

Reengaging Disconnected Youth Through Radio Drama: A Study Examining an Intervention to Promote Metacognition and Meaningful Dialogue

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Addressing how young people, specifically those who feel excluded or disenfranchised, can be engaged and involved within societal discourses, is a key challenge within the UK today. Therefore, there is a need to include them in discussions, making them aware of their place within the wider narrative. This can be done by providing them with thinking skills that promote self-awareness, giving them greater agency in the world.

This research project is part of a PhD at the University of East London, under the wider international, internet radio initiative, RadioActive101. They promote inclusion of socially excluded groups, giving them an opportunity to share their views. In this research the participants are also afforded the chance to share their views, narratives and ideas through the anonymity of radio, whilst engaging in drama based practises and narrative research informed activities.

This presentation highlights the key findings of the initial study of the PhD, examining the design, implementation and evaluation of an intervention conducted with two groups of 'at-risk' young people in which radio drama was created, with the aim of increasing the participant's use of and awareness of their own use of metacognitive 'conditions', such as thinking; managing the self; relating to others; participating and contributing; and engagement.

Within the first research stage (intervention), two groups of 12 participants aged 10-12, took part in practical creative radio making sessions over 6 weeks and were tasked with creating an engaging radio drama that addressed issues with which other young people could empathise. In the second stage (listening), two groups of 10 participants aged 8-11, listened to and discussed the dramas. The research was evaluated through a qualitative analysis, the first stage included interviews (pre and post intervention) and fieldwork journals. The second stage included transcripts of focus groups. Data was analysed using Dialogical Narrative Analysis.

Key findings revealed that 'context' and group dynamics were key for the intervention phase to generate meaningful data. The study found that drama potentially enables participants to share real life experiences, with the cathartic benefits of doing so, without admitting their autobiographical nature. Listening, promoted peer learning and meaningful discussions of the drama's themes, e.g. bullying, grieving, online safety and identity issues.

Future work will explore young people's understandings of how the metacognitive 'conditions' being investigated are shaped by the world around them, their peers and the media and how these shape their understanding and critical consciousness of society.