

Resource reviews

HOW DO WE KNOW IT'S WORKING? A TOOLKIT FOR MEASURING ATTITUDINAL CHANGE FROM EARLY YEARS TO KS5

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'How do we know it's working?' is a valuable educational resource which provides a methodology and toolkit to evaluate the impact global citizenship work has on young people by measuring attitudinal change. The resource was developed by the Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) following their Global Schools project, which worked with a group of six primary and secondary schools to develop global citizenship in the curriculum.

The main body of the resource outlines 16 short audit activities for small groups of pupils covering the themes of 'understanding diversity', 'making a difference', 'thinking about futures' and 'awareness of the wider world'. The methodology proposed uses activities as a baseline audit, analyses the results and uses them to inform the school's planning. At the end of a teaching and learning programme informed by the baseline audit, the audit activities are then repeated. By comparing and analysing the responses to the baseline and repeat activities, teachers can illustrate changes in values, attitudes and understanding. The toolkit is designed to provide an insight into the impact of global citizenship work on a class or group of young people, rather than to form an individual assessment.

The activities draw on a range of techniques including voting, brainstorming and responding to photographs to develop a snapshot of pupils' understanding of and attitude towards issues such as how to protect the environment, what makes a family and what you might see in a country in Africa. The activities promote thought and discussion, which is the key to revealing knowledge and understanding, and values and attitudes. However, the audit activities are not teaching and learning activities themselves; they are intended to bring out existing views and misconceptions and gaps in knowledge rather than to address them. Teachers must therefore be prepared for controversial issues that may be raised through the activities that they should not necessarily challenge, as this would influence the audit.

Some of the activities are very open in creating a snapshot of values and attitudes; however, a few activities could potentially be seen as influencing pupils into giving a particular response. In these activities pupils are encouraged to draw on stereotypes to complete the task, in a way justifying the application of stereotypes. For example, one activity asks pupils to decide who will have a specific job based solely on a photograph of a young person. The toolkit does also include a warm-up activity which ‘encourages (pupils) to think and respond independently in preparation for subsequent activities’; this preparation and encouraging of independent and critical thinking is important to avoid a following-the-crowd approach to the activities.

Each activity is clearly explained and includes a section on how to analyse and interpret the results and how to know if the teaching has been effective in changing perceptions. These sections provide useful criteria to analyse the activities against; however they are value-laden. This is acknowledged in some activities, for example, the ‘what’s the best way to look after the environment?’ activity states that ‘there is no definitive answer in this complex debate’, and goes on to give an example of the response of an ‘expert in sustainable living’. In some other activities a ‘right’ answer is proposed; although this is sometimes controversial, it does provide a useful starting point for teachers to engage in a debate about what they would like to see their pupils demonstrating through the activities.

Case studies from RISC’s Global Schools project are also included with each activity and provide informative examples of how schools have used the toolkit. Although the case studies are from schools that have used the whole toolkit over a two-year period, it is more likely that teachers will pick and choose activities and use them over a shorter period. Flexibility is a key strength of the resource: the duration of the activities can vary and the ideas behind each activity can be easily adapted to focus on a different global citizenship theme.

By bringing a wide range of activities together in one resource, ‘How do we know it’s working?’ helps to bridge the gap between the difficulties of measuring attitudinal change and the importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of global citizenship work. It gives a framework with accessible tools and ideas to start the process of evaluating global citizenship, which is a welcome development in the global education sector.

References

Allum, L; Lowe, B & Robinson, L (2008) How do we know it's working? A toolkit for measuring attitudinal change from early years to KS5, Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC), Reading, available: http://www.risc.org.uk/education/risc_publications.php, £19.95 + p&p.

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