

Living and Learning in the 21st Century: What can We Learn From Queer Youth?

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Outline

- 'Interesting (and paradoxical) Times'
- What Capacities are needed to Negotiate the 'interesting times' we live in?
- *Educare*- to Lead Forth
- Transformative Opportunities- Building alliances across differences
- Taking leadership inside and outside school to create social change
- Engaging with Popular Culture (Quinlivan, In press).

'Interesting (and paradoxical) times'

- Fast and aggressive global capitalism emphasising individual self maximisation, economic wealth, achievement and competition
- 'Liquid modernity'- (Baumann, 2000) everything we assumed was solid is in flux- identity, community, geographic boundaries, loyalty- more 'choice'
- Increasing cultural, gender, sexual & gender diversity
- Increasing social inequalities/instrumentalism and fundamentalisms
- Increasing complexity and uncertainty- manufactured 'Imminent Global Crisis' (Klein, 2007)

What Capacities are needed to live well within the 'interesting times'?

- Global Citizenship- all students know who they are, in order to find a place for themselves, and contribute to a world
- Wholistic wellbeing- Intellectual, Social and Emotional dimensions
- Move beyond the individual to build webs of relations that value difference, relationality and process, in order to create new ways of being, seeing and relating
- Build the ability of students to use, critique and modify a range of different knowledges to use them as resources solving real problems mattering to real people

Educare- to Lead Forth

Building the Capacity of **everybody** to learn can be transformative (Hart et al)

- Intellectually
- **Socially**
- **Emotionally**

In current contexts young people need-
Roots/ Wings/ Audience/ Compassion
(Ungar, 2009)

Transformative Opportunities- Reframing Deficit Constructions

“I was talking to a young man before who said he’d never been to anything like this, never met any other queer people, so I think it’s quite good for reflection. So often there’s not reflection, not positive reflection, in a way, or diverse reflection of gay and lesbian people, and they’re either conforming to heterosexual stereotypes, or they’re a joke, or they’re about to die, or they’re unhappy, so I think it’s really cool for young people to be able to meet a whole range of real, diverse queers and say “oh ok, cool”. (Regional Queer youth coordinator)

Building alliances across differences

“the beauty I find is that instead of being a barrier there where you’re having to label yourself, which is a very difficult thing to do, often, it’s very confusing, as gay or straight or bi-sexual, and that you can be a lot more fluid about it. And the idea about [our group] that is so good is that because it’s a gay-straight alliance, you can fit anywhere along the continuum, whether it’s fully gay, fully straight, a bit in the middle, kind of curious. ... A person can come to the group without being labelled one bit. And because of that it means people, they’ll be able to identify themselves, but at the same time, I saw the change where you’d ask someone if you’re gay or straight, and they’d turn around and say “no, I’m a person” (Member, school diversity group)

Taking leadership inside and outside school to create social change

“the beauty of the group is that a group may only have 20 kids in it, but it’s not so much the fact that you have 20 active members, it’s that the school community itself, as a wider community, becomes accepting and I think the way we noticed that was the fact that short term it takes a wee while to build up, but 5 years later you really saw the impact of it. Not so, you saw it not just with sexual identity being accepted, but the school itself had that real pride factor about it” (Member, school diversity group)

Engaging with Popular Culture

"I guess it gives just a different perspective, and different ways of looking at things than, say, school would, you know? I think someone like a musician is gonna be more blunt about it, you know, they're not gonna be as PG rated about it, you know, they'll tell you the full truth, rather than the school rated version. ...it's a lot more like real life, like if you've experienced that kind of thing then you go to school, and they're all PG rated, you kind of look at it like "well that's not really what's happening", but then if you listen to that music, and they tell you what's really happening, then you kind of see it from, um, like they see it, or something" (School based Diversity group member)

Quinlivan, K & Goulter, M. (forthcoming)
Queer Youth Groups As Sites of
Learning Inside and Outside School

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