

CENTRE FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION



Good Practice Tips to Planning an Action Outcome in Development Education

This short document is one of the outcomes of a one day workshop organised by the Centre for Global Education on 23 September 2015 titled 'Development Education, Activism and Social Change'. The workshop aimed to support reflection and debate on how development educators engage the public on international development issues (a full report is [here](#)). The action outcome is regularly cited by governments, non-governmental organisations and inter-governmental bodies as a core component of their education activities. They collectively suggest that at the very heart of development education practice is the idea of combining reflection and action toward positive social change.

But incorporating the action component into the planning and delivery of our work can often be a challenge for development educators for a range of reasons such as funding limitations, time limited access to learners, lack of resources, and a narrow learning environment in terms of opportunities to explore action outcomes. However, there are also, at times, deficits in our own practice which can hamper citizen engagement. They include: inadequate attention to the action component in the planning of our work; a lack of serious engagement with learners on potential action outcomes; and a tendency to opt for 'soft', transactional and superficial actions rather than long-term, systemically-oriented actions. This document suggests some tips to consider when planning action outcomes as part of an educational activity. They are based on the outcome of detailed discussions during the workshop attended by development educators from a range of sectors: community arts, third level, community education, youth and development NGOs.

When Planning the Action think about...

- Your mission. What change do you seek to create and why?
- Who the action is for? Is there evidence that the action is needed?
- How the action connects with the 'bigger picture'? Ensure that the target group understands the wider context of their undertaking.
- The capacity and context of the target group?
- Whether the intervention is relevant to the reality of learners' lives?
- Does this initiative connect the local and the global? If it appears too remote or disconnected it will not connect with local people.

- Ensuring that the action is part of the learning process, not a demonstration of outcomes.
- What methodology will be used to work toward citizen engagement?

When Implementing the Action think about...

- If it is realistic, achievable and directly addressing the problem being tackled by your education activity?
- Exploring different paths to the goal rather than accepting one method imposed by the facilitator / teacher?
- Ensuring that the learner has ownership of the process.
- Consulting and engaging with learners all the way through the learning process and ensuring that the action evolves naturally as part of that debate.
- Using activities and case studies that are relevant to the learning context and can guide the learners in arriving at an agreed form of engagement.
- Trying to make the education activity fun and engaging through activities such as role plays and simulation games.
- Making sure outcomes are relevant to the group and their environment.

Practical considerations:

- Insurance and Health & Safety.
- Ensure that the learner has confidence and trust in the process.
- Ensure that there is one key contact in the target group who can be liaised with throughout the intervention.
- Adequate commitment and time from the learners.
- Ensure the activity is adequately promoted.
- Use a venue that is comfortable and appropriate to the target group.
- Do not parachute into the group and deliver a one-off initiative. Carry out thorough consultation work in advance and tailor the initiative to the needs of the group through dialogue.

Evaluation of the Action

- What did the action achieve? Implement a reflective evaluation process.
- Monitor the impact of the action in partnership with learners.
- Assess the action against its original goals.
- Consider the impact that the action has had on the learner.
- Use the action outcome to inform next steps.
- If possible, check in with participants some months after the action to capture longer-term or unexpected outcomes.

Try not to....

- Tag an action on to the end of the initiative; it needs to be part of the planning process for the development education activity.

- Impose a menu of actions on the learners; they need to have ownership of the process that produces them.
- Opt for the 'soft' option of funding-driven responses to problems; try to opt for more long-term, systemic-driven actions.
- Suggest an action for action's-sake; it won't have any effect without prior reflection and debate. Similarly, debate without action won't take us very far.

Further reading:

Centre for Global Education (2015) Workshop report: 'Are we Changing the World? Development Education, Activism and Social Change', 23 September, available: <https://goo.gl/Wd30Yb> (accessed 10 October 2015).

McCloskey, S (2015) 'Thinkpiece: Are we Changing the World? Reflections on Development Education, Activism and Social Change', Belfast: Centre for Global Education, available: https://drive.google.com/a/centreforglobaleducation.com/file/d/0Bwa0-yi_NbZGZDVHczNQY0dFU0k/view (accessed 2 October 2015).

Oliveira, S and Skinner, A (2014) 'Journeys to Citizen Engagement: Action Research with Development Education Practitioners in Portugal, Cyprus and Greece', Brussels: DEEEP, available: http://deEEP.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/DEEEP4_QualityImpact_Report_2013_web.pdf, (accessed 24 April 2015).

Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review, Belfast: Centre for Global Education, available: www.developmenteducationreview.com.

Trewby, J (2014) 'Journeys to engagement with the UK Global Justice Movement: Life stories of activist-educators', London: Institute of Education, University of London, available: <http://www.columbans.co.uk/download/144/> (accessed 13 May 2015).

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