Generating disruptive pedagogy in informal spaces: learning with both the head and the heart

Momodou Sallah

Introduction

My positionality and situatedness is that of a scholar-activist, interested both in the generation/production of knowledge, and the application of knowledge, especially towards social justice and equality. I also write from a de-colonial perspective in challenging ways of knowing and ways of being; to generate what has been called "epistemologies of the South" (Sousa Santos, 2014). In using Global Youth Work (GYW) as a pedagogic approach and conceptual framework, I will illustrate how participatory spaces for the deconstruction and reconstruction of ways of knowing and being, can be generated; how the classroom can be taken into the real world and how the real world can be brought into the classroom. Using a range of places and spaces, spanning the classroom, real-life situations, within communities, and across the streets and museums, I will share how participatory learning methodologies are constantly employed to generate curiosity, maintain curriculum currency and make learning transformative. Drawing on my writing, teaching, practice and research over the last twenty years, across a number of countries and continents, I will position participatory approaches and methodologies of learning as disruptive and a panacea to aspire to, as learning and teaching then becomes deeper, rather than surface; and transformative (Freire, 1972) instead of "banking".

Keywords: Global Youth Work; Disruptive Pedagogy; Youth Work; Development Education; Decolonisation

Bio

Momodou Sallah (PhD, MPhil, MA) is the Director, Centre for Academic Innovation, and a Reader in Globalisation and Global Youth Work at De Montfort University, UK. He is also a founding Director of Global Hands, which is a Social Enterprise/Charity operating in The Gambia and UK, with a focus on capacity building and social good. In June 2013, he was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship by the UK Higher Education Academy. In November 2015, he was named the "Most Innovative Teacher" in the UK by Times Higher. He has more than 20 years' experience working with young people at local, national and international levels; from being the Youth Director of Gambia Red Cross Society to a Senior Youth Worker at the Leicester City Council, UK. Dr. Sallah has numerous publications in the fields of work with black young people, young Muslims and globalisation/global youth work. His research interests include diversity, participatory methodologies, globalisation in relation especially to young people, and public engagement.

Positionality and Situatedness

How I have come to understand the world and consequently construct reality and decipher "human meaning making" (Rogers, 1989:26) in my daily encounters is significant, and necessary, to establish from the onset. This forms the basis of my orientation, and consequently the launch pad of my teaching and pedagogic disruption. The significance of this is principally to premise my assertions on transparency and accountability as it is pivotal that readers understand the canvas I draw from, the position I draw upon, and how I am situated within the context of wider human interactions. In its simplest illustration, the insider-outsider dichotomy speaks to this fact (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kerstetter, 2012) where my positionality and situatedness can often be constructed from either an insider or outsider perspective, often in terms of research, but in this particular case, the vexed issue of knowledge production in general and pedagogic approach in particular. Somewhere else, I have explored this tension as a researcher, who is situated in both hemispheres, in that I have spent the first half of my life growing up in The Gambia and the second half living in England. As both an academic and researcher, I came to the conclusion that my situatedness and cultural affinity imbues what I do and therefore who I am, and consequently how I see and interact with the world:

> This approach to cultural affinity/experiential affinity, while I am mindful of its limitations, has been a pivotal component of my research and writing over the past ten years. Having had the experiences of a Black young man, of a young Muslim, of a witness to the excesses of globalisation (*explicitly linked to colonialism and capitalism*), I understand and share some of the pains and frustrations of those being researched *(and the teacher and the taught)*; I also encounter a rigid academic approach to research (as well as teaching and learning) which is also very disempowering, being based on ideologically dominant configurations of reality and orthodoxy, supported by a dogmatic approach to knowledge and ways of knowing. This epistemological snobbery has resulted in a vicious cycle of entrenching oppression and … (Sallah 2014b:408).

In progressing the argument beyond my situatedness and positionality, two other fundamental considerations influence my teaching and learning approaches; the issue of decolonisation and that of situating myself as a scholar-activist.

Decolonisation

In my experience, most of the curricula I have encountered within learning spaces, is reliant on dominant constructions of the supremacy of Western knowledge, in all spheres of production, configuration, dissemination, sanctification and validation. This, either consciously or unconsciously, in my experience, has been built on the oppressive tablets of colonialism and its predecessor, slavery, within the African context, starting in the mid-15th Century. Boaventura de Sousa Santos talks about "cognitive injustice" and "epistemicide", which destroy whole knowledge systems, largely based in the South (2014). This, it can be argued, has been on a continuous loop, within Western, and even Southern classrooms, given our submission to the prevailing "logic of the system" (Freire, 1972). In rallying a battle cry for the defence against "epistemicide", de Sousa implores us to challenge dominant configurations of ways of knowing and being and in turn build "epistemologies of the South" (Sousa Santos, 2014). Fundamentally, the education I have received, and to a large extent,

continued to witness in the vast majority of institutions I have been or still continue to be, have been steeped in a deep colonial reservoir. To remind us of the iconic words of Walter Rodney, colonial education was meant for subjugation and to facilitate exploitation of the African, and not for their progress and development (Rodney, 1972); it is my observation that large chunks of this kind of underlying philosophical approach still determines significant sections of many African educational spaces; most noteworthy is the assertion that, the process of decolonisation has not even started in many European educational institutions I have visited! In this context, it is heartening to know that my current institution, De Montfort University, is not only talking about decolonising the curriculum, but the whole institution! In its website, #DecolonisingDMU boldly states that:

Decolonising DMU recognises that racial inequality in Britain originates from colonialism. In seeking to decolonise, we are creating an anti-racist university which allows all to succeed, and which celebrates the rich diversity and heritage of DMU. It shifts the burden and conversation away from one of deficit, blame and shame, to recognise that racial inequality has been built over centuries on the dominant western and northern hemispheres and patriarchal interpretation of values and merit. This in turn has created systems, hierarchies and behaviours that create disadvantage and fail to recognise the rich history and world contributions of the global majority.

Different to the strategies of many Higher Education Institutions, Decolonising DMU stretches far beyond the curriculum. It acknowledges that the scale of the challenge runs deep into examining the everyday norms of university life and will require all DMU staff and students to acknowledge, identify, discuss and seek to understand the issues. It is critical that we work collectively, with respect and dignity, in order to work for institutional solutions that are underpinned by the reality that our staff, students and communities will benefit from an anti-racist university.

Decolonising DMU, working definition 2019

In my practice, I have, and still continue to subscribe to the decolonisation notion as it is a key tenet of my practice. Since the days of my childhood, I have borne witness to the destructive impact of a colonised educational base; to attest to how this has been manifested, whilst in primary school in The Gambia, I was one of thousands who were not allowed to speak in our local languages, especially given that English has never been a language in which I could express myself adequately as it does not have the vocabulary to convey cultural nuances and contexts, and were made to wear symbols (a collection of the dirtiest and smelliest things collected from garbage cans) in order to subdue and humiliate us, which also has the impact of devaluing our local languages, linked to the construction of identity and the self. In the words of Ngugi, we have come to see ourselves in the eyes of others (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). This taught us to consider what was written and spoken in English as invaluable and all that was in the local languages as uncivilised. I could also speak of the massive deficit in our national historical construct where the Scramble and Petition of Africa in the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 was painted as a good thing for Africa; coupled with the fact that we could name a lot of European "heroes" but knew practically nothing about our national heroes and their attempts at resistance against colonial subjugation. The curriculum around pre-colonial Africa was extremely limited and, in some cases, even non-existent, subsequently our educational staple diet was significantly infused by stories of the

"heart of darkness" and Tarzan! The twisted lenses of colonialism became the prism through which I, saw, defined, and interacted with the world. If this process of toxic colonisation, laced with mutating fluctuations of self-depreciation is not exorcised, then the very act of education itself can be based on racist and oppressive tablets, for both educators and learners, in both hemispheres. This stance, in my experience, still prevails both in the Northern and Southern hemispheres; therefore, any attempt at genuine education, from my perspective, should pass through the tunnel of decolonisation, hence this has become an integral part of my situatedness.

Scholar-activist

The third pillar I want to explore, before getting to the core of this article, is the issue of being a scholar-activist. Whilst some scholars in academia are only preoccupied with research and the generation of knowledge, there are also practitioners who are also equally preoccupied only with practice; both often mutually excluding the potential benefit of the other. In my practice, I have often straddled the tensions of being both an academic/scholar and also being an activist, simultaneously. In the same vein, my approach to academic innovation and pedagogic disruption centres on taking the classroom into the real world and bringing the real world into the classroom. In the early parts of my education until A Levels in The Gambia, I often struggled with the relevance and functionality of the education I, and many others were subjected to. As a pupil in primary school, I was taught to memorise synonyms and antonyms as well as times table; and I had a number of teachers who took great pride in giving you "hot mental" and asking you to stretch your hands out when you get it wrong for some lashing!

In building on Walter Rodney's thesis of how Europe underdeveloped Africa, one of the ways being through a dysfunctional education system, which centres on learning things that have no relevance to my environment or survival. In the midst of poverty, disease and suffering, education was positioned as a luxury and access to privileges, not as a tool for emancipation from deprivation and the oppressive clutches of subjugation, both national and international, as well as well as through capital. For example, I remember struggling with maths in High School, and there were many like me; apart from the fact that we had to learn maths under the hot sun and severe heat, the relevance of our calculations and equations, we could not decipher. I remember trying to understand trigonometry and the teacher constantly hammering the equation in my head but I could not see the relevance of the equation in my environment or even conceive of its application in my mind's eye, in my early teens. It took some young Canadian university students to take me outside the classroom and demonstrate that I could measure the height of a tall pole by measuring the distance from where I stood to the pole and the angle, in order to work out the height. This became a moment of realisation as I could then make sense of the senseless equations! Another example I am drawn to is Walter Rodney's (1972) assertion that in pre-colonial Africa, education had relevance and functionality; this was education that grew from and responded to the specific African environment; in effect, it was useful education! Consequently, as an educator, I have always been excited, not only in imparting knowledge into learners, but more significantly, in supporting them to locate their learning within their lived realities.

My pedagogic approach has also been significantly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (1972) whose view that traditional education has been about "banking" knowledge and

asking students to regurgitate it during exams, is dysfunctional and only serves to entrench the bonds of servitude to the system/dominant orthodoxy; in contrast, he advocates, for education for liberation and critical consciousness. This is significant as it attempts to break the chain of oppression; the work of Althusser (1971) highlights that in addition to the violence of the State through the administration, police, judiciary and army, its softcore violence also resides in society, media, religious institutions, but most significantly, and in my experience, the greatest potential for harm, within the education system, and especially how and what we teach as teachers. Education, as Freire (1972) argues, is not neutral. In Freirean parlance, it should be education for liberation; education that breaks the chains of servitude to hunger, disease, and suffering. An education that addresses social injustice and works towards human development; it is not education as a luxury but one that generates human freedoms. This is why my approach to teaching and learning is situated from that of a scholar-activist.

Participatory spaces/GYW I have generated

In this next section, I intend to illustrate my practice in action by sharing the counter-orthodoxy and disruptive spaces I have been generating in my practice over the last 15 years of being a lecturer/senior lecturer/Reader in De Montfort University, UK, and also as a founding director of Global Hands, operating in The Gambia as a charity and in the UK as a social enterprise. These examples speak to my positionality/situatedness as mentioned earlier; they also speak to my experience of decolonising the learning and teaching experience; and additionally, positions me as a scholar-activist, motivated by the need to engender functional education. I intend to draw on three examples from my practice to make my point : 1)The Gambia Development School where over 600 University students mainly from the UK but also from the US have participated in study visits to The Gambia ranging from 7-19 days and with groups from 10 – 45 from 2012-2020 2) Learning and teaching of the Globalisation and Global Youth Work module on the third year BA in Youth and Community Work at De Montfort University 3) The use of Global Youth Work as a pedagogical approach to engage about 1200 young people on the margins in the UK.

Gambia Development School

Established in 2012, Global Hands is a Leicester-based social enterprise and a charity in The Gambia, set up by current and former De Montfort University staff and students, motivated to do public good. Global Hands aims to tackle issues regarding inequality by raising consciousness about local and global issues through community engagement. Global Hands is interested in supporting people build their capacities to address these issues and engages communities through informal and non-formal methodologies. Under its remit of Education and Public Engagement, Global Hands has been conducting the Gambia Development Schools (Study Visits) to engage students and practitioners in provoking their consciousness and supporting them to take action. The motivation has been to open up participants to other ways of knowing and other ways of being and make these "credible and visible" (de Sousa, 2014).

As participants have discovered during the Gambia Development Schools they attended, there were many learning and development opportunities before, during and after the trip, which changed the way they understand the world significantly. The planned outcomes were:

1) Participants will encounter life-changing experiences that will impact the way they perceive and interact with the world.
2) Participants will study the impact of globalisation (economic, political, cultural, environmental and technological) on the Global South as well as reflecting on its relationship with the Global North.
3) Participants will explore specific themes/issues that are of interest to them, comparing how these affect The Gambia and the UK.
4) Participants will engage in sustainable development and capacity building initiatives to help build a fairer and more equal world.
5) Participants will develop greater global intercultural competence.

Whilst some people were tempted to see The Gambia Development Schools as just an exciting trip, we did place a lot of emphasis on informal learning and continuous reflection. From the daily '30 minutes to go' (where we all sat together and reflected on the previous day for a minute each, deconstructing and reconstructing), to observation visits and informal conversations in the streets, we always encouraged our participants to constantly reflect and question things.

A huge part of the process is appreciating the many learning opportunities in the programme (which range from building a campaign around a specific issue like "undocumented youth migration from Sub-Saharan Africa" and operationalising it through Run4Africa (Sallah, 2018); spending 24 hours in the life of a Gambian villager where you eat/drink and go to the toilet like an ordinary villager without running water or electricity, being placed with an organisation linked to your profession including schools, hospitals, media houses; partaking in a cultural activity; visiting James Island, Fort Bullen, one of the first churches built in West Africa by the Spanish/Portuguese explorers in the 15th Century, or the Maurel Frere and CFAO buildings at the advent of the "legitimate trade" in Albreda; learning and seeing the impact of Female Genital Mutilation first hand in a country where up to 73% of women are affected by this practice. We encouraged all participants to keep daily reflections in a reflection booklet, designed to optimise learning. These are real-life learning situations where the real world is brought into the classroom and the classroom is taken out into the real world; where there is an instantaneous symbiosis of theory and practice. In going to spent 24 hours in the life of a Gambian villager, the students from the UK or US are often decentred; from how they have come to understand reality, and question assumed dominance of Western knowledge configuration or production, with concrete and palpable examples that often leads to the re-centring of self and brings learning alive. In relation to a whole day of visiting Fort Bullen, going to James Island (now Kunta Kinteh Island), Portuguese Chapel of San Domingo built in the 15th Century in the epoch of the Spanish/Portuguese explorers like Christopher Columbus and Vasco Da Gama, linked to the era of globalisation, or the Maurel Frere/CFAO buildings linked to the era of Classical Gold, Berlin conference and the mass scale colonisation of Africa. These visits and conversations, often culminating in a group picture in front of the NEVER AGAIN statue, amplified by the paraphernalia of subjugation and slavery on exhibit in the Slavery and Colonialism museums in both Fort Bullen (only fort actually built to stop slavery after its abolition in 1807) and Albreda, brings into question

whether slavery was abolished in 1807 mainly because of efforts by humanitarians like William Wilberforce and Granville Sharpe; after stepping back in time to explore the horrors of slavery, participants would then be able to decipher, through critical analysis that the end of slavery was because, at the advent of the industrial revolution, machines were more effective and cheaper than the labour of slaves; and that what was now needed from Africa was not the labour anymore, but the raw materials to feed the hungry machines of Europe! These are just a few of the examples from the transformative approach of utilizing study visits as a pedagogic tool of disruption. It allows the subject to come alive, it leads to a process of de-centring and re-centring to give visibility and credibility to other ways of knowing and being. It allows the learners to breathe in historical fumes, to learn with their head and with their heart. When students embark on little boats to return from James Island (slave houses) where we encourage the pedagogic approach of silent reflection; a significant number of them are often overwhelmed with sadness due to their encounter with the tragedy that was the Atlantic Slave trade, in concrete and palpable terms, and often ended up in tears. More importantly, it allows for learners/participants to be central to the learning and teaching process, and not only to learn with their heads (the theories they know and have been taught) but also with their hearts (how they feel and what they have observed in palpable rather than abstract ways) in order to start acting with their hands (the things they do to bring about change).

Globalisation and Global Youth Work Module

Moving on to the second example I want to share in this article, the Globalisation and Global Youth Work module serves a dual purpose; first, it seeks to bring about an understanding of the concept and process of globalisation. The second purpose is to extend this understanding to the domain of Global Youth Work, which involves working with young people through youth work methodology to explore how the impact of globalisation at the personal, local, national and global levels is visited on young people as well as possibly act to remedy perceived social injustices. In the module guide, students are told that:

> It is worth stating that the learning approach to this module centres on Paulo Freire's (1972) problem-posing and liberatory approach to education where everyone in the class is engaged in a dialogical process of learning; including both teacher and student! Our learning will be rooted in our lived realities and the new knowledge we encounter must help us build, dismantle or rebuild our theories; this is an active process that can be called disruptive pedagogy; it calls for the "decentring" of the self. Students who come to this module expecting lecturers to "bank" knowledge into them will be sorely disappointed! Students will be encouraged to question the "logic of the system" and everything with a critical eye, in developing their praxis. (Globalisation and Global Youth Work Module Guide, 3rd Year BA Youth and Community Development 20-18-19, DMU).

Whilst there are many pedagogical highlights of this module, I will only focus on one example due to word limitation; the example of carrying out an observational analysis on one of the five faces of globalisation in one of the most diverse areas of Leicester (Belgrave Golden Mile), given that Leicester (UK) is seen as one of the most diverse cities in Europe. In this

module, students gain 20% of their final mark through this observational analysis and a short group presentation at the end. Students are given the following task:

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Assignment Task 1 (Compulsory)
<u>Field Trip Analysis Presentation</u>

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In 5 groups (each comprising 6 members), develop a plan to carry out an observation analysis of the impact of globalisation on the communities living and working in Belgrave. Your observation analysis should focus on one of the 5 faces of globalisation and its impact on the local community. Allow time for analysis of your observations and to prepare a 15-minute presentation in the afternoon.

The focus of your presentation and analysis can be any of the following:

1. Economy

2. Technology

3. Politics

4. Environment

5. Culture

The afternoon session of the **(given date)** will consist of presentations from the five groups, each analysing one main aspects of globalisation. Groups will need to offer an evidenced perspective on whether they feel globalisation is good or bad and how it affects people at the personal, local, national and global levels. Students will also be required to demonstrate the interconnectedness of their chosen focus and its relation to the other faces of globalisation.

There will then be a chance for the whole group to discuss and analyse the perspectives offered by each group.

The aim of the exercise is to gain a practical understanding of the impact of globalisation on the personal, local and national. Note that the module assignment requires you to provide an analysis of the impact of globalisation on your chosen theme or topic.

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Assessment Criteria

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1. Overall cohesion of presentation.
2. Clear and critical analyses of one of the faces of globalisation and its correlation with the others.
3. Clear involvement of all team members in the fieldtrip analyses and presentation.
4. Assertions are evidenced and backed up by theory.
5. The group offers a perspective on globalisation.
6. A PowerPoint of the presentation is submitted to the module leader (Globalisation and Global Youth Work Module Guide 2018-19, Module Guide, pg. 13).

Witnessing students perform this task, with slight tweaks, over the last 15 years, has been quite instructive, and at the same time transformative. This task is normally given to students after four lessons covering:
- Introduction to module and assignment launch
- What is Globalisation?
- Global Inequalities
- Brettonwoods Institutions and Multinational/Transnational Corporations

These four sessions are often very theoretical in nature and at times, despite many efforts to break it down to students' everyday experiences, not the easiest concepts to deal with, as an introduction to the module. Taking the students down the Golden Mile in Leicester, and getting students to locate the theory they have learnt about globalisation, in the streets, past the statue of Gandhi, the multinational corporations, the gold and diamond on display, the carbon footprint of the vegetables at the local market, the influence of Bollywood on the local and the impact of the global on the local, the telecommunications and significant rise of digital commerce, often bring these theories alive. It is also a pedagogical approach that allows the students to engage in real life situations.

The students in these modules will also have the opportunity in 5 groups (often with 5-10 students) to deconstruct and reconstruct their observations, learning, and experiences. This is often an engaging peer learning pedagogic approach where students break down complex theories for each other and generate the mutuality approach, where everyone present is both a teacher and learner. Apart from the fact that students will be assessed for 20% of their mark for the module, my experience over the last 15 years has been that it generates critical engagement and students have mostly been immersed in the learning process as they are also able to bring the topic alive by hanging it around their own lived realities.

Using Global Youth Work to Engage Young People at the Margins
In my praxis, I have positioned Global Youth Work, comple
mentary but different from Global Education (McCollum and Bourn, 2001; DEA, 2004), on the basis that it goes beyond just awareness raising, as a pedagogic approach of working with young people to 1) making links to issues that affect young people and how this relates to the local, national and global through the process of globalisation 2) how we support those affected, young people in this case, to take action, towards social justice (Sallah, 2014a; Sallah and Cooper, 2008):

> "...the role of the practitioner in delivering GYW is to engage or intervene in young people's construction of reality either as a group or individually and get them to question "their reality". Their reality is the spectacles through which they see and interact with the world. It is hoped that by exploring the personal, local, national and global interconnections between the young people and the 5 faces of globalisation, a critical understanding (Freire 1993) will be generated ...the second prerogative is to promote action as a result of that consciousness which attempts to change the world and their interdependence" (Sallah, 2008:7).
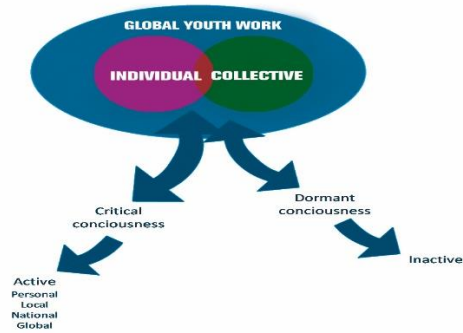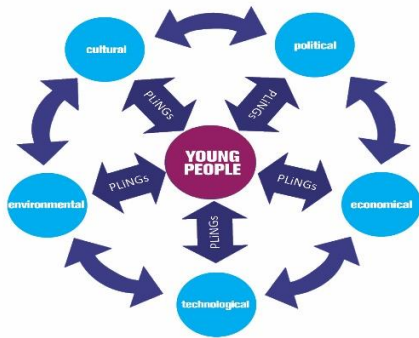
Sallah, M. (2014) Global Youth Work: Provoking Consciousness and Taking Action. Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing.

It is a pedagogic approach that is rooted in experiential learning towards liberatory education, as opposed to "banking education" (Freire, 1972); it rejects notions of charity based campaigns, and places a premium on young people telling their stories through a critical journey (generation of critical consciousness), without colonial blinkers, and consequently taking action (based on positionality and situatedness); it is based on mutuality where both teachers and students embark on the joint enterprise of critical and disruptive learning. This has been my approach to teaching outside the classroom, where I engage learners to invite me into their world, in order for me to understand their world, before attempting to change it.

Following a successful project award from DFID to YCare International(YCI), the Global Youth Work in Action (GYWIA) project started on the 1st April 2010 and ended on the 31st March 2013. The Global Youth Work in Action project was designed to provide spaces outside of the formal education system for marginalised young people to increase their understanding, empathy and interconnection with global issues, international development and poverty. The project targeted 350 young people aged 16-25 each year, over three years. A key projection was for 66% of the young people engaged to be from YMCA-based youth work programmes, 33% from other youth work organisations and 20% of the young people to be from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. The key objective of the project, linked to this paper, was to engage young people in transformative education, through a Global Youth Work pedagogical approach, towards the duality of Global Youth Work: 1) provoke consciousness 2) take action to change the world at the personal, local, national and global levels (as illustrated in the diagrams at the beginning of this page).

In identifying young people on the margins, and beyond NEET (Not in education, employment and training), the youth workers involved in the project used the following terms to define the young people they worked with and considered on the margins:

➤ "12 of our group are BME which in this particular context, being in a white majority area of Somerset
➤ Young refugee children

- Young unaccompanied asylum seekers –for all of them, English is a second language, and recently learned and two of them don't have very good literacy skills
- Adults with disabilities aged between 19 and 25
- Roughly half of the young people who come here have got Downs' syndrome and quite complex sorts of other needs
- Tensions within a community in which we're based at the time between African and Caribbean young people
- NEET (Not in education, employment or training) young people
- Unemployment young people
- YMCA youth hostel residents
- LGBT and of ethnic minority background
- Difficulties in colleges and issues with the police-these involve gang culture, shop lifting, anti-social behaviours and from broken homes, etc.
- Young offenders who had varying lengths of sentences and life expectancies"
Source: Youth Workers Project Forms

Given the associated difficulties of working with some young people on the margins (Britton et al., 2002; Finlay et al., 2010; Simmons and Thomson, 2011; Bryant and Ellard, 2015); a key concern has been how to effectively engage them and through engagement, generate transformative educational experiences, that both provoke a new consciousness as well as support action with the most affected young people at the centre. However, this avenue can be quite disempowering, especially from mainstream structures that are often rigid and lack a situated and contextual understanding of these young people on the margins, given their positionality (Britton et al., 2002); additionally, the effects of intersectionality on these diverse variables that imbue their lives also often needs much greater consideration.

It is in this light that I worked with staff of YCare International, from the inception of the project right through to its completion, to position Global Youth Work, both as a conceptual framework and methodological approach, with a great potential to creatively engage young people on the margins, to start the process of deconstructing their realities as well as disrupt their oppressive constructions of social reality, whether internalised or externalised, as well as develop agency to take action. This approach to education is situated from the position of the scholar-activist who is not only motivated by the need for knowledge production, but also equally by the need to see changes in the lives of those most affected, through the development of their own agency.

Whilst it is very difficult to establish exactly how many marginalised young people were engaged, we have been able to establish that 1197 young people were engaged in the lifespan of the project and the overwhelming majority of the young people could be classified as marginalised on the basis of being homeless, incarcerated, being disabled, being immigrants, asylum seekers or refugees; and being of other socially excluding stratifications. There is often a perceived difficulty in effectively engaging these young people on the margins and the effectiveness of the Global Youth Work in Action (GYWIA) project lies in its ability to engage a youth population often defined as "hard to reach". There were a range of 33 locations over the three years of the project where young people were engaged through the GYW approach; the settings were very diverse and included, just to illustrate with a few examples: a peer education project based on HIV/AIDs; a project involving young people in the exploration of the global

drugs trade; conflict resolution in schools in Belfast; exploration of child soldiers; 8 weekly Skype sessions between young people in England and Zimbabwe to explore citizenship; young British Muslim women exploring the environment, global economy and food production; exploration of child labour culminating in a "free from child labour fashion show"; Black, Asian and refugee young people who identify as LGBT exploring their identity through arts-based workshops; incarcerated young people in a Youth Offender setting exploring issues of global development and social justice (Sallah, 2013).

Key findings

Whilst the findings of the whole research project and its multidimensional aspects are too many to address here, we will briefly share some of the reported changes in learning about global development (critical consciousness) and also in behavior and skills (taking action) as a result of participating in the GYWIA project:

Learning about global development
- (72%) had either 'not at all' learnt about development at school or learnt a 'little'.
- 57.3% of participants felt there were 'some' or 'a lot' of links between their lives and the Global South after participation in the project.
- 8.9% thought there were no links at all (after engaging with the project).
- 98% of young people believed that their knowledge of global development issues increased after the project
- 62% felt that this increase was by 'some' or 'a lot'.

Change in Behaviour & Skills
- 91% stated that their global behaviour had changed after engaging with the project, the majority (63%) of these by either 'A lot' or 'Some'.
- Over the three years, 84.2% of participants agreed that they felt 'some' or 'a lot' of confidence in now using these skills.

As reported earlier, there was a massive increase in young people's awareness, knowledge and understanding of development issues. Additionally, there was also a significant increase in their reported change in behavior and development of new skills (to take action). This has significant implications, not only because young people have now developed operational capacity, in addition to a new-found consciousness, to effectively function in an increasingly globalised world where time, space and distance have been conquered. The highlight of this project and its deployment of GYW as a pedagogical tool of engagement, to illustrate transformative education, is its efficacy and effective use of the head, heart and hand in learning. Both young people and youth workers who participated in the project, in hailing its success, stated that the GYW approach as a pedagogic tool was successful because:

Why GYW has been effective
- Engender informal learning "by doing".
- Providing spaces and opportunities for young people to learn new things, leading to the generation of curiosity.
- Engaged with the learning spaces as co-producers of knowledge and action.
- Bridging the gap between gaining consciousness and taking action.

- Space created in the project to interact with a variety of people from a diversity of backgrounds.
- Local – global symbiosis

Not only have the majority of project participants developed new-found consciousness, but they have also reportedly increased skills in changing behaviour and taking action to build a more sustainable and socially just world, ranging from developing peer materials, campaigning, to changing consumer habits. The project has also seen young people take an active part in engaging their immediate and wider communities; this is a significant demonstration of political capital by young people in a climate where young people are often accused of political inertia.

The project did not only effectively engage young people, youth workers and youth work organisations, but also the immediate and wider communities in which project participants were located in. The impact of the project on wider communities cannot be overstated as a range of audiences of over 4000 people across communities were effectively engaged, ranging from peers to family members as well as geographical communities.

My role in this project was twofold; the first as an educator, working with the YCare team to create and generate disruptive and counter orthodoxy spaces for innovative learning to take place, outside the normal boundaries of the formal classroom; to take learning into the real world and provoke learning in action. The second component was to develop and operationalise an evaluation/research mechanism to capture and document the learning on the project. From going into prisons to observe young offenders engage with learning from a GYW pedagogic approach, to observing young people's peer education approach to AIDs through the same mechanism, the experience has been truly humbling.

Conclusion: lessons from my teaching and pedagogies of disruption

In conclusion, I would like to highlight that I do not subscribe to the totality of academic objectivity; in fact, I have argued this to be consumption of negative neutrality (Sallah, 2014) wholesale; my situatedness and positionality as well as my relationship with colonialism/decoloniality, has affected and shaped my praxis; to deny this is to wallow in ignorance. I therefore embrace my positionality but at the same time seek transcendence every day; this is equally important in engaging the learner, in my experience. As a young school boy, I was in some cases denied acceptance of self and my positionality and consequently, education, in a number of instances, was not functional as it was devoid of my positionality and therefore my "being". Education, learning and teaching, in my experience, must be rooted and situated in the realities of the learners and this must be the starting point of all effective education, I would argue.

Linked to the above point, I would also posit that, education does not need to be stale, predictable and rigid; it must seek spaces to be disruptive, counter-orthodoxy, and unpredictable, in order to generate curiosity and maintain curriculum currency. As an educator, I am constantly seeking ways to bring my subject matter to life, to breathe excitement into the learning materials and spaces I generate; how can I make my teaching and their learning so exciting that the learners will consider my class akin to teenagers waiting for their first date! This, in my opinion should also be linked to the scholar-activist

approach to not only engage in the pursuit of knowledge; but equally in the functional use and application of knowledge.

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