Chapter 5

Intervention, Innovation and Inspiration

Introduction

This chapter highlights examples of best practice in the development of respect and understanding. Most do not come under the label 'citizenship education' as such, but represent innovative ways of working towards political empowerment and intercultural understanding, and so share the same aims. There is also an extended discussion of school linking at the start, given its potential importance for respect and understanding. The examples are diverse in terms of the countries represented, with some taken from outside the Commonwealth – countries such as Kuwait and Mexico – since it is important to maintain awareness of practice elsewhere in the world, and learn from it. There is also substantial diversity in terms of the level of education, with some examples taken from school level and others from higher education and adult learning, as well as diversity in the provider and form of education, involving governmental and non-governmental initiatives in formal and non-formal education. Most of the examples involve transformation of the curriculum or educational environment, but importantly in some cases also involve extending access to marginalised groups. Needless to say, this is not an exhaustive account of best practice, and many other cases (such as UNICEF's child friendly schools) could also have been included.

The cases provided here are mostly small-scale, and future implications may involve expansion to provide a broader reach, although not necessarily, with a multiplicity of localised actions often being an effective course of action. Furthermore, these cases are bounded by their own specific contexts, and cannot be easily replicated elsewhere. The conditions that make possible the establishment of intercultural universities in Mexico or dialogue between ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland simply may not be present elsewhere, or it may be that in other contexts of racial discrimination or ethnic conflict another form of response would be more appropriate. Nevertheless, the fact that replication might be difficult or inappropriate does not mean that the cases have no relevance for others. Significant learning about possibilities and constraints can be gained, and more importantly the inspiration and commitment from knowing that change is possible.

School linking

School linking, global school partnerships, or North–South school partnerships as they are variously referred to, have over the last decade increasingly gained visibility and recognition as a means to improve children's engagement with the world they live in. School linking puts schools in different countries in partnership, giving students and teachers opportunities to work jointly on projects designed to 'motivate young people's commitment to a fairer, more sustainable world' (DFID, 2010). In the past, school linking programmes were associated with fundraising for schools

in developing countries, but in recent years the emphasis has shifted from inputs to integrated curriculum and learning outcomes. School linking today is also facilitated by the internet and communications technologies which have transformed the ways in which children and teachers across the world can teach and learn together.

Examples of how schools pursue partnerships vary. The partnership between The Marches School and Technology College in the UK and three schools in the Soshanguve Township in South Africa (Thakalange JS, Ruabohlele JS and Echibini) has lasted for ten years and has included a number of student and teacher exchange visits and regular correspondence between students. 'After a visit to the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg with the three head teachers, The Marches School teachers have been able to share the real life experiences of the South African teachers in their lessons on apartheid and African history' (Link Community Development, 2010a). The Lancaster Girls' Grammar school in the UK's link with Vidya Devi Jindal School brought about a Year 8 exchange of albums of drawings and photographs of students dressed up as various teenage stereotypes from the two countries to contribute to their investigation of stereotyping and inclusion. The project has also fostered closer contacts between Lancaster Girls school and the local Hindu and Muslim communities.

School partnerships are intended to 'develop the knowledge, understanding, values and attitudes of young people and the wider community as informed and responsible global citizens who are effective in taking decisions about making a difference to the world' (Link Community Development, 2010b). Amongst the benefits of school linking is the promotion of learning through a range of topics with an international dimension including global development issues (the Millennium Development Goals for example), social justice and equity, diversity, globalisation and interdependence, sustainable development, and peace and conflict. Most organisations facilitating school linking emphasise jointly constructed projects that are integrated into curricular outcomes; exchange visits for students and teachers are also common. A recent study on North–South school partnerships notes that school linking can have a significant impact on teachers' professional development as joint projects stimulate collaboration and innovation within and between schools (Edge et al., 2009: 11). The study also suggests that direct contact between the schools has an especially catalytic effect in deepening the quality of school partnerships: 'Exchanges are the cornerstone of partnerships and the turning point for learning and engagement' (Edge et al., 2009: 107). Ultimately the quality of school partnerships comes down to leadership, commitment and good communication on both sides.

Much of the momentum around school linking in recent years has come from its endorsement and promotion by the UK's education and international development strategies. School linking programmes were once promoted on an ad hoc basis by grassroots non-governmental organisations, but over the last decade have become increasingly institutionalised and centralised as a key element of the Department for Education and Skills 'International Strategy for Education' (DFES, 2004), with policy and funding support from the Department for International Development (DFID). There are currently over 2,000 schools in the UK with links to 56 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (DFID, nd) facilitated by a wide range of organisations underwritten by DFID, including the British Council, Link Community Development, Plan and Oxfam. In addition the Global Gateway, an international website under the Department for Education, facilitates partnerships between schools and educators across the world. These UK-led

initiatives have in turn generated interest in the area of school partnerships internationally. In 2006, Commonwealth Education Ministers affirmed their support 'to encourage and promote school to school links and at other levels of the system as a means of fostering mutual understanding and to improve the quality of learning outcomes' (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2006), and as many as 76 governments have signed up as strategic partners in school linking through the Global Gateway.

School linking programmes are generally thought to have a positive influence on teachers and students in participating schools. In the UK a new study on the impact of global learning shows that 'Without an opportunity to learn about global issues in school, over a third of the population (34%) are neither involved in, nor interested in getting involved in, any form of positive social action. Amongst those who have learnt about climate change, poverty or world politics and trade at school, this figure drops to around one in ten (9%, 12% and 12% respectively)' (Hogg and Shah, 2010: 3). However, the Edge et al. (2009: 18) study shows asymmetrical responses in the North and South when it comes to the specifics: for example 66.7 per cent of Northern schools compared with 88.6 per cent of Southern partnership leaders found higher levels of participation and engagement amongst students involved in school linking projects, and 49 per cent of Northern schools versus 85 per cent of Southern schools found significant changes in students' academic behaviour. These differences are likely to reflect the considerable gap in innovative teaching and learning, resources and global exposure available to most schools in developing countries.

Although school linking represents a significant tool for children across the world to learn more about and from one another, there is still ground to cover in equalising the partnership between the North and South and in promoting South–South linkages. School partnerships are playing a key role in the UK's agenda for international engagement and global citizenship education in its schools, however many Commonwealth governments have yet to institutionalise a response to the growing phenomenon. Given the higher rates of engagement and impact on schools in the South indicated in Edge et al's (2009) study, Commonwealth Ministries of Education could do more to maximise the benefits of school partnerships for their own schools by developing relevant supportive policies and strategies covering curriculum and capacity building.

Modelling the World: The Model United Nations at School

(Laura Johnson)

> I think it opens their eyes to the complexities of things. And, you know, when you're in High School, you think of everything in black and white, and I think that Model UN helps the process of seeing shades of grey…
>
> (Model UN Organiser, interviewed in July 2009)

Model United Nations programmes are simulations of discussions within the United Nations (UN). Students take on roles as nations' representatives, research foreign and domestic policies of those countries and participate in formal debates and informal dialogue to attempt to 'resolve' international problems and global concerns such as conflict, poverty, gender violence and environmental issues. One inter-school programme in the UK, for 13 to 18 year-olds, separates the 300 or so participants out into committees of around 30 students relating to agencies of the United Nations such as UNESCO and UNICEF. The objective for each committee within the one- or two-day con-

ference is to co-operatively draft and sign a UN resolution regarding the topic under discussion. Experienced students take on the organising roles in the conference: once the conference is underway, there is little adult involvement. Model UN programmes run across the world, with large international conferences taking place in cities as diverse as Belgrade and Beijing, New York and Nairobi. They can also happen on a smaller scale: a classroom of students can undertake a Model UN simulation using only a few resources, namely country 'placards', a stopwatch/timer and a makeshift gavel.

The aim of the programme is to increase students' international knowledge and to develop their research, debating and negotiation skills, as well as building their confidence. By taking on the role of a diplomat from a country other than their own, students develop empathy and respect for persons and cultures and absorb a new, more formal, method of interacting with each other and resolving conflicts based on 'decorum'. That said, the Model UN is not an unproblematic educational activity. It can be regarded as promoting a Western centralised system which has limited authority in today's world of grassroots and internet activism. It can also be seen as a competitive and perhaps even elitist activity, although the programme aims to dispel this image by focusing on state schools and providing accessible resources that can be implemented across schools as part of basic curriculum provision. Despite these and other problems, the student response to the programme has been overwhelmingly positive. Meeting students from different backgrounds, strengthening leadership skills and gaining a sense of the complexity of global challenges can be a powerful motivator for students to undertake more research and to start working together to reinterpret and remodel the world.

> Model UN has taught me that you won't be able to get anywhere… just being really selfish and only listening to what's going on in your head and not listening to everyone else. (16-year-old Model UN Student Participant, interviewed in July 2009)

Children in Conflict: a case study of Gujarat, 2002

(Beena Jadhav, Zakia Soman)

In 2002, the Indian state of Gujarat was witness to violence unprecedented since independence. It was one of the worst examples of religious strife and hatred between communities, leading to the deaths of innocent women, men and children and mindless destruction of property following the burning of the train at Godhra on 27th February in which 59 people returning from Ayodhya [karsewaks] were killed. What followed was a series of mass revenge killings of innocent persons belonging to the Muslim community. The police looked away and the administration chose to remain quiet and at some places supported the mayhem. Over 100,000 people were rendered homeless and forced to take shelter in relief camps put up by religious leaders.

ActionAid supported the relief and peace campaign led by Citizens' Initiative. The peace campaign was called Aman Samudaya. We deployed volunteers in all relief camps to provide psycho-social counselling, legal support, livelihood support etc. The worst sufferers under the circumstances were women and children. Children were always overlooked as a group. We started education for children below 15 in various relief camps. Young volunteers, particularly girls, were specially trained on the spot to work with children to engage them in creative exercises that would help to overcome trauma. Writing, story-telling, painting, drawing and singing were some of the

activities regularly carried out in the camps. Curfew lasted for over eight months and the camps became the school as well as the home for these children. A year later, when peace returned we continued our association with these children by supporting 74 of them through annual fellowships received from the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. This took care of their school fees, tuition fees, uniforms, books etc. We gave preference to children of single mothers and girls. The support also included 20 children of the Hindu *karsewaks* who were killed in the train at Godhra. Children from both communities came together to celebrate festivals like Independence Day annually and also participated in an atmosphere of harmony and communal amity. Over 300 children from vulnerable families were sent to different schools where their studies were sponsored by community donors. The engagement has continued to date through counselling mothers for continued education and support by schools such as partial waiver of fees.

Intercultural Universities in Mexico

(Fernanda Pineda)

Since colonial times, educational projects were often aimed at mainstreaming Mexican indigenous peoples into the dominant culture. The history of resistance and activism to counteract assimilationist education in Mexico has been long and complex, yielding to transformations of educational policy – a phenomenon observable throughout many other Latin American countries. Since 2003, Mexico has been addressing a multicultural nation via the creation of intercultural universities (IUs). Presently there are 10 throughout the country. The IUs have been designed to be open to all, indigenous and non-indigenous students, though the proportion of indigenous students is intended to be around 70 per cent. A quota system is in place to ensure at least 20 per cent Mestizo participation.

In brief, the IUs seek to acknowledge the diverse voices of Mexico, and to create spaces so diverse social actors integrate the indigenous and rural communities into the dynamics of the modern world in an inclusive, respectful and intercultural manner. Educating intellectuals and professionals committed to the development of their people and their regions is part of the IUs' mission. In brief, the IUs model seeks to foster research on language, culture and regional development, with the goal of 'reevaluating, revitalizing, and consolidating the languages and cultural expressions of our original communities' (Casillas Muñoz, 2005: 1), and to explore 'alternative routes to foster development stemming from the values and traditions that have characterised [the indigenous communities]' (Casillas Muñoz, 2005: 1). It also seeks to facilitate students in the 'appropriation' of their own academic formation by strengthening the knowledge and revaluation of students' roots first, and equip them 'to become active agents of transformation of their surroundings' (Casillas Muñoz and Santini Villar, 2006: 22). Finally, it seeks to draw back those sociopolitical elements that make aboriginal languages and cultures vulnerable.

The IUs project represents a landmark in the education system of the nation, addressing at the educational policy level an age-old debt to the original populations of Mexico. The processes is arduous and not free from challenges, but as Schmelkes (2009: 8) points out, the IUs 'are one way of responding to both historical and more recent demands by indigenous people'.

Distance Learning For Long-Term Refugee Youth in Thailand

(Barbara Zeus)

For youth trapped in Southeast Asia's largest protracted refugee situation along the Thai–Burmese border, further education opportunities upon graduation from camp-based secondary schools are bleak. Many young people do not know much about life outside the camps, and leaving the camps to study at university remains a distant dream for most. Competition for scholarships to study abroad is high and such programmes are controversial not least due to socio-cultural challenges, financial costs and the loss of human resources for refugee communities.

Thanks to a committed group of people and modern online learning technology, tertiary degree programmes have found their way into the refugee camps. The Australian Catholic University has pursued a participatory approach when determining refugee communities' needs and students' subject preferences. Over the last few years, young refugees have studied Business, Theology and Liberal Studies. Australian learning and teaching materials have been adapted to suit the socio-cultural context of the refugee camps. The programmatic approach combines online learning with face-to-face teaching from visiting tutors and on-site tutorial support to motivate students and help them improve their academic English and study skills.

Through the online courses, students have been able to access information, develop skills and knowledge and obtain an internationally-recognised qualification which had earlier seemed beyond their grasp. With their advanced English, IT, research and leadership and management skills, graduates have found employment with NGOs and community-based organisations dealing with a variety of issues from educational provision to human rights. Most importantly, the degrees have had psychological, life-transforming and empowering impacts as students self-confidently engage in direct dialogue with local and international stakeholders in policy- and decision-making processes. Generally, courses help students develop transferable skills and prepare for a yet uncertain future that may include repatriation to Burma, resettlement to a third country or local integration within Thailand.

Worldwide, there are some 15 million refugees who spend on average 17 years in exile. It is estimated that less than one per cent of refugees have access to higher education. A general lack of research on refugee higher education goes hand in hand with widespread reluctance to invest in such programmes. Distance education in particular remains relatively unexplored as a tool for the inclusion of marginalised learners at higher levels. The case described proves that such programming is possible and can have positive, empowering impacts on students and their communities.

Human Rights Friendly Schools

(Sam Mejias)

Amnesty International's *Human Rights Friendly Schools* project is a new global human rights education initiative currently being implemented in its pilot phase in 14 countries around the world by the organisation's International Secretariat, with the support of national Amnesty sections in each participating country. Amnesty International is using this approach to support its wider mission to promote a global culture of human rights. Conceived as a whole-school approach to human rights education, the project sets an ambitious agenda for participating schools to incor-

porate ten core principles, developed from key international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, into four areas of school life – governance, curriculum, extra-curricular activities and school environment – and into community relations. In each participating country, a national Amnesty International section has partnered with one secondary school to develop and implement a one-year action plan to begin transforming the school into a human rights friendly community. Amnesty defines a human rights friendly school as a place in which all are included and encouraged to take part, regardless of status or role, and where cultural diversity is celebrated. A human rights friendly school ensures that equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and active participation are at the heart of the learning experience and present in all major areas of school life. In the United Kingdom, the project is being implemented in a comprehensive secondary school in the Southall area of London.

From Prison to Peace: learning from the experience of political ex-prisoners

(Lesley McEvoy)

As in other transitional societies, the curriculum in Northern Ireland plays a significant role in addressing the conflict and its legacy. Since past curricular initiatives, such as Education for Mutual Understanding, were recognised as having very limited success, due to their avoidance of controversial issues and in particular a lack of acknowledgement of the political nature of the conflict, the statutory subject 'Local and Global Citizenship' attempts to 'up front' issues central to the conflict and the transition to peace. However, to date, the delivery of citizenship education in schools has not resulted in substantial engagement with past violence and the harder realities of conflict transformation. 'From Prison to Peace: learning from the experience of political ex-prisoners' aims to provide schools with a mechanism to deal with these difficult issues.

The initiative arose out of the genuine desire of politically motivated former prisoners to demythologise their involvement in the conflict and the prison experience, in the hope that this would deter young people from engaging in violence and direct them towards positive participation in their communities. Representatives from each of the five main political ex-prisoner support groups (that is republicans and loyalists who were former Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), Official IRA, Irish National Liberation Army, Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Volunteer Force prisoners) worked to produce an educational resource and DVD for use in the citizenship curriculum. The resource, based on the narratives of fifteen former prisoners, focuses on the circumstances which influenced individuals in their decision to become involved in the conflict, and on the prison experience and its impact, before concentrating on encouraging young people to learn from the positive contribution made by political ex-prisoners to conflict transformation and community development.

In addition to demythologising the conflict, the political ex-prisoners involved in this initiative also hope that young people can learn from the way in which they, as former enemies, can engage with each other in the pursuit of a stable peace. This engagement is based, not on false notions of friendship, but on the capacity for individuals to show 'political generosity' to one another through recognising the rights of the other to an expression of their identity and their right to pursue their political aspirations. As one political ex-prisoner states: 'It doesn't make me any less of a loyalist to recognise that republicans have a point of view that's legitimate for them'. To this end, the initia-

tive also involves loyalist and republican ex-prisoners jointly facilitating workshops and discussions with young people, helping them explore the contours of the conflict and its effect on society.

The impact of this work remains to be seen. But what is already apparent is that some teachers are welcoming the refreshingly honest approach to this aspect of the curriculum, typified by the quotations taken from the resource below, and the genuine motivation of these individuals to engage young people in peace-building.

> I don't feel the need to apologise for what I've done but I will take responsibility for what I've done. But everything has changed now. The Peace Agreement has changed things. The use of force depends on the level of oppression and what other ways there are to end the conflict. It may be slow and frustrating but it's better than the alternative.
>
> (Republican political ex-prisoner)

> The clear message we want to be sending young people is we've been there and done all of that. Nobody needs to go through all that. There's other ways now. We need to educate them and teach them about communication, negotiation and compromise. If they can be helped to be confident and proud of their own history and culture they don't need to be afraid of anyone else's. (Loyalist political ex-prisoner)

Struggles for Democratic Education: A Kuwaiti Teacher's Mission

(Rania Al-Nakib)

While the Kuwaiti government has stated its commitment to education for democratic citizenship, it has yet to lay out explicit aims and outcomes and to provide necessary teacher training. It has also failed to address the largely undemocratic structure of the national school system and the lack of student participation. In short, Kuwait's educational system is in direct conflict with its democratic aspirations.

However, during a case study of a state secondary school carried out in 2009–2010, I met Tahani. A Kuwaiti teacher, Tahani conscientiously seeks to create alternatives to the status quo in her classroom and school. She strives to educate her students democratically and with full recognition of their rights despite the undemocratic national curriculum and the confining walls of the school buildings. Despite exam pressures and restrictive policies from the Ministry, she does not hesitate to put the national textbooks aside and have her students dictate the curriculum. Tahani, comfortable relinquishing her power to her students and respectful of their voices, yields impressive results. There are no typical lessons with writing on the board and rote question and answer sessions in her classroom. Every unit is completely student-led and action-based – from demonstrations outside the administration offices demanding a cafeteria to the design and implementation of a 'Relaxation Oasis' on campus. These activities, though seemingly benign to administrators who gave them the green light, are hugely significant, symbolic, and, for Kuwait, radical. Kuwaiti schools are designed with minimal student-centred space. Classrooms are set up in rows with the teachers at the front. There are no cafeterias, common rooms, or other spaces for students to congregate. Furthermore, education is largely confined to within school grounds, and interaction with the community is minimal. Tahani's classroom was designed in co-operation with her students, and she is also often heard advocating a 'school without walls'. However, bound by the walls, she constantly brings the community to her students, from bus drivers to MPs.

Tahani is passionate about listening to students and involving them in every aspect of school administration and policy-making. Not content with the tokenistic school council at her own school, Tahani worked with a human rights lawyer outside of school hours and pay, drafting a proposal for a student council that would work with the Ministry of Education. The Ministry promptly declined the proposal, beseeching Tahani, 'Please do not open the students' eyes.' Fortunately, she chose not to heed the advice and continues to do just that everyday.