

Briefing Paper for Trainee Teachers
Of
Citizenship Education

Resolving Conflict between Countries

Produced by citizED
(a project of the Teacher Training Agency)

AUTUMN 2004

More information about the series of
Briefing Papers for Trainee Teachers can
be found at www.citized.info



Resolving Conflict Between Countries

Conflicts between countries arise because states often have competing national interests and opposing views on international issues. Such conflicts vary in their levels of intensity from mild diplomatic disagreements through to violent wars. As KS 3 aims to introduce pupils to the values of open-mindedness and respect for others' views, teachers should concentrate their approach on analysing with students how such destructive and confrontational situations arise, and how they can be avoided.

A possible avenue into this topic might be for trainees to consider the relationship between violence and conflict. The two terms are often used interchangeably, but trainees should be wary of doing so for it implies that conflict has only negative characteristics. In fact, conflict also has many **positive attributes**. It enables states to identify and try to understand the needs, values and interests of others. It might also entail a desire to achieve social well-being, justice, gender equality and human rights. The challenge is to help states view conflict in this context. They can then find **constructive and peaceful solutions** to their conflicts without recourse to violence, reaching a just and mutually beneficial agreement through consent and co-operative problem-solving

A commitment by states to this process is articulated in Article 2(3) of the **United Nations (UN) Charter**, in which they agree to settle their disputes by peaceful means. These means are outlined explicitly in Article 33(1), which proclaims that states “shall seek early settlement of their international disputes by *negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or other peaceful means of their choice.*” This list is neither hierarchical nor exhaustive. It is designed simply to give states a **free choice of means** over what peaceful mechanisms they use to resolve their conflicts.

These methods can, however, be categorised into (1) diplomatic means, (2) legal means and (3) procedures among member states of international organisations. The nature and causes of a particular conflict determine the effectiveness and suitability of any given mechanism. That said, a critique of all three categories could be one way for trainees to teach pupils about peacefully resolving conflict between countries.

RESOURCES:

Key texts include: Merrills, J.G., *International Dispute Settlement* (3rd Edition). Cambridge University Press: 1998. Includes extensive case studies. Doyle, Michael, and Olara Ottunnu, *Peacemaking and Peacekeeping for the New Century*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc: 1998. Bercovitch, Jacob (ed.), *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc: 1996.

Useful web-sites include: www.acrnet.org: Background information – what is conflict resolution? www.un.org/cyberschoolbus: provides collection of briefing papers on conflict resolution, disarmament and UN peacekeeping which summarise the key concept issues and outline examples of classroom activities and extra resources. Look at the UNESCO website, <http://www.portal.unesco.org/education>, for teaching materials on non-violent education and peace. In particular, visit the website <http://www.unesco.org/youth/EduquerANG.pdf> for the pamphlet *Education In and For Conflict*, which outlines processes and key issues related to conflict resolution. See also the UNA-UK website, www.una-uk.org, for briefing papers on a range of conflict resolution topics, as well as information on Model Security Council activities.

For pupils: *Building Peace where I Live*, a resource pack for key stages 2&3, explores themes of saying no to violence, resolving conflicts fairly, taking part in our communities. *Time for Peace* (by Janet Ganguli) reflects on themes such as why wars happen and alternatives to war. Both sources are available from Pax Christi (<http://www.paxchristi.org.uk>).

ACTIVITY 1 (CURRICULUM/CLASSROOM) – CAMP DAVID ROLE-PLAY

Citizenship, KS 3 (Year 8/9)

OBJECTIVE: understand the causes of a particular conflict and the options available to resolve it; review the functions of negotiation and mediation to resolve a conflict; recognise the limits of these mechanisms.

KEY SKILLS: communication; contribution to class discussions and debates; consideration and possible acceptance of other peoples views.

ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Trainees should give out role play cards and background information (see below) and allow time to read through this. Then they should explain that the members of each group will be meeting to try to reach an agreement on the Israel-Palestine conflict. The fourth member should act as observer, note-taker and reporter. [NB. The Israel-Palestine conflict is a controversial one and it is important that Trainees do not encourage a specific solution. The focus (as well as the objectives for the student) *must* be on the **process** of resolving conflict rather than the outcome]. The activity could take place over a series of lessons or, in a truncated form, within one lesson. Negotiations will be more meaningful if there has been a period of proper preparation.

BACKGROUND: In July 2000, US President Bill Clinton convened a summit at Camp David upon the insistence of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. Issues never before discussed at senior levels between Israelis and Palestinians were suddenly put on the table, such as the status of Jerusalem, statehood, boundaries and refugees. Clinton and Barak supported a plan that envisioned a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and publicly blamed Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat for the failure to reach an agreement on a two-state solution. The Palestinians criticised the proposal. In their eyes, the Clinton/Barak plan would have left the new Palestinian state with significant loss of water and land. The summit failed to produce an agreement, but nonetheless Arafat and Barak approved a new series of meetings between the negotiators over the following months.

THE US MEDIATORS: As the country mediating these negotiations, you should run the meeting. Ask each country about their problems and what they seek in order to solve them. Make sure everyone listens and no-one interrupts. Get the group to discuss ideas and try to think of ways to solve the crisis. Any ideas are welcome. Don't take sides – your role is to facilitate the discussion. Be aware that both Palestinians and Israelis may suspect your motives and you will want to reflect on the full range of reasons that has brought you to the negotiating table.

THE PALESTINIANS: You rejected the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. In 1967, the “Six Days’ War” saw Israel grow to almost double its size through the acquisition of land (in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). Since then, you have been trying through your negotiations to regain the land lost in 1967 and create a Palestinian state. You come to the summit feeling you have already lost more than enough and are not prepared to accept any further loss of land or continued Israeli control of vital amenities such as water, roads and other resources.

THE ISRAELIS: Since the creation of your state, you have felt threatened and surrounded by aggressive neighbours. You want to see the long-term existence of a Jewish democratic state with internationally-recognised borders. You have arrived wanting to deal with the core issues – settlements and territory, borders, refugees, Jerusalem and security arrangements. You don't want anything to be agreed until everything is agreed.

RESOURCES: <http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/MiddleEast/Palestine/Background.asp>. Provides a brief background and timeline to the modern conflict. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/oslo/negotiations>. Information on all of the agreements reached since the Oslo Accord in 1993. Also has lists of further resources available.

DIFFERENTIATION: Make it harder by: *Limit the time available for group discussion and debate (in real terms, this would happen towards the end of a summit anyway). Does this cause students to panic and make rash decisions? Does it make it harder for them to compromise? This will also require more active mediation.* Make it easier by: *Using a less complex or controversial conflict than the Middle East.*

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION: De-briefing session (at least 15mins). What did the group members feel (both in and out of role)? How many groups managed to reach an agreement? What were the solutions? What were the difficulties? Did students acknowledge the benefits of constructive and co-operative approaches to the issues?

ACTIVITY 2 (SCHOOL) – MODEL UN SECURITY COUNCIL (MUNSC) EVENT

Citizenship, KS 3 (Year 8/9, older students may be better suited to a Model General Assembly – MUNGA) in collaboration with other subjects and year groups

OBJECTIVE: practice preparing and presenting a position that you may disagree with; think quickly on your feet and respond constructively to criticism; negotiate outcomes that are acceptable to all; develop knowledge and understanding of the primary role of the UN Security Council in settling inter-state conflicts and come to appreciate the challenges of multilateral negotiation.

KEY SKILLS: research and analysis; communication skills through participation in debates and discussions; problem-solving and critical thinking.

A **MUNSC** is a one-day role-play exercise that sees students assuming the role of country diplomats – or ‘delegates’ – at the UN Security Council. The delegates research their country positions on a topic chosen and agreed upon in advance and then come together to enact the meeting. At the end of the event – through discussion and negotiation with other delegations – the delegates will have written and adopted a UN Resolution that is acceptable to their own country and to the wider world.

ROLES REQUIRED: *President:* to chair the meeting (neutral). Should be the teacher or an older pupil if this is a school-wide event. *Secretary-General:* again, a teacher or ideally the principal organiser of the event. The role is to take charge of the Secretariat (pupils doing the co-ordination and message-taking during the meeting). *Advisers:* to assist delegations in drafting resolutions. *Secretariat:* students who act as go-betweens for delegations to distribute papers and notes etc. Enables pupils not involved in delegations to play an active part in the event. *Delegations:* should include as many (ideally all) of the 15 Security Council Members as possible. You **MUST** have the five permanent members (China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and the United States of America). The ten non-permanent members (who serve two-year terms) can be altered, but try to maintain a geographical balance.

CONFLICT SCENARIOS: *The range of conflict scenarios available for use in a MUNSC is limited to those which amount to “threats to international peace and security” (refer to the UN Charter, Chapter V for provisions dealing with the role of the Council). It is for the teacher and organisers to agree on the most appropriate context based on the perceived difficulty level. The Council has been expanding its interpretation of threats to the peace in recent years, and so underlying causes of international tension can be included such as poverty, trade disputes or imbalances, refugee flows, human rights abuses and the arms trade.*

FOLLOW-UP ACTION: The opportunity exists for broader engagement with the community. The final resolution could be sent to the Embassy or High Commission of the country represented with a cover letter explaining what position the delegation had taken and asking for comments. It could also be sent to the local MP with a request to discuss it with him/her. After such a meeting, ask the MP to forward it to the relevant government department for comment. See if it can be printed in a local newspaper. Seeking external comment is also a useful way to evaluate the success of the event.

DETAILED INFORMATION: trainees should contact UNA by email, mungaassistant@una-uk.org for a copy of “How to Run a Model UN Security Council (MUNSC) Event”, which provides guidance on forward planning, a collection of possible scenarios and detailed descriptions of how the event functions. UN Charters can also be provided by UNA on request.

DIFFERENTIATION: *make it harder by* introducing more countries with different angles or vested interests so that the outcome is less clear-cut e.g. if Afghanistan was used as the conflict scenario, get countries such as Pakistan involved. It follows that you can *make it easier by* ensuring the outcome is clear-cut. Pick countries for the Security Council with only one or two different perspectives on the conflict scenario so that an agreement is more likely.

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION: Feedback form. De-briefing (at least 15 minutes) at the end of the event where participants come out of their roles. How did everyone feel? Were smaller countries intimidated?

ACTIVITY 3 (COMMUNITY) – COMMUNITY ‘QUESTION TIME’

Citizenship, KS 3 (Year 8/9)

OBJECTIVE: become an active citizen in your community; learn the importance of participation in the political system; develop the communication skills necessary to engage with various sectors of the community including MPs, interest groups, civil society organisations, and the media.

KEY SKILLS: organisation; communication (verbal and written media); analysis, reflection on issues as they affect the community.

ACTIVITY: This event differs slightly from the BBC’s version of Question Time in that it should deal with only one particular international issue rather than a range of issues. It could be up to the teacher or the students to decide on the topic. This could be: Was it right to attack Iraq? Should we intervene militarily in Darfur, Sudan? Can the UN keep the peace? The task is for students to arrange an hour-long event – from conception to fruition – that brings together individuals and groups from across the community to question a panel of specialists on an agreed international conflict. Teachers will need to split students into four teams. [See the report from the Institute for Citizenship Education for comprehensive details of how to run this type of event at http://www.citizen.org.uk/education/question_time/teach_notes_and_cards.pdf].

PANEL AND CHAIR TEAM: This team is responsible for getting the panel together and arranging a Chairman for the meeting. Students will need to do some background research (internet) to come up with a short-list of appropriate and diverse panellists. They could come from politics, the media, academia and the arts. They will also need to have known differing views of the conflict chosen to ensure a lively debate, and must be good communicators. The Chair must be impartial and have in depth knowledge both of the panellists’ views and of the chosen conflict. Students will have to draft professional letters to invite panellists informing them of the date, time and venue as well as what is expected of them during the event.

VENUE TEAM: This team is responsible for everything to do with where the event takes place. This will require thinking about all sorts of logistical issues. Is a sound system needed? How will the audience get there? Are there enough facilities and is there disabled access? Will there be refreshments? Everything must be arranged well in advance so that the event can be advertised with all the details and panellists can be informed of all the relevant information. Because the event is on a very specialised subject, students may find universities suitable venues. This could also help guarantee the attendance of academics as well!

AUDIENCE AND QUESTION TEAM: The audience must represent a range of different views, but for a specialised event like this one, to really hold the panellists to account requires also an informed audience. This team should therefore try to bring on board specialists as well as concerned citizens in the audience. A Prep. Committee could be set up to brief those in the audience less-informed of the conflict. The questions must get to the crux of the issues, especially if they are directed at MPs – this is the students’ chance to really have an impact on politics and current affairs.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM: This team is responsible for all aspects of publicising the event. Publicising needs to be both general and targeted. Make local newspapers and radio stations aware to boost interest. Run an internet search to find out what local organisations (NGOs, civil society groups) are engaged in conflict resolution work and make sure they are informed.

DIFFERENTIATION: Make it harder by: *try and complete the various stages/tasks in a shorter time frame. How do students react under pressure?* Make it easier by: *helping students secure the support of the influential community organisations and panellists.*

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION: Observing the event, watching reactions of panel and audience and speaking to participants about what they thought. Develop a questionnaire to ask if the event was well-organised, what might have been done differently and whether participants were satisfied.