

Perspectives

Night classes in changing the world: Introducing World-wise

Hester Ross

“Education should encourage dissent and criticism as a citizen’s duty. It should involve the development of thinking skills and effective criticism. The educational ethos should be one of listening, debating and taking part...”.

Prof. Lindsay Paterson

The World-wise project

The World Development Movement Scotland’s (WDM Scotland) active global citizenship education programme for adults, World-wise, was launched in March 2003. Currently billed as *night-classes in changing the world*, the project is geared towards helping groups of local people across Scotland – as yet unseasoned campaigners – explore the big global issues of the day and equip them to take action to change the world.

The project is designed to function across both formal and informal educational contexts and past and current pilot classes have run as supported programmes in Glasgow, Stirling, Fife and Highland regions. These have operated variously as part of a city community education programme; a university night class; in conjunction with an independent development education provider; as part of the Highlands’ Workers Educational Association (WEA) programme and a group meeting in a hotel in a west coast fishing village.

A city centre interdenominational church group also has plans to form a World-wise group, and in March 2006 training in the use of the course materials will be offered to adult education practitioners as part of Edinburgh City Council’s continuing professional development programme.

As well as providing course materials on CD the project also runs tailor-made training workshops for facilitators. Our new website (launch due January 06) will provide further support and resources to World-wise groups.

World-wise dynamics and ways of working

The entire World-wise project is underpinned by certain related dynamics which inform the entire learning approach and ways of working:

- World-wise starts where people are; group members' own experiences are taken as a starting point
- local issues are related to global concerns
- materials and sessions should be interesting, accessible and people-centred with no unnecessary jargon (in particular we try to avoid abbreviations and acronyms which can be terrifying and exclusive)
- we work with existing local and national campaigning groups in a mutually supportive relationship
- the interests of the group should inform the direction of the course and the topics covered
- there is a central commitment to achieving global justice.

Materials

Participant and facilitator versions of the course materials are available on CD-Rom. These comprise course notes linked to various 'Toolkit' documents (such as sample press releases, brainstorming guidelines and drama scripts). The facilitator version contains a facilitator handbook with learning outcomes and preparation tick lists.

Participants are also provided with a Taking Action Pack which contains a collection of up-to-date campaigning materials from a range of local and national campaigning organisations concerned with issues of international justice. For example, our current pack includes information and resources such as web links from Amnesty International and their partners on their Stop Violence Against Women, Respect Refugees and Control Arms campaigns; The Trade Justice Coalition; The Jubilee Debt Campaign; Friends of the Earth as well as The World Development Movement's own 'Dirty Aid Dirty Water' campaign and others. The pack also includes information on working with The Scottish Parliament.

A key advantage of this format is its flexibility. Materials can be adapted to suit the requirements of specific groups or learning contexts. The content of the Taking Action Packs is a main driver in determining the choice of issues explored by the group and this can be adapted to suit learner or group needs. The materials can also be updated as the resources will reflect current campaigning interests.

This cooperative approach has been welcomed by our contacts in the

various campaigning organisations represented in the pack not least because providing samples of resources offers a targeted marketing opportunity for their campaigns. The system also harnesses a great deal and variety of expertise and allows the experts to speak directly for themselves on subjects they are passionate about. The issues which can be engaged with are not restricted to WDM campaigns.

Time is allocated in each session for group members to explore the information in the pack; identify a number of issues and actions which the group would like to know more about; allocate topics to be researched by smaller sub groups and present their findings at a session entitled The Justice Forum.

Group sessions

Participant-centred learning is established early on as brainstorming type exercises allow group members to draw on their own experience to identify the big local and global issues and to begin to explore connections between them. Subsequent sessions include an exploration of justice and human rights; a media workshop; a session on engaging with various levels of government and international powers; and several sessions where local and global campaigners are invited to engage with the group over their campaigning experiences. Campaigning skills such as writing press releases and gaining publicity for events are put into practice as early as possible within the context of announcing the group's activities and reporting on any interesting meetings.

In the second round of ten-week sessions, group members take charge of the programme as they work together on their chosen campaigning project. Skills gaps are identified depending on the selected project and the group begins to function independently as it makes arrangements to put these in place. Committee skills, research techniques; event organisation, networking and presentation skills are all embedded into this phase of the programme.

Project example

Our Stirling pilot group decided to stage an 'unfair-tug-of-war' in Stirling Town Centre during Fairtrade week 2005 in the run up to the Make Poverty History (MPH) events in Scotland in July. The regional Green MSP, local press, children and adults were all involved. An information stall with samples of Fairtrade products was central as forty two Vote for Trade Justice Cards were signed and over ninety white armbands for the Make Poverty

History campaign were bought by local residents

The following related activities of the World-wise Stirling campaign group are drawn from the facilitator's report:

- press release to local media ('Stirling Observer' March 16th 2005, p.24)
- getting sponsorship for T-shirts and refreshments for the event. ('G8/ Unfair Trade Is Just Unjust' on the front and back of the shirts, and permission to hold the event was obtained from the council)
- sending over forty letters to local groups and church representatives informing them about the MPH campaign and the oncoming public event
- letter of request to the Director of Education to present information in local schools
- distribution of leaflets and posters promoting local Fairtrade campaign and Trade Justice Activities
- enlisting the professional support of a local speaker to give feedback on individuals' public presentations.

Feedback from participants

Group members were asked to report on their experiences and a selection of responses is recorded below:

"I feel quite stimulated by it all really and want to do more, like writing and talking with others. I've been doing (as a result of this course) a presentation skills class which has been really good for communication skills and my confidence. I've found it very refreshing because I work alone, and it's been important to me being part of this group".

"The two terms have been very different, but I want to do more. I've learnt how much ground a group can cover, not just one or two people working alone. I've got a boost from meeting other people and hearing their ideas. I've learnt new skills and now know ones I'd like to develop".

"I've taken away how similar the issues are in developing countries to what's going on here. The same issues are at the heart of both, like Out of Town Shopping Centres. I've never appreciated it before. I'd like to do more presentations to young people".

Accreditation

The World-wise course ran as an evening class at the Department of Continuing Education (DACE) at the University of Glasgow and is now a DACE accredited course. The entire project underwent inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in 2004 who reported:

“The World-wise programme contained good-quality learning materials on global poverty and development in a variety of appropriate formats. This included electronic documents on a CD-ROM. These resources had been drawn from the research resources of both WDM-UK and partner organisations. Tutors imaginatively linked these resources to local issues in the four pilot areas. There was a strong emphasis throughout the learning materials and classes on equality of opportunity and respect for cultural diversity. The initial learner feedback from the pilot programme showed that almost all learners viewed their initial experiences positively”
(HMIE, 2005).

Materials are also referred to an advisory panel comprising development education and international development practitioners. The current set of materials has been revised to take on board feedback and ideas from participants and facilitators of the 2004 – 2005 pilot groups as well as a training professional at the Training and Consultancy department of Stevenson College of Education, Edinburgh.

Post World-wise

The annual World-wise conference held each March is a participative event where World-wise groups can present their projects and engage with a range of speakers on topics of current campaign interest.

It is the aim of the project that participants will be empowered to campaign on global issues within new or existing local groups. Several participants have joined existing campaigning groups such as Fair Trade groups, WDM groups or Amnesty groups. One participant has taken up employment with a national campaigning group and has plans to train as a World-wise facilitator and another is volunteering with a developmental charity. The project endeavours to keep contact with participants and it will be interesting to chart the progress of those who are willing to keep in contact and report back on their activities.

References

HMIE (2005), *Review Of Voluntary Sector Organisations (Community Learning and Development - 'World Development Movement Scotland')*, HMIE

Hester Ross is World Development Movement Scotland's World-wise Project Officer and is the author of the World-wise course materials.

The World Development Movement (WDM) (www.wdm.org.uk) campaigns to change the global structures that keep the poorest people poor.

The new World-wise website is at:
www.world-wise.info.

The full project is currently limited to Scotland but anyone wishing to use the resources should contact the author on:
hester@wdmscotland.org.uk.

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