

Viewpoint

The **Viewpoint** section of Policy and Practice enables two authors to debate the same topic.

In this issue **Frank Sudlow** and **Bernie Ashmore** examine the topic “Development education and campaigning – the perfect partnership?”.

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION AND CAMPAIGNING – THE PERFECT PARTNERSHIP?

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We all learn best that which we enjoy. If something is fun and engaging then we are more likely to open ourselves to greater discussion and debate. However, just because I enjoy something does not necessarily lead to greater learning. I have been watching the cricket over the summer and have become fascinated with the progress of the England Team, as they have come through to beat Australia, the team considered to be the best in the world. However, I have also learned a great deal about the game at the same time. The TV coverage has used the opportunities presented by various events to explain some of the game’s finer points. The result has been that not only have I enjoyed watching the games but I have also learned more about how the game is played.

When young people took to the streets in February 2003, how many of them understood the causes or implications of the planned war against Iraq. Yet they took to the streets and engaged in a massive popular campaign, which will remain with them for many years to come. Many also returned to their homes and schools hungry for more information, enthused by the excitement

of the event, frustrated at the response from Government, in essence, with minds open to learning, about war and peace, about power and justice. In this way popular campaigning provides fertile grounds for development education. It also provides a real challenge for development educationalists. Campaigns are often necessarily simplistic in their focus and their demands. 'Make Poverty History' is a great banner, but becomes quite a challenge when we begin to translate this in terms of – identify the injustices perpetuated by your behaviour, your purchases and your government; change your behaviour and work with others to change the behaviour of governments and companies so that others might live more justly.

For development education the learning process builds on the experiences of the individual and campaigning can offer rich experiences that encourage reflection and analysis, not only of the kind: 'How was it for you?' but also in terms of 'What did you set out to achieve?', 'Was the action effective?', 'What did you learn as a result of this activity'. Such reflections then provide avenues for further analysis. 'What have others done in this area?', 'What have been the results?', 'Were the results predicted / predictable?'.

The opportunity then presents itself for further research and reflection. Following the Stop The War marches there were a number of websites carrying articles by a range of different actors. There was quite a lively debate about the pros and cons of violent action, with some suggesting that there should have been an attack on the American Embassy in London rather than just a march! Bringing these different and often contradictory views into our learning can open up real opportunities for transformative education in which perspectives are challenged and alternatives explored. The development educator has to facilitate the process of exploring the values basis of different viewpoints. This is a process in which the student and teacher are both learners. It is also a values rich environment. Student and teacher should be discouraged from thinking that all actions and viewpoints are equally valid. They are clearly not. However, the exploration should be about striving for the deeper reality.

There is a danger in remaining at the simplistic level of the campaigner. The end rarely justifies any means. The Nazi Youth movement was great at campaigning; its education programme, however, was not open to challenging perspectives and exploring alternatives. There is also a danger, even for some whose work is in the field of development education, of measuring the ‘success’ of the programme by the numbers of individuals taking action of one sort or another. The signing of a campaign card or the purchase of a particular resource does not of itself point to a transformation in thought and deed. That is far more difficult to demonstrate.

Campaigning therefore provides opportunities for development education, but challenges too. Our education programmes can and should respond to the issues that concern those with whom we work. Campaigning may also provide valuable opportunities for demonstrating transformations that have taken place in our thinking and commitment to justice. It should also provide further challenges, which require reflection and analysis. There will be times when we rightly question a campaign message, not only for its simplicity, but also for the values that underpin its message. Not all campaigning is good and it is wise to demand transparency and explore the attitudes and values of those inviting us to campaign.

As such Campaigning and Development Education may form perfect partnerships. When they do they can be powerful and effective, but they are not the same and are not even bound together.

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