

35 YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION: LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

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Trócaire is marking thirty-five years of working for development by taking the opportunity to look back and review its development education (DE) programmes. A process of research and reflection, exploring some of its major DE programmes and projects, has been undertaken with a view to signposting opportunities for future work. This article looks at some of the key approaches taken by Trócaire over the last thirty-five years and highlights some of the areas of future opportunity, not just for Trócaire but for the wider development education community with which it engages.

Beginnings

Since it was first established, Trócaire has sought to develop an understanding of the inequalities of our world and the inherent responsibilities accompanying this understanding. While supporting long-term development projects and responding to humanitarian crises, Trócaire recognised that more was required if prevailing global inequalities were to be tackled. The agency recognised that tackling inequalities was a matter of justice requiring a commitment to educate the Irish people of the root causes of poverty and injustice and the 'duty to respond'. 'At home, [Trócaire] will try to make us all more aware of the needs of these countries and our duties towards them. These duties are no longer a matter of charity but of simple justice' (The Bishops of Ireland on Development, 1973).

Initially, Trócaire focused on providing information and raising awareness of key issues through its Press and Information section. In 1982, with the appointment of its first Education Officer, Trócaire's development education programme took on a distinct identity of education and awareness raising within the organisation. From an initial 'one cap fits all' approach, it moved to develop strategic partnerships and programmes and to integrate Trócaire's existing structures into various sectors.

In the 1980s, Trócaire's development education programme used the United Nations' definition of development education as its cornerstone:

“[Development education seeks]...to enable people to participate in the development of their community, their nation and the world as a whole. Such participation implies a critical awareness of local, national

and international situations based on an understanding of the social, economic and political processes” (Trocaire, 1984:14, citing Hicks & Townley, 1982).

Central to development education was: an appreciation of attitudes and how they are formed; the acquisition of knowledge on political, social, economic and cultural dimensions of development; the development of skills in assessing and analysing information and arguments; and the development of a critical approach to information. Development education was seen as a process which sought to promote global literacy and international understanding, as well as a perspective which sought to promote the global dimension in the consideration of any issue.

Development education was promoted as involving reflection, enquiry, assessment, synthesis and action. It was cognisant of not portraying an overly negative world view by focusing solely on global problems. Instead, it aimed to highlight the diversity of views, experiences and approaches in the world.

“Educationally it is unacceptable to teach and study any issue with only a passing reference or (as so often happens) with no reference at all to the majority of the world’s population. Almost 75 per cent of the world’s people live in the Third World and yet many textbooks and syllabi in many subject areas make no reference to them at all or such references are often ethnocentric, sometimes racist and most often paternalistic” (Trócaire, 1984:14).

A clear distinction was made from the outset between development education and campaigning or fundraising which were recognised as possible actions or outcomes of a development education process but not an integral part of development education practice.

The partnership model

The partnership model formed the basis of Trócaire’s education programme from the mid-1980s. Support for partnerships took a variety of forms, including financial assistance, personnel, planning and resource support, as well as joint initiation and delivery of programmes. Trócaire recognised that educational work within different sectors in Ireland required different strategies, approaches and timescales. This became evident in the diverse approaches and content used in different settings, such as primary and post-primary schools, parish, church and community groups as well as sectoral

groupings.

The partnership model included a number of key characteristics. Fundamental to the model was the development of a joint programme with a key stakeholder organisation or institute. Between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, a number of partnerships were sustained across a range of sectors including partnerships with Mary Immaculate College, Limerick at primary level, the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) Curriculum Development Unit at post-primary level, Macra na Feirme, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and Development Education for Youth (DEFY). The appointment of an Advisory committee comprising personnel from Trócaire, members of the partner organisations, and in some cases additional key personnel with particular expertise in the sector, was seen as important in managing the partnerships. The partnership model also involved the delivery of a joint programme at a range of levels which varied from programme to programme. At primary level, for example, it included participation in pre-service work, in-service training with teachers, classroom delivery, and the piloting of materials.

Identifying and training trainers was central to delivering the outreach programme. In the initial phase of the Macra na Feirme partnership, for example, workshops at a grassroots level were used as an opportunity to identify potential trainers who could implement the programme as it developed. Training was delivered jointly by Trócaire and the partner organisation or education body. An example of another effective partnership was that with the National Committee for Technology in Education (NCTE) which facilitated a nationwide in-service programme for primary school teachers on the CD-ROM *Rafiki* through the regional Education Centres.

A core component of all the partnership programmes was the joint development of support materials to ensure relevance and shared responsibility. Also, working with existing networks was seen as invaluable in delivering the development education programme. Within each sector, there were ready-made structures and modes of programme delivery which were opened up through the partnership model. An example of this was Trócaire's programme for Early Years which was supported by city and county childcare committees nationwide.

As Trócaire looks to the future and to new areas of engagement, the partnership model can continue to assist the development of a strategic approach. It provides the opportunity to work with policy decision-makers, education practitioners and those active at a grass-roots level. It is a model which Trócaire will continue to employ alongside a range of other approaches.

Advocacy

Advocacy has been integral to Trócaire's education work in terms of integrating development education into existing education programmes. Key to this process is committing education decision makers in a range of sectors to incorporating development education into policy. Within the youth sector, for example, this has involved targeting board members across a range of youth organisations to commit to the incorporation of development education at policy level. Advocating for the inclusion of development education within existing and emerging education programmes was also key within the post-primary sector. This included identifying areas of opportunity in each of the subject areas of the Junior Certificate when it was first introduced and feeding into the development of subjects such as civic social and political education (CSPE) and, more recently, the curriculum for citizenship studies. In addition to making submissions to government as part of wider network organisations, Trócaire also made a number of independent submissions on the issue of development education such as *Towards an Integrated Government Policy for Development Cooperation*, Submission to the White Paper on Development Cooperation, (Trócaire, May 2005). Advocating for development education will continue to be integral to Trócaire's education work in the future.

Operational programmes

Alongside partnerships and advocacy work, Trócaire has run a range of operational development education programmes. These include the ongoing annual Trócaire Lenten Campaign to raise awareness of and engender support for a specific development issue. The Lenten campaign includes producing educational materials for the formal education sector based on the Lenten theme and the country or countries being profiled. These have evolved from awareness raising leaflets to booklets which are specifically targeted at the early years, junior and senior primary and post-primary level curricula, and integrating with specific subject areas such as geography, CSPE and religious education.

In recent years, *Pamoja Kwa Haki* (Together for Rights), an operational programme for senior cycle students, has been a major focus of Trócaire's work at post-primary level. *Pamoja Kwa Haki* aims to engage students at a meaningful level in development issues and to connect them with like-minded students in other schools in Ireland and Kenya. *Pamoja Kwa Haki* involves the students participating in a training programme, undertaking a research project, hosting a visitor from the country being

researched, running an action programme in their school and community, and finally, participating in a national event with all of the schools involved in the programme. In addition a Human Rights Summer School is open to selected students from the *Pamoja* schools. Events held on International Human Rights Day on 10 December, is the key focus for students who are involved for a second year in the programme, which includes study visits overseas for teachers involved in the programme as a contribution to their professional development.

The Southern perspective

The Southern perspective has been central to Trócaire's education programme from its beginnings both in its operational programmes and in its strategic partnerships. Trócaire's overseas partners and those they support have shared their stories and perspectives, and facilitated a realistic exploration of the many challenges and successes of addressing the inequalities in our world. This is an area Trócaire will continue to develop in the future in the context of accuracy, authenticity and an acknowledgement of the essential contribution of the perspectives of those who are directly affected by key development issues. In addition, there are increasing opportunities to share the perspectives of communities from the global South who are now an integral part of Irish society.

The wider development education community

From the outset of its development education work, Trócaire has recognised the importance of an independent and vibrant non-governmental sector in development education and has sought to play a role in its development and promotion. It engages with development networks at a national level, such as Dóchas and IDEA (the Irish Development Education Association), and at international level, such as CIDSE (International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity), and CONCORD (the European Confederation of NGOs for Relief and Development). In addition, Trócaire supports a range of groups and organisations in Ireland through its Development Education Grants Scheme, which is currently being revised and will be re-launched at the end of 2008.

Conclusion

Trócaire's work today continues to remain true to the original mandate of making people in Ireland more aware of the needs of developing countries and

their duties towards them in the context of justice. Its education programme does this by utilising opportunities presented within the education sector and the development arena to maintain its commitment to innovative action and engagement with a broad range of individuals and organisations working for greater global justice. Trócaire also seeks to promote a development education perspective through its partnerships and operational programmes and carries out advocacy work at national and international levels. The agency's commitment in these areas will continue in the years ahead.

References

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