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1 Objectives and outcomes

Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
<p>Students will learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that most issues are complex • that people hold different ideas and views • that attitudes and values can and should change and develop • how people work cooperatively to make decisions 	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek appropriate information • understand data presented in a number of forms • identify bias in information • understand the limitations of data • state their own ideas clearly • listen to, respect and consider the ideas of others • identify and reflect on how their own ideas change • negotiate with others to achieve a common goal • empathise with others • be tolerant • compromise • take care not to offend others • seek solutions to conflict.

2 Approaches to teaching controversial issues

Approach A

Students are given materials produced by two campaigning organisations with opposing views. They are asked to write notes on the pros and cons of the issue before writing their opinion about the issue and what has influenced them.

Approach B

Students are asked which side of the issue they support and then assigned to the opposite camp in a debate about the issue. At the end of the debate students discuss how they feel about the issue. If they have had a change of mind, they consider why they have changed. Finally they discuss what further information they would like in order to help them develop their understanding of the issue.

Approach C

Students are asked which side of the issue they support. They are then given appropriate information to use as a basis for their contribution to a debate on the issue. At the end of the debate, all students vote to decide what should be done.

Approach D

Students are given information from a range of organisations that have a bearing on the issue. They use it in a simulation exercise where students take on different roles with appropriate stances in a role-play of the issue.

Approach E

The teacher researches arguments for and against the issue. This material is collated into a table of pros and cons, which is discussed with students in a question-and-answer session. The students then copy the table into their books.

3 Teacher stances**Advocacy**

- The teacher argues for their own position/view.

Affirmative neutrality

- The teacher presents as many sides of the argument as possible without revealing their own view.
- Affirmative neutrality is often regarded as 'more balanced'.

Procedural neutrality

- The teacher acts as a facilitator eliciting ideas about the issue from students and provides information and materials about all sides of the controversy.
- The teacher is neutral and does not reveal their own view.

Devil's advocate

- The teacher takes on a stance that may not match their own view in order to develop discussion or to balance a biased discussion.

References

Plant, M. and Firth, R. (1995) *Teaching Through Controversial Issues. Teacher Education Pack*. Nottingham: Nottingham Trent University and British Agrochemicals Association.

Tasker, M. (1988) 'Dealing with controversial and contentious issues', *Industrial and Commercial Perspectives in Initial Teacher Education: Common Issues Programme*, Letchworth, Epsilon Press.