

Development Perspectives

The Story So Far

Impact enquiry (2006-2009)



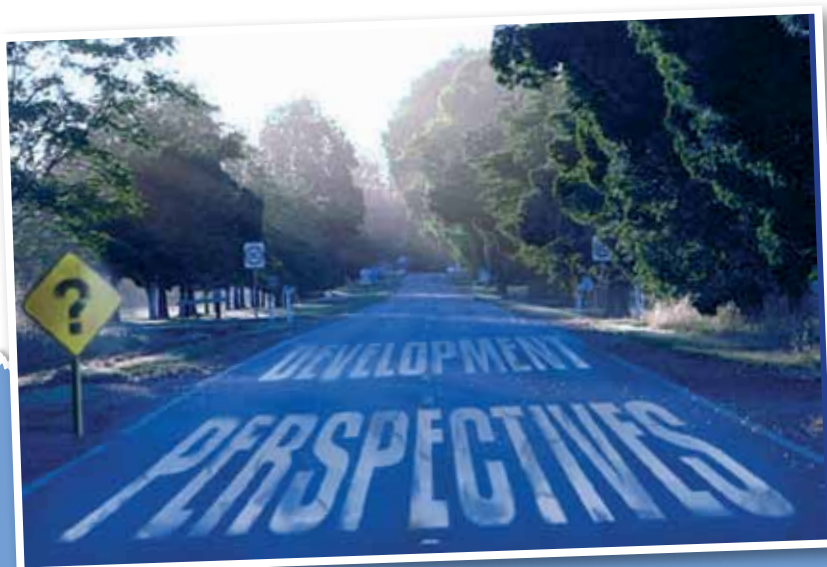
*We live in an interdependent,
unequal and everchanging world...*

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Introduction

INTRODUCING

As stated in the Strategic Plan (2011 – 2014) of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA), “there is a perceived lack of evidence of the impact of development education interventions” (IDEA, 2011:5) in Ireland. Based on this perception there is a pressing urgency for the Development Education (DE) sector to make strides into gauging its effectiveness and overall impact. Essential questions must be asked; is DE having a positive long term impact on the actions and decision making capacity of people living in Ireland? Are individuals and communities engaging more with issues and concerns that affect their lives and the lives of others? Are people becoming more aware of their responsibilities as global citizens? Is the population of Ireland more actively involved in political, social, economic and environmental challenges as a result of DE? Are we impacting and making a difference to the lives of those living in poverty? Answers to such questions are not easily obtained, however; it is the responsibility of individual organisations to invest in research that will sign post what is working in the DE sector.

This inquiry looks specifically at the work of a small NGO and charity Development Perspectives (DP), based in Drogheda, Co. Louth. DP was founded in 2006. The organisation aims to provide high quality Development Education opportunities for adults and young people in the non-formal learning arena across Ireland. The overall study is embedded in a social constructionist philosophy of research, which emphasises the validity of the views and opinions of participants who took part in the DP flagship project from 2006-2009 inclusive. The underlying key questions are based on an attempt to gauge whether DPs, 8 month, DE project impacted on past participants by encouraging them to re-think their ingrained assumptions or perceptions of life in an informed and responsible way and go on to act as facilitators or multipliers in the field of DE. Furthermore this enquiry will try to assess whether these individuals have succeeded in making a positive impact on poverty and inequality at home and abroad.

A strong emphasis has been placed on the use of open-ended questions and qualitative responses. The rationale for choosing a single case study was based primarily on time and financial constraints. According to Yin (1994, p.47), “the conduct of a multiple case study can require extensive resources and time beyond the means of a single student or independent research investigator”. Moreover, a single case study eliminated the competitive bias that is often more prevalent in multiple case studies due to one organisation being compared to another.

Understanding impact and the aim of Development Education in Ireland

UNDERSTAND IMPACT

In order to frame this study it is important to understand what it is we are trying to gauge when measuring impact. In a discussion paper published in 2010, CONCORD defined impact as “the positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term and/or significant effects in peoples’ lives and environment produced by several interventions, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended” (CONCORD, 2010:6). While remaining cognisant of this definition, we will try to examine the direct and intended effect DEPs flagship intervention has had on past participants.

A good starting point is to outline two widely accepted definitions of DE.

The Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) definition of Development Education - “Development Education is an educational response and process aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the shared development of our world. By engaging people critically in and with our increasingly interdependent world, development education aims to challenge global inequalities, and works towards creating a more just and sustainable future for our planet” (IDEA, 2012).

Irish Aids definition of Development Education - “Development Education is an educational process aimed at increasing awareness and understanding the rapidly changing, interdependent and unequal world in which we live. It seeks to engage people in analysis, reflection and action for local and global citizenship and participation. It is about supporting people in understanding and acting to transform the social, cultural, political and economic structures which affect their lives at personal, community, national and international levels. (Irish Aid, 2003, p12)”

Are we achieving our goals as Development Education practitioners? And more importantly by achieving our goals are we making a real impact on the lives of people living in poverty? Is DE effective?



Role of the researcher

As one of the co-founders of DP and acting deputy director of the organisation, it is of a personal interest to me to identify the true value of the work I have been involved in for six years. According to Linter (2002:131) “researching ones practice is the ultimate expression of what it is to be professional”. I have built on a previous study undertaken in 2008; “An enquiry into the effectiveness of a range of approaches used in Development Education projects in Ireland”, where DP was also used as a single case study. In the concluding paragraphs to this inquiry it was suggested that a longitudinal approach over a number of years would add a great deal to the insights already gained. The findings of this research have been not only encouraging for those involved in DP but may also contribute towards the process involved in drawing up a performance measurement framework for Development Education in Ireland.

Development Perspectives Flag Ship Project

DP flagship project is an eight month DE journey. The project has three phases: A three month pre-departure phase based in Ireland during which time, theoretical Development issues are raised with participants through a series of explorative and challenging workshops; The overseas phase between the years 2006-2009 brought participants to either Sri Lanka or Tanzania where they were involved in a 3 week experiential learning journey comprising of both practical and theoretical engagement.

The group lived, worked, shared and studied alongside communities who experience development from a different perspective and context. The overseas phase encourages empathy; highlighting the importance of equality in difference and the value of diversity. The final stage of the project is the de-briefing phase which includes reflection, evaluation and DE training/ facilitation skills, Goal setting and next steps.

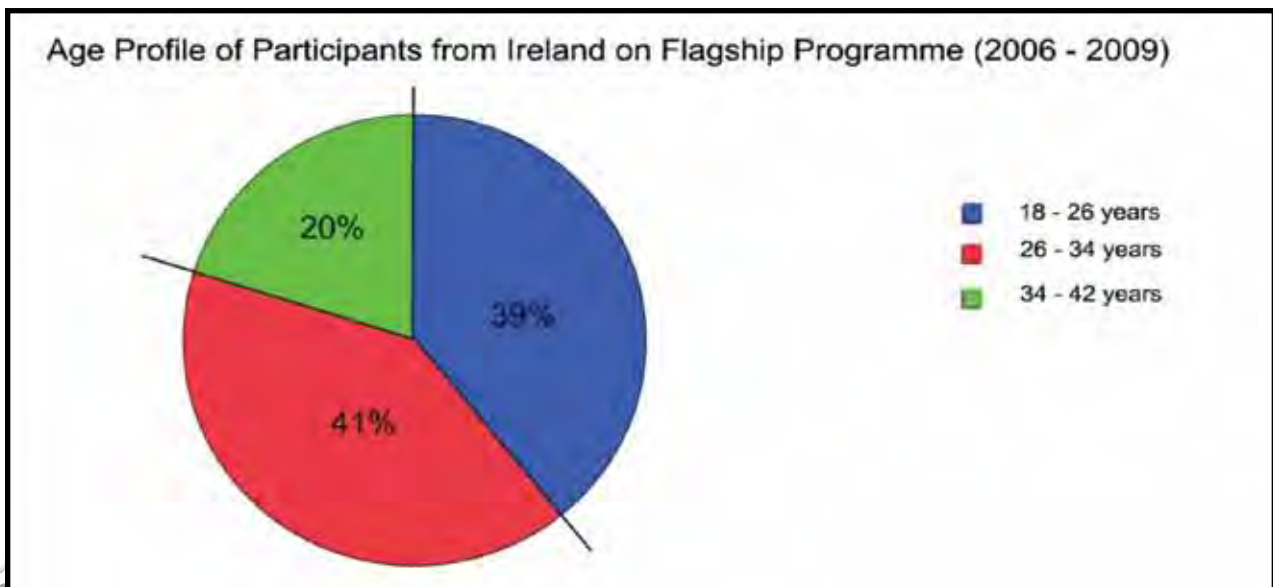
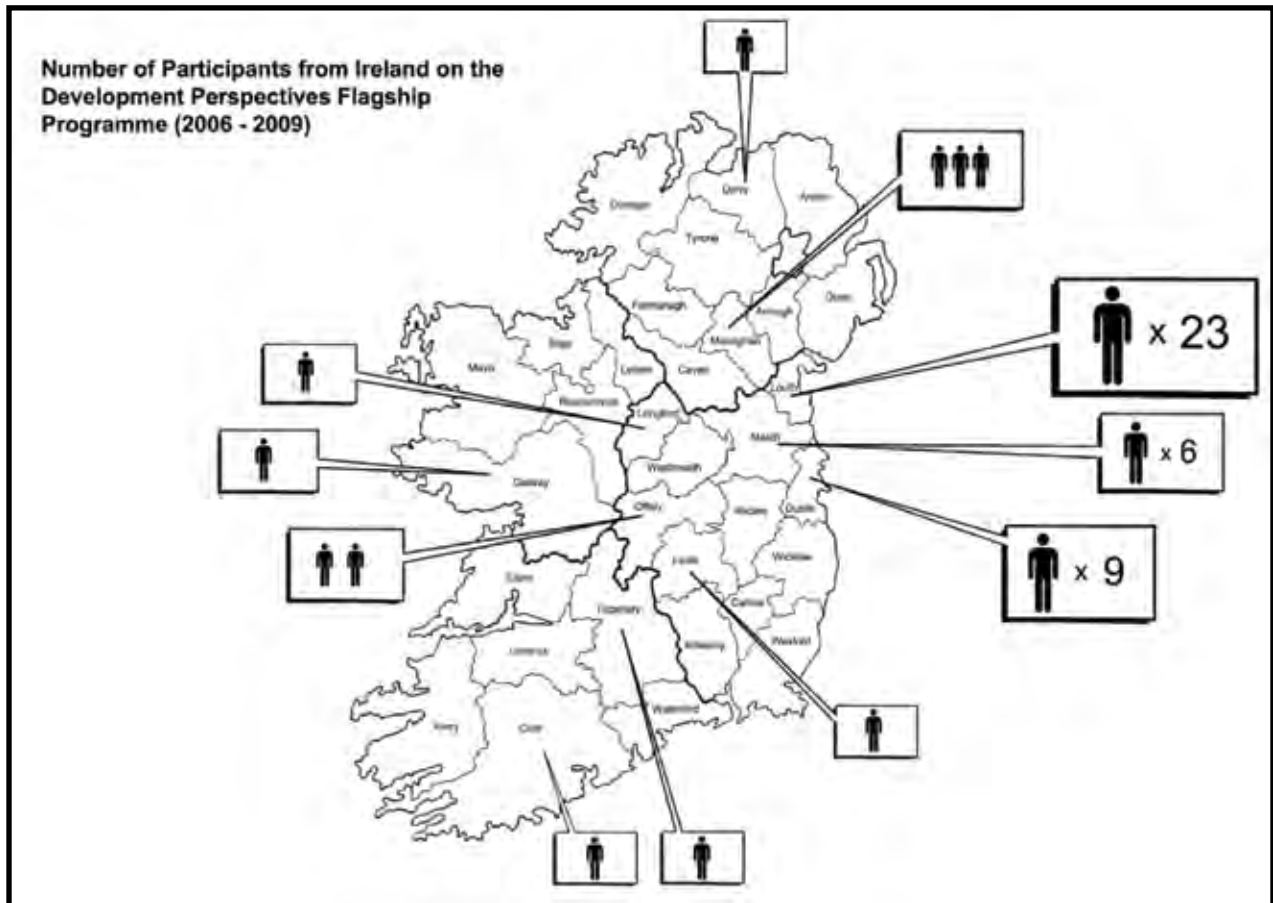
The project aims to facilitate a development education process that provides participants with opportunities to develop competencies, skills, knowledge and awareness needed for the facilitation of development education activities. The overall objectives of the flagship programme between 2006 and 2009 were:

- To build a network and pool of skilled, informed and motivated development education trainers and facilitators (multipliers) within the North East of Ireland. This group will develop the skills, knowledge and competencies needed to design, develop, facilitate and evaluate development education initiatives. They will also lead and multiply the quantity and quality of development education initiatives within the region in formal, non-formal and adult education sectors.
- The second aim is to create an interactive development education resource that can be used by all organisations within the region that have an interest in development education. This resource will take the form of an interactive exhibition comprising of photographs, film footage, audio interviews, written information (fact sheets), music, games, role play and theatre. The panel of trainers involved in the process will be heavily involved in the facilitation of this exhibition.

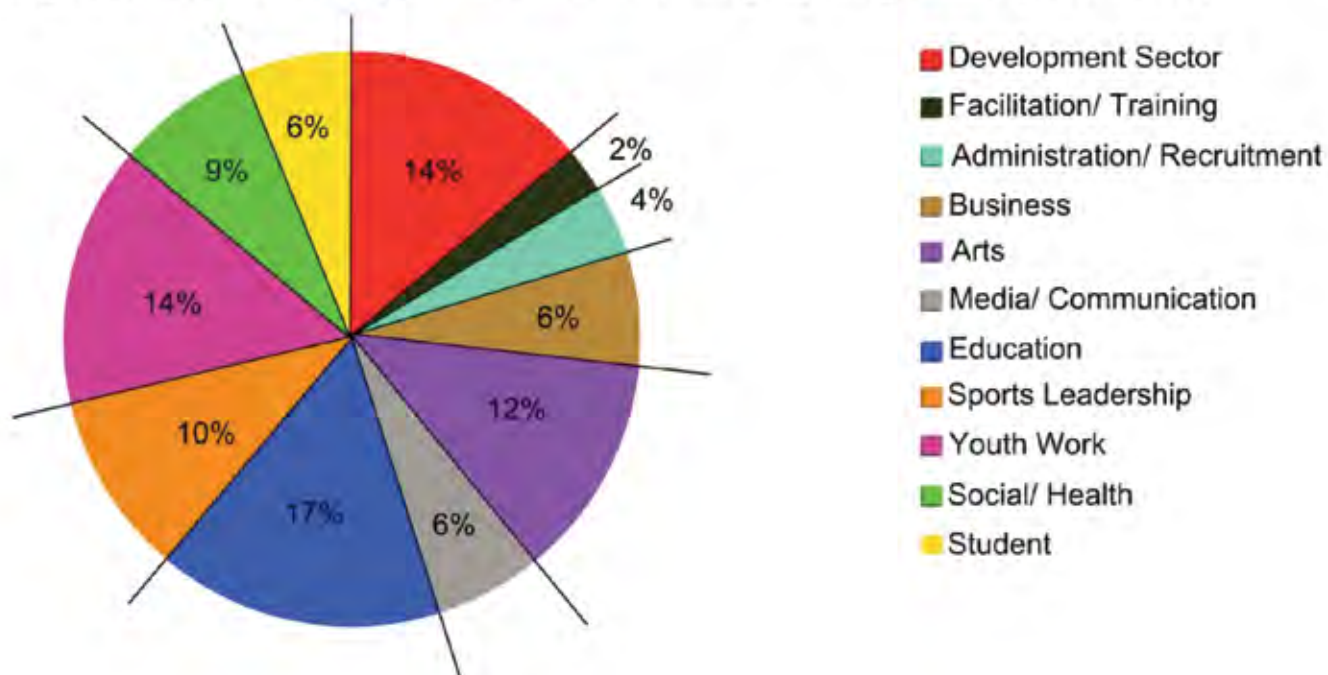
Longitudinal Impact

To assess the longitudinal impact of DPs Flagship project, 49 past participants from 2006-2009 inclusive, who completed the entire 8 month project, were invited to take part in this research. Each past participant was sent a questionnaire, by email and by post, with a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions. (See appendix 1)

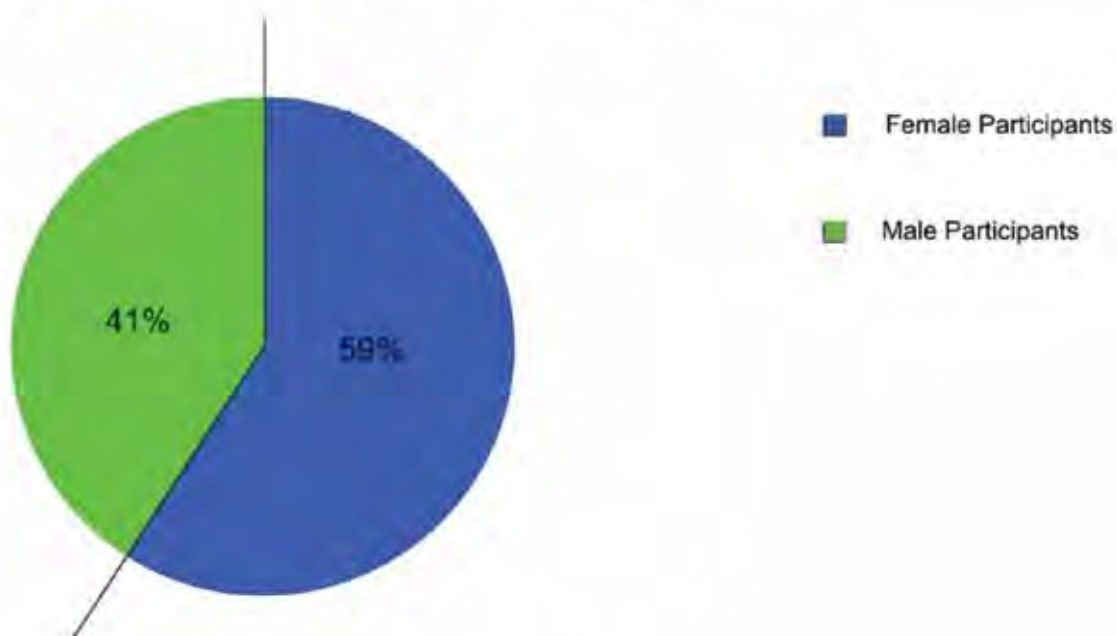
The following charts illustrate clearly the age, gender, location and occupational profiles of the 49 past participants.



Background Profile of Participants from Ireland on Flagship Programme. (2006 - 2009)



Gender Breakdown on Flagship Programme (2006 - 2009)



The study focus

STUDY FOCUS

The study focus is three fold;

Questions 1-3 relate to the first research objective which is to examine the impact DP made on the individual, if any! Did participants experience a long term change in their knowledge, attitude or skills and furthermore, did participation in the project lead to future educational or employment opportunities?

Questions 4-6 relate to the second objective which is directly linked to the projects first aim; to create a pool of skilled and motivated DE practitioners and multipliers. Have past participants gone on to be involved in Development Education activities post project and engage the wider community in development related issues and activities?

Question 7; the final question, relates to the overall vision of DE in Ireland and specifically DP; as stated in their strategic plan 2011-2013 – “Our vision of the world is one where people live in peace with each other, in harmony with nature, free from the shackles of hunger and poverty and who are willing to work and co-operate with each other to bring about an equitable, just and sustainable world”. Do past participants believe that they have contributed to a more equitable, just and sustainable society as a result of their participation in DP, and how?

Research Findings

RESEARCH FINDINGS

18 past participants responded to the questionnaire; 11 males and 7 females, giving a 37% response rate.

Question 1-3

Question 1a asks “Can you identify if the DP project impacted on your life”? YES/NO

17 participants responded “yes” to this question and 1 responded “yes and no”, stressing the point that “impact arises from many influences and therefore I find it difficult to access what direct impact DP had on my life”.

Question 1b allows for a qualitative elaboration on how DP impacted on the individual. The following quotes have been drawn from the questionnaires in order to gauge the common overlaps of impact.

"It has taught me to value what kind of life I have and enticed me to work with people at home and abroad to build stronger communities".

"DP increased my awareness of social, economic, environmental and political systems which intertwine and impact on communities".

"DP has broadened my view to see the world as an interconnected global village in which we are all key players who can impact through the choices we make as consumers and citizens".

"Through DP I have learnt that we are far from powerless".

"After my second experience with DP I resigned from my permanent position as a clerical officer to return to full-time study...I have no doubt that my involvement in DP sparked the enthusiasm, passion and confidence which prompted me to make, life changing decisions in my career path and my continued engagement in social justice, activism and Dev Ed."

"DP increased my knowledge about global development issues but in a very real and emotional way. The emotional impact stayed with me. I suppose DP answered a lot of questions I had about the kind of world I would like to live in".



"I became aware of the importance of supporting fundraising events for worthy causes".

"My participation in DP has given me the belief that I can make a difference".

"I have a greater understanding of the responsibilities and power of individuals".

"My participation in DP has been a source of motivation to become politically active".

"My awareness and knowledge of development increased through my participation in DP".

"Heightened awareness of many issues that affect the world today".

"It has given me a sense of empowerment that makes me honestly believe that I can change the world".

"DP was a life changing experience for me ... it changed the very direction of my life".

"DP confirmed a lot of what I already felt about the way things are in the world".



"It opened my mind to new ways of looking at the world on so many levels. I am more aware of poverty both in Ireland and abroad".

"I am more aware of the impact I can play in the world as a global citizen".

"It opened me to a world of change that I wouldn't have had an opportunity to witness before".

"DP changed my life; it has had such a huge impact on me in every aspect of my life. What I eat and wear and more importantly the way I see the world".

"It certainly impacted my interpretations of Dev Ed and challenged me to focus my time, energy and professional career path in the direction of Dev Ed".

"I really feel that DP has opened many doors that I felt were previously closed in my life".

"I feel more pro-active empowered and confident as a result of my experience with DP".

Frequently mentioned words and phrases which appeared in answers included: increased awareness, knowledge, empowerment, confidence, individual power, change, emotional impact, life changing, inter connectedness, motivation and belief all help to illustrate the personal impact.

Question 2a asks; "Did your experience on DP contribute to a long term change in your knowledge, skills and attitude"?

17 participants responded "yes" to this question and one responded "yes and no" stating "my experience confirmed to me that there were many people who felt that our attitudes need to change if we are to effect the transformation necessary to contribute to an environmentally and equitably sustainable future for all. In this sense my initial DP experience was empowering".

Question 2b allows for a qualitative elaboration on how individuals' attitude, knowledge and skills were impacted by identifying what change they had experienced. The following responses have been drawn to identify common themes.

"DP has shown me how to look critically at the world around me; at poverty and war and what are the real underlying contributing factors to these situations".

"When I started with DP I had no experience or knowledge of development so nearly all my knowledge and experience over the years is a direct result of taking part in the project and staying involved with the organization".

"My knowledge and interest of development issues and how we can effect development on a local and global scale definitely changed as a result of my involvement with DP".

"I questioned the way organizations worked a lot more and questioned the impact of the work and the motivation behind many so called western aid and development organizations who focused all their time in the global south".



"I felt empowered as a result of my learning at various stages of the project".

"Working with teams from different countries greatly enhanced my interpersonal skills as well as giving me a good deal of personal development".



"There has been a great deal of change in my attitude to how the world works and the various problems that face us on a daily basis".

"Knowledge – the inter connectedness of the social, environmental and political systems of which we are a part, locally and globally. Skills - critical literacy and personal confidence. Attitude – that we live in an unequal, unfair world however also that individuals and communities possess the power to meaningfully participate, engage, challenge and transform the structures that govern our lives".

"I witnessed so much positivity in Tanzania and the fact that they have so little opportunity and still work incredibly hard makes me appreciate everything I have a lot more".

"It encouraged me to be more critical and question more. The overseas phase challenged the negative stereo type I had of Africa that was presented in the Irish media. This experience encouraged me to challenge Irish people when I returned to Ireland".

"It made me want to work with communities on issues they may have by facilitating a process so they themselves can come up with the solutions".

"The value of a systematic approach to thinking and problem solving. The value of experiential learning and lasting impact".

"It changed the way I viewed my life, my goals and what was important. It woke me up to the injustices and imbalances in the world".

"DP provided the basis of facilitation, teamwork and leadership skills".

"My knowledge and attitude to towards global social justice issues was affected dramatically as a result of my involvement with DP".

"DP challenged me to take a look at my life, my choices and my world and to see the development issues that shape it".

"I now have a keen interest in developing countries and equality. Before DP I would not have opened my mind to some of these issues".





The responses to this question (2b) can be broken into 3 areas.

1. Impact on Individual knowledge -

Reference made to a greater understanding of the inter connectedness of social, environmental and political systems; of social justice issues; of development on a local and global level; of experiential learning and a different knowledge of how to view the world, all illustrate the impact that the DP project has had on past participants knowledge.

2. Impact on individual skills -

Critical thinking, interpersonal skills, ability to question, increased personal confidence, problem solving skills, facilitation skills, teamwork and leadership skills were all identified as new sets of skills acquired by taking part in the DP project.

3. Impact on Individual attitude -

Words and phrases such as empowerment, personal development, “woke me up to the injustices and imbalances in the world”, “opened my mind”; “I now have a keen interest in developing countries and equality” and “it made me want to work with communities”, illustrate the change that took place in the attitudes of participants.

Question 3 asks; “Did your participation in DP lead to educational or employment opportunities”?

“DP made me aware of opportunities to work in local schools raising awareness of issues such as racism and stereotyping”.

“Because of DPs support I have started a Masters Degree in Development Studies at Kimmage Studies Centre, Dublin”.

“After my second experience with DP I resigned from my permanent position as a clerical officer to return to full-time study as a mature student on the KDSC BA in Development Studies. I became more involved with in several Dev Ed projects and soon began working as project coordinator with Burma Action Ireland...I then went on to complete my M.Phil. in Peace studies with ISE, TCD. I now work full time with the DTALK programme in KDSC”.

“I have attended many development education workshops and forums since”.

“I took part in a 10 week course in DKIT on the issue of Global Development”.



"No, but it helped me to decide what masters course was right for me and I'm now doing an MA that deals with working with communities and organizations".

"Yes, I can say that my participation in DP led me to employment in the Africa Centre".

"I'm still in full-time education. If I apply for employment in the development sector I will definitely have an advantage because I have experienced life in the global South".

"Following my participation in 2006 I became passionately involved in youth work and development education. I undertook an MA in Development Studies in 2007 at KDSC which also opened up my current role as Programme Officer at Link Community Development Ireland".

"My participation helped me to believe in my own ability. I have recently set up my own business".

"Yes, more so educational opportunities".



"I went on to further my studies in Development Education and focus the direction of my work to Development Education rather than Peace Education and Youth Work where I had previously worked".

"Yes, when applying for a position in a primary teaching college in England I was told that my experiences were unique and I feel that helped me in my quest to become a teacher. My participation has since aided me in my teaching style".

"Over the past two years I was given an opportunity to be a leader on DPs Sports camp, Development Education Project, and an international youth exchange".

"In the summer of 2011 I worked for Trocaire on their Youth Human Rights School".

"For my student work placement I gained employment in the National Adaptive Physical Activity Centre. My experience as a leader with DP exploring issues such as inequality in society played a big part in me getting the job"

"Yes, I took part in several youth exchanges as a direct result of my participation in DP...when I finished my degree I got a job on a cross border project dealing with integration in Irish society. I honestly believe that it was my work with Development Perspectives that set me aside from all the other candidates".

"It is in my plans to do an MA in Development Studies; however this is down the line".

"I have written a number of songs based and inspired by my experiences with DP. I feel that the knowledge acquired has allowed me to write about subjects I previously feared approaching in the song-writing process".

"Not specifically – though it may be said that I might not have pursued a course in Development Studies if my initial DP experience had been negative".

5 past participants went on to complete an MA in Development Studies in KDSC and 1 completed her BA in KDSC. 6 others stated that DP had a direct impact on job opportunities for them with; DTALK, Africa Centre, Trocaire, Burma Action Ireland, Cross Border project and LINK Community Development. A number of participants were involved in youth exchanges post project and Development related courses.



2 believed it was their involvement in DP and the experience they gained that gave them “an edge” when applying for employment and one stressed how DP had given him the confidence to start his own business.

Summary of question 1-3

The findings from the first three questions would suggest that the DP project certainly made an impact on the individuals who responded to this inquiry. There is a clear expression and understanding of how the DE project impressed on them personally; how it changed their attitude, knowledge and skills and how it aided in affording them job opportunities. But when we look at the greater vision does this individual change really matter? The following three questions try to measure the impact these individuals have made on others as multipliers.

Question 4a leads us into the second focus area – “Have you acted as a multiplier of change since your participation on DP”?

All 18 responded “yes” to this question.

Question 4b asked how participants acted as multipliers of change.

The majority responded to this question by saying they had acted as multipliers through friends and family by raising awareness through discussions and suggested actions, facebook and social internet sites, radio programmes and fundraising events promoting the work of DP and high-lighting local and global issues of concern.

5 participants went on to act as leaders on further DP projects; Facilitating workshops in primary and secondary schools and designing Development Education interventions such as music competitions and sports events at home and abroad.

2 past participants took part in the Trocaire Development Education Summer School and one acted as a leader on a Human Rights Summer School.



4 past participants mentioned that they had encouraged others to take part in DP, to get involved in global justice campaigns and to make responsible decisions regarding the purchase of fair-trade products, recycling, growing their own vegetables and living sustainably.

5 participants went on to do a MA in KDSC through recommendations of those who went before and 1 participant said he brought his new experience and “questioning mind” into his work, first as a youth worker with marginalised communities and then as a Development Education officer in the NGO sector.

Interestingly, 1 participant responded by saying “it is difficult to quantify the impact I have made post-DP and also to measure qualitatively my impact without further detailed research. DP has acted as an indirect conduit to me being active in the Development Education sector in Ireland.”

“Through my work I have engaged with approximately 42 Irish primary and secondary schools, their teachers and wider communities over 3 years on Development Education programmes. I also worked directly with approximately 70 young people in ROI/NI in Global Education workshops and peace building activities during 2006/2007”.

There is strong evidence to suggest that the majority of responses indicate some level of a multiplier effect taking place.



Question 5 asks participants “What Development Education activity(s) have you been involved in since you participated on the programme”?

The responses were as follows:

- *Programme officer with Foroige National Youth Development Organisation.*
- *Programme officer with Link Community Development Ireland.*
- *Facilitator on Suas Global Issues Course delivering workshops in TCD, DCU AND NUIM on Gender Inequality.*
- *Leader on DP's Tanzanian sports camp which catered for 100 children and focused on promoting gender equality.*
- *5 x Leader on DP's 8 month Development Education Flagship programme.*
- *2 x Leader on DP's Youth Exchange to the Basque country.*
- *3 x Leader on Trocaires Human Rights School.*
- *Development through sport workshops with soccer clubs both sides of the border.*
- *Started a radio chat show looking at development issues called global talk.*
- *Involved and led several protests on the Palestine question and the greed in Irish society.*
- *Participated on the DP's Advanced Development Education Programme in Liberia.*
- *Involved with Upstate Theatre Company to facilitate a series of workshops on Identity, racism and stereotyping in secondary schools in Drogheda.*
- *Compiled an album of songs from experiences on DP and performed songs at many Development events such as Globalfest Cork and in the Trocaire tent at the electric picnic.*
- *Contributed to the Kimmage Alumni workshops and sessions.*
- *Volunteered with Comhlamh through their focus magazine.*
- *Team leader representing DP on the international “Exploring Pathways to Peace” programme in Warrington.*
- *Trained as a facilitator with Comhlamh for Dev. Ed activities.*
- *Programme coordinator with Burma Action Ireland.*
- *Participated on a 10 week programme in DKIT looking at Global Development.*
- *Raised awareness of global development issues on radio.*
- *Organised a music competition focusing lyrics on greed, hunger, poverty and Palestine.*
- *Submissions to Irish Aid, campaigns and Training.*
- *Dissertation based on Development Education.*
- *Organised fundraisers.*
- *Organised a community resilience course.*
- *Post Graduate in Development Education in DCU.*
- *Organised and facilitated anti-racism and multi-cultural seminars in Primary schools.*

Question 6 asks participants specifically how they engaged the wider community in development related issues post-project.

There were many obvious overlaps in the responses between question 4, 5 and question 6. The common thread that came to the forefront in question 6 was that past participants believe that they engage the wider community in development related issues simply by the changes they have made in their own lives as a result of the project. They believe that development education is not something that can be associated with one isolated part of their life, for example during work hours, but rather it is a way of thinking, acting and being and it is these changes that are most effective. When acting as a multiplier one must lead by example! Some of the comments that support this statement are listed below.

"I feel that Development Education is not a job you work in from 9-5, it is something which you live".

"When I am in contact with people, friends, family and work it is about shining a light on the injustices of our world".

"I have informed many staff members of my experiences and shared my knowledge with students, friends, family and community alike. I attend protests and conferences associated with positive change on a local and global level, its part of my life".

"By impacting on those closest to me".

"I brought my personal experience with me into every area of my work, family and community life. Whether it was Youth Work, Conflict Resolution or simply communicating with my family, friends and community they got to see, hear and learn how my experiences abroad and in Ireland with DP had impacted and affected me".
"By living differently and more responsibly".

"By simply changing the way I lived myself".





"I have engaged the community by fund raising events, awareness raising activities, promoting and alerting people to social justice issues via social media".

"I am educating my daughter as a member of the community to purchase fair trade produce as a responsible life-style choice".

"In terms of the wider community I suppose it was through talking to people and finding out what they know".

One participant acknowledged that although he had made attempts to engage the wider community he had failed to follow through. "I must say I have done relatively little in my opinion. I attempted and for reasons more to do with personal circumstances than anything else, failed to follow through on – a community development project locally".

Summary of Question 4-6

Measuring the "multiplier effect" on the wider community adds a complexity to the study which reminds us of the boundaries of this inquiry. One of the participants highlights this point in his response to question 5, "its is difficult to quantify the impact I have made post - DP and also to measure qualitatively my impact without further detailed research".

We have clear first hand knowledge of how individuals acted as multipliers through family, friends, community, work, social networking, protesting, campaigning, awareness raising and life-style change. However, we do not have the capacity in this research to inquire further into the depth of impact that has occurred. Each past participant would need to evaluate the impact they have made on others through researching similar questions.

Question 7 brings us to the final and crucial question relating to impact. Are Development Education interventions, specifically DP projects, paving the way towards a more equitable, just and sustainable society? Through education and action are we making a difference to the lives of those living in poverty? The following compilation of responses indicates the level at which past-participants believe they are making an impact.

"The main purpose of my job is to dispel the myths about Africa and African people. This ambition extends beyond my work and into everyday life. I am unsure if I have made a significant contribution but I do strive toward an, equitable, just and sustainable society".

"I have worked on many projects and workshops dealing with issues of justice. I have tried to make friends and family think about the effect that they are having on the wider world. Development is not something you work on for a working week. You must live with the

idea of a just and sustainable world in mind and this is what I try to do"

"Difficult to answer Yes or No – perhaps "somewhat"! As Zhou Enlai said about the success of the French Revolution in 1789, it's probably "too early to say"!"

"I feel I have, I make a conscious effort to buy fair trade products. I'm more aware and my actions are more responsible".

"I don't know! But I do know I have become more enquiring and critical of the status quo. Social justice more than ever takes on a more urgent place within our political and social structures".

"I try my best to contribute to a more sustainable society a lot more than I did pre-project".

"I think about the effect of my purchasing power now. I support fair trade products. I believe this lessens exploitation. I also inform others actively through my new knowledge, encouraging them to do the same".

"Since taking part in DP I am more aware of campaigns for change and take time to contact my local representatives on issues that are important to me. I have lobbied politicians to prevent cuts to the ODA budget and have used my job in radio to raise awareness of global issues".

"I hope through my facilitation work I have challenged people to reflect and think about how their choices affect their world and have profound repercussions for others".

"I have encouraged others to look at the world in different ways. I am more conscious of my impact on the environment and now I try to reduce, reuse and recycle goods".

"I'm more aware of human rights violations around the world and I have signed many petitions supporting organizations work".

"I have changed how I behave, from a passive onlooker with regard to social justice issues, to an active participant campaigning for change. I have witnessed changes in how my family and friends behave, noticed changes in their attitude and assumptions and have heard them sharing their opinions with others to challenge beliefs and raise awareness of the social responsibility of every citizen to contribute

to a more equitable, just and sustainable society”.

“Yes, I would like to think so”.

“Although it is extremely hard to see at times, I do believe that I have added not in any great or extraordinary ways to a more just and sustainable world but in smaller ways by challenging myself and those around me to think about the way we live our lives and how we affect others at home and abroad by our decisions and actions”.

“Racism, inequality and sustainability are huge concerns of mine and I believe I have greatly contributed by sharing my views and educating others”.

“Yes, by putting into practice the knowledge and experience I gained on DP”.

“Yes, through my involvement in community work, fundraising, Awareness raising and participation”.

“Yes, I believe I am proactive in change for a better future for all”.

Summary of Question 7

In response to question 7; 16 past participants were confident in saying “yes” they had contributed to a more just, equitable and sustainable society post DP. 1 respondent was unsure and 1 stated “yes - in being open and equitable in my dealings and interactions with others and in my consideration of related developmental issues before pursuing a certain course of action. I don’t feel that DP is responsible for this but it certainly didn’t impact negatively”.

There appears to be a general consensus that no matter how small the contribution; is it one that is worth making.



Observations and Considerations

CONSIDER THIS

Response rate

Although the findings of this study present a predominantly positive argument for the value and continuation of this particular DE intervention, we need to be cognisant of the 37% response rate. It is unknown as to whether those who put aside the time to complete the questionnaire are the participants who were most affected by the DP project. It is pure speculation to make such an assumption. However, the question must be raised; what happened to the rest?

Social Constructionist Method

As mentioned in the introduction, the overall study was embedded in a social constructionist philosophy of research, which emphasises the validity of the views and opinions of participants. This format is really only successful when gauging the impact on the individual. We can see the difficulties that are presented when trying to measure the multiplier effect. A larger more comprehensive investigation is needed to quantify the impact participants have made on the wider community.

Scale of Research

Although the scale of this research is small due to financial and time constraints, it has allowed for an insight into the longitudinal value of our work as DE practitioners. For a more comprehensive overview of the DE sector in Ireland, the responsibility lies with individual organisations, projects and practitioners to invest in a similar inquiry. Once this information has been attained and compiled by a central body such as perhaps the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) a clearer picture will unfold, allowing for a stepping stone closer to understanding our overall collective impact on Development challenges.

Development Perspectives commitment to exploring impact and quality

In recent years DP has been committed in a number of ways to assessing the impact and quality of our work.

1. On the 17th of October 2011, Bobby McCormack, Director of DP, was involved in organising, designing and facilitating a seminar examining the concept of quality in the DE sector in Ireland in conjunction with Suas, Africa centre, Comhlamh, Dochas and IDEA.
2. DP plays an active part in the quality and impact working group with IDEA.
3. DP was requested by Cercle De Development and ASTM in Luxemburg to lead a two day training course on the creation of quality criteria for the Development Education sector in Luxemburg. This training course took place in December 2011.

4. Bobby McCormack was the resident Expert at the DEEEP Development Education Summer School in Finland in June 2011. The focus of the summer school was Quality and Impact in Development Education. The event was attended by over 90 practitioners from all over the world.
5. Over the last two years, DP has developed Quality criteria with indicators at output/outcome and impact levels. These efforts will sharpen our focus on future editions of our flagship programme.

Conclusions

As an organisation we need to continue to focus on our contribution to long term impact. The range and number of variables affecting the direction of a person's life make it impossible for us to claim full responsibility for impact, however; we can make claims regarding contribution. As clearly stated in Irish Aids Development Education Logic Model (2011) the intermediate outcome level outlines 2 specific aims;

1. "Irish public (s) have increased knowledge, critical awareness, understanding, and skills to engage critically with global justice issues"
2. "High levels of support among Irish public for international development and Ireland's role are maintained"

Keeping both these aims in mind and returning to the two previous definitions of DE, there is enough evidence to suggest that the majority of those who responded to this study acknowledged that through their participation in the DP flagship project they experienced a change in their attitude, knowledge and skills. They became more aware and understanding of the world around them. They became critical thinkers engaging more with political, social, economic and environmental movements at a local and global level. They believe that their participation on DP aided in successful job applications.

Former participants became multipliers of change responsible for their own choices in recognition of how their decisions affect the lives of others. They allowed DE to be mainstreamed into their daily thoughts and actions and no matter how small their contribution is to a more just, equitable and sustainable world, they believe they are making one, which brings the famous nineteenth century, Anglo-Irish politician, Edmund Burkes quote to mind "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little" (Sonas, 2009:10)

Are we impacting on the lives of those living in poverty? Yes, but to what extent? To answer this question comprehensively more time and investment is needed in research and a collective effort to design an adequate performance measurement framework for Development Education in Ireland. There can be little doubt that during this turbulent time and evolving context, individuals, households and communities across the country need to be equipped with a knowledge and understanding of the world around us. This knowledge and understanding needs to be part of a package, which includes the skills necessary to influence and act on the issues and challenges that are relevant. We need problem solvers! We need a population willing and able to contribute to struggles ahead rather than one paralysed by fear or a lack of confidence/skills/knowledge. Development Perspectives can play its part in this needed movement.



Appendix 1

Development Perspectives (DP) Impact Study Questionnaire 2011

Name (optional)

Year you took part in DP..... Male/female Dob -

Questions 1-3 relate to the impact Development Perspectives made on you as an individual.

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.....

Question 3-6 relate to how you acted as a multiplier of change and impacted on others.

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.....

Question 7 relates to the overall aim of Development Perspectives.

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.....

Q1a. Can you identify if the DP project impacted on your life? YES / NO

b. How? (Please identify specific changes you made as a direct result of your participation)

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.....
.....

Q2a. Did your experience on DP contribute to a long term change in your knowledge, skills or attitude?

YES / NO

b. What change did you experience?

.....
.....
.....

Q3. Did your participation in DP lead to educational or employment opportunities?

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.....

.....

Q4a. Have you acted as a multiplier of change since your participation on DP? (See footnote)

YES / NO

b. How?

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.....

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Q5. What development education activity(s) have you been involved in since you participated on the programme?

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Q6. How did you engage the wider community in development related issues post project?

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Q7a. Since your involvement in DP do you believe you have contributed to a more equitable, just, sustainable society?

YES / NO

b. How?

.....

.....

.....

*multiplier of change – through family, friends, colleagues, social engagement, facebook twitter, awareness raising activities etc.

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

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