

Mutual learning for sustainability: The Gambia and the UK

“Our clever minds are thinking the same”

The following comes from a discussion paper on mutual learning which arises from a Tide~ project involving joint work between teachers in the UK and The Gambia from 2000 to 2002. The paper has been used as a stimulus for study visit groups, and is based on three key questions:

- *What are we giving?*
 - *What are we getting?*
 - *How can we work in an equal and open way?*
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“We can’t overstress the importance of meeting a variety of people – formally and informally. There is no ‘typical Gambian.’”

- The most effective *Mutual learning* has come from doing work together informally [eg joint fieldwork].
- All collaborative group activity contains an element of *Mutual learning* – and the hallmarks of good groupwork are often also those of successful *Mutual learning*.
- However, this has only been made possible because we have done extensive work on becoming conscious of issues of equality and cultural sensitivity [as relationships have developed, this consciousness has become more “natural” and less of a visible concern].
- *Mutual learning* is **not**: schools linking; us telling people what to do; an exchange visits scheme [although it might include elements of these].
- It involves flexibility, giving and getting from each other and seeking answers and solutions together – around a common *educational* focus.
- It involves skills and dispositions to: flexibility and responsiveness; active listening; cultural open-ness; respectfulness.
- It recognises: the individual within the group; that there are a variety of perspectives; and that each perspective throws light on previous perspectives.
- It involves room for reflection on content, product and *process*, by both parties. This sometimes involves recording the process.
- Above all, it is about *relationships and partnerships*.

The following publications have helped in developing these ideas:

Planning to teach about development issues – Ideas from the Kumasi geography teachers’ workshop. Tide~, 1995.

Global goals and own goals in education. Lynn Davies, Tide~, 1998.

Journeys into global understanding – organising a group visit to study development. Margot Brown, UNICEF, 1995.