

CLICK: Arts education and critical social dialogue within global youth work practice

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The CLICK project created a butterfly effect, one small thing on one side of the universe having an effect on the other side of the world.

Dafydd James, CLICK playwright

Abstract

This article discusses CLICK, a collaborative theatre project between the Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company in Wales, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the Australian Theatre for Young People, and Inspired Productions in New Zealand. This case study demonstrates the value of using arts education to bring together young people from multiple countries across the world through the use of social media and theatre for development work, and to explore issues of diversity and identity through Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC). This article will explore the use of social media within arts education and global youth work practice to promote critical social dialogue around sensitive issues as a catalyst for positive social change.

Keywords: global youth work, education for sustainable development, global citizenship, theatre for development, social media

Introduction

This article will explore the case study CLICK, a collaborative theatrical project between the Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company in Wales (www.messupthemess.co.uk), the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the Australian Theatre for Young People, and Inspired Productions in New Zealand. The project has worked across 12,000 miles with over 100 young people from four countries, using social media and a theatre for development approach to explore issues of diversity and identity through ESDGC (Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship). The case study will highlight the value of this collaborative

experience and the potential for replicating this model of working within the field of development education and global youth work. This experience highlights the value of using social networking as a way of engaging young people from across the world in critical social dialogue as a catalyst for positive social change. This article intends to fill the identified gap in the development education literature by exploring the specific processes (Bourn and Brown, 2011) that have been adopted when delivering global youth work in the arts education sector. We can see that the virtual experience of arts education sets global learning directly within the hands of young people and opens up the possibilities of breaking down cultural barriers, promoting intercultural learning and tackling sensitive issues that are easier to confront within a virtual context through exposure to other realities. This article will explore the processes that were undertaken to deliver the CLICK project, where this project fits within global learning theory, the impact of this work on young people, the potential for replicating this model of working, and the multiplying effect this can have in changing attitudes and behaviour.

This article has been informed by my long-term relationship with the Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company as an external evaluator of their Big Lottery funded projects.¹ One of these projects, Act Now (2011–2014), aimed to engage marginalized young people in participatory and interactive workshops led by professional artists and peer leaders, in order to inspire them to become positive role models in their community and the world at large. Another such project is Dream On (2014–2017), a three-year project supporting diverse groups of young people from across South Wales to exchange ideas and work together, empowering individuals to effect real change in their communities through the delivery of youth-driven, issue-based bilingual training and community action programmes.

Research approach

Through my role as external evaluator for the Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company, I have had the opportunity to explore the CLICK project in detail, with access to all the project documentation and to the internal evaluation that has been carried out. I have also reviewed the documentary film created by Carolina Vasquez, a cross-media film maker (www.carolislide.com). My research process has been shaped around a series of semi-structured interviews with key project practitioners from the four participating countries, including the CLICK playwright Dafydd James. This has enabled me to gather personal narratives to shed light on the theoretical approaches that have been adopted through the project and to examine the impact and potential of using social media and theatre for development work within global youth work.

Within this article I will explore the perspectives of youth worker and drama practitioners on the CLICK project process. By exploring youth workers' own experiences of working transnationally through the application of social media and theatre for development work, I will bridge the gap between global youth work theory and practice. As highlighted by Andreotti (2006a: 7) in her eponymous paper, 'theory without practice is idle, practice without theory is blind.' Andreotti highlights the need for development theory and practice to be explored hand-in-hand. Although Bourn and Brown (2011) highlighted that little has been written about the form or nature of global youth work, this case study will build on recent research carried out by the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Service (CWVYS, 2014), which highlights good practice in ESDGC work, as well as Sallah's (2013) research into using global youth work practice to engage marginalized young people, undertaken in collaboration with YCare International. Further, it draws on Adams' (2014) work exploring the role of global youth work. The CLICK case study offers further opportunity to explore the value of using the arts and social media as a tool for engaging young people in global learning.

Young people who took part in the CLICK project were invited to participate in this research. This enabled me to undertake a series of semi-structured interviews with a sample of young people who agreed to contribute to this study. I was able to glean an understanding of the long-term impact of the CLICK project and how it has been a catalyst for positive social change.

Background

The Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company is a well-established youth arts organization based in South Wales, United Kingdom. Mess Up The Mess successfully use theatre creatively to inspire and engage disadvantaged and hard to reach young people through transformative learning experiences. In 2011-12, Mess Up The Mess conceptualized CLICK, a multimedia theatre production which explores stereotyping, young people's use of the internet, and ingrained prejudice. The production was based on young people's transnational exchanges through social media, using their dialogue and shared experiences. CLICK is the culminating script created by Dafydd James, a Welsh bilingual playwright, in collaboration with young people from Wales, Hong Kong, Australia, and New Zealand, using material and dialogue that young people produced during creative workshops, through online discussions, and during script development workshops (this will be explored further when describing the project process in detail). This process resulted in productions being performed simultaneously in all four countries.

The CLICK project was founded on a commitment across the four participating organizations to work within a youth-led approach to create socially engaged theatre

work through the exploration of key shared issues. The CLICK project provides clear evidence of global learning, which encourages youth-led action through the development of critical social dialogue between young people. This is critical dialogue as seen by Freire (1972), to be understood as the ability to critically reflect on your own life by entering dialogue with others, with the aim of reaching 'critical consciousness,' which will in turn provoke positive change. The social dimension of critical *social* dialogue is provided through the use of social media and cultural exchange work between young people from the four participating countries, which will be explored in more detail in the context of theatre for development and digital technology (Anderson *et al.*, 2011). Thus enabled to explore the same issues simultaneously, young people from across the four countries are able to make connections between society, religion, the environment, and politics.

The CLICK project was established on the following key objectives:

- to increase intercultural understanding
- to promote internationalism
- to test new ways of working internationally
- to celebrate diversity and champion mother tongue
- To explore themes of identity and cultural heritage with young people.

The cross-cultural partnership between Mess Up The Mess in the UK, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the Australian Theatre for Young People, and Inspired Productions in New Zealand was established based on existing work relationships between the New Zealand and Welsh partners. Additional support came from Wales Arts International, a partnership between the Arts Council Wales and the British Council that facilitates the bringing together of potential collaborative international partners to support the arts and artists from Wales.

The CLICK project engaged over 100 young people, aged between 11 and 25 years old, from the participating four countries. There was an even gender split across the groups. In Hong Kong, young people were recruited through the Boys and Girls Brigade, a Christian youth organization, enabling the involvement of marginalized groups of Cantonese young people. In Wales, young people were recruited from five identified groups: the Swansea Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST), a support service for ethnic minority young people, the Monkton Gypsy Traveller project, Rising Stars, a theatre group for young people with learning disabilities, Barnados support service for young carers, and the Swansea Looked After Children support group for children and young people under the care of the local authority. In Australia, young people were recruited through a fee-paying youth theatre group of predominantly White young people, with two Asian young people, and in New Zealand it was a

mixed group of local young people, mostly White, with one Maori and one Asian young person.

ESDGC and transformative learning

The Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company has worked for some time to support the Welsh global learning agenda of ESDGC (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006). Wales is one of the few countries in the world to have governmental policy regarding ESDGC (ESD&GC, 2014), responding to the vision of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) set out by UNESCO (2005) for 2005–2014, the decade of education for sustainable development. In 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government endorsed and published its strategy, along with further updates in 2008 (2008a) and 2009 (2009).

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) is an approach that encourages ‘understanding of the impact of your choices on other people, the economy and the environment’ (ESD&GC, 2014), borne out of the principles of Education for Sustainable Development, which ‘allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future’ (UNESCO, 2005). ESDGC is built around seven themes: the natural environment, consumption and waste, climate change, wealth and poverty, identity and culture, choices, decisions and health. ESDGC’s aim is to challenge learners to see how they can contribute to the lives of others (ESD&GC, 2014) and to support young people to become global citizens (UNESCO, 2006). ESDGC approaches are being mainstreamed across all education sectors in Wales. ESDGC is already embedded in both curriculum and management policies of schools in Wales, and in part of the inspection process.

The ESDGC strategy has provided organizations, such as Mess Up The Mess, with a working framework that has given them the structure and momentum to develop education for sustainable development work. Glover and D’Cruz (2011: 1) recognize that ‘government policies and their effective implementation can perform an important role in advancing sustainable actions, and the Welsh Government provides clear evidence of achievements for the ESDGC agenda’ The Welsh Assembly Government (2008b) suggests that there is a need for greater commitment at senior management level and for planning and development time to embed ESDGC work within project delivery. However, the Education and Training Inspectorate for Wales (ESTYN, 2008) felt that many non-formal adult and youth work providers do not have a clear understanding of the range of educational benefits that come from embedding ESDGC in their work and the cost benefit of investing in the development of activities and the curriculum. ESDGC also comes at a time of increased financial pressure on youth and community services in Wales due to government cuts, which mean that the development of ESDGC policy and practice is not seen as a priority.

ESDGC strategies challenge education providers to find creative ways to engage young people in key issues that will enable them to develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become actively involved in building a sustainable future (McNaughton, 2010). UNESCO (2005) suggests drama can be part of the teaching and learning process. McNaughton's research on using drama in ESDGC found considerable evidence that educational drama 'provides participants with meaningful contexts in which concepts in ESD/GCE could be explored' (2013: 18).

Mess Up The Mess workshops explore ESDGC by introducing young people to creative approaches to express the ESDGC issues they identified, which enable young people to consider their place in the world and their communities as active citizens. Mess Up The Mess's project approach has been to run participatory sessions through which young people explore their place in the world and then are able to explore different issues associated with education, sustainability, and global citizenship. This approach has enabled young people to use their acquired creative skills to explore themes that they have identified and then put on events, through pre-planned large-scale shows such as CLICK and additional self-initiated youth-led projects. This is in line with The Youth Work Curriculum Statement for Wales 2007 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008b), which reinforces the idea that youth work should be educative, participative, expressive, and empowering.

If we look at Mess Up The Mess's work in the wider context of global learning and development education, we can see that in recent years 'there has been a gradual move towards associating such education with dialogic and experiential learning, aiming at a more critical approach, rather than didactic educational activities (Andreotti, 2006a; Shah and Brown, 2007; Bourn, 2008a; Kumar, 2008; Brown, 2011; Bourn and Kybird, 2012)' Brown (2014: 6). As Scoffham (2013: 29) claims, 'it is implicit in the notion of global learning' that there is a 'commitment to interactive and participatory pedagogies'. Mess Up The Mess have been able to bring together their drama-based practice, alongside their knowledge and understanding of ESDGC, to shape the epistemological approaches that have been used by the CLICK partners. ESDGC offered cross-cutting themes upon which to build the CLICK project, such as choices and decisions, and identity and culture.

We can see through the CLICK case study that ESDGC in a youth work context starts from the experiences of young people and encourages a critical understanding of the links between their lives and that of young people in the other participating countries. Think Global, formerly the Development Education Association (DEA) until 2011, clearly defines global learning as the need 'to help people understand the wider world around them and make the global connections between issues such as poverty or climate change' (Think Global, 2014). The CLICK case study has provided opportunities for young people to reflect on each other's experiences, thereby

promoting transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000; Bentall and McGough, 2013; Brown, 2014). Dafydd James, the CLICK playwright, emphasized the importance of the project process rather than the product to enable CLICK to reach its proposed objectives (see section on Background above). The CLICK case study follows on from recent research conducted by Bentall and McGough (2013: 47), which explores young people's personal engagement with global learning in further education, as the CLICK project continues to examine 'issues of transformation and how learners respond to challenges of their sense of self'. Chávez-Reyes (2012: 44) identifies critical social dialogue as the 'the process of problem posing, facilitating personal stories through silence and multimodal assignments, and positioning them for students to re-examine and re-evaluate their understanding of systems of social difference'. The online/social networking dimension to the CLICK project was instrumental in creating opportunities for young people to respond to personal issues of collective and individual identity.

Andreotti (2006b: 40–1) has been vocal in her definitions of *critical* and *soft* citizenship, arguing that 'understanding global issues often requires learners to examine a complex web of cultural and material processes and contexts on local and global levels ... critical global citizenship can be an effective way to support learners in that process.' Andreotti also highlights that it should '[e]mpower individuals to reflect critically on the legacies and processes of their cultures, to imagine different futures and to take responsibility for decisions and actions'. Andreotti believes we too often see a soft, light-touch approach to developing citizenship within current practice. The CLICK project, however, offers a multi-layered approach to critically engaging young people in global issues through both the creation and performance of issue-based drama, which has triggered a cascading model of change in young people's attitudes and behaviour. This will be touched upon further in the section exploring the project process.

Global youth work

The Welsh Assembly Government (2008b) cite that the term 'global youth work' is often used to describe an approach to youth work that incorporates the main principles and practices of sustainable development and global citizenship. It can be argued that Mess Up The Mess work within the same global youth work framework that has been developed by Think Global/DEA. The DEA (DEA, 2004: 21) define global youth work as the delivery of informal education to young people 'that encourages a critical understanding of the links between the personal, local, and the global and seeks their active participation in actions that bring about change towards greater equality and justice', thus providing them with a voice locally and globally.

Global youth work methodology, as seen in the approach adopted by Mess Up The Mess, provides opportunities for young people to explore issues from a personal, local, and global perspective to bring about action and change. The CLICK project clearly demonstrates how global youth work practice provides a platform for young people to explore issues in a local and global context. This is similar to the 'Connect, Challenge, Change' youth work approach (DEA, 2010: 7) developed by Think Global/DEA, which has been designed to encourage youth workers to:

- help **connect** young people to the global issues that matter to them
- encourage young people to **challenge** themselves, to gain a more critical understanding of the world around them, and to challenge inequality and injustice
- support young people to plan and take action to bring about positive **change** towards a more just and sustainable world.

DEA, 2010

Historically, the Connect, Challenge, Change educational process (DEA 2010) was designed to provide youth workers with a model for planning and evaluating their own global youth work. However, it also reinforces the need to encourage young people to critically examine the world and be able to create positive change.

Woolley's (2009) global youth work model also seeks to understand the delivery of global youth work. He suggests that there are three essential components to global youth work: exploring global issues, global perspectives, and offering global experiences, such as youth exchanges and linking projects.

Global youth work methodology, much like the CLICK project, also reinforces the importance of meeting young people where they are and making sure that the project is located in the young people's own realities, embedding the process in the young people's own experiences (DEA, 2004). As Bentall and McGough (2013: 65) suggest, our biggest task is to encourage engagement that young people 'can cope with, which also challenges them and encourages critical reflection'. When we explore the CLICK process in more detail, we will recognize that youth practitioners in each country had to facilitate the exploration of the key themes of the project in a culturally sensitive way, appropriate for the young people involved. We can see that it is about creating an informal environment (Jeffs and Smith, 2005), where participating young people feel comfortable. The non-formal youth-led environment in which global youth work takes place (Adams, 2014) is an essential ingredient in enabling particularly marginalized young people to increase their capacity and potential to effect change at a local and global level.

This is where global youth work stands removed from previous development education methodologies in its specific remit to take action in response to development issues by enabling young people to recognize the connection to their own lives, moving development education work beyond youth exchange, child sponsorship, and linking projects (Cotton, 2009).

Theatre for development

Beyond the concepts of global youth work, it is important to explore the work of Mess Up The Mess in the wider context of theatre for development and arts education work. Historically, arts education has been used to engage young people in global learning and development issues (DEA, 2006), particularly using performance as a medium for promoting social change around important issues, such as HIV and Aids. Story-telling and oral history have been commonly used within communities as methods for educating younger generations and providing a catalyst for community and interpersonal dialogue, debate, and action (Perlmann *et al.*, 2013).

Lloyd-Williams (2013) recognizes that there has been an emergence of applied theatre rising out of the increased interest in citizenship, participation, and human rights, heavily influenced by Bernard Crick's report *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (1998), which led to the standardization of citizenship education in English schools. Performance has been seen as an effective medium to practise active citizenship. DEA (2006: 5) have been promoting the use of the arts as a way of encouraging the global dimension of learning within schools, providing young people with the 'opportunity to see that other people's lives involve comparable dilemmas and aspirations to their own.' DEA (2006) highlight the value in using the arts to explore issues of identity and diversity, to understand other people's experiences, and to strengthen our sense of global citizenship. This provides some overlap with global youth work principles of exploring development issues from a personal and global perspective.

Theatre for development work was borne out of ideas of socially engaged performance and participatory approaches to theatre. Theatre for development is widely accepted as a branch of applied theatre, defined by Nicholson as 'forms of dramatic activity that primarily exist outside conventional mainstream theatre institutions and which are specifically *intended* to benefit individuals, communities and societies' (2005: 2). Augustus Boal, a contemporary of Paulo Freire who became the forefather of participatory 'forum theatre' principles, has been a prominent figure in theatre for development. Rooted in the pedagogical and political principles of Paulo Freire's work (1972), Boal (1992) established the process of forum theatre, an interactive approach to theatre in education. Participants begin by acting out an everyday life

situation and audience members are urged to stop the action and replace actors to enact their own solutions to the situation being explored.

The Theater of the Oppressed is practiced by 'spect-actors' who have the opportunity to both act and observe, and who engage in self-empowering processes of dialogue that help foster critical thinking. The theatrical act is thus experienced as conscious intervention, as a rehearsal for social action rooted in a collective analysis of shared problems.

Brecht Forum, 2004

This leads us to the work of Grant Kester (see Garber, 2004: 4), who highlights the importance of social justice discourse in arts education. He is interested in “dialogical or discursive aesthetics” as a model for art making that relates to community and social needs. He believes ‘it grows out of a process of dialogue and collective exchange, the artist’s active listening and empathetic identification, and a willingness to let the community influence art and artist’.

The CLICK project facilitators created a youth-led project approach that enabled young people to lead the creative process and identify the key issues that they wanted to explore, demonstrating how drama offers a pedagogy that enables young people to explore and negotiate problems (Anderson *et al.*, 2011: 26). As the New Zealand partner recognized, ‘our methodology is rooted in participatory development. The key elements are about role-sharing and collaborative decision-making, the acquisition of technical skills, articulating a message, and team work, rather than necessarily a focus on an end product’, a sentiment regularly articulated by the CLICK script writer Dafydd James.

As Nicholson (2005) highlights in her work, the value of theatre for development and drama education is the intention to create drama to improve the lives of individuals and wider communities. ‘The emphasis is on bringing about personal and social change through the work by activating participants to identify and explore what changes are needed and how to enact them’ (Lloyd-Williams 2013: 38). This makes the connection to the pivotal change element within global youth work and, more directly, within the Connect, Challenge, Change methodology.

It is important to note that some academics have chosen to distance themselves from the term ‘theatre for development’, due to the connotations with the word development reinforcing notions of the developed and developing and maintaining a form of western colonialist intervention into work with minority groups (Sharp, 2009; Young, 2003; Lloyd-Williams, 2013). However, we can choose to see theatre for development work starting from the premise that as individuals we are in the ongoing process of self-development and ‘that we are *all* developing citizens’, which

'opens up new models of subjectivity and spaces for change' (Lloyd-Williams, 2013: 40). Using theatre for development work as a tool to create what Prentki saw as 'dramatic learning spaces,' 'in which we can discover how to act together to shape the world we share' (Prentki, 2008: 96, as cited in Lloyd-Williams, 2013).

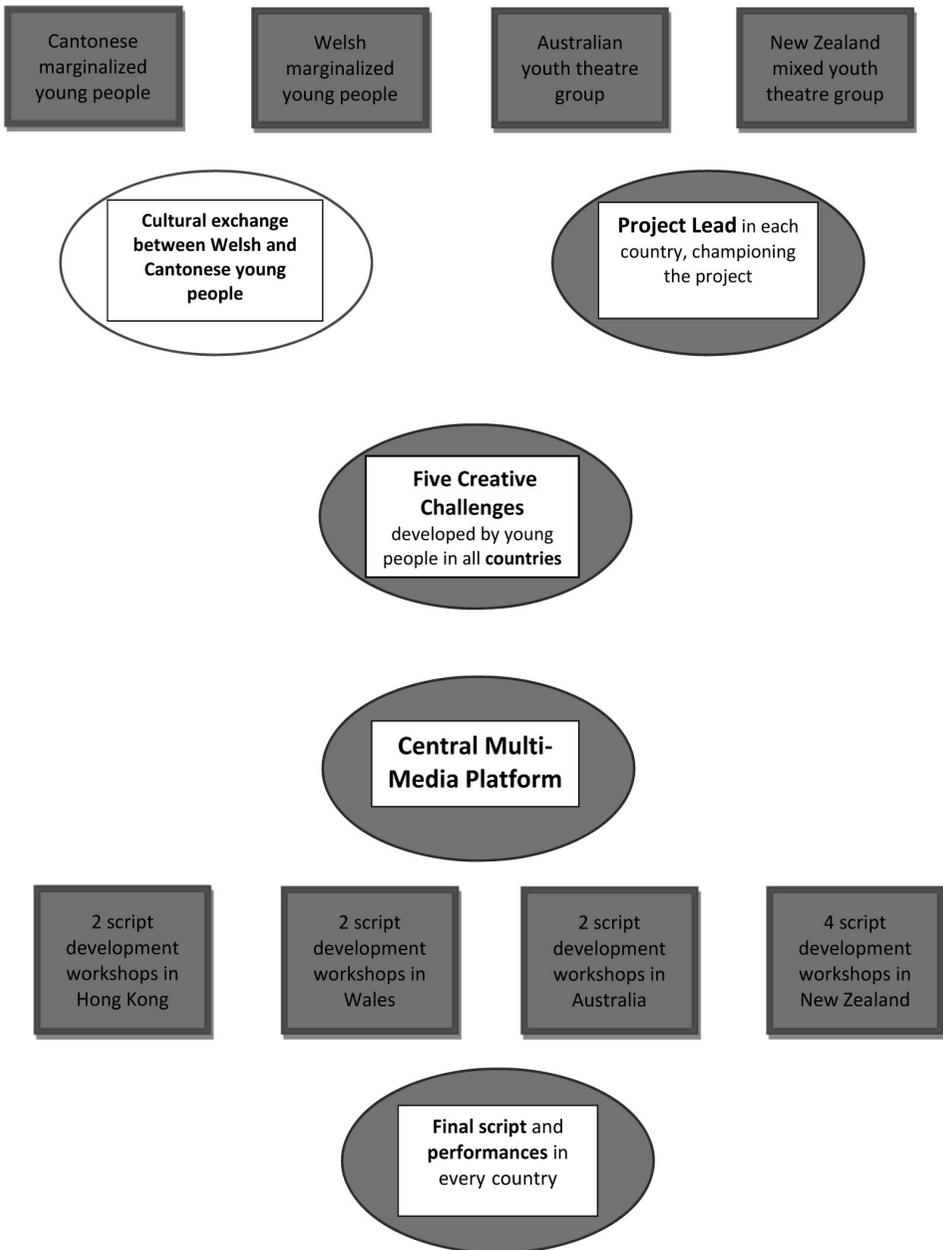
It is commonly thought that the fictional context of drama (McNaughton, 2013; Simpson, 2010) can provide a safe space in which individuals can distance themselves from their own individual and collective realities, and are able to explore positive alternative possibilities and choices. Simpson's (2010) research into the use of drama role play for citizenship education highlights how drama role play can help temporarily suspend the traditional power dynamic between adults and children and that the use of drama role play can encourage more assertive role play in young girls. The CLICK production was clearly able to pick up on the benefits of anonymity whilst working through the internet, as well as through drama, to provide young people with the opportunity to explore issues of sexuality and homophobia, which may not have been so easy to tackle directly within their local communities. This brings us back to the importance of global youth work taking place within a non-formal learning environment (Adams, 2014; Jeffs and Smith, 2005), enabling youth workers to create a space where young people feel comfortable to share their experiences.

Project process

To fully understand the CLICK project it is important to outline the project process and how the four participating organizations were able to work collectively on the project. This is to help ascertain the value of using social media and drama education in bringing together young people from multiple countries in global youth work practice.

Figure 1 clearly outlines each stage of the CLICK project development process and the key project management roles. The project process was kick-started with an initial cultural exchange between fifteen Cantonese young people and five Welsh young people, hosted in Hong Kong. Young people from each of the four participating countries worked together, face-to-face and online, to decide on a cross-cultural theme that they would like to explore simultaneously. The young people chose to focus on the idea of strangers. ESDGC provided the CLICK project with an approach and cross-cutting themes on which to build the project. It highlighted the interdependent nature of ESDGC and how interlinking themes and concepts, such as choices and decisions, identity and culture, influence the decisions we make and the way we live our lives.

Figure 1: CLICK project structure



A key element of the cultural exchange was for young people to participate in five creative challenges, which were used as a starting point for the collaboration between the four organizations. Young people worked with drama practitioners to develop pieces of work in five different creative areas; music, poetry, film, movement, and characterization, based on exploring the theme of strangers from personal, local, and global perspectives, as seen in global youth work. Drama practitioners adopted an experiential learning approach, focused on young people leading on the creation of creative work. As Adams (2014) suggests, global youth work requires a high level of participation by young people in the design and focus of non-formal activities.

Each country had a project lead, with Wales operating as the project central hub. As the project evolved, young people uploaded their work on to a central multimedia platform, which operated as a central interactive project blog. A particularly effective element of this work was uploading videos that evolved as part of the connecting plot across the four countries and became a successful part of the final production. The Australian young people even chose to use live Facebook messaging projected on to the stage as part of their final performance of CLICK.

The process of developing the creative challenges was intended to enable young people from each country to respond and develop ideas between themselves and gain greater intercultural understanding from each other of how young people from different countries would respond to the same issues: 'during the intensive week when Wales and Hong Kong youth got together, they were creating together and appreciating the cultural expression of each other; they found things in common amongst themselves' (Hong Kong partner).

Following the creative challenges, each group of young people were asked to create two Facebook pages, depicting two fictional characters. It was these two characters and their interactions that were used by Dafydd James as the starting point for the plot of the CLICK production.

From the point at which Facebook became the main communication platform [replacing the blog], the level of student participation in and ownership of the project increased. It was a medium through which they could more easily participate and bounce off each other and the rest of the participants around the world.

Australian partner

The internet provided a mechanism by which to develop experiential learning within a global youth work context.

Once young people from across the partnership generated material, Dafydd James began to create a script inspired, devised, and co-created simultaneously by the four groups. Following the completion of the first draft of the CLICK script, it was

sent to each country, and script development workshops were delivered. This was to enable all the participating young people to support the creation of the final script. Dialogue in the final CLICK script was taken from online communications as well as from video footage that was recorded during the script development workshops in each country. The biggest challenge was how to show to the audience the process of the cross-cultural collaboration in the final production.

Ultimately, the play became about the process of communicating across the internet. The script explores 'young people's use of the internet and the different masks we wear in different parts of our lives. The play reflects the journey of creating the script and has been shaped by the creative challenges and interaction between the groups' (Dafydd James). CLICK explored issues of communications across the internet, social boundaries, relationships, and trust. The production tackled hard-hitting issues including those of young carers, youth sexuality, teenage pregnancy, homophobia, and identity, and was informed by the experiences that young people from the four participating countries shared through the project.

The CLICK project provided a multi-layered approach to critically engaging young people in global issues through both the creation and performance of issue-based drama. The opportunity to perform CLICK in four countries simultaneously triggered a cascading model of change in young people's attitudes and behaviour. Young people involved in the development of CLICK were able to disseminate and share their experiences with the audience.

The modelling of positive healthy relationships was seen as a key output of the CLICK theatre production, enabling young people to develop compassion and empathy for others. As the project was based on 'real' public realities, the strength of characters was seen to be authentic and believable. Even though individuals' experience of life may be completely different, the project resonated with many young people across the world. The project provided young people with the opportunity to explore individual and global identity whilst celebrating diversity, an ambition of global youth work methodology. The project process brought together different groups of young people from within each country and across the world, developing greater understanding between them and creating dialogue to explore the differences in their lives and different responses to the same issues and concerns. This further highlights the cascading impact that the project has achieved.

It is important to note that the final theatre productions were adapted for each country and cultural context, providing the opportunity to break down cultural stereotypes and existing prejudices within each local community. In Wales a key character came from the Roma community. There was much debate amongst young people as to how this character could be adapted for the other countries. In New Zealand this character was played by a young person of Maori descent. In Australia

the character came from the Muslim community. In Hong Kong they chose to adapt the script to create a performance that felt most appropriate for the audience and cultural setting:

We took out some extracts from the script which we believed showed the essence of the cyber-identity which our audience and youth could understand immediately. Then we added in a lot of movement pieces developed by our youth with bamboo sticks and Chinese drums.

Co-Director

It has been suggested that having script writers from each country working together could have provided a more democratic project approach and enhanced the possibilities to adapt the performance to meet the local cultural context.

Although cultural diversity was a strong element of the project, there has been no real attempt to champion mother tongue within the project, which was an identified project objective. It would have been too ambitious to explore multiple languages and consider their incorporation in the CLICK production within an already complex project structure.

Beyond the lifetime of the CLICK project, there is clear evidence amongst the young people involved that the CLICK project has provided the catalyst for greater involvement within their own communities through the development of youth-led action, and a willingness and motivation to make a positive difference, which aligns with global youth work practice. It has provided them with the focus to want to challenge local prejudice, echoing Connect, Challenge, Change methodology. In New Zealand, one CLICK participant moved on to establish the first ever LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) drama group in the country. In Wales, young people have been instrumental in securing a £250,000 Lottery Fund grant to develop youth-led community action projects across South Wales.

The CLICK project was seen to have a particularly life-changing impact on the Cantonese young people, as they usually have limited creative opportunities available to them and no opportunities to be exposed to the lives and experiences of other young people elsewhere in the world. As one facilitator commented, 'Young people in Hong Kong don't often participate in "fun" educational activities. This project has offered so many new experiences.' The particular dedication of the Cantonese staff and the considerable funding available to the project increased its impact on the young people involved.

Funding levels had a significant impact on the level of engagement of young people across all the project partners. Feedback from project leaders showed that not all countries had the same trust in the project process, in part due to the limited

dedicated funding to support the project. It has been suggested that a partnership agreement memorandum could have helped to support the project process, as would a dedicated project support resource in each country.

Social media

Without the use of the internet and social media, the CLICK project would have been unattainable, as the internet 'enabled us to communicate with people from different backgrounds with the press of a button' (Participant). The CLICK project shows how social media and online technologies offer new emergent approaches to global learning. However, the rapid change in technological advancement is an ongoing concern for educators across a wide spectrum of disciplines. Some of them fear that technology might supersede the involvement of young people (Buckingham, 2007) and heighten a growing sense of hopelessness that we are chasing a moving target (Anderson *et al.*, 2011: 32). Prensky (2001) illustrates the fast pace in which technology is developing and the need to create educational experiences that are appropriate for the 'native' digital generations. Prensky (2001) suggests young people are more likely to be connecting online than with young people in their local community, although his critics, such as Buckingham (2007) and Bennett *et al.* (2008) maintain that he overstates young people's technical awareness and ability. Young people may have ownership of technology, but not all young people have the skills to use it. Buckingham (2007) highlights the undemocratic tendencies of many online communities and the limited nature of much digital learning. Maugey (as cited in Stromquist and Monkman, 2000) argues that we are also witnessing the diminution of respect for spiritual and cultural values. The CLICK project demonstrates the positive role that the internet can play in bringing together different groups of young people to explore cultural identity, particularly for communities of young people who have less exposure to young people that are different to themselves, such as young people in rural South Wales and Hong Kong.

The CLICK project has realigned the use of the internet, in particularly Facebook and blogging, with its embryonic egalitarian principles (Jeffries, 2014), through the development of work that has engaged young people in constructive dialogue exploring better use of the internet for positive social change. The project process has also enabled young people to develop key skills in information and communications technologies (ICT) and has trained them in the practical application of social media to develop an effective transnational project, which, converse to Maugey's argument (as cited in Stromquist and Monkman 2000: 2), has celebrated cultural diversity. Postman (1993) cited a fear that the introduction of technology into education will be the end of cultural identity, whereas this experience recognized the need to embrace online youth culture and the huge potential that it offers to develop transnational

work. It has shown a clear ability to use social media and interactive blogging as a way of extending young people's exploration and enquiry.

The use of the internet and social media within the CLICK project was not without its issues and faced familiar problems to other transnational projects, with language barriers (as most of the Hong Kong students were not fluent in English) and technical difficulties that were added to by the varying time zones. 'The Skype experiences were valuable – but obviously technical difficulties and time zones limited the opportunities for this interaction' (Project Lead).

It is also important to note that the opportunity for the Welsh and Cantonese young people to have face-to-face interaction at the inception of the project clearly increased their capacity to critically reflect on each other's experiences.

Youth from Wales and Hong Kong have built up a more solid relationship during their time spent together physically, in Hong Kong. Being only introduced to each other online might not have that psychological closeness for further co-creating during the creative process. It was one of the rare opportunities to allow local youths to work with youths from other countries. Some of the young people were active participants after the project with the activities our organization held.

Hong Kong partner

Potential for replication

Mess Up The Mess and its international partners have created a complex project process, which means replication could be difficult. However, the findings demonstrate the potential value of virtual learning and social media to touch upon more sensitive issues, such as sexuality and identity, which has enabled us to explore the more transformative elements of global learning. The project has been a catalyst for critical thinking around issues affecting young people on a personal, local, and global level.

The project brought its challenges in balancing all the participating organizations' different needs and objectives. The greatest stumbling blocks appear to have been ensuring that the appropriate levels of funding were in place and that there was an equitable commitment from all the staff involved. However, it is clearly evident that the commitment and drive from young people was triggered by the novel approach to global youth work, bringing together theatre and social media to create an attractive working format for engaging them.

Interestingly, the long-term impact of the project appeared to be most significant for young people from marginalized communities in Hong Kong and Wales. They were supported by a well-resourced and committed staff team, and some of these young people had the opportunity to meet in person, which helped solidify their

personal relationships. These young people have not ordinarily been exposed to opportunities to work in these creative mediums and with other young people different to them. It is clear that the opportunity to work in a non-formal setting to explore issues they had identified themselves, created an environment that led to high levels of commitment and enthusiasm. It appeared that global youth work methods were particularly effective when working with marginalized groups of young people (Sallah, 2013; Adams, 2014).

Conclusion

Using social media coupled with arts education, we can see that the CLICK project has successfully extended young people's opportunities for exploration and enquiry, offering an exciting medium through which to enable young people to actively lead in a transformative global learning experience. The CLICK project demonstrates the positive role that the internet can play in bringing together different groups of young people to explore cultural identity and to develop transnational project work, although it is important to note that the CLICK project provides evidence that this youth work process can be further enhanced by meeting in person.

The CLICK case study has sought to provide further insight into the form and nature of global youth work, building on recent research conducted by Bourn and Brown (2011), CWVYS (2014), and Adams (2014). The Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company offers a new insight into the global learning agenda by emphasizing the unique role that the arts and social media can play in examining issues of diversity, identity, sexuality, and active citizenship. Mess Up The Mess were able to use their knowledge and understanding of ESDGC work as a starting point for building the project. The CLICK project clearly demonstrates the value and relevance of using key themes from ESDGC as a way of responding to questions of collective and individual identity, identified by the young people engaged in the project. The case study also highlights the importance of social justice discourse within arts education, enabling young people to lead the creative process and identify key issues they want to explore and challenge, as seen within global youth work. We can also see that the CLICK project mirrors global youth work principles through its creation of a non-formal learning environment, to ensure that the young people are comfortable and at ease and the project is embedded in young people's own realities. The CLICK project had the added value of the fictional context of drama that has enabled young people to explore sensitive issues, in an indirect and non-threatening way.

The CLICK project has significantly raised the profile of youth-led ESDGC performance work, inspired by the density of the project process and the multi-faceted approach of critically engaging young people in global issues through both the creation and performance of issue-based drama. The process of engaging

young people in the creation of the CLICK production enabled young people to enter critical dialogue with one another to identify common concerns and areas of interconnectedness. The performance itself provided an opportunity to challenge cultural norms, community and self-perception, and topics such as sexuality and identity. By using multimedia technology and performance, young people have connected on a global scale, exploring both their own cultural landscape and those they shared, and celebrating diversity through the use of theatre. It has provided the opportunity to produce drama with the intention of creating positive social change due to the ability of adapting the script to fit the cultural context of the performance. The reach of the project, through the creation and performance of a theatre production, offers exciting possibilities through its potential wide-scale butterfly effect and cascading model of delivery.

Note

¹ The Big Lottery Fund is money raised through the UK's national lottery and distributed to good causes. The funding is awarded to community groups and projects that improve health, education, and the environment. Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company have been awarded funding through the People and Places programme, which supports projects that encourage coordinated action by people who want to make their communities better places to live.

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