

# Editorial

**John Davidson**

'Working in partnership' is a phrase that has entered the vocabulary of many disciplines and professions. As this edition shows there are many uses for it. At its simplest it means people or organisations working together to achieve common goals. The complexities arise when the goals are not clear, when they are not shared, when the imbalances of power and influence, which are a feature of most partnerships, are not openly acknowledged and accepted by the participants. These issues are highlighted by the South evaluation of the Norwegian RORG-Network and by Sulochini Pather's article which explores the effect of power imbalances within a country on the success of a project. Harm-Jan Fricke, Stephen Fairbrass and Rosemin Najmudin all demonstrate the importance of effective partnerships for development education centres (DECs) and explore some of the challenges.

In relation to development education the partnerships currently of greatest interest to me are those between North and South. There is a growing interest in forming links between schools; there are more people joining teachers' international professional development (TIPD) programmes

to visit Southern countries; community links are flourishing. Out of the increased contact comes a realisation that it is time to replace the old notion of North to South transfer of technology with an approach which recognises the transfer of knowledge and experience as a two way process. This is clearly demonstrated in the article on the RORG-Network. The strengths and weaknesses of educational approaches that exist in different societies have to be examined collaboratively and good practices developed and shared. For this to happen the first requirement is to have relationships built upon trust and mutual respect.

These thoughts have been reinforced over the past 10 days during my stay in Mumbai (where this preface is being written) at a conference of the Global-ITE project, a three way partnership between universities in Gloucestershire, Kenya and India. After working together over the last two and a half years the core team from the three countries undoubtedly has the necessary level of trust and understanding. To get there we have had to unpack our assumptions, examine pre-conceived notions and open our minds to the cultural differences that exist between us.

<b>Contents</b>		
<b>Development education: past, present and future</b>		
<b>Guest Editorial</b>		
<i>Scott Sinclair</i>	1	Establishing and sustaining a Development Education Centre <i>Heather Swainston</i> 24
<b>Theme articles</b>		
Towards a theory of development education <i>Douglas Bourne</i>	3	Concepts of global learning ñ the German debate <i>Gregor Lang-Wojtasik</i> 25
A fifty year perspective on development education perspective <i>Annie Robson</i>	7	Developing a methodology for including the global dimension in the ITE curriculum <i>Jayashree Inbaraj, Subbalakshmi Kumar and Greig Whitehead</i> 27
DFID and development education <i>Ben Hammond</i>	9	<b>In my view</b>
DE + EE = ESD? <i>Clive Belgeonne</i>	12	Development Education 1973 to 2003: What's changed? <i>David R Wright</i> 30
The global dimension in education <i>Alison Scott-Baumann, Cathie Holden, Nick Clough and David Hicks respond to questions from Doug Bourne</i>	15	Development education – my education development <i>Pete Coulson</i> 32
Deepening public understanding in Ireland of international development issues <i>Peadar Cremin</i>	19	Transformations in DE from an anthropological perspective <i>Shehnaaz Kanji</i> 34
<b>Getting it right?</b>		<b>Network news</b>
'Because it's right I want to be part of it' <i>Helen Garforth</i>	22	Young Muslims as citizens of the world <i>Ali Omar Ermes</i> 36
		Schools and a sustainable future <i>Lord Puttnam of Queensgate, CBE</i> 37
		<b>Reviews</b>
		Facing or avoiding the sustainability challenge <i>Rolf Jucker</i> 40

So what has happened beyond the building of trust, and what lessons are there for education in the UK? First, partnerships with the South take time to build. Face to face contact makes all the difference; it provides the stimulus for sustaining links through email and video conferencing. In fact building partnerships anywhere – North or South – as articles in this edition show is a complex and subtle process requiring skill and determination.

Secondly, the learning and sharing has real impact because each country has something unique and distinctive to contribute, as well as having the same need for a sustainable future. The words of Mahendra Singh, an Indian trainee teacher involved in the Global-ITE project, ‘education has always been the vehicle for social change and it now faces the uphill task of developing global citizens who will work co-operatively for a sustainable future’ (Singh 2001-2), resonate strongly with Angela Grunsell’s assertion that global citizenship education has relevance for both North and South.

The third lesson is that subject based learning and issues based learning both have a part to play in getting across the information and ideas underpinning sustainable development and global citizenship and in inculcating the will and creative thinking needed for lasting solutions.

Finally, experiential learning through project work in Kenya and India has shown what a powerful force schools can be in bringing about understanding and action on topics of direct relevance to the lives of local citizens. I know from my work in Groundwork that there are many examples around Britain of equally interesting and innovative partnerships between schools and local communities, often involving the business community as well.

In Southern countries, the Northern visitor is confronted with the stark realities of the interplay between the social, economic and environmental dimensions affecting peoples’ lives. Whilst much blame can be laid at the door of the rich nations, there is a growing realisation in the South that education should equip young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to become much more effective at the local level in bringing about change for themselves. This reinforces the importance of UNESCO’s efforts to link the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development with the Education for All agenda. As Mary Joy Pigozzi suggests, to achieve ‘quality education’ and a sustainable future, basic skills must be related to the core principles of sustainable development as they are relevant to the learner as individual, family and community member, and as part of a world society.

Whilst the terminology may differ (e.g. value education in India, civics in Kenya, global citizenship in the UK) the need everywhere is for competent and trained people to help bring about changes in the way teachers are trained and education is delivered. That is why the idea is gaining ground that local development education centres, appropriately named, could have a part to play in providing trained personnel to assist with the delivery of development education in schools and colleges; to stimulate and facilitate educational and

development projects in partnership with others; and to engage with partners in the North in a continuous process of analysis, dialogue, information sharing and problem solving.

The notion that development education is a Northern concept was not accepted by conference delegates here though few would defend the term if a more descriptive one in the English language were to be proposed.

Partnerships with the South are exciting, stimulating and bring depth and quality to the learning experience. Things can go wrong and we should be grateful to those who, in this edition, have taken the opportunity to explain the problems and difficulties they encountered. But we can see from Rosemin Najmudin’s article how partnerships with communities in the South illuminated the contribution of local action to global sustainable development and empowered local communities in Lancashire. We should use this journal to keep evaluating our experiences and encouraging others to come up with fresh ideas and new examples.

## Reference

Singh, M (2001-2) *Sensitising students towards the issue of deforestation*, action research project submitted to Kapila Khandvala College of Education in part fulfilment of the B.Ed Programme, University of Mumbai

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