

OUR RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION



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Lesson Summary

In this session the group will consider the importance of being able to access education, and look at the ways that different young people, around the world and throughout history, have tried to ensure education access was expanded to cover everyone. The case studies are the Latin American educational reform movement of the early 20th century, and the work of Malala Yousafzai.

Learning Objectives

- Think about the value of education, and the different important ways it can affect us.
- Learn about the different groups of people who have been denied an access to education, both historically and today.
- Find out about Malala Yousafzai, her life, and her work to promote women's access to education.
- Discover how Latin American students tried to ensure that poor people had access to education in the early twentieth century

United Nations Sustainable Development Links

- Quality Education
- Gender Equality

Curriculum Links

- PSHE- KS3 and 4

British Council Core Skills

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Student Leadership
- Collaboration and Communication
- Citizenship

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Activity 1: Discussion exercise

No preparation required in advance

- Ask to students imagine that the government has just passed a law which restricts access to education. Inform them that under this law, which is meant to save the government money, schools will not be open to everyone, and instead will only be open to young people who cannot afford to pay for private schooling. This will mean that all students will be means-tested based on what their parents earn. Ask them whether they think this law would be fair or not, and to justify their answers.
- Try to steer the conversation towards why it would be unfair to have such an education policy- ask the students what education gives them. Try to highlight the following factors:
- Provides the opportunity for access to better jobs and increases students' earning power
- Helps us engage in day-to-day activities- reading food labels while shopping, or paying bills for example.
- Helps individuals understand the world around them
- Allows young people to form friendships/ relationships with people their own age
- Educated people are more able to engage in politics and civil society, giving them power
- Education can spark passions and interests which are valuable in and of themselves- literature, art, drama, sports, etc
- Follow this up by asking students what would happen if only some people (for example rich people, men, racially-privileged groups) had access to education while the rest of the population did not. Try to highlight
- Only certain groups would get access to better jobs- meaning there would resultant wealth inequality
- There might be reduced numbers of people entering trades like engineering, medicine, and law, which would mean day-to-day life would be more difficult for everyone.
- Only certain groups would have access to political positions- meaning that they might make decisions that only benefit the group that they came from, and lead to worse treatment for others eg. women, working-class people, people of colour.
- Some groups of people might feel more isolated and alone, which might have negative impacts for their mental health.



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Activity 1: Discussion exercise

Cont.

- Finally, ask students what they could do if such a law was in place. What would they do to try to ensure that more people had access to education? During/after the discussion, point out that young people have been involved in trying to broaden access to education in lots of different ways.
- Some have set up their own schools and universities which are free or cheap to attend, and have got funds for these from trade unions, political groups, and charities.
- Some have tried to get the schools/universities that they attend to offer free courses for people who would not be able to attend otherwise
- Some have tried to change government policies, to ensure that there are more schools, and that no one is prevented from going because of their gender, religion, race, or class.

Activity 2: Education and Growth

Requires: Worksheet Activity 'Education and Growth'

Preparation: Print out enough copies of the worksheet activity for your students

- Ask students to split into pairs, and to have a look at 'Activity: Education and Growth' on the front of the worksheet.
- Once they have picked a country and discussed why they would choose it, ask the group as a whole to share their answers.
- Ask the following question to the entire class. What can this tell us about the importance of education for a society/country?
- Try to draw out the importance of education in (i) developing important skillsets amongst the general population, (ii) enabling communication and exchange between societies and (iii) attracting investment and enabling growth.



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Activity 3: Malala Yousafzai

Requires: Slides 2-9, Worksheet source 1

Preparation: Ensure that you have enough copies of worksheet source 1 printed out for the group.

- Run through slides 2-8 with your group.
- Ask students to get into pairs, read the quotes from Malala in source 1 from the worksheet, and then ask them to answer the questions on slide 9 with their partner.
- Draw the whole group back together, and pose the questions to individual pairs, asking them to share their answers with the class. Ensure that you give space for other people to respond and put forward their views.

Activity 4: Latin American Education Reform Movement

Requires: Slides 10 -17

- Run through the slides on the Latin American Education Reform Movement and the Popular Universities (slides 10-17). Use the notes below to explain what is happening in the slides.
- When you hit the questions on slide 14, have students discuss them with a neighbour briefly, and then ask the group as a whole to share their answers, explaining why they think their course of action is preferable.
- Finish the session by asking students to discuss the questions on slide 17 as a whole group, encouraging dialogue and responses with one another.

Slide 10

- 'Latin America' refers to the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries of South and Central America. These countries had been colonised and controlled by Spain and Portugal in a process which began in the 1500s.
- Local (or 'indigenous') inhabitants were treated very badly- many millions were killed or died from new diseases that arrived with the Europeans, and those who survived often faced poverty while working in very hard conditions in big farms, mines, and ranches.
- Spanish and Portuguese people moved to the continent, and were treated better by the European-controlled governments than indigenous people, but still faced bad conditions.
- There was little development of the continent- roads and transportation were neglected, industries relied on workers doing hard labour for long hours and low pay, and there was very little in the way of schools, hospitals, or universities.



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Activity 4: cont.

Slide 11

- During the 1800s a series of wars and revolutions led to these colonies becoming independent, but many of the problems of the colonial era persisted.
- Many universities were only open to rich men who had descended from European settlers. They were often controlled by the Catholic Church, and excluded people who did not agree with them.
- Poor people, women, non-Catholics, indigenous peoples, and political radicals faced many barriers to getting a good quality education, getting better jobs, and gaining access to political positions.
- This meant that the people who already had power were able to hold onto it, creating a very unequal society.

Slide 12

- During the early 1900s, students across Latin America realised that they faced very similar problems. They formed a group called the 'International Congress of American Students', and held several meetings in different countries.
- Students from across the continent gathered to discuss how they could improve education in their countries, and make sure that more people could access universities.
- Some of them decided that they would protest, and would try to get to universities and governments to change the way that the existing universities were run. This was very successful in changing the way that universities were run across Latin America, but entry was still often restricted to the upper-and-middle-classes.
- Others decided that they would set up an alternative- that they would offer their own education to people, free of charge, on the subjects that they thought were important. These were called 'Popular Universities'

Slide 13

- In 1918, at the University of Cordoba, Argentina, students took over the campus. They refused to go to classes until changes were made. Some of them even climbed onto the roof!
- The army tried to clear the protesting students out of the university, but their ideas were so popular that non-students started to join them! The government eventually agreed to their reforms, and other Latin American countries soon followed, after their own student protests emerged.

Slide 14

- N/a



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Activity 4 cont.

Slide 15

- In Peru, the first Popular University was set up in January 1921 in Lima, the capital city. It was named “Universidades Populares Gonzalez Prada,” in honour of the activist Gonzalez Prada.
- Organised entirely by student volunteers, classes were free to all and run at night in a series of makeshift classrooms- concert halls, offices of student unions, and even public parks were all used!
- Attendees were often workers from European backgrounds who spoke Spanish, with a mixture of women and men attending. Over 1000 attended during its first year.

Slide 16

- The classes offered had different focuses. Traditional subjects like history, geography, maths and the sciences were taught, alongside political discussions of how to get better rights for ordinary people.
- Some classes focused on very practical things- teaching people to read and write, first aid techniques, and tips on personal and household hygiene were all commonplace.
- Hoping to break down barriers between Europeans and Indigenous peoples, classes on indigenous culture and history were taught, and parties were organised with Indigenous Peruvian musicians and dancing.
- Sometimes the students organised events which combined parties and lessons- walks on beautiful beaches were accompanied by poetry, studies of the skies, and studies of animals and the natural world.

Activity 5: Popular University

- Show the group slide 17, and give each pair of students a piece of paper.
- Ask them to make an advert for a Popular University that they are running. It should have a name, a list of courses/ classes on offer, other events that are to be organised, and a place where it is based.
- When the students have made their adverts, ask each pair to show off their advert and explain their choices.



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Activity: 'Education and Growth'

You run a company which makes, designs, and programs smartphones. You have decided that you should expand your business to another country and have asked your team to do some research about where would be best.

They have come back to you with the following information about **Country A** and **Country B**.

Which country would you pick?

Why do you think this country would be better suited to your business?

	Country A	Country B
School is compulsory for:	5-14 year olds	5-18 year olds
Compulsory subjects:	English, Maths, Science	English, Maths, Science, 1 Foreign Language, Computing
Percentage of young people attending university:	30%	40%
Young people receive financial help to attend university?	No	Yes

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Source 1

Quotes from - ***Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban***

"Let us pick up our books and our pens," I said. "They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world"

"The Taliban could take our pens and books, but they couldn't stop our minds from thinking."

"Education had been a great gift for [my father]. He believed that lack of education was the root of all of Pakistan's problems. Ignorance allowed politicians to fool people and bad administrators to be re-elected. He believed schooling should be available for all, rich and poor, boys and girls."

"I don't want revenge on the Taliban, I want education for sons and daughters of the Taliban."

"We want to be free to go to school or to go to work. Nowhere is it written in the Quran that a woman should be dependent on a man. The word has not come down from the heavens to tell us that every woman should listen to a man"



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