



Virtual Cultural Exchange

#SheffForGaza2015

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Where did the idea come from?

- An idea by Malaka Mohammed, Education Officer
- University of Sheffield Students' Union has been twinned with the Islamic University of Gaza since 2011:

"Twinning is the chain that feeds us with experience and knowledge... ..we can communicate to share our experiences, cultures, obstacles, histories, etc... ..We break the artificial borders and communicate easily to reach a point where we are all one world, the same humanity, and the only goal we have is to spread peace, love and knowledge."

- SU Policy is to campaign for an "end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories"

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Develop global perspectives

Create an environment that enables our students to benefit from intercultural experiences, enjoy international friendships and develop their global understanding.

'A Global Community'

We will promote and celebrate our cultural diversity, enabling students from all over the world to integrate, socialise and learn from one another.



A Global Education

Globalisation describes a process by which national and regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through the global network of trade, communication, immigration and transportation.

What makes a global student?
Are integration and a global perspective
intrinsically linked?

Communication
Environment
Technology
Transport
Business
Culture



What was the idea?

- To facilitate discussions between Sheffield students and their peers in Gaza, allowing both sides to share their culture and learn more about the world around them.
- 5 weekly sessions on a Wednesday afternoon
- Communicate via webcam/skype



- An Introductions Session
- 3 themed sessions – Family and Friendship, Interests and Travel, Work and Studies.
- A final session reflecting on the experience
- Additional activities such as “Virtual Dinner Party” and watching “5 Broken Cameras”.
- Weekly blogs, photos and footage shared with the wider student body.

5 Broken Cameras



Activity

Each person has been given one question or topic. Please discuss this with the people around you and consider how the answer may differ between cultures.

The view from Gaza

"With a very special group of students coming from different backgrounds, an hour seems like a very short time to go in a journey of discovery into different interesting cultures. As short as it is, I find this hour exceptional and unique."

- Shaimaa, Gaza



"I wanted to cite an example represents how friendship is an absolute embodiment for a better life and base of understanding and caring... Once there is someone to care about you, you feel how valuable you are and how this person does see value in you."

- Ahmed Elqattawi

Did it Work?

Achievements

- Extremely rewarding experience for participants
- Largely student-led
- Cross-cultural friendships formed
- Experience also shared with the wider community
- The themed sessions and additional activities helped to encourage productive discussions.

Difficulties

- Technology was the biggest challenge
- Attracting students who are not already at least partially interested in this type of activity - especially home students

Going forward...

- The project will be repeated again next year, perhaps with a different partner
- Issues with technology will be addressed
- We will explore how we can expand the project for our participants and integrate it with other existing initiatives