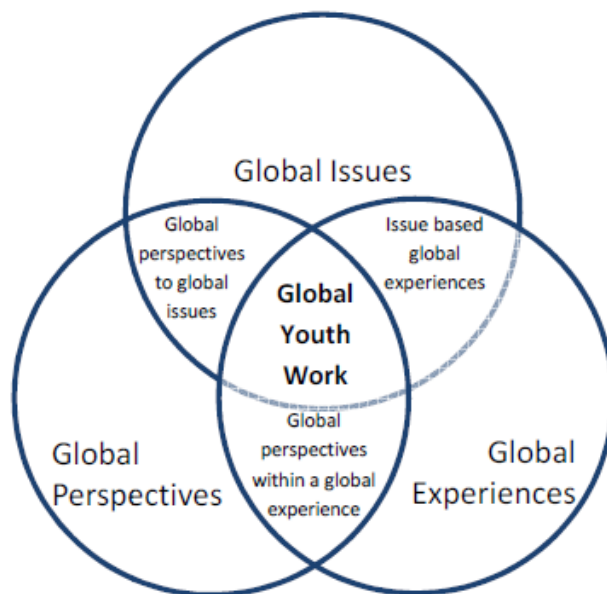


The Global Dimension in Youth Work: A Conceptual Model

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The Global Dimension in Youth Work model conceptualises global youth work as a tangible element of educational practice. A global dimension in youth work can be achieved through the development education process, more commonly known as global youth work. This model is based on the definition and principles of global youth work developed by the [DEA](#) as “Informal education with young people that aims to encourage a critical understanding of the links between personal, local and global issues. It seeks young people’s active participation in bringing about change towards greater equity and justice”. The development of this model is the result of seven years experience in promoting a global dimension to educational practice through work with young people, youth workers and agencies of youth work. The model provides the framework by which a global youth work curriculum can be developed and assessed against.



The global dimension in youth work conceptual model. Copyright © March 2009 Greg Woolley, Global Education Derby.

The global dimension

The term Global, as apposed to International, suggests an educational context that goes beyond the boundaries and cultures of nation states and is of values, humanity and the interconnectedness of our lives, history and environment. The global dimension can be understood by eight key concepts: global citizenship, conflict resolution, social justice, values and perceptions, sustainable development, interdependence, human rights, and diversity (www.globaldimension.org.uk). Incorporating the global dimension into practice enables youth workers and young people to explore their connections with the rest of the world, engaging with complex global issues and exploring the links between their own lives and people, places and issues throughout the world.

Using the model

For youth work to contribute to the development of an equitable, just and sustainable global society, each of the three key areas identified in the diagrammatic model above (Global Issues, Global Perspectives and Global Experiences) must be addressed equally within the youth work curriculum. Without equilibrium between the three areas, global youth work, by its own definition and principles, is not taking place. The principles of global youth work are as follows:

1. Starts from young people's experiences and encourages their personal, social and political development
2. Works to informal education principles and offers opportunities that are educational, participative, empowering and designed to promote equality of opportunity
3. Is based on an agenda that has been negotiated with young people
4. Engages young people in critical analysis of local and global influences on their own lives and communities
5. Encourages an understanding of the world, based on the historical process of globalisation
6. Recognises that the relationships between, and within, the North and South are characterised by inequalities caused by globalisation
7. Promotes the values of justice and equity in personal, local and global relationships
8. Encourages an understanding of, and appreciation for, diversity - locally and globally
9. Sees the people and organisations of both the North and South as equal partners for change in a shared and interdependent world
10. Encourages action that builds alliances to bring about change.

www.dea.org.uk

Within each section of the model youth workers must ensure that the following eight key elements are integral to their practice.

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| 1. Young peoples own agenda | 5. Making links |
| 2. A negotiated agenda | 6. Understanding issues of equity and justice |
| 3. Informal education methods | 7. Taking action |
| 4. Working in youth work settings | 8. Evaluation |

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Developing global youth work

In practice, global youth work is an ongoing process defined in part by the confidence of the youth worker to develop the global dimension along with their skills, knowledge and value base and also the relationship between the youth worker and young people. There are many ways that global youth work can be developed within a youth work curriculum. The diagrammatic model above identifies three curriculum agendas that contribute to the global youth work process. As stand alone agendas, these do not constitute global youth work - for example, undertaking activity work on the HIV/AIDs as a global issue, although valuable in itself, it is just work with young people on a global issue. Similarly, taking young people on an overseas trip does not, by itself, constitute a piece of global youth work. However, when these are intertwined with the two other areas, then you start to develop global youth work. These present good starting points but a youth worker confident in developing work with young people in one or more of these areas must challenge themselves to take this to another level and avoid becoming complacent in their approach to global youth work. Youth workers should use the conceptual model, combined with the eight key elements outlined above to assess their own practice.

Global issues in youth work

Addressing global issues is about making the link between personal and local issues, to those of a global scale. This can be done in two main ways. Firstly through local issues that are global in the sense that they will be shared by communities around the world. For example exploring issues around sexual health with young people could then go global by exploring for the issue of the global HIV / AIDS epidemic, or exploring different attitudes and perspectives to sexual health in different countries and cultures. This helps to build empathy and solidarity between geographically separate groups. Other examples of global issues of this type are discrimination, oppression, drugs, and many environmental issues with mainly local impact (such as air and water pollution). A second category of global issues are to do with inter-connectedness - where the decisions and actions of people in one part of the world have consequences for the lives of people in another. These include other environmental issues such as climate change; poverty and inequality that drive economic migration; war and conflict that can destabilise whole regions; and trade and consumerism that impact on livelihoods around the globe.

Creating global experiences for young people

Global experiences for young people can take many forms - for example, international excursions or exchanges of young people between countries (international youth work). Today, international travel is undertaken by many young people but an international experience is not necessarily a global one. One example of this is when a group of young people go on holiday to a sunny holiday resort in the global south but fail to venture beyond the hotel complex owned by a western European company, serving western European food and staffed by western European holiday reps. Global experiences, however, do not require travel to take place. More often than not, a global experience can be developed using technology such as the internet or via the exploration of international cultures through the arts, food, media and sport.

Global perspectives in youth work

Global perspectives are the voices and experiences of the majority population of the world, living in the global south. Youth workers and young people must recognise that we all see the world differently, based on our own experiences, knowledge, understanding and environments. This aspect of the conceptual model is the area most neglected within current youth work practice, yet the values behind incorporating the Global or Black and Southern perspectives is core to what youth work and development education are about. The challenge is to go beyond the western Eurocentric view by which we analyse contemporary and historical global life, of the relationship between the Northern and the Southern world and of local – global issues.

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