Young People and Development: The Role of Global Youth Work in Engagement and Learning

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Introduction

In this chapter I will outline the definitions and principles of what is known as global youth work and relate this to learning and development in the wider youth work sector. I will also look at how global youth work has been interpreted and what makes it distinctive, in terms of its approach, agenda and intended outcomes; be it young people's personal, social and political development or awareness of global development issues. Historically many local government youth services and voluntary and community sector organisations in the UK and Ireland have explored global issues with young people through international work, including youth exchanges, links and intercultural learning as distinct curriculum areas. However this work has always been constrained by the limited funding available and a lack of understanding of the value of this work as a core activity at a strategic level within the youth work and development education (DE) sectors and government departments. This chapter will identify some of the perceived differences between global youth work and school based development education in regard to aims and methodology, in particular youth work's principle of 'voluntarism' and a desire to be 'action focused' involving the active participation of young people in curriculum design and delivery.

Global Youth Work and Development Education

Development education approaches to work with young people have often focused on the classroom and drawn on an understanding of the value of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

For example the use of group work, role play and simulation games (see the *Global Dimension* website, Think Global 2013). Much of this work takes place within the formal context of school, with associated standards of pupil behaviour and limited scope for critical questioning of the status quo, authority and power within these structures (Elias, 1976). This approach reflects the belief that to reach a wide youth audience schools are the most direct and economical route, where work can be undertaken in a structured environment and learning outcomes can be controlled and measured in line with national curricula. However it could be suggested that there is limited scope for the implementation of the principles and methodologies of 'popular education' or education for 'critical consciousness' as advocated by John Dewey (1933) and Paulo Freire (1972), amongst others, in this Western, European school setting in which young people are often subject to a directive approach involving low levels of meaningful participation (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1992). Farthing (2012: 3) suggests, participation is 'a process where young people, as active citizens, take part in, express views on, and have decision-making power about issues that affect them'.

We know that not all young people are engaged with learning at school but they can still benefit from and contribute to development education in informal settings. This is reflected in the work of the development agency Y-Care International which has found that:

> "[T]he majority of the young people we work with in the UK and Ireland are from marginalised backgrounds. As these young people are not reached through the formal education sector, we believe that global youth work is a far more relevant tool than development education" (Y-Care International, 2013).

This is approach is evident in Y-Care's innovative 'Guns, Gang and Knives' project with gang members, and the 'Global Youth Work Behind Bars' project with young offenders (see http://www.ycareinternational.org). I propose that a youth work approach closely resembles the

empowering methodologies advocated by educationalists such as Freire, as youth work takes place in an informal community context, where voluntary participation can lead to a more equal relationship between the learner and educator (Rogers, 1969). This has the potential to empower young people, and for the aims and aspirations of development education to truly flourish.

Global youth work is a form of development education. However, what distinguishes global youth from DE is that it starts from young people's own perspectives and experiences and develops a negotiated agenda for learning. Global youth work also focuses primarily on the impact of globalisation on the lives of young people and communities rather than education about the *development* and *underdevelopment* of countries (DEA, 2007). Although development education shares many of the values and principles that underpin effective youth work, it often has its own agenda from the outset, linked to specific campaigns or concerns and has historically taken place in more formal educational settings. As Y-Care puts it: 'what distinguishes global youth work from development education is its focus on young people taking action - it empowers them to make a decision to do something positive about the issues they learn about' (Y-Care International, 2013).

Youth Work Principles

Tony Jeffs and Mark Smith suggest 'informal education' is the main distinguishing feature of youth work and youth workers should be concerned with:

- 'Focusing on young people
- Emphasising voluntary participation and relationships
- Committing to association
- Being friendly and informal, and acting with integrity

- The education and, more broadly the welfare of young people' (Jeffs and Smith, 2005).

The elements that make youth work a distinctive and powerful form of education are reflected in the established definitions of youth work; where the content of the curriculum is less important than the principles of dialogue, voluntarism and participation. The English National Youth Agency (NYA, 2013) defines the purpose of the work as to: 'facilitate and support young people's growth through dependence to interdependence, by encouraging their personal and social development and enabling them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and society'. This definition goes further to suggest that:

> "Youth Work offers both 'planned' (non-formal) 'and spontaneous' (informal) opportunities for people to learn through experience about self, others and society. Youth Work occurs when young people learn by interacting with their peers and others, share a range of new experiences which extend, challenge and excite the individual, and have opportunities for reflection, planning and action" (NYA, 2013).

This is reflected in the Republic of Ireland where the Youth Work Act 2001 states youth work to be: 'a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary participation' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2001: 7). Williamson (2007) usefully summarises the key elements of youth work, suggesting that it is often portrayed as follows:

- "Its goals relate to the personal and social development of young people
- Its methods are embedded in personal relationships and experiential learning

- Its values are based on voluntarism, working from the interests of young people and winning their consent rather than coercing their compliance" (2001: 38).

This 'winning of young people's consent' and therefore their participation in a conversation, activity or a programme is key to youth work; an educational process which is based on relationships and dialogue, where the principle of voluntary engagement is central. It has been suggested by Jeffs and Smith (2005) and others that it is this 'experiential learning' that underpins youth work, and similarly development education places some emphasis on this approach. It is this approach that is primarily based on the assumption that: 'we can act upon our experiences rather than simply having them. It is this process of drawing out meaning from experience, often through reflection and discussion with others, which extends and deepens that experience, freeing us to learn from it' (Crosby, 2005: 54).

One of the central roles of the youth worker is to enable the young person to reflect upon, and consequently learn from, their day to day personal experiences. Youth workers should be proactive and seek to initiate and facilitate experiences which young people will learn from. Jeffs and Smith (2005) propose that education can be viewed on a spectrum, from a more idealistic 'conversation based' informal education ('free association' youth work) through a 'negotiated curriculum' ('non-formal' structured programmes of activity), towards the set curriculum of formal education (e.g. secondary school). Global youth work can be seen to be located between the 'informal' and 'non-formal'.

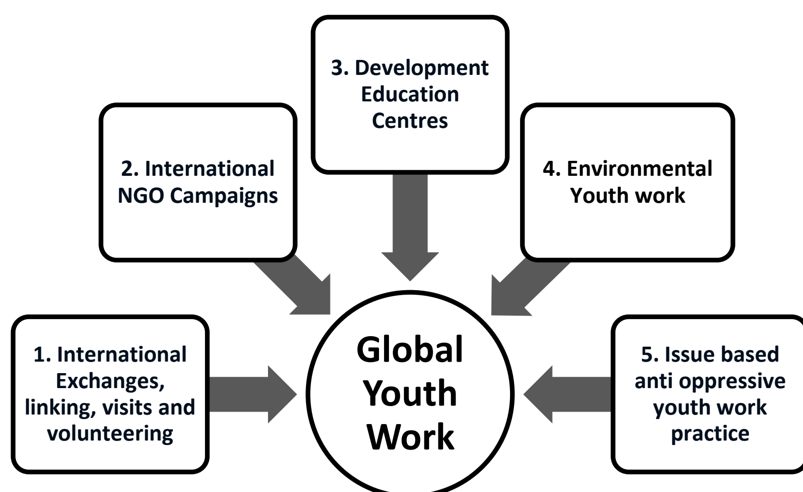
Definitions of global youth work offered by development agencies and others (Think Global for example) emphasise the *informal educational* nature of the work. However the manner in which much of the work with young people is delivered is centred on the *non-*

formal, where there is a structure and it is organised by the educator (youth worker) to specific ends (Ord, 2007).

Approaches to global youth work

The development of the term global youth work can be traced back to 1995 and the *World of Difference* report by Bourn and McCollum. This research report aimed to 'give an overview of development education within youth work in the UK' (1995: 6), and concluded that 'rather than promoting development education within youth work, one should be using the phrase "making global connections and promoting global perspectives"' (Ibid., 94). This was the first step towards the notion of a distinctive 'global youth work' rather than development education with young people in the UK. In Figure 1 I have indicated the different types of work with young people that have an international or global dimension, and which have given rise to the concept of global youth work. All of these approaches have a global dimension but not all reflect the values of that which would later be termed 'global youth work'.

Figure 1



(Adams, 2014)

If we look at these areas in turn we can identify their contribution to the development of global youth work:

International exchanges, linking, visits, and volunteering have essentially been about the mobility of young people and the resulting personal and social development and intercultural learning that takes place as result (Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council [CYEC], 2013). There is a long history of these types of approaches within youth work organisations in the UK and Ireland and they continue to be delivered often based on historical, community or individual links with particular countries e.g. within the Commonwealth by members of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.

International Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) campaigns have again contained an element of awareness raising, aimed at engaging young people in fundraising and or contributing to specific campaigns. A powerful example of this was the Make Poverty History Campaign in 2005.

A relatively small number of Development Education Centres in the UK and Ireland have organised youth work events, projects and workshops to engage young people in development education and curriculum led activities, alongside the loan of educational

resources to local youth workers. Some have developed more strategic responses in recent times for example the Global Youth Work Partnership East Midlands (GYWPEM) which involves a range of organisations in regional youth work events and training.

Environmental issues have long been a concern for some youth workers; in particular those in voluntary sector youth work organisations such as the Scouts and Woodcraft Folk, where this is reflected in their missions and programmes. In addition awareness raising work within organisations such as Friends of the Earth, who are concerned with reaching young people with messages about sustainability, lifestyle choices and specific campaigns.

There has been a long and rich history of 'issue based' anti oppressive practice in the youth work sector. Anti racist and anti-sexist approaches in particular have an inherent international dimension linked closely to the discrimination faced by young people from BME communities and young women (see Chauhan, 1989; Batsleer, 2013). From the 1960s we also saw a focus on sexuality and disability as distinct foci of youth work practice (Davies, 1999) and these again have often drawn on experiences, models, inspiration and solidarity from across the world. An anti-discriminatory approach is also reflected in the key principles and National Occupational Standards of youth work including 'Value equality of opportunity and diversity, challenging oppression and discrimination' (LSI, 2012: 42).

The Development Education Association (DEA), now Think Global, set out a definition and a range of principles of global youth work in a *Global Youth Work Training and Practice Manual*. It states that global youth work:

- "[S]tarts from young people's everyday experiences;
- engages them in critical analysis of local and global influences on their lives and communities;

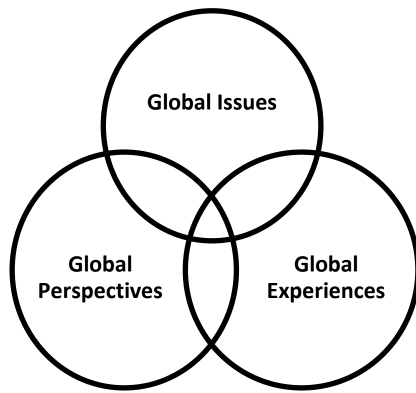
- raises awareness of globalisation, the world's history and rich diversity of peoples, particularly in relation to issues of justice and equity;
- encourages young people to explore the relationships and links between their personal lives and the local and global communities;
- seeks young people's active participation to build alliances and create change, locally and globally" (DEA, 2007: 21).

The emphasis on globalisation as the key term seeks to replace terms such as international work, international dimension to youth work, or development education with young people. It has sought to place global youth work firmly in the tradition of youth work, aligning it with the principles of informal education with an added emphasis on young people taking action and recognising an unequal process of globalisation. These principles are supported within the Republic of Ireland by McCrea and Sheehan (2008) whom, whilst utilising the term development education, suggest that:

> "[D]evelopment education places young people at the heart of the learning process. It starts with their experiences, perspectives and ideas and provides them with an opportunity to explore and take action on issues which are important to them and it shares many of the same principles as good youth work. These include starting with and valuing young people's own views, learning through participation and promoting equality, responsibility and mutual respect" (McCrea and Sheehan, 2008: 53, 55).

Woolley's *Global Dimension in Youth Work conceptual model* (2009) seeks to explain the elements which are essential to the understanding and delivery of global youth work. He suggests three essential components are required to be in place to ensure that a comprehensive picture is offered which adheres to the key principles of global youth work.

Figure 2



(Based on Woolley, 2009)

To paraphrase Woolley, *global issues* are essentially the content or topic to be addressed with young people such as HIV/AIDS or child labour, which have both a local and global dimension. *Global perspectives* are about the inclusion of voices of peoples from the 'global south', whether they are in the UK or elsewhere (this can be linked to elements of issue based anti-oppressive youth work mentioned earlier). *Global experiences* are concerned with the creation of experiences of a 'global' nature, for example youth exchanges, international trips or linking people by utilising technology like Skype. Any of these in isolation can be valuable for young people's personal and social development, but all elements need to be addressed to result in global youth work's desired outcomes, as identified by the DEA:

'Knowledge and understanding - young people may develop knowledge and critical understanding of:

• local, national and global societies and cultures;

• the global dimensions of the world around them;

• the role of human rights locally and globally;

• the impact of personal or local action on global events.

Skills - young people may develop the ability to:

• analyse issues critically;

• carry out enquiries;

• challenge their own and others' attitudes;

• build alliances;

• show empathy;

• participate in activities.

Attitudes - young people may develop attitudes that demonstrate:

• self-respect;

• self-awareness;

• support for justice and fairness;

• open-mindedness;

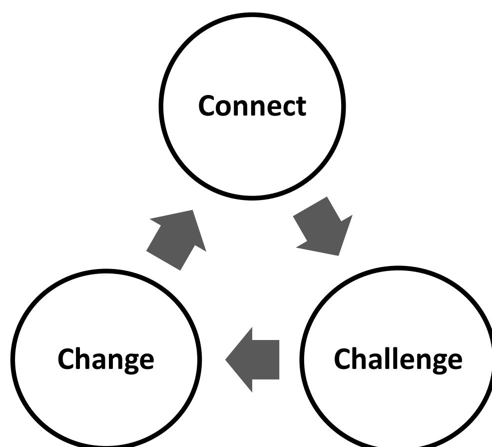
• a global perspective on their world;

• an orientation toward action' (DEA, 2007: 25).

In 2010 the DEA's Global Youth Action (GYA) programme developed a model of global youth work based on a youth action approach. The Centre for Social Action (2007: 5) define youth action as a 'way of supporting young people to develop and lead' and 'giving young people opportunities to play a key role in the design, delivery and evaluation of projects' including peer education. The GYA programme was instrumental in the development of a reflective practice model titled Connect, Challenge, Change (CCC). The CCC model could be seen as an attempt to make sense of the practice of global youth work in a substantial Global Youth Action programme over five years. The project suggested:

> “[W]e help *connect* young people to the global issues that matter to them. We support them to make the connections between the personal, local and global, and to connect with peers who share their passions and concerns. We encourage young people to *challenge* themselves, to gain a more critical understanding of the world around them, and to challenge inequality and injustice. We support young people to plan and take action to bring about positive *change* towards a more just and sustainable world” (DEA, 2010a: 3).

Figure 3



(DEA, 2010a: 3)

The CCC model appears to reflect a simplified version of Kolb’s (1984) or Lewin’s (1951) Learning Cycle, where there is an *experience* (global connections identified/engineered by the youth worker), which leads to *reflection* (challenge) and is followed by *action* (change). All stages are seen to be essential to the learning process although the change stage is seen to be a key element in moving beyond raising awareness to personal or collective action. Uninformed action in itself is not sufficient, involving young people in action (e.g. campaign ‘stunts’) without first making emotional and intellectual connections to their personal lives and local concerns will reduce the likelihood of a deep

reflective process and meaningful learning taking place. This is supported in part by the research of Devlin and Tierney whose findings suggest that for young people it is often 'difficult to make the connection with their own lives. Where there was any success in doing so, it most frequently involved making connections with the lives and circumstances of other young people, and in relatively tangible ways' (2010: 7).

This simple CCC model may be helpful for youth workers in planning interventions with young people. The DEA (2010b) discussed the origins and potential impact of this model in a research study which found that the CCC Model 'provides an accessible framework and language and a 'learning journey' design tool for global youth work in an outcomes-driven age. Focussing on the 'how to' helps to integrate conceptualisation, learning progression and action.' (DEA, 2010b: 3).

The Practice of Global Youth Work

In 2011 a small scale piece of qualitative research to map global youth work concluded that the focus on project work and curriculum resources suggests a mostly (but not exclusively) *ad hoc*, funding led approach to practice (Adams, 2011). This is in contrast to an integrated approach as advocated by policy briefings such as *Young People in a Global Society* (2002), which stated that 'principal youth officers, senior managers and decision makers need to build on the practice of individual motivated youth workers and the interests of young people, and develop organisational policy frameworks' [that] 'develop youth service/organisational mission/curriculum statements that include global youth work' (DEA, 2002: 9). For some global youth work is still seen as a 'curriculum area' (Woolley's 'global issues') equivalent to sexual health, sport or arts work for instance, which is addressed at various times in a youth work programme rather than as an *underpinning global dimension* to all curriculum areas.

This view is underlined in Devlin and Tierney's work (2010) in which they suggest 'a focus on programmes – at all levels within the youth work sector – can at times work against the development of integrated understandings and responses' (2010: 8). This focus on the content and delivery (programmes) can distract from a strategic approach to the integration of global youth work in mainstream practice.

The 2011 study asked a sample of people who identify themselves as being involved in, or who have an interest in, global youth work what they felt were the most important aims of global youth work to be in order of priority (Adams, 2011). The largest proportion of respondents felt that 'to develop/empower the individual young person' was the most important aim of global youth work, reflecting the distinct youth work nature of the approach and perhaps in contrast to the broader aims of development education. The second largest response identified the need 'to challenge young people's attitudes/assumptions about others and the world around them'. The third significant choice was 'to increase young people's knowledge of development and globalisation issues, e.g. fair trade, climate change' (Adams, 2011: 8).

Based on these responses it appears that the skills and attitudes considered necessary to be an effective global youth work practitioner are not dissimilar to those of an effective youth worker, who engages young people in dialogue and some form of non-formal education (e.g. project work), which leads to personal or collective action in line with the National Occupational Standards for youth work (LSI, 2012). The research confirmed that there was little evidence of what can strictly be defined as informal education in the global youth work sector. Some workers stated that they deliver 'one-off' activities, but even these seem to have a method, content and outcome in mind after (or even before) an initial

conversation with young people (Adams, 2011). 'Fundamentally, youth work with individuals and groups stems from negotiation and mutual agreement', which does not often occur in the formal education setting (Merton et al, 2004). And as one respondent stated during the 2011 qualitative study: 'ultimately global youth work is a vehicle for youth work to take place. It must be about young people and enabling their personal and social development rather than any other external agenda' (Adams, 2011: 7).

Global youth work, non-formal or informal, is based on a negotiated curriculum as a point of principle because engagement in youth work is voluntary and young people can walk away if they feel an encounter has no immediate connection to them and is not interesting or attractive. Consequently this increases the efforts required by the worker to ensure that any intervention is relevant and engaging. The practice of non-formal education is increasingly reflected by the current nature of youth work practice in local and commissioned youth services (Adams, 2011: 34). This type of practice increasingly requires youth workers to utilise structured work with young people, which results in evidence of progression and attainment, rather than informal education approaches, for example media or arts projects. According to the National Youth Agency (2007) *'youth services have traditionally provided a mix of 'open access' or universal youth work, intended for all young people in an area, and work which targets particular groups of young people, usually those who are disadvantaged or socially excluded.'* However, it is increasingly the *targeted* groups which are prioritised, recognised and rewarded within youth services. Ironically global youth work practice, rather than the theory, may be more in tune with this context.

It may also be useful to locate global youth work in relation to an established model of youth work, in particular Hurley and Treacy's (1993) *Models of Youth Work – Sociological Framework* which identifies a typology of youth work. In Hurley and Treacy's model the

role of the youth worker ranges from character building, personal development, critical social education to radical social change. The expected outcomes of this activity will differ according to the perspective or paradigm adopted, consciously or subconsciously. Global youth work is aligned to a more radical *Critical Social Education model* where:

- "Youth work has the positive intention of transferring power to young people;
- Relationship with young people is undertaken with a view to 'engaging' them as partners;
- Youth worker adopts the role of 'problem poser';
- Young people actively involved in identifying, exploring and understanding issues of concern to them;
- Two way process of mutual dialogue between young people and adults;
- Action is the result of analysis and reflection" (Hurley and Treacy, 1993: 41-43).

Hurley and Treacy suggest the 'outcomes for young people' of this model include:

- "Young people have developed the ability to analyse and assess alternatives and
- the capacity to define 'their position' in their world and the skills to act to change it they sought;
- Young people are aware of the inequities which institutions promote;
- Young people are active in mobilising groups at local level to seek changes within existing structures".

According to Hurley and Treacy (1993: 44) the 'outcomes for society' might result in institutions undergoing 'internal structural change to respond to demands for change'. This model is reflected in the stated aims and principles of global youth work, for instance young people developing the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to: 'take action locally to combat the negative effects of globalisation and enhance the positive by developing and

supporting ethical alliances and partnerships between young people, organisations and networks in the UK and across the world' (DEA, 2007: 24).

Professional youth work training

Nationally recognised, professional youth work has existed in the UK since the early 1960s, and now the National (Joint Negotiating Committee [JNC]) Qualification, validated by the National Youth Agency in England, requires an Honours Degree delivered via one of the 58 professional training routes (NYA, 2013). In 2002 it was recommended in the *Young People in Global Society* document (DEA, 2002: 7) that 'initial training courses in higher education need to: Recognise the skills, knowledge and experiences required to develop global youth work through curriculum content and placements, including youth work curriculum design and delivery as well as analysis'.

Indeed the criteria for professional youth work training have gone some way to recognise the value of the global dimension in the skills and knowledge which should be possessed by youth workers. For those advocating global youth work the anticipation has been that this will lead to a more 'globally aware' set of professionals emerging from professionally validated programmes/courses, who will in turn implement programmes with young people – including some of the most difficult to reach - with 'global' messages. However there has been little research to measure this impact as yet, other than the work of Sallah (2008: 3) who concluded in *The State of Global Youth Work in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)* summary report that 'ways of working with young people that address the global dimension are understood variously'. He identified 'four main classifications: namely Development Education, Concept and Process of Globalisation, Global Youth Work and

Global Citizenship' and that '90 % of respondents from HEIs said that GYW is covered within their institution' (43 out of a possible 50 HEIs were contacted).

Importantly there are now references to the global context to youth work within the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Youth Work (LSI, 2012). Reference to the NOS learning outcomes and assessment is an essential requirement for validation of *professional* youth work training routes in the UK. This is in addition to the Higher Education *Subject benchmark statement: Youth and community work, Quality Assurance Agency* (*QAA)* (2009), essential for *academic* validation in higher education in England. If we look at each in turn we can identify the integration of the global dimension.

The National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (LSI, 2012) specify that youth workers should be able to: 'engage with communities to promote the interests and contributions of young people'. The knowledge and understanding required is: 'how local, regional, national and global issues and activities can impact upon each other, including how local activities relate to the wider context, and vice versa' (25). The standards locate the global dimension within the arena of citizenship and youth workers are asked to**:** 'encourage young people to broaden their horizons to be active citizens' and be able to 'explore constructively with young people the concept of citizenship including its relevance at local, national, international and global level; promote an awareness of the wider local, national and global communities, and explore and identify the benefits of involvement with these' and 'explore with young people the global context to personal, local and national decisions and actions' (40). The knowledge and understanding required includes: 'what is meant by effective citizenship, including its relation to families, local communities, local and national government, and international and global affairs' (41).

The *Subject benchmark statement: Youth and community work* (QAA, 2009: 13) states that the 'approaches to learning and development' should include:

> "global learning, environmental learning and theological or faith-sensitive learning, using characteristic methods of informal education, which require practitioners to locate their practice within a matrix of power dynamics across local, global and faith divides, citizenship learning, collaborative and open enquiry and political education".

As might be expected there is little detail in these standards and benchmarks as to how these areas should be addressed in the HEI curriculum or in youth work practice per se, leading to the variance in delivery identified by Sallah (2008). Although subject to monitoring, periodic review and revalidation, HEIs and other training providers are free to interpret these standards and benchmarks as they see fit. So whilst the integration of a global dimension into these standards and professional requirements is to be welcomed there is little evidence that these developments have resulted in a an increased awareness of the importance of a global dimension amongst youth work professionals, or whether this has resulted in significant change to youth work practice.

Local 'non-professional' training, some with accreditation like that validated by the National Open College Network, have been offered by global youth work projects over a number of years, including; Think Global and Global Youth Work Partnership East Midlands in England, Centre for Global Education in Northern Ireland and Cyfanfyd in Wales. In addition Y-Care International has worked with the YMCA George Williams' College to develop a stand alone, credit bearing 'Certificate in Global Youth Work', one of the few offered in the UK to date. This training has been offered as a professional development opportunity for

interested youth workers but this is not on a scale which can have a significant impact on mainstream youth work practice. Interestingly these organisations are not youth work organisations, and are located in the voluntary and community (charity) sector, which tend not to employ professionally (JNC) qualified youth work staff, nor are they required to adhere to National Occupational Standards for youth work. In the UK these programmes have, until recently, largely been supported by the Department for International Development and other grant aid providers like the Big Lottery Fund. The government sources are, as always, subject to the whim of policy and unsurprisingly global youth work, by its very nature a youth action focused, form of critical pedagogy, is not a current government priority.

Conclusion

In theoretical terms global youth work can be identified as a form of *Critical Social Education,* employing a youth action approach, concerned with increasing young people's capacity to effect change at a personal and structural level, by contributing to local, national and global communities whilst developing their own social capital. Global youth work requires, and desires, high levels of participation by young people in the design and focus of non-formal activities, unlike more mainstream school based development education where the curriculum and delivery is largely set externally by the provider and funding sources. Within global youth work the outcomes for the young people themselves are important, unlike youth campaigns, and can include critical-thinking skills which contribute to a more holistic understanding of globalisation and development issues.

Global youth work offers non-formal educational opportunities for often marginalised young people outside of the formal education system. It often employs experiential learning approaches and its 'action focused' approach to utilising young people's energy and enthusiasm, supports their personal and social development in line with youth work's core

principles. Historically youth work organisations have addressed elements of *Global Issues* and *Global Perspectives,* in relation to issues of equality and diversity and anti-discriminatory practice and offered *Global Experiences* in the form of youth exchanges and links, within the youth work curriculum. The informal, voluntary, organic, negotiated nature of youth work and the lack of predetermined learning goals can be perceived as a lack of focus or rigour by funders, formal educators and government departments, leading to marginalisation of the work, especially in times of austerity. But these principles can be understood as the strengths of global youth work, the ability to engage often disadvantaged young people in flexible, relevant learning about the world and their place in it, by supporting them to take action to change it.

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