Community development and youth work analysis and the freirean framework

In this essay I will be critically exploring how youth work and community development responds to issues of structural inequality and how it can also be obscured. I will be using the Freirean framework of analysis known as the Pedagogy of the Oppressed to support my research and my ideas analysis. I will also be relating back to module content and relevant literature of Community Development and Youth Work. Also, within this essay I will be exploring on the idea of the core values and the challenges they face.

Paulo Freire was an educator in Brazil, and he developed new ideas about education for the oppressed these were people who had been pushed to the side. Freire's social condition didn't allow him to have an education, but his experiences showed him the relationship between social class and knowledge. As Freire lived among poor rural families and laborers, this allowed him to gain a deeper understanding of their lives and of the effects of the socioeconomic factors on education. In his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), Freire, talks about the differences between the oppressors and the oppressed, he also talks about the discrepancies he saw between the two groups in an unjust society. Freire's biggest statement education for critical consciousness was from his revolutionary method of education. This is where he said that the starting point in an individual's life where the awareness of consciousness has been made is when individuals go through certain life experiences and one way this can be achieved is by defeating their obstacles.

Freire's view on education was that everyone has a lot to say but not everybody has the chance to say something. This can be supported when he

said, " There is no such thing as a neutral education process." I agree with his beliefs because I think that this is an example of education in a statutory establishment VS Community Development and Youth Work. From my understanding I think this quote supports what Youth Work and Community development should be. Education can work in two ways it can be either formal or informal education. Formal education is classroom-based, provided by trained teachers and informal education happens outside the classroom and this is usually community development or youth work where it t becomes the ' practice of freedom', the way in which men and women deal judgmentally with reality and learn how to deal with conflict and how to contribute in the change of their world. Freire said a space needs to be created for dialogue and this has been created in the form of Community development and Youth work. Youth work is concerned with the development of young people's personal, educational and social progress. According to the National Youth Agency (NYA), Youth Work is a definite educational process that has adapted across a variety of settings to support young people's growth. Services that are provided can vary depending on the culture and the needs of the individual and their community. Youth and community centres exist for this purpose, but these services are slowly reducing and closing. Youth work in the United Kingdom is a process where young people learn through experience about themselves and they are presented with both spontaneous and intended opportunities. It is an environment where young people feel comfortable to take part in informal education activities. Youth work aims to explore the individual's values,

beliefs, ideas and issues which then enables the young people to develop their voices.

The definition of Youth work itself can obscure structural inequality in Youth work because society sees this as a method to keep young people busy and off the streets as they are the ones at fault. But this is not the case in fact the structure of Youth work is the problem and it is not the young people/ youth who are to be blamed. Today's Youth work does not meet the core values because it can sometimes fall into the teaching structure this takes away the power and control from the young person and causes there to be a lack of empowerment and trust. This relates to Freire's opinion on what Education and Youth work should be this includes the choice to participate and voluntary engagement which allows the young people to feel empowered. Dialogue is very important, and it involves respect meaning that it should not involve one person acting on another, but rather people should be working with each other in order to achieve a goal and to help the development of each other. The National Federation of Educational Research report, 1996 states that " No amount of additional funding, curriculum planning or new facilities could compensate for youth workers who did not engage with young people in a way that they found acceptable" this shows that the most important thing that matters to the young people is communication, they just want to be heard. This also shows that young people just want to be worked with and they want to be empowered by being allowed to voice their opinions. The National Citizenship Service (NCS) is a government initiative which is a voluntary personal and social development

programme for 15–17 year olds in England and Northern Ireland, funded largely by money from the UK Government. This method is a way that Youth work responds to the structural inequality of opportunity and inclusion. The method of this initiative is that it takes teenagers undertake a residential visit, usually to an activity centre for an outdoor education-style course in the countryside involving physical and team building activities. Methods like this allow Youth Work practise to be effective and beneficial for the young people this helps in making the point that youth workers need to " do things with" the young people rather than do things for them as this will hold more value to the young people as they have been able to contribute to the decisions that have been made for their development. This allows young people to find a sense of belonging and purpose.

Research conducted by Young (2005) noted that historically participation has been a consistent feature of Youth work all the major post-war government reports on youth work for example the Albemarle, Thompson and Fairbairn-Milson reports have all contained a commitment to participation. Roger Hart's Ladder of participation identifies eight levels of participation in projects. This shows that Participation and Voluntary engagement plays a significant part in Youth Work Practise. He argues that genuine participation should not be confused with children's dance and theatre activities where they act out according to the pre-determined roles by the adults.
As part of the programme participants undertake a residential phase where they obtain a taste of independent living and learning a variety of skills for their future. Participants plan and deliver a ' social action' project in their

local community, often to raise awareness of or fundraise for a cause. The disadvantages of methods like this is that not all young people get the opportunity to go on the residential as there are limited spaces and it is a first come first serve basis. Surveys were conducted between two sample groups one was NCS participants who took part in the 2015 summer programme, and between a sample control sample of similarly aged young people who expressed an interest in participating on NCS but did not get a chance to take part on the summer programme.

Results showed that across participants, NCS leads to important improvements in social integration. On average, participants reported an increase in warmth towards people from different ethnic groups, an increase in positive mixing with other ethnic groups, and an increase in positive perceptions of cohesion in their communities. They also reported no increase in their frequency of negative mixing with people from different ethnic groups. However, behind these average impacts of NCS are critical differences in how participation impacts social integration for different groups of young people. Young people come on to the programme showing important gaps in their levels of social integration. For example, those who came on to the programme with lower levels of social integration to begin with; young people who faced more barriers to social integration in their daily lives; and young people who came from communities where social integration is weaker. The new reality of Youth work is the movement the New Labour Government made about focusing Youth Work towards a more targeted approach with the aims of meeting agreed outcomes when working

with young people examples of this include Every Child Matters introduced in 2003 and Youth Matters which was introduced in 2005. Nowadays Youth work is about making the young people " job ready" and Youth work exists to keep the youth entertained and busy and I do not agree with that because. This method of work should be focusing on the youth work process, not the product which includes the targets and statistics. Youth work should be about teaching the young people life skills beyond that will help them in the future as mature individuals not just the skills of their job role. This relates to Freire's description of how low-income students were largely streamlined through the education process with the goal of becoming respectful workers who would enter the workforce as passive individuals. Youth work can respond to structural inequalities like these as young people are encouraged to express their feelings and experiences, regain their sense of humanity and then take action to change circumstances. They are taught the skill of challenge and how to voice their opinions if they do not feel comfortable with the services or inequalities they are facing, this can be done with the use of having youth council panels, youth worker and young people catch up meetings and one-ones. Freire believed education was a political act that could not be separated from teaching. He defined this as the main principle of critical pedagogy. He said that teachers and students must be made aware of the ' political views' that surround education and that the way in which students are taught is through a political method. According to Kincheloe, 2008 teachers have political ideas they bring into the classroom and obey but the lack of attention in academic institutions around the world undermine the values of education and its role as a strength of social

fairness. This can be supported by research that shows students in low-income neighbourhoods receive a lower of education than those students in wealthier areas. The study also found that this accounts for 37% of the reason as to why there are lower math scores and another reason for those low-income schools to have more underqualified or inexperienced teachers. Racism operates at a personal and institutional level and is a material and political power. Education discrimination can be on the basis of age, ethnicity, gender, race, economic condition, nationality, disability and religion. Education aims to transform oppressive structures by engaging people who have been marginalised, dehumanised, alienated and drawing on what they already know.

Within schools, tracking progression directs students towards different careers. Individuals say that this method helps minorities and women towards less rewarding jobs and others argue that tracking methods like this are needed within educational institutions to give gifted children the best preparation to excel and progress. This relates to Freire's beliefs where he thought there needs to be a focus on issues that participants identify and on the problem and intellectual interest, and not on the investment everyone needs to be a learner and the teacher.

Participation comes in different ways this includes " giving the young people responsibilities, decision-making roles, action and engagement" (Ord 2007). This helps in making a difference in the lives of the young people. This will also challenge the concept of prompting critical questions and actions as this method will focus on helping people to be free from their limitations instead

of teaching young people, students and communities to easily accept knowledge without question as sometimes information may be irrelevant or inaccurate. This method responds to structural inequalities in Community development and Youth work as it allows individuals to challenge the things they may not agree with. Schools can be seen to have quite specific aims and education is concerned with getting young people to read, learn and write. But at the same time teachers and professionals may find it difficult to draw boundaries around school and their activities as they have certain rules to follow and must try to influence their students in a positive way and by having on a deep and strong front. This is where Youth work comes into place where they respond to structural inequalities by informally teaching by being on the level of the young people and creating positive relationships with them. Educationalists need to connect their personal relationships with individuals to the political and economic reality. There is a power dynamic between teachers and students because it is seen that the teachers know it all and the students are a blank page.

This leads to structural inequality; structural inequality has been defined as a condition where one group of people is recognised of an unequal status in relation to other categories of people. The concept of structural inequality is based on privilege, created by institutions within an economy. There are powerful socialising agents that tell us how far and what we can achieve within the society. This includes factors such as health care, education and the media. The law, business practices, and government policies are also pointers on where individuals may stand in their community according to

their status. An example of where structural inequality exists in the education society is where poor children must attend public schools due to the lack of being able to pay for education whilst the rich children can attend private schools. Before the 1950s, school exclusion was allowed by national law and during this period, females were guided towards home economics instead of math. This shows that people thought that maths was a subject for male students to study as they are the breadwinners of the family and females should stick to doing what they do best and look after the house in terms of cooking for their families and domestic cleaning. Community development is something that cannot be defined. Because to each different individual it may have different meanings and understandings to what community development is. This method enables people to work collectively to bring about positive social change. In practise community development recognises that some people, groups and communities are excluded and oppressed by the way structures and societies are formed. The Community development process is underpinned by a set of values on which practise is based these include Anti-Discrimination, Social Justice and Equality an example of this is Community development seeking to challenge this and ensure fairness for all citizens. Community development responds to structural inequalities such as homelessness and hunger by using models such as having foodbanks that are accessible to individuals who are going through difficult moments in their lives. Capitalism is built on the foundation of slavery from which it obtained its wealth and power. A foodbank is a non-profit, charitable organisation that distributes food to those who have difficulty purchasing enough to avoid hunger. This method is essentially

based on the values of human rights, equality, social justice and respect for diversity. Not only do they provide a solution to the problem of hunger, but it doesn't require resources from the Government, and they can be viewed as evidence of increasing community spirit and of active, caring citizenship.

According to Freire, daily engagement with factors related to social pressures, how people may act towards each other forces dehumanisation and tends to interfere with our existence. This decreases the power of love as there is a lack of knowledge between individuals. Without the power of love on our side we are nothing but lost. Freire felt that love and kindness should be shown to those people who tolerate discrimination and rejection within societies as part of an educational process, rather than as an act of sympathy.

Community development is a long -term process and it starts from taking people's own experience and allowing communities to come together to identify their own needs and actions which strengthens people's voices this can be done through collective action and reflective practise. Other principles that underpin this method according to Freire includes having self-determination where people and communities have the right to make their own choices and decisions. People should be able to control and use their own powers and means to influence this is known as empowerment. An example of this when Black activists challenged the classical Marxist theory and said that the relationship between race/class, race/gender there needs to be recognised. (Gilroy 1987). It needs to be acknowledged that it is both a multi-racial and racist society where people are treated indifferently. One

form of oppression is that the state policy act as an oppressive force on black people. One finding was that if " community work is going to be relevant to black communities then the resistance to racism needs to be addressed" (Ohri 1982). There needs to be a provision of the opportunities that encourages independent cultural groups. This was an approach used to show that oppressed groups, through collective action, can change their situation, which influenced the development of CD theory and practice.