

Sophia - my contribution

On the surface it appears that I am woefully inadequate in terms of my support for Sophia. I rarely attend meetings or join conference calls. However, I like to think that one of the more innovative features of Sophia is that, as a network it promotes several ways of providing active support for its three aims. I would like to share how this works in practice for me.

Sophia acts as a way of allowing me to support its aims in two ways

Free consultancy
I am able to provide expertise in my own area of education whenever and to whom it is needed. Thus Sophia members, or their working partners can call upon me with queries or requests within or impinging on my field. I can then respond with help, advice or actual documentation, even a written paper, as required.

Framework for related activity
Sophia provides a framework within which I am now able to instigate my own actions within the field of primary education. Thus, it has allowed me to work with other organisation such as CAFOD and OXFAM to discuss ideas and initiate new projects in education.

Current examples of both ways of contributing come easily to my mind.

- I have recently initiated a small project in which Hamilton Trust, the educational charity with whom I work, will develop and produce a pack of materials for primary teachers on sex education. This will be aimed at teachers of 10-11 year olds, and will be freely available to the profession through the Hamilton Trust SOS [Save-Our-Sundays] website - currently used by 40 thousand primary school teachers across England and Wales. In this science project we have attracted a grant from the Oxford Trust, for which we are very grateful. The pack of materials will incorporate (for the first time in Primary Education) a section of materials on prevention and better access to treatment for those living with HIV or Aids.
- Recently, Dr Alice Welbourn contacted me to ask advice when preparing information for DFID. I was able to assist in producing the relevant parts of a document which included references to National Curriculum and related statutory requirements for schools in England and Wales.
- Hamilton Trust is committed to producing, probably in collaboration with CAFOD and OXFAM, a comprehensive pack of teaching resources and related pupil materials on the topic of 'A village in Africa' - one of the current compulsory teaching units in the statutory Programmes of Study for Geography. Again, this package is likely to be used by many hundreds of schools throughout England and Wales and it will incorporate an active approach to educating both teachers and their pupils on matters directly related to Sophia's aims.

In my mind, the massive advantage of an network like Sophia is that it provides busy people like myself with a means of contributing, hopefully in a very real way, to the cause, without attending lots of meetings or becoming bogged down in bureaucracy. It is a liberating way of being part of, and contributing to, a network.

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