

Global learning and fundraising: mutually exclusive or happy bed-fellows?

In this thinkpiece, Matt Jackson from Oxfam considers the relationship between education and fundraising. He argues that fundraising with young people and global learning should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Fundraising activities can have a valuable place in educational contexts if participation is placed at their heart. Matt explores the implication of such an approach for educators and charities.

Matt Jackson is Head of Public Engagement at Oxfam, overseeing Oxfam's engagement work in schools, with young people, in communities and digitally. He was previously Director of Global Youth Work at Y Care International, running one of the largest global youth work programmes in the UK and Ireland, supporting YMCAs to develop and deliver global youth work with young people in their communities. A trained youth worker, he is a visiting lecturer in Global Youth Work at De Montfort University and George Williams College and has been involved in global education work with organisations such as CAABU, Daneford Trust and Unipal.

Email: MJackson@oxfam.org.uk

Many educators have strong views about the compatibility of fundraising with the aims of global learning, driven in part by some bad fundraising practice by some development agencies in the past. As a result, the relationship between education and fundraising has for too long been a taboo topic in development education and global youth work circles.

The issue has come into the spotlight again with the publication of *'Unlocking the educational potential of fundraising activities: Guidelines for good practice in fundraising with young people'*. DEA has brought together a range of international NGOs to develop these guidelines, which outline the characteristics of fundraising activities which fulfil their educational potential. Here at Oxfam, fundraising in schools and youth centres is very much on our agenda as we are about to launch a new resource supporting young people to fundraise with us.

We believe that fundraising can have a valuable place in educational contexts. But that doesn't mean we think it is a good idea to simply give a young person a bucket to shake. Fundraising in schools and youth groups must be 'good' fundraising – and that means putting the principle of participation at its heart, a principle which should underpin all good educational practice. Supporting young people to participate in decision-making is the first principle of the new guidelines, and one which we believe unlocks the other principles. Putting participation at the heart of your work not only ensures that what you are doing meets the needs of young people but it also gives young people ownership of the work.

In planning our new resource we conducted research with over 200 teachers. This showed us that schools really want to raise funds for charities, and a very large number (86% of the teachers who responded) are doing it already on a regular basis. Giving to charity has long been seen by people as a way to have an impact that can be easily and quickly quantified and measured. It makes a difference and saves lives. Involvement in fundraising can also be the point at which people start to engage in global issues, realising that poverty and inequality is a global challenge and one where they can create change.

So do we leave educators and young people to do it themselves? Or do we help to provide a space for them to do good fundraising, supporting teachers to ensure that what they do maximises the gain for the young people involved?

Any fundraising must come as a result of a choice by young people to take action in this way. In order to make an informed decision, they need to have gone through a process of critically exploring global issues and their role in relation to them. Oxfam's Active Global Citizenship programme is just one example of many similar global learning tools used by organisations in both the formal and informal sectors.

Young people should not only have the opportunity to learn about the underlying global issues, but also about how they can make a difference to the world around them. Educators can support this process by giving young people a 'menu' of actions

and supporting them to make an informed decision about the best action for the context.

At Oxfam, we believe the options young people are given can mirror the way Oxfam itself believes it can effect change. Oxfam works to overcome poverty in three ways: Campaigning; Development work; Emergency response. We aim to be open and transparent with young people about the benefits and challenges of each of these. So if a group of young people want to campaign and use their voice to have an impact then we can provide them with tools to do that as effectively as possible. And if they think that long term development and responding to emergencies and disasters can make a difference, then they should be given the tools to raise funds for these projects.

Whilst we believe in supporting young people to fundraise if that is what they have chosen to do, bad fundraising can create an impression that giving money is either a quick fix or makes a problem go away. That's why it's important that money is not seen as the only answer to global poverty. Whilst its direct impact on the lives of people in the global South is enormous we should always be encouraging young people to ask 'is there more we can do?'

We also believe we have a job to do in being transparent and open about how we spend money, enabling young people to make a decision based on how their money will actually be used and opening up discussions around issues of accountability and trust in development.

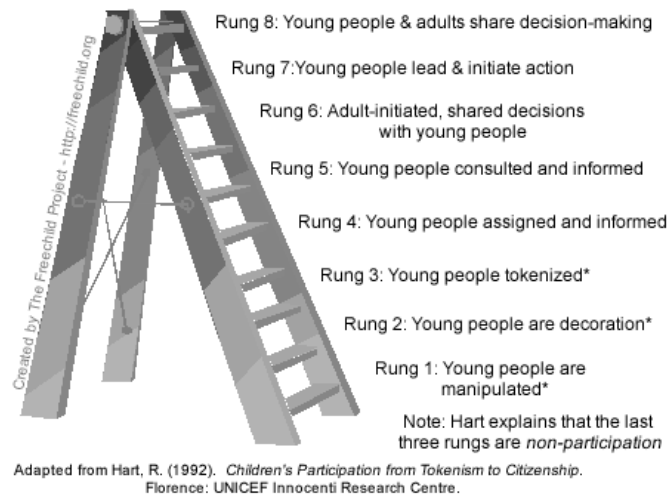
It is this process of informed choice which can make fundraising in schools stand out. Fundraising activities ought not to be carried out because a teacher or educator is telling young people to take part or because a charity has put pressure on them. To facilitate a sense of choice and participation, charities have a responsibility to use images and stories wisely, evoking a message of empathy and shared common values rather than pity.

A good way to assess the participatory nature of fundraising with young people is to use Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation¹. Uninformed bucket-shaking approaches to fundraising can be found at the bottom of the ladder where young people are manipulated. Fundraising on these lower rungs would use imagery of people in the developing world that played on victimhood, and pushed a sense of guilt on young people.

Our aim is for our fundraising to sit proudly near the top of the ladder, whether it is adult-initiated but based on shared decisions with young people (rung 6) or at its very best a process in which young people and adults share decision making (rung 8).

¹ www.freechild.org/ladder.htm

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



One test of how well we are sticking to principles of good practice is to consider how we market fundraising to schools and other organisations. Do we say, '*We have a new fundraising product, we'd like you to raise funds for us*' or do we say, '*If you choose to raise funds for us we have a product that can support you to do it*'? The latter approach is the one we want to push. The difference may seem subtle but it is a vital one. If we are to stick to the principle of participation then this must underpin our actions as well as our intentions.

Fundraising and global learning should not be seen as mutually exclusive. If done well, fundraising activities can be truly educational and open new ways to engage young people in global issues and explore the issues behind global poverty. Involvement in fundraising can help young people develop new skills of research, planning, problem-solving, reflection, team-work, creativity and communication. It can help to develop key skills such as project management and 'learning by doing'. It can also provide a space for young people to critically analyse the way in which development agencies spend their money and to come to an informed conclusion on the effectiveness of aid and development.