

Reviews

Global Interdependence

Charles Hayes

Reviewed by Colm O'Connor and Peadar King

Background

In June 2006 the revised Leaving Certificate will be examined for the first time. Changes in both the syllabus and the examination format will mean that large numbers of students will now be studying development education at Leaving Certificate level. Whilst development education was, in theory at least, on the old course most students (c. 95%) did not attempt the question. This was due to the nature of the question and the associated marking schemes.

For those of us interested in, and motivated by, development issues the new Geography syllabus is a major advancement. The course consists of core units, electives and options. Whilst development issues are referred to in all sections of the course they are most thoroughly dealt with as one of the four options. *Global Interdependence* is one of these options (which only higher level students must study). Furthermore it is the only section for which essay-style questions will be required. It is in this context that *Global Interdependence* by Charles Hayes must be reviewed.

Does *Global Interdependence* meet the syllabus needs?

The syllabus has four main statements:

- views of development and under-development are subject to change
- we live in an inter-dependent global economy. Actions or decisions taken in one area have an impact on other areas
- empowering people is a way of linking economic growth with human development
- sustainable development as a model for future human and economic development

Each of these statements is then elaborated on with further points e.g. models of development, Euro-centric thinking, transnational corporations, debt and fair trade. The chapters of *Global Interdependence* are based directly on these points; as such, the book meets all the needs of the syllabus.

Does the book meet wider development education expectations?

Of equal concern to those involved in development education is how the author deals with issues that are sometimes controversial. In the subtleties of his argument is he ultimately an apologist for, or critic of, global power structures? Is he optimistic about the possibility of change, or not? It seems clear to me that Charles Hayes has a deep knowledge of both global affairs and modern history. Furthermore he is not afraid to make reference to reactionary or harmful actions of either international or domestic governments. As such he passes the acid test for those interested in development education.

Is the book useful for both teacher and pupil?

The challenge for the teacher is to discuss all of the aforementioned issues in twenty seven periods. In that regard, the length, presentation and readability of the book are critical issues. The possibility is that the book's length, at a hundred and eight pages, may prove daunting. Rightly or wrongly, many teachers may see this as three pages per day, which would then present a significant challenge given the level of detail involved. Having said that, the content and presentation of the book are very impressive. A good example of this is the author's choice of cartoons and photographs. Teachers know that students misinterpret these a lot more frequently than one might expect. Those chosen for this book are relevant, clear and unsubtle.

The question of readability is always a serious one when choosing a textbook. In the past, relatively weak students were able to attempt the Higher Level Geography course; however, the level of detail required by the new syllabus may well see a drop in the numbers attempting that level. This situation is beyond the author's control and, given the issues to be discussed, he has succeeded in using a reasonable level of English.

Is the book useful for those involved in non-formal education?

Readers involved in non-formal education would also find the book to be useful as it has a large number of case studies, many of which are linked to Irish settings. These could be looked at in isolation or form a short development education course. The book also contains useful definitions, such as terms used in the immigration debate, and explains the role of international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund. The aforementioned photographs and cartoons could also be enlarged to make posters or flash cards.

Perhaps the most important aspect of both the syllabus and the book is their focus on solutions to global problems. Again, concise case studies could be used as part of a class / youth group action project e.g. fair trade. One flaw within the book is the absence of contact information such as postal addresses or websites for the Non-Governmental Organisations working on development issues.

Conclusion

Global Interdependence by Charles Hayes is a clear, informed and informative resource which is ideal for use both within, and outside of, its intended setting.

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Hayes, C (2004) *Our Dynamic World 4: Global Interdependence*, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin.

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