. In my experience practitioners and youth work organisations are struggling to find an analysis that allows them to voice concerns about the challenges posed to practice by a new policy environment. On the ground, there is little time for in depth analysis of policy and yet it is so crucial. For me, policy is the mood music that plays in the background to practice. As we get lost in the everyday actions of the work we can forget to pay attention to that mood music: how it sweeps us along, how it makes us feel about the action and ourselves as actors. For youth work practitioners, this study may help to support analysis of the unfolding VFMPR reforms. The beginnings of this study in 2016 coincided with the beginning of the VFMPR reforms as seven 'sample' VFMPR pilot projects were announced for funding. With this in mind I believe this study is a timely contribution for those concerned with how youth work is being remade inside the black box of sample

projects. By analysing the policy work that very closely informs these projects, this study contributes background knowledge that can help to better understand and critique the remaking process at play.

The study underscores the importance that Davies (2010) attaches to policy analysis as a first and vital skill of youth work but more than that it offers an example of how this analysis can be carried out. Methodologically, this study is the first to apply WPR to youth work policy. The study contributes to youth work knowledge by modelling this application of the WPR model to Irish youth work policy analysis. The use of WPR offers great potential in the critical pedagogical process for the training of youth workers. This WPR model shares an interest in problem – posing work familiar to youth workers who are influenced by Freire. Since policy analysis is a core skill required of youth workers (Davies, 2010a) the WPR framework could add considerably to the critical policy analysis abilities of youth workers.

In terms of scholarship, this study contributes to the growing application of Foucauldian and governmentality theory in youth work. This has included analysis of youth work as discourse (Duffy, 2013; 2015); the use of discourse analysis to understand youth work (Devlin, 1989; Mackie et al, 2013); the role of youth work as government (Bradford, 2004; 2014); the analysis of risk as a governing technology in youth work (Bessant, 2003; 2008; Kemshall, 2009); the use of evaluation as a governing technology in youth work (Fitzsimons, 2007; Duffy, 2017a,b; de St Croix, 2017); the production of subject positions and subjectivities in youth work (Lohmeyer, 2017; Bradford, 2000; de St Croix, 2017); and the analysis of neoliberal restructuring of youth services (McGimpsey, 2017b; Youdell and McGimspey, 2015; Bright and Pugh, 2015). In the Irish context this study contributes to the community of scholars using governmentality to examine aspects of youth work (Swirak, 2013; 2015; Sargent, 2014) and youth work policy (Devlin, 1989; Kiely and Meade 2018). By drawing on and extending the work of these scholars, this study contributes to embedding governmentality perspectives as an important means of engaging in critical analysis in youth work. Additionally, this study addresses gaps in the academic literature relating to contemporary Irish youth work policy analysis.

In the broadest sense, part of the contribution of this study is to reproblematise the VFMPR, to interrupt its logic. The study offers one way to challenge the increasingly dominant neoliberal, economic, positivist, and evidence-based tendencies to be found in the discourse surrounding Irish youth work policy and practice. This WPR guided policy analysis offers itself as a ‘counter discursive activity’ (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:8). The most significant work of the VFMPR is to attempt to normalise the shift of the social to the economic by examining youth work as value for money. In that, there is something in this study for anyone

involved in ‘human services’ or in the Irish voluntary sector as both are increasingly subjected to neoliberal restructuring.

8.7 Limitations and Further Research

A key decision in this study was to focus on the analysis of policy documents only. By focusing on documents as the sole data source, a potential rich set of data from interviews with youth workers, youth policy advocates and policy makers are excluded from this analysis. This decision was taken despite reflections from many other WPR researchers that the addition of interview data had enriched and extended the WPR framework beyond a focus of policy documents.[82] This is a particular limitation in relation to an examination of the ‘lived effects’ of policy (question 5 of WPR). The scope of the analysis is also limited to official Government documents and publications over a relatively short period of time. Any such selection of documents and time periods results in leaving out other documents that might have been useful for the research and it excludes other discourses and perspectives on Government policy such as those from the youth sector itself.

The decision to focus on Government policy texts was both practical and purposive. At a practical level, the study faced time and word count constraints and these impacted on the scope of the research. The key focus was to analyse the VFMPR and I did consider extending the research out to interviewing those who has been involved in the steering committee for the VFMPR and the staff of new sample projects. However I realised that as reform developments were getting off the ground it was likely that the time was wrong for interviewing key informants because developments were so new. On a principled level, I felt that the policy text itself needed critical attention and interview data might distract from this.

I also reduced the scope of the study to analysis of Government policy texts that interacted with the VFMPR. I was conscious of the time involved in conducting WPR analysis, time spent searching, finding, reading interacting policy texts. Having started to gather and analyse material from the youth work sector I realised I would not have the time or space to do it justice and I opted to reduce the focus to just the government texts surrounding the VFMPR. In this decision I acknowledge that this research is incomplete. Also, by focusing on government texts, this study doesn’t get to the ‘messy actualities’ (Larner, 2000) of how policy is enacted by practitioners nor can it illuminate the practices of refusal and resistance that sometimes accompanies these enactments. On the other hand, I believe there is much

[82] A post structural interview analysis guide has been included in Bacchi’s latest work (see Bacchi & Bonham in Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016).

to be gained from analysis of Government policy because as a ‘discourse of status’ (Bacchi, 2009) it influences the main source of funding in Irish youth work (Kiely and Meade, 2018).

Acknowledging these limitations does point to potentially rich areas for future research. Firstly, it would be interesting to follow up this study by conducting an analysis of the youth work sector’s response to the VFMPR by analysing documents such as annual reports, policy submissions, annual reports and websites. Secondly, conducting interviews with the policy makers and advocates of the VFMPR would extend this research. Thirdly, an important follow up to this study would be to research the evolving VFMPR ‘sample’ projects. Following Brady and Lippert (2016), critical ethnographic approaches to undertake research of practices and practitioners would be very interesting here and would allow an in-depth account of the ‘lived effects’ and subjectification effects of policy. Following Ball et al (2012) and de St Croix (2017) such research would also facilitate an exploration of the ‘enactment’ of policy discourse within local sites (e.g. within youth work organisations, services and programmes) and the expressions of performativity, subjectivities and resistances to be found in these enactments.

8.8 Concluding Reflection

From the first reading of the VFMPR I was fascinated and troubled. How could this document be? How could youth work be under such intense scrutiny? I started out then to analyse its work. Along the way I have met practitioners, students, board members who have gotten excited upon hearing that I was researching the VFMPR. Most, though not all, of those people hoped I was doing something that might address the measurement of youth work. Often I felt I let people down when I explained it was an analysis and critique of the policy. I was producing more questions than answers, I was not “problem solving” - I was problem questioning. I have felt somewhat lonely in this journey and in the moments when I occupied my neoliberal self I questioned how ‘useful’ this research is. In my poststructural moments I saw it as a way to prod, myself and others, out of complacency that policy progresses youth work. As this dissertation draws to a close there is no firm conclusion or prescription for how to advance an open and open-ended youth work. What it does offer are some invitations for further thought. Much more *collective* dialogue is needed amongst Irish youth workers, activists and young people to support the remaking of youth work in ways that ‘govern with least domination’.

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Appendix 1: A Brief Description of Voluntary Youth Work Provision in Ireland

Youth work in Ireland has been, and continues to be, organised and delivered by the voluntary sector. The primacy of the voluntary sector's role in delivering youth work services is recognised by the Youth Work Act (2001). Historically, similar to other personal social services, the organisation and delivery of Irish youth work was tied up with the Catholic church and charitable provision (Dunne et al, 2014:5). Early youth work provision was therefore influenced by the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, thus ensuring the state played a minimal role until the 1960s when Church dominance declined (Devlin, 2010). This history distinguishes Irish youth work provision from that of the UK where it was mainly provided by the state (after the establishment of the welfare state in the 1940s). This is a point of contrast: current governmental analysis of neoliberal restructuring focuses on the shift from the state as provider to purchaser of services and locates the voluntary sector as part of the displacement of state services (e.g. Newman and Clarke, 2009) under a 'third way' mode of governing (Loyhemer, 2017). While neoliberal welfare restructuring in Ireland is underway, leveraged through managerialism, marketisation, governance, fiscalisation etc (see Dukelow and Murphy, 2016) there is not the same analysis of the voluntary sector as a newly elevated 'third way' solution to welfare provision. Instead, Ireland can be seen as a *more* mixed economy of welfare (Fanning, 2006), with a continuing reliance on a state funded voluntary sector but with an increasing range of private sector solutions being drawn upon. Additionally, the voluntary sector is currently undergoing neoliberal re-form through increased use of market like mechanisms associated with state funding such as contracts, outcomes, commissioning and increased regulation and governance.

Today Irish voluntary youth work provision is organised and delivered by over 40 national youth work organisations and a large number of local projects, clubs and programmes. There are estimated to be around 40,000 voluntary youth leaders and 1,400 paid youth workers involved in the provision of Irish youth work (Indecon, 2012:11). A number of recent studies of Irish voluntary youth work provision (Institute for Social Work and Social Education 2007, IVEA 2009, Powell et al 2010, Indecon 2012, Powell et al 2012, Dunne et al, 2014, Doran 2016) paint a picture of a significantly diverse set of youth work organisations that seek to address the non-formal educational needs of young people aged 10 to 24 years of age. Powell et al (2010:8) refer to the 'bifurcated nature' of Irish youth work as it displays significant distinctions between mainstream and targeted provision. According to Powell et al 's (2010:22) study, mainstream provision can include youth clubs, uniformed groups, youth cafés and youth information centres whilst targeted provision can refer to disadvantaged youth projects, youthreach centres, youth diversion projects and young people's facilities and services fund projects.

The institutional framework for Irish youth work provision involves a complex set of legislative, governance, policy and funding arrangements that situate voluntary youth work organisations in a formal relationship with the state. The Youth Work Act (Government of Ireland, 2001) provides a legislative basis for the definition and recognition of youth work in Ireland and it appointed the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) as a social partner to represent the youth work sector. It also made provision for the appointment of statutory based Youth Officers across the country whose role is to coordinate the provision of youth work in each county. The Education and Training Board Act (Government of Ireland, 2013) has reiterated the definition of youth work used in the 2001 Act.

The Youth Work Act (2001) established a statutory basis for the governance of Irish youth work provision. Afters over 100 years of voluntary based provision, and a minimal role for the state, the Act placed responsibility for ensuring the provision of youth work with the state. Governance responsibility for youth work in Ireland now lies primarily with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) set up in 2011. However, it previously was situated with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and there is still some cross departmental responsibility here since local ETB Youth Officers are governed by DES. The Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) also takes governance oversight of some aspects of youth work provision, specifically the Garda Diversion Projects (Dunne et al, 2014). The Health Service Executive (HSE) provides funding to local organisations and has a governance function at this level also. Youth work policy is made by the state as a strategic part of its governance role in relation to youth work provision. The Youth Work Act (2001) established a National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC) to have a role in governance arrangements between the voluntary youth work sector and the government in supporting policy developments.

Voluntary youth work provision substantially relies on funding from the state (Dunne et al, 2014). The main sources of state funding for youth work are the DCYA, the HSE and the DJE representing 78%, 11% and 11% respectively (Indecon, 2012: 41). There are complex arrangements for organising and distributing state funding via a range of about 14 different funding programmes (Dunne et al, 2014, Indecon, 2012). Funding often involves distribution through a range of organisations (e.g. national youth organisations, ETBs and regional youth work offices) before it reaches projects on the ground. For applicant organisations the funding process is complex and onerous since eligibility criteria to apply for funding programmes vary as do the evaluation reporting formats. Details of DCYA's most recent funding allocation are given in the following table:

Fund	**2017**
Special Projects for Youth	€14,764,857
Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (Round 1)	€5,542,994
Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (Round 2)	€13,309,620
Local Drugs Task Force Projects	€1,180,021
Targeted funds total	**€34,797,492**
Youth Information Centres	€1,277,390
Youth Service Grant Scheme	€10,651,765
Sample VFMPR Projects	€2,029,462
Local Youth Club Grant Scheme	€2,103,568
Youth Officer Allocation and Technical Assistance	€3,423,374
LGBTI+ Youth Strategy	€400,000
Other National Youth Organisations and Youth Initiatives	€1,635,281
DCYA Policy and Support Programmes	€476,669
New Initiatives and other funding streams within Department	€600,000
Total	€57,395,000

(Zappone, Dail Debates, 31st May, 2017)

Appendix 2: Summary of WPR Terms

'Problem' – designates what is assumed to be a real, obvious and simply existing problem relating to youth work and youth work provision as represented in DCYA policy discourse. By using quote marks, I am calling this designation into question, underscoring my claim that this is a socially constructed 'problem' – not a natural, logical or inevitable one.

Problem representation – designates a poststructural understanding of 'problems' as problem representations. This is used to indicate that what are assumed to be real and existing 'problems' are socially constructed and are just one way to represent an issue. WPR itself is written in such a way as to bring our attention to the notion that problems are represented and presented to us in particular ways – and there is governing work involved in this. Problems do not simply exist 'out there'. Problem representations 'are the implied problems in problematizations'.

Problematising –designates the broad process and activities by which 'problems' are brought into being using various ways of thinking (rationalities) and mobilising various technologies, knowledges and expertise (DCYA discourse can be seen as problematising youth work provision to create a set of 'problems' relating to youth work; This research can be seen as re-problematising the DCYA process of problematising youth work provision). A process of questioning – or bring something into question.

Problematisation

First meaning = Problematisation as an analytic practice. Foucault's first meaning of the term 'problematization' – as – "thinking problematically" (problematising or interrogating) (verb)

Second meaning - 'how something is put forward as a problem'. Designates both the end product of the process of problematising – it represents the arrived at problem AND the process by which it was arrived at. WPR analysis aims to deconstruct problematisations found in policy discourse. All policies *are* problematisations (noun)

Also it is a 'framing mechanism' that considers some things and leaves out others – in the construction of problems.

Policy as problematisation

- Constructs the problem (where once there was none)
- Proposes solutions (proposals, reform, intervention)
- Can have a particular frame or shape
- The construction of the problem and solution has implications/effects that are both symbolic and material
- And can impact on subjectivities/subject positions: dividing practices

(Adapted from Bacchi, 2009)

Appendix 3: VFMPR Full List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Recommendations of this VFMPR which are agreed should form part of a time-lined implementation plan, which DCYA officials should be responsible for.

Recommendation 2

The three youth programmes under review should be amalgamated into one funding scheme for targeted youth programmes.

Recommendation 3

The DCYA should design and construct a new performance-related governance system that is fit for purpose. Costs (including staffing resources), outputs and outcomes should be clearly specified as part of routine performance monitoring.

Recommendation 4

The governance capacity of the DCYA to manage performance should be enhanced. The required additional governance capacity for the programme should be sourced from existing Youth Officer time, requiring a rationalisation and replacement of professional effort from existing activities to governance oversight.

Recommendation 5

Overall demographic trends and the underlying patterns relating to the needs of young people outlined in this report should be clearly taken into account by the DCYA in terms of future prioritisation and the design of programmes.

Recommendation 6

The DCYA should require that local service planners, in identifying the groups of young people that will be engaged in a given year, include a quantified estimate of the differential need levels of the young people or groups of young people involved. This estimate should be based on clear demographic data and other local intelligence, and specify the operational means to assure appropriate engagement. The DCYA may wish to adapt the Hardiker Model as an overall frame of reference. DCYA output expectations and funding profile should reflect these more contoured assessments.

Recommendation 7

The DCYA should create new output counting rules to ensure fair comparability in terms of how and where service effort is deployed. This exercise should be routinely audited to improve national consistency in local assessments.

Recommendation 8

The DCYA should undertake a baseline exercise with all providers, working in conjunction with Pobal, to physically map the catchment area of each service to areas which are co-terminus with CSO units of measure.

Recommendation 9

The DCYA should create a deliberative forum involving officials, service providers and academics to weigh up the evidence and arrive at workable interpretations of the key messages that should inform policy and intervention choices. The forum should actively consider means of engaging young people in these deliberations.

Recommendation 10

The DCYA should construct a coherent logic model for targeted youth programmes, identifying the theory of change, specifying data collection points and giving clear direction in terms of methods of measurement.

Recommendation 11

The DCYA should adopt the seven outcome mechanisms identified in the literature review as a preliminary package of proximal outcomes for deliberation and which could form the focus point for service provider performance.

Recommendation 12

As part of the implementation plan, long-term governance arrangements should be kept under periodic review.

Focused Policy Assessment (FPA) recommendations

Two areas identified in this examination merit more detailed study and may be of benefit to other line departments. These are:

(a) Undertake an examination of the management arrangements in place by providers. This FPA should identify the types of supports or management overheads required by human service programmes, what should be expected in terms of output and outcome of the management supports, and to test these assumptions empirically. This FPA should be able to offer a means to compare provider costs and value for money.

(b) Undertake an audit of targeted funding for young people to identify the degree (if any) of service duplication for young people at local level.

Appendix 4: Data Archive

Sample 1: Full Archive Listing: 82 documents

Youth Work & Reform

National Youth Policy Committee (1984) *Final Report of the Costello Committee*, Dublin: Government Publications.

Dept of Education (1995) *White Paper on Education: Charting our Education Future*, Dublin: Government Publications.

Government of Ireland (2001) *Youth Work Act 2001*, Dublin: Government Publications.

Dept. of Education and Science (2003) *National Youth Work Development Plan 2003 – 2007*, Dublin: Government Publications.

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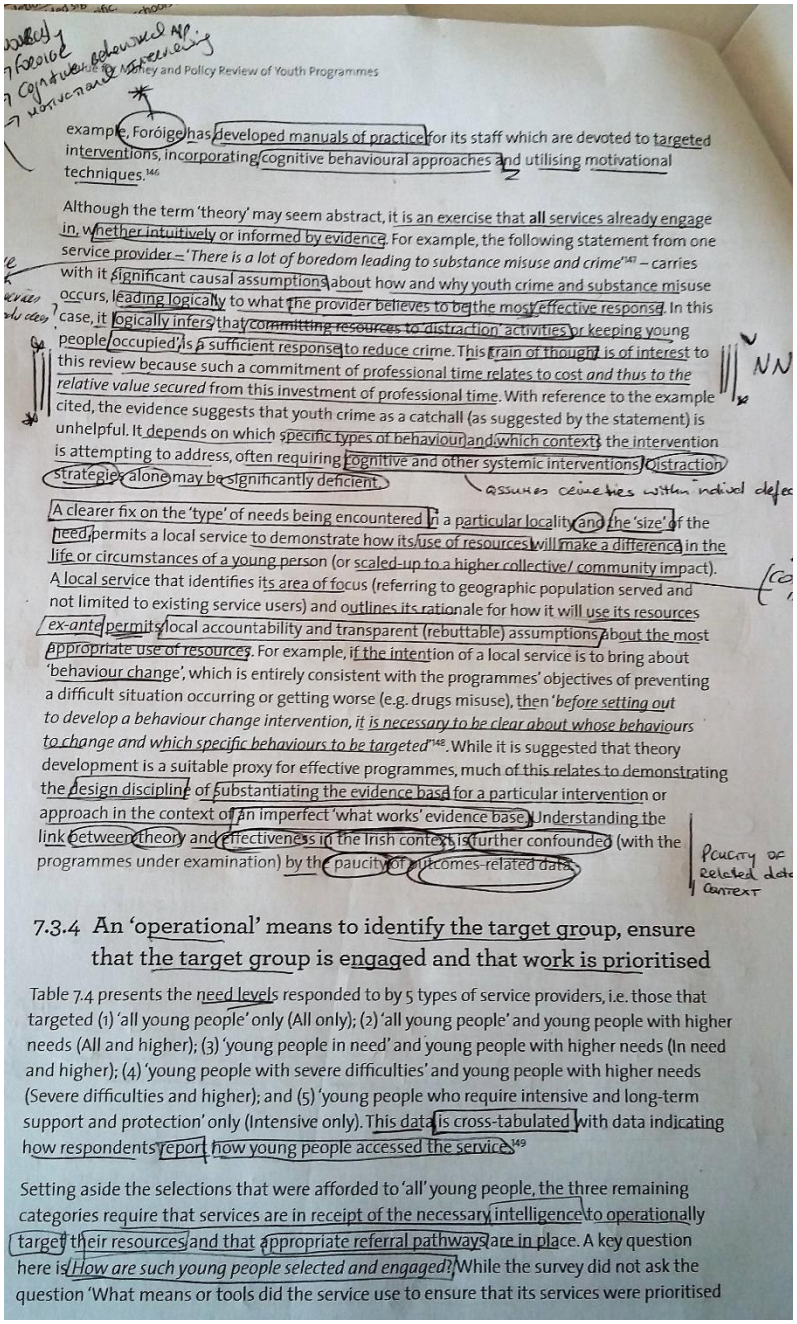
Sample 1: List of key threads in data gathering working outwards from the VFMPR

Interacting policy threads	Themes and links to VFMPR	Government Sources	Date Range	No. of Documents
Youth Work Policy and Reform	Changing ideas about value of youth work; emergence of outcomes and evidence; impact of austerity;	Department of Education, Office for Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Oireachtas	1984 - 2014	40
Public Sector Reform	Emergence of outcomes, NPM, ideas about marketisation; reform of services delivery in the Irish mixed economy; for voluntary sector	Dept. Public Expenditure& Reform, DCYA,	1994 - 2014	17
Children's Reform	Emergence of evidence and outcomes; Risk paradigm; Role of philanthropy, psychology, science	Dept. Health, Office for Minister for Children, DCYA	2000 - 2014	5 (Plus DCYA documents listed under Youth Work Reform)
Developments in Philanthropy	Rise of social investment and impact; emergence of science of outcomes and evidence; mix of investment and outcomes; emphasis on better services for children; role in lobbying Government; influence on both voluntary and statutory children's services; ideas about effectiveness of children's services; establishment of new knowledge expertise eg CES	Oireachtas, DPER, DCYA	2008 - 2014	3 (plus DCYA documents listed under Youth Work Reform)
Developments in the Voluntary Sector	Social partnership, charities regulation; governance of voluntary sector; references to impacts on voluntary sector involved in social services delivery; emergence of commissioning models; new funding mechanisms; marketisation and contracts v grant aid	Dept Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, Dept. Rural & Community Development, Oireachtas, DPER,	2000 - 2014	7 (Plus DPER documents listed under Public Sector Reform)
Strategic Government Developments eg Social Partnership Agreements, Action Plan on Jobs	Links to youth work; public sector reform; economic crisis and austerity	Dept of An Taoiseach, Dept. Business, Enterprise and Innovation	1994 - 2014	10

Appendix 5: Coding & Analysis Samples

Sample 1: Open/Initial Coding of VFMPR on Paper



Policy and Policy Review of Youth Programmes

example, Foróige has developed manuals of practice for its staff which are devoted to targeted interventions, incorporating cognitive behavioural approaches and utilising motivational techniques.[146]

Although the term 'theory' may seem abstract, it is an exercise that all services already engage in, whether intuitively or informed by evidence. For example, the following statement from one service provider – *'There is a lot of boredom leading to substance misuse and crime'*[147] – carries with it significant causal assumptions about how and why youth crime and substance misuse occurs, leading logically to what the provider believes to be the most effective response. In this case, it logically infers that committing resources to distraction activities or keeping young people occupied is a sufficient response to reduce crime. This train of thought is of interest to this review because such a commitment of professional time relates to cost *and thus to the relative value secured* from this investment of professional time. With reference to the example cited, the evidence suggests that youth crime as a catchall (as suggested by the statement) is unhelpful. It depends on which specific types of behaviour and which contexts the intervention is attempting to address, often requiring cognitive and other systemic interventions. Distraction strategies alone may be significantly deficient.

A clearer fix on the 'type' of needs being encountered in a particular locality and the 'size' of the need, permits a local service to demonstrate how its use of resources will make a difference in the life or circumstances of a young person (or scaled-up to a higher collective/ community impact). A local service that identifies its area of focus (referring to geographic population served and not limited to existing service users) and outlines its rationale for how it will use its resources *ex-ante* permits local accountability and transparent (rebuttable) assumptions about the most appropriate use of resources. For example, if the intention of a local service is to bring about 'behaviour change', which is entirely consistent with the programmes' objectives of preventing a difficult situation occurring or getting worse (e.g. drugs misuse), then *'before setting out to develop a behaviour change intervention, it is necessary to be clear about whose behaviours to change and which specific behaviours to be targeted'*[148]. While it is suggested that theory development is a suitable proxy for effective programmes, much of this relates to demonstrating the design discipline of substantiating the evidence base for a particular intervention or approach in the context of an imperfect 'what works' evidence base. Understanding the link between theory and effectiveness in the Irish context is further confounded (with the programmes under examination) by the paucity of outcomes-related data.

7.3.4 An 'operational' means to identify the target group, ensure that the target group is engaged and that work is prioritised

Table 7.4 presents the need levels responded to by 5 types of service providers, i.e. those that targeted (1) 'all young people' only (All only); (2) 'all young people' and young people with higher needs (All and higher); (3) 'young people in need' and young people with higher needs (In need and higher); (4) 'young people with severe difficulties' and young people with higher needs (Severe difficulties and higher); and (5) 'young people who require intensive and long-term support and protection' only (Intensive only). This data is cross-tabulated with data indicating how respondents report how young people accessed the services.[149]

Setting aside the selections that were afforded to 'all' young people, the three remaining categories require that services are in receipt of the necessary intelligence to operationally target their resources and that appropriate referral pathways are in place. A key question here is *How are such young people selected and engaged?* While the survey did not ask the question 'What means or tools did the service use to ensure that its services were prioritised

Sample 2: Early Node Hierarchy for Analysing VFMPR in NVivo

Name	Sources	References
contradictions	3	35
important quotes	1	14
VFMPR as Technology	1	9
Binaries	0	0
DCYA	0	0
History	1	2
Role	1	13
Youth Affairs Unit	1	11
Discourses of	0	0
Drug images	1	3
Machine images	1	2
Market language	1	3
best price	1	1
branding	1	1
competition	1	1
Contract	1	6
exchange	2	6
investment	1	4
portfolio	1	2
returns	1	1
positive brand	1	2
private sector	1	1
product	2	5
professional time & cost	1	3
purchase	1	6
commissioning	1	4
transaction	2	8
unit cost	1	7
neuroscience brain images	1	1
performance	1	1
Governing performance	1	11
Performance of DCYA YAU	1	3
Performance of youth programmes	1	5
Performance of service providers	1	3
Managing performance	0	0
Operational mgt	1	6
Mgt costs	1	5
Performance mgt	1	8
Measuring Performance	1	12
audit	1	3
comparison	1	30
Performance as judgement	1	2

standardisation	1	2
Using outcomes for perform measurement	2	26
Performance Problems	1	12
Knowledge used to support VFMPR views	1	1
Methodology used in VFMPR	0	0
Evaluation	0	0
Challenges in VFM eval	1	4
Measurement probs for VFM methodology	1	10
Eval as examination	1	14
Limitations of VFM Eval	2	8
Mixed Method Eval as solution	1	6
Purpose of VFMPR	1	22
VFM Terms of Ref	1	26
VFM Funding Scheme outcomes	1	4
CES Lit Review	1	11
proximal outcomes	1	3
Young Foundation	1	5
Hardiker used	1	6
Horwath VFM	1	18
Mayne contribution used	1	1
Population Data	1	10
Public spending code	1	5
balanced scorecard	1	2
Calculations	1	2
costs	1	3
numbers	1	5
VFM Guidance Manual 2007	1	2
Logic Model used	1	4
VMPR steering Committee	1	7
Methods	1	1
documents	1	9
interviews	1	5
site visits	1	3
Survey	2	5
References	1	7
BOBF	1	5
CRE	1	4
DCYA Dept Strategy	1	4
DCYA outcomes guidance	1	1
Devlin & Gunning	1	1
NYS	1	1
Systematic Lit Review	1	3
Problems in VFM	4	147

contested knowledge	1	13
EBPs as risky	1	4
Data	2	39
information asymmetry	1	3
intangible	1	1
local discretion	1	10
Poor measurement practices & tools	1	10
progress reports forms	1	6
questioning attitide to Yth Work	3	57
effective practice	1	5
making practice knowable	3	31
Youth Work refs	1	3
uncertainty	1	4
Promoted knowledge in VFMPR	0	0
certainty	1	1
evaluation knowledge & methods	1	2
Logic Model promoted	1	6
Mayne contribution promoted	1	5
Unit cost promoted	1	1
we value tool	1	2
Evidence industry	0	0
early intervention	1	1
Foroige BPU & NUIG	1	3
manualised programmes	1	1
RCT	2	15
evidence informed	1	2
science	1	2
USA	1	3
what works	1	6
Theory & Theory of Change	1	8
Young Foundation promoted	1	1
Hardiker promoted	1	6
motivational interviewing & cbt	1	4
NQSF	1	14
Quality	1	5
self assessment	1	4
outcomes knowledge	1	7
population knowledge	0	0
area population knowledge	1	1
yth population knowledge	1	2
shared knowledge	1	4
change stories	1	1
local knowledge	1	2
Philanthropy partners	1	2
Silences VFM	4	24

Cuts to funding	1	1
emotional labour	1	3
rural	1	3
starting where young people are at	1	1
structural analysis	1	2
yp rights to services	1	1
Silencing Youth Work	1	1
Solutions or Proposals identified in VFMPR	1	61
Subjectivities	0	0
VFM areas of investigation	0	0
yp rights to services	0	0

Sample 3: Later Thematic Node Hierarchy

Name	Sources	References
A stuff	3	81
Beyond youth work	1	7
Binaries	1	29
DCYA	1	56
Discourses of	3	105
Knowledge used to support VFMPR views	1	1
Methodology used in VFMPR	1	51
Methods	2	23
References	1	53
Performance	1	1
Problems in VFM	2	38
Conducting the VFM itself	0	0
Findings re Problems	2	8
Problematising youth work	1	1
State of knowledge re yth progs	1	24
Yth Progs existed prior to DCYA	1	5
Promoted knowledge in VFMPR	2	103
certainty	1	1
evaluation knowledge & methods	1	17
Evidence industry	2	33
Hardiker promoted	1	6
motivational interviewing & cbt	1	4
NQSF	1	23
outcomes knowledge	1	7
population knowledge	1	3
shared knowledge	1	9
Silences VFM	1	82
Cuts to funding	1	1
DCYA expenditure	1	1
emotional labour	1	3
rural	1	3
Silencing Youth Work	1	59
structural analysis	1	9
Voluntary Organisation Autonomy	1	4
Young People as central	1	2
Solutions or Proposals identified in VFMPR	1	12
Conclusions & recommendations	0	0
Governance solutions	0	0
Knowledge solutions	1	3
Reform Solutions	0	0
remaking youth work as something else	1	9

Subjectivities	1	176
Local areas	1	1
Workers	1	59
Young people	1	62
Youth Officers	1	19
Youth Work Organisations	1	35
Youth Programmes	0	0
z Sample project data DNQ	1	4

Sample 4: Extract of coded section of VFMPR in NVivo – Market Language (theme)

Name: Nodes\\VFMPR\\2 Thematic & WPR Coding\\Discourses of\Market language

<Internals\\Govt discourse yth wk\\DCYA Period 2011 - 2018\\2014 DCYA VFMPR> - § 51 references coded [1.33% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.02% Coverage

Unit cost: Refers to the funding per young person, calculated by dividing total funding in a service by the number of individual young people who participate over the year in the service.

Reference 2 - 0.01% Coverage

Efficiency is assessed by examining the unit cost per young person of each service. The unit costs are compared by need levels and governance model.

Reference 3 - 0.04% Coverage

Daily and annual participant numbers are examined and trends analysed for the years under review. Median daily and annual participant numbers are compared across services that provide for young people with different need levels. Unit costs are calculated using total funding and the total numbers of individual annual participants to measure efficiency. Trends in unit costs are examined and median unit costs are compared across need levels.

Reference 4 - 0.03% Coverage

The exchange between the front-line professional and the young person is the most important in targeted programmes. This interaction produces the desired policy change, an improvement in the young person's situation or circumstances. Therefore, any associated overhead cost or activity should demonstrate added value to this critical exchange

Reference 5 - 0.02% Coverage

Policy and programme implementation can rarely be realised in one simple and direct move, like by the push of a button linking policy objective with a successful outcome. In most cases, transaction costs apply.

Reference 6 - 0.03% Coverage

The governance system for youth programmes articulates expectations via funding agreements with service providers, common with many such statutory/ voluntary sector partnerships. In a general sense, therefore, it can be described as a contractual as opposed to a direct management relationship.

Reference 7 - 0.01% Coverage

These transaction costs were more difficult to decipher and locate. 'Management fee' reported in annual progress reports is the most distinguishable

Appendix 6: VFMPR List of Proximal Outcomes

7 Proximal Outcomes produced by the CES for the VFMPR (p163)

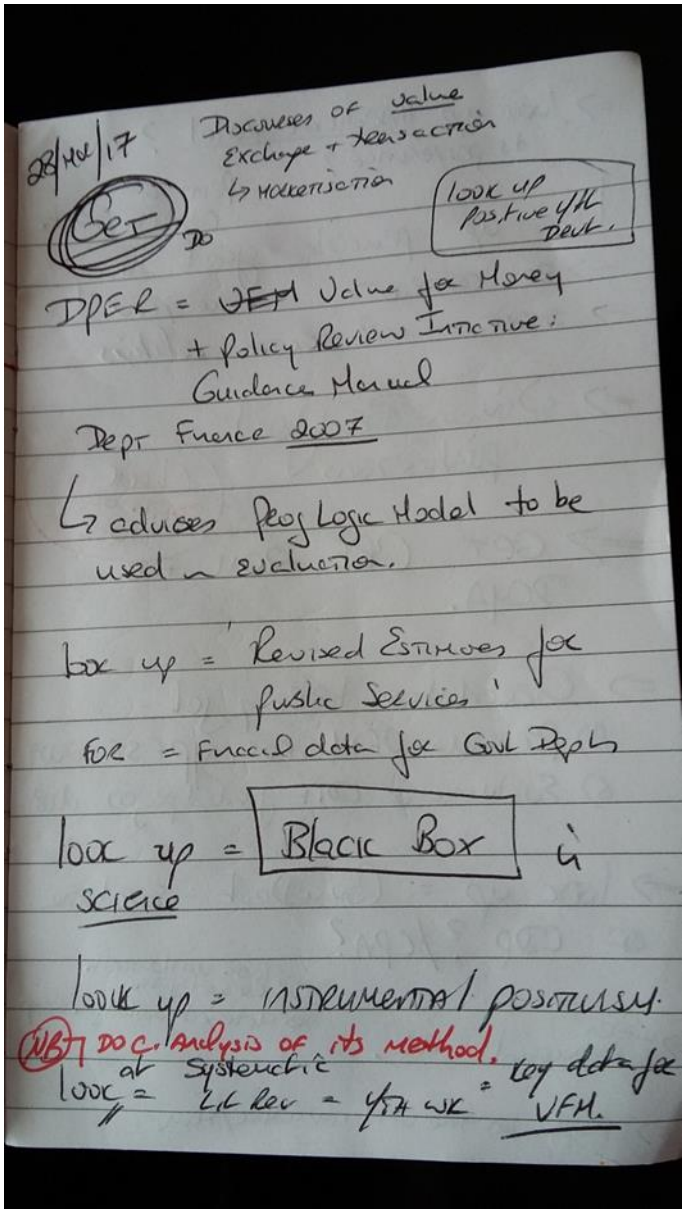
Table 3: Outcome areas relevant to DCYA policy objectives

Outcome area	Source
Communication skills are essential for a successful transition to work or training, for independence, and to access a range of life opportunities, to attainment, in forming positive relationships and in reductions in reoffending.	Clegg *et al* (1999) Rose (2006) Bercow (2008)
Confidence and agency enables young people to recognise that they can make a difference to their own lives and that effort has a purpose, is important to key outcomes such as career success. There is evidence of a link between positive outcomes and self-confidence.	Goodman and Gregg (2010) Dweck (2000)
Planning and problem-solving, alongside resilience, provides young people with a 'positive protective armour' against negative outcomes associated with risky life events. Problem-solving has also been shown to be associated with the ability to cope with stresses in life.	Turner (2000)
Relationships are an effective for getting young people involved in positive activities through valued personal relationships with peers, adults or siblings. A beneficial change in young people's relationships with other adults through their participation in positive activities can be transferred to academic learning and may lead to better outcomes.	Adamson *et al (*2011)
Creativity and imagination is related to resilience and well-being. Creativity can have a positive impact on both self-esteem and overall achievement.	Benard (2004) National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999)

Appendix 7: Research Diary

My research diary ended up being spread across many 'platforms' including Microsoft Onenote, Evernote and NNivo Memos and numerous paper notebooks (e.g. Sample 1). My notes on the research combined: notes on things to look up or get (see Sample 1); reflexive notes on my own process within the research (Sample 2); and useful observations for analysis ideas sometimes using mind mapping (Sample 3) as well as self problematisation reflections (Sample 4)

Sample 1: Things to Do



Sample 2: Reflection

‘The Scream’

I’m in the middle of a very close reading of the VFM document. If I could pick an image to sum up my reaction to it, it would be ‘The Scream’. This would represent the frustration (mentioned twice in the document) I sense bouncing off the text. The text is a scream for order and for certainty and frustration with the messiness of ‘human services’ and youth work in particular. ‘The Scream’ would also represent my scream back, my frustration and questioning, who says there is a problem, who says we need this order and why and who needs this order and for what purposes and! order and certainty are not possible anyway? Two competing screams, facing each other, two competing ways of looking at the world. I want to try to understand how youth work policy can look like this now, in 2017. It didn’t always look like this. Excerpt from Research Diary 29th March, 2017

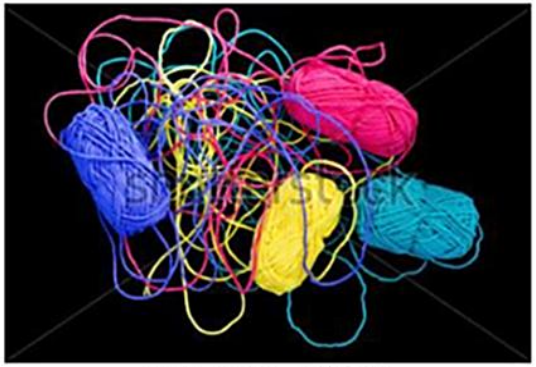
Sample 3: Ideas for Analysis (next page)

Themes from VFM

Monday 3 April 2017 13:28

1. **Youth Work as Governmentality** - Outcomes

"The Solution"
Governmentality
Bio power - youth & social policy - governing populations
Governing youth through youth work
Governing youth work through outcomes
Outcomes as the mechanism for governing subjectivity of young people and youth workers
Tools and technologies
Experts and 'youth professionals'
Governing



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2. **Youth Work as Lean**

"The Challenge"
Efficiency, effectiveness and economy- **Value for Money**
Yth wk as a human welfare service - as a market product and service
Youth work - as transaction, exchange, investment
Yth work as - portfolio of programmes
Youth work versus off the peg purchasing
Youth wk as necessary intervention vs market solution
Restructured welfare state - REFORM
Reform of public services (DCYA and partic Youth Affairs Unit)
Neoliberalism - discursive practice
Marketisation, competition, NPM, commissioning
Conditionality, activation, incentive & sanction (of individual recipients AND of provider organisations)
Human services 'production'
Voluntary organisations and reship with state - contracts etc - shifting relaship between sector and state
Performance management, evaluation, measurement
Outcomes and evidence, risk mgt
Nudge theory?
State = shadow employer/manager
Youth work in the service of the State
Comparing poor and excellent providers (dividing practices - VFM creates a new category BETWEEN providers)
Nudging - soft NPM Irish style

Assemblage - all these themes interplay with each other
Problems identified in VFM
Lack of data
Lack of governance, oversight and performance mgt
Information asymmetry between Dept & local providers(they have too much discretion - ie lacks managerialism)
Black Boxed - Youth work is the problem
In the Black - Youth work or youth intervention is the solution? Contradiction - as it calls on and finally attempts to bring in 'human relationship'
Totally silent on - youth work as a public good; young people and right to services/safe spaces; young people and right to civil society space
"In the Black" = play on an accountancy term that means having a positive net worth - but juxtaposed to youth work being blacked out or black boxed in the VFM process - contradiction
Silenced - **youth work itself is silent/silenced** and youth work knowledge, practitioner knowledge
Silenced - social analysis, political analysis
Silenced - values (youth work) and of evaluators
Reductionist - criteria for targeting - ignored social isolation (rural), poverty is downplayed, youth homelessness underestimated? Didn't explore new areas for marginalisation and young people (vs BOBF)
Doesn't reference BOBF at all
What (kind of) youth-work or work with youth is made possible by the constituting influence of VFM
Implies - youth work is a problem, lacks proof/credibility, lacks form basis - makes reader question (lack of accountability, creates suspicion - youth workers didn't know 'things' when interviewed, when cross checked data was found to be 'incorrect' - as lack accountability..implicit lack of trust in believing the accounts of youth work given by workers and young people

4. **Youth Work as Risky** - Accountability

"The Problem"
Local and professional discretion is a problem
Lack of validity and reliability
Lack of data
Lack of good quality data
Lack of certainty - RCT data
Incorrect data provided; youth workers didn't 'know' things when interviewed
Relying on 'relationship' is a problem
Emotional labour is black boxed - relationship, process
Risk narrative - re you people AND implied re youth work
Risk associated with working with risky young people
Risk - re governance and oversight by YAU
Risk - of complexity
Risk for DCYA in services
Risk science - mitigating risk
Purchasing certainty
Invoking the taxpayer

3. **Youth Work as Black Box** - Evidence (Science)

"The Examination"
Youth work is completely silenced and bracketed out
Knowledge production, research, evidence
Sociology of knowledge, social science knowledge (SSK)
Search for certainty and proof
Measurement
Challenges of complexity - leads to black boxing youth work
Psychology (Psy orthodoxy) and science -
Logic models, theory of change, search for causality - RCTs
Evaluation theory - nb
Nature of knowledge - ontology and epistemology
Discourse of science
Instrumentalism
Black Boxed - silenced within the doc, yet inherently implied in each page and comment...tactically not named or mentioned with a small number of exceptions
NQSF (undermined/under valued/ under evidenced = black boxed (literally)
Evaluating - Examining

5. **Youth-Work as Liminal Space - In Flux**

Travelling - changing
Youth **intervention** - is valuable and valid
Targeting - (geo targeting)
Narrowing - (7 proximal outcomes)
Reduction...to what?
Restructuring - collapsing funding streams;
ETB Officer - line mgt
Possible move to TUSLA???
From youth work to positive youth development?
From **values to value..**
Contradictions with other official policy discourse that invokes "youth work" as solution - BOBF and Youth Strategy re - broader set of outcomes for young people

Sample 4 – Self Problematisation Reflections

WPR is unsettling (extract 23rd February, 2018)

My innocence in relation to the welfare state as a good thing has been challenged - when seen from the perspective of governmentality - that the welfare system governs and regulates individuals

My 'romantic humanism' is challenged re - a better youth work of the past - is similarly challenged in this context - that all youth work governs and is governed

As if the challenge - of the present and future - how to search for or promote 'less harmful' modes

Post structural research seeks to unsettle what is taken for granted (out there)

But if you engage with it as a research - it unsettles you (in here) too

Im also unsettled most of the time - second guessing/checking myself with regard to committing some sort ontological offence - if I say this - I cannot say that! I find it difficult to hold all the threads together at the one time. This is because using a Foucauldian informed approach turns normative and "normal" sociological approaches to qlr (especially structural/Marxist) upside down…it is like relearning things

Bacchi says - you are supposed to feel uncomfortable

I need to remind myself Im NOT looking for causes or causal links, or saying this reform here triggered this reform there - all are discourses - interacting with each other at this present

A Letter to Carol Bacchi (extract, 24th April 2018)

Dear Carol,

As I read your work I was introduced to Foucault, poststructuralism, governmentality as well as WPR. It has taken me an enormous amount of time and reading to even begin to appreciate the poststructural approach and theoretical position, alongside governmentality etc. Along the way, and still today, it is challenging to engage with this approach. In particular there are challenges for me given that I have 'trained' in a very strong 'romantic' humanist tradition that imbues the area of youth work (ideas of democracy, participation, empowerment, structural analysis, people power etc.) so I definitely need to reflect on this as part of the 'self problematisation' process!

The legacy of Catholic subsidiarity (extract 10th May, 2018)

I'm reading Powell's (2017:165) account of the development of the Irish welfare state and it makes me think about the long legacy of subsidiarity thinking in the Irish context, deeply influenced by Catholic social thought, that portrays 'etatism or state control as a social heresy'. I have this realisation that my own involvement in voluntary youth work has influenced my positioning in this dissertation – that has its roots (whether I like to admit it or not) in this Catholic subsidiarity principle – that views state control/involvement as unwelcome…and rests on assumptions of local control through voluntary association…with my assumptions of this as a certain kind of freedom…but with a dawning realisation now that my assumptions are embedded in a history of Catholic governance.

Appendix 8: Proving or Improving Youth Work

Possible characteristics to expect of an outcomes and evidence approach when the purpose is to use them for:	
Proving Youth Work	**Improving Youth Work**
Approach to measurement and evidence	
Prioritises objective, proven knowledge generated by scientific research. Important measurements could be randomised control trials; psychological measures of behaviour. Statistics and quantifiable measurements are important. Evidence based practice approach (EBP).	Acknowledges a variety of different kinds of reliable knowledge - 'statistics and stories' generated by a variety of stakeholders including practitioners and their practice wisdom. Evidence informed practice approach (EIP)
Youth Work Outcomes measured	
Focuses on outcomes for individual young people in terms of psychological measures of personal and social well being,	Acknowledges youth work outcomes beyond individual change, including social change and policy change outcomes.
Aids Judgements in Relation to	
Success in achieving pre determined outcomes, aligned with funder/government objectives. Value for money. Standardised measurement allows comparison between youth services and aids decision about which to fund/or not.	Progress, quality and the continuous improvement of the youth work programme or service being considered.
Accountability	
Is primarily upwards to funders and policy makers and takes the form of value for money and adherence to standards. External scrutiny (audit and inspection) is the basis for accountability.	Is primarily outwards to young people and the youth service employer and other youth workers/ profession, utilises peer review and communicates youth work to other stakeholders. Internal scrutiny (personal, professional and organisational) is the primary basis for accountability though external scrutiny occurs as well.
Policy Context	
'Hard' – clear New Public Management drivers for outcomes and evidence; close associations between use of EBP and attempts to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and economy of youth work; 'policy' decision making is to be based on rational and technical evidence	'Soft' – the use of outcomes and evidence is attractive for policy makers but with less clear adherence to NPM drivers and to EBP principles as a method to inform policy decision making.

Appendix 9: Operational Map

Governing Youth Work Through Problems: A WPR analysis of the VFMPR				
How is youth work governed through problems constructed in policy? Specifically, how does the VFMPR policy work to govern and guide the conduct of youth work?				
Research Questions	7 Cs tasks & WPR Prompts	Governmentality themes & concepts	Analysis tasks	Methodological tasks
How is youth work represented as problematic for governing within the VFMPR? What are the problem representations of youth work within the VFMPR policy discourse?	Q.1Clarify	Problems and proposals; governing through problems, problem representations; policy as problematisation	Work backwards Implicit/explicit Analyse interrelated policies Identify, describe, classify problems	Problems Solutions Dominant problems Word frequencies
How are these representations of youth work as problematic constructed in the VFMPR policy discourse and what underlying rationalities give this discourse its legitimacy?	Contextualise & (de)Construct Q.2, Q.3 and Q6.a	Rationalities; technologies; discourse, knowledges; expertise and technologies; conditions of possibility; power/knowledge history of the present; governing beyond the state; policy actors and agencies; policy as discourse; policy as governing technology	Analyse discourse Describe how the problem is constructed Consider history – look at contested nature of the problem over time Genealogy – trace backwards through interacting policy developments How does a prob rep come to dominate or get legitimacy? Spread of the problem and its authorisation – who sustains it? How do prob reps reach their target audience? Destabilise	Multiple knowledges drawn upon Unexamined ways of thinking Policy language Word frequency Patterns by looking across policies, rationalities Binaries Concepts and categories used Repeated assumptions Competing rationalities Policy history – tracing backwards; randomness Macro issues – e.g. neoliberalism Policy travel Role of policy actors Role of expertise
What implications do these problem representations have for youth work?	Critique Q.4a, Q5	Silences; Effects/Implications knowledge/power; Subjectivities; governing from a distance; dividing practices; policy as discourse; policy as re-forming	Describe the weaknesses in the prob reps and point to the harm – what is at stake Critical analysis of the limits or faults in problems – what is left out. Critical analysis of who is harmed Assess more and less harmful effects What's the long-term impact? Look at dividing practices Critically analyse	Inadequacies in the prob rep Contradictions/tensions in and between prob reps Contingencies – why a problem here and not there? Silences - what's left out Contrasting policy vs other discourses Uneven effects - harm Discursive effects – what it is possible to think/say. Subject positions Subjectivity Dividing practices – who is made responsible Material Silencing = an effect; subjugated knowledge = an effect
How can these problem representations of youth work constructed in the VFMPR be challenged?	Challenge Q.4b and Q6b	Alternatives; political aims; finding alternatives or replacement discourses; resistance; counter/reverse discourse; re-problematising	Find & Offer alternatives Find alternatives – think otherwise Re-problematise Be inventive Resistance Disruption	Pay attention to: existence and possibility of contestation Contradictions and tensions in and between prob reps Find and offer alternatives
	Contemplate Q.7	Self-problematisation		
	Conclude	Thesis conclusion		

But my project is precisely to bring it about that they 'no longer know what to do', so that the acts, gestures, discourses which up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous. This effect is intentional. (Foucault, 1991: 83)