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‘[…] where are they [young Muslims] going to get information from? I mean they see this stuff on the news all the time and no-one is talking to them about it. They'll end up getting it inevitably from somewhere else. The youth get pushed out of public space and pushed into private space where it is a lot more difficult to challenge and refute ideas.’

London, International Alert (unpublished internal paper)
The potential for Youth Work processes to provide empathic spaces for young Muslim people to discuss radicalisation, religious ideology, identity and domestic and foreign policy safely.
‘The best way of preventing terrorist violence is to widen the range of opinions that can be freely expressed, not restrict it’

Professor Arun Kundnani calls for the enabling of ‘spaces for wide-ranging discussions of religious ideology, identity and foreign policy, particularly among young people who feel excluded from mainstream politics’

Drawing on Fine (2018) Chambers (1997), Freire (1972) and on a reflexive critical consciousness in Pakistani/Punjabi Sufic practice and tradition (Pratt Ewing 1997), how can we enable these spaces to facilitate the dialogue and practical solutions identified by young people?

Rooted in a Pakistani/Punjabi context, Pratt Ewing (1997) introduces a reflexive critical consciousness in Pakistani/Punjabi Sufic practice and tradition, not unlike the reflexive critical consciousness found in Freirean conscientização/conscientisation. Within this theoretical space a ‘triad of concepts’ (ibid., p.4) from literature on the postcolonial subject are realigned: ‘hegemony, consciousness, and the subject’. At the intersection of these concepts people are shaped by discourses and ideologies arising from and in reaction to these (ibid., p.5).

Youth work is underpinned by a clear set of values. These include

- young people choosing to take part;
- starting with young people’s view of the world;
- treating young people with respect;
- seeking social commitment, in particular by encouraging them to be critical and creative in their responses to their experience and the world around them;
- helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities;
- respecting and valuing differences; and,
- in young people’s personal, social and political development, it is concerned with facilitating and empowering the voice of young people, encouraging and enabling them to influence the environment in which they live.

(NYA 2007, 2012)
The NYA set out ‘ethical and practice principles’ Youth workers have a commitment to

- ‘contribute towards the promotion of social justice for young people and in society generally’.
- draw attention to unjust policies and practices and actively seek to change them;
- promote the participation of all young people, and particularly those who have traditionally been discriminated against, in youth work, in public structures and in society generally;
- and encourage young people and others to work together collectively on issues of common concern

(NYA 2004 p.8)
curriculum........................conversation

formal education
non-formal education
informal education
informal learning


the disparity between curriculum and conversation

is a key distinction between formal and informal education.

‘conscientização’
‘the young perceive that their right to say their own word has been stolen from them and that few things are more important than the struggle to win it back’

Critique of ‘banking’ education – theoretical base for youth work’s emphasis on experiential learning

Problem posing education

Freire’s pedagogy requires those involved to act to bring about change

young women and men looking critically at their world in an educative ‘dialogical encounter with others’

‘conscientização’


Wroe, S. (2014)

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The challenges are paradigmatic, reversing the normal view, upending perspectives, seeing things the other way round – ‘with shift of orientation, activity and relationships away from past normal experience […]’ (Chambers 1997, p.147) from:

- dominating to empowering
- closed to open
- individual to group
- verbal to visual
- measuring to comparing, ranking and scoring

and of experience (when things go well) from,

- reserve to rapport
- frustration to fun

(Chambers 2003, p.10).

Chambers, R (2003), Notes for Participants in PRA-PLA Familiarisation Workshops in 2003, IDS, Brighton.
With a focus on change, a youth work approach will seek to ‘liberate’ participants to have a greater awareness of their situation in order to promote activism, turning ‘frustration, stigma and anger’ into peaceful and peaceable actions and a stake in society.