Evaluation Report

Stories of courage from Northern Ireland

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July 2014
‘UP Standing - Stories of courage from Northern Ireland’ features diverse accounts from people who stood up to violence, discrimination or prejudice in Northern Ireland. It provides a window into often-untold stories of courage that individuals have shown in the context of a divided and often violent society.

The UP Standing series has been produced as part of ‘Facing our History, Shaping the Future’, a project of the Corrymeela Community in partnership with Facing History and Ourselves. Funding for the project was provided by the International Fund for Ireland under the ‘Sharing in Education Programme’, managed on behalf of the Fund by the Department of Education. This evaluation has been independently commissioned by the Corrymeela Community.

This evaluation was undertaken by Leah Judge as part of the Graduate Certificate Programme in Conflict Transformation at St Mary’s University, Texas in partnership with the Corrymeela Community.

About the Corrymeela Community

Corrymeela is an inclusive Christian Community founded in 1965 by Reverend Ray Davey, assisted by a group of students from Queen’s University, Belfast. Corrymeela’s mission is: embracing difference, healing division and enabling reconciliation. Our vision is of a peaceful and sustainable society based on social justice, positive relationships and respect for diversity. www.corrymeela.org

About Facing History and Ourselves

Facing History and Ourselves, founded in 1976, is an international educational and professional development organisation whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of more humane and informed citizens. www.facinghistory.org
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. A small scale evaluation was undertaken with educators to evaluate the impact of the ‘UP Standing – Stories of Courage from Northern Ireland’ resource. Methods included: a literature review on the role of storytelling in peace and conflict; semi-structured interviews; and an online survey which combined quantitative and qualitative questions. The total sample size was 31 individuals across formal education, youth & community work settings and faith based contexts.

2. Based on the sample returned the resource has been primarily used in schools settings (61%), with the remainder being split across youth and community settings and faith groups.

3. The DVD resource is the most utilised part of the resource as participants enjoy the audio and visual elements.

4. The majority of respondents believed that the resource has supported their participants to explore ethical decision making and human behaviour during times of violence. Furthermore respondents felt the resource had increased learners understanding of the ‘Troubles’, supported them to understand new narratives and challenge indifference. Respondents reported anecdotal examples of learners challenging discriminatory behaviour after engaging with the resource, evidencing that the resource supported them to turn theory into action.

5. In the formal education sector some challenges were reported around fitting the resource into courses which relate to public examinations (e.g. GCSE examinations) as there are significant time restraints. Other barriers to implementation included fear on the part of the educator to deal with contentious issues, although this was a minority view within the data collected.

6. The resource supported a story telling ‘multiplier’ whereby learners began to share their own stories that related to standing up, the Troubles or challenging indifference. Whilst this was particularly a feature with adult groups who had lived experience of the Troubles, young people were also able to articulate how on-going division affects their lives.
7. In one school setting an innovative model for implementing the resource emerged whereby 6th form students who had engaged with the materials would facilitate sessions with younger age groups within their school. It was felt this peer education approach could encourage more honest and open engagement with the themes emerging from the resource as there would be less desire to ‘please’ the adult educator.

8. Recommendations included: wider dissemination to increase usage of all three products; translated versions of the resource to support use in other conflicted societies; and the development of a related resource focused on ‘by standing’ to provide a counter experience to the theme of upstanding and help learners contextualise the act of upstanding.
INTRODUCTION

Stories have the power to impact. There is no doubt that a person’s story has the ability to inspire, challenge or change a person. It can bring about a broader perspective or a new insight; it can motivate someone to action. Hearing other’s stories can also prompt one to share their own story or dialogue with others. We are all impacted by the stories that we hear. Yet are these stories causing us to make positive choices? Well, it depends on the story.

*UP Standing: Stories of courage from Northern Ireland* has been produced to challenge and encourage others to make good, ethical decisions. In a world that has seen much conflict, many studies have taken place and tend to focus on the perpetrators and victims of those conflicts. Yet within any conflict, there are other possible human responses and an individual can play different roles at different times. There are many bystanders in each conflict that turn a blind eye, which can assist in perpetuating a conflict. If one looks deeper into these situations, however, there are also upstanders: those who are willing to make a decision to stand up for what they consider to be morally right in the midst of difficult circumstances. While these stories are often overlooked, they have the potential to inspire and challenge others to question their own actions. These stories can give insight into what courage may look like and how each one of us also has the potential to show such courage when we are faced with difficult, ethical decisions.

The UP Standing material focuses in on these very upstanders within Northern Ireland. Explorations of the conflict in Northern Ireland arguably also tend to focus on issues of victims and perpetrators. However, there were many upstanders as well, and their stories are often overlooked. The *UP Standing* material features three components: the DVD, which consists of ten diverse stories of upstanders; the story booklet, which contains the stories available on the DVD in addition to further stories; and the educators guide to assist classroom or facilitator’s use of the DVD or story booklet. The *UP Standing* materials have been produced...
by “Facing our History, Shaping the Future,” which is a project of the Corrymeela Community in partnership with Facing History and Ourselves. The project was funded by the International Fund for Ireland as part of their ‘Sharing in Education Programme’.

AIM OF EVALUATION

While stories have the power to impact, their context and usage can greatly affect this impact. The UP Standing DVD was released in April 2013, and has been distributed widely since, with a particular focus on the Post-Primary school sector on Northern Ireland. The story booklet and the educators guide were distributed from December 2013 onwards. The aim of my research is to discover if the UP Standing material is being used, how it is being used, and its impact on those viewing it.

THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING

When reflecting on the past, there is much that is learned from history and the stories that are shared. “For many, storytelling is a means of confronting their past and articulating their stories, involving elements of both narrative and moral reassessment. Through storytelling, people realize that, although they feel their cause was just, not all that they did in pursuit of it was either the right thing to do, or altogether necessary.” As stories are shared, both those sharing and those listening or reading can learn from the past and gain insights for the present and future. When hearing stories of atrocities, the stories can be the reminder that the past does not need or want to be re-lived. Decisions and events that happened could be looked at and a decision could be made so they do not happen again.

It is essential to recognize that while stories can be shared, if others are not listening or receiving them then something of the story is lost. Pádraig Ó Tuama writes of the Corrymeela Community that it believes “that the quality of the telling of a story will be related to the

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quality of the listening of the people.” If people are not “listening well,” the story will not fully be heard and therefore less impactful. The Consultative Group on the Past writes, “Whatever the starting point, many agreed that effective storytelling must be a two way process: listening to the stories of those on the ‘other side’ as well as telling their own.” It is easy to listen to stories that reinforce our own beliefs or understandings; it can be a difficult thing to listen to stories that challenge our current beliefs or understandings. Yet there can be a richness that can come from being willing to listen. In addition, great healing can come to those who are being listened to. As Judith Thompson puts it, “So, being helped by respectful listening contradicts the sense of isolation and despair.” While the content of the story being shared is important, it is also important that stories can be respectfully received.

While we have discussed the importance and potential of storytelling, the difficult question of impact still remains. How does one measure the impact of stories? Those hearing the stories will be at different places and receive the words or visuals from their own personal perspective. Wilhelm Verwoerd states that it’s “difficult to evaluate storytelling, because you are not only talking about a particular mechanism, you are talking about a stage in the journey.” While he is speaking of his own work in Beyond Walls, I think this is relevant to all storytelling. Each person sharing the story and each person receiving it will be at different stages in their life journey; it is difficult to evaluate the impact of how it is being received. As we attempt to evaluate storytelling, we also must “listen well” to what people are saying in relation to their own journey; we can then understand where they are at and how a story may indeed impact their lives.

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2 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 29.
The measurability of impact is a difficult venture to embark on. It is difficult to assess change within one’s self, not to mention to measure change within another. In this search, I have come to find this to be an interesting paradox: it is through hearing the stories from the listeners that one can understand the impact of the original story. In addition, one’s actions may change due to hearing or reading a story; yet without testimony from that person, we will not fully know the motivation. We must “listen well” to hear how a story has changed or impacted a person. Yet the impact can never fully be quantified as this person may in turn tell another of the change within them; this story could then cause further change, so the impact will continue. The relational nature of human beings certainly has power to impact one another through story.

As mentioned previously, “stories have great potential to contribute to peace and reconciliation or violence and destruction.” UP Standing is an exceptional venture to deal with the past through storytelling in such a way that will contribute to peace and reconciliation. The stories shared are diverse in age and perspective and attempt to point the viewers or listeners to challenge their moral choices. It is an attempt to look at the past from a different perspective to bring about new understanding regarding the Troubles and how one can respond to conflict in a positive way. The educators guide helps to bring greater learning from each story. Its use of personal stories has the potential to positively impact its receivers. As we continue to discover the impact of UP Standing, I will leave you with this reminder of the power and potential that stories contain: “We have to recognise the power of stories. When someone engages with it, it pitches you outside everyday experience; when you come back, you see things differently. It creates a moment of transcendence.”

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9 Ibid.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to discover the usage and impact of *UP Standing*, I have distributed an online questionnaire to all the known people who have received the *UP Standing* material. Corrymeela staff have kept a database of those that they have directly distributed the materials to. From this database, each recipient was asked to complete an online questionnaire. In addition, I conducted semi-structured interviews with four teachers or facilitators that have used the *UP Standing* material in diverse settings. Through the questionnaire and interviews I will be able to gain a broader understanding of how the *UP Standing* material is being used and its impact on those engaging with it.

The questionnaire was sent to 113 recipients. It consists of three parts of the questionnaire: background information of those using it, how and where it is being used, and the impact that it’s having on those using it.

The interviews were conducted either by phone or in person and I had specific questions to ask, although I allowed the conversation to be directed to a certain degree by the interviewee. The opportunity to speak to the facilitators or teachers was valuable to understand which stories were most impactful, how they were using the DVD and written materials, and how they perceived the impact of the *UP Standing* stories on the viewers. All information gathered will be non-attributed in this paper.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

As I have ventured on this evaluation of *UP Standing*, I have been pleased with the positive response I have gotten from those that have been using the resource. Of the 113 questionnaires sent out, 31 responded which comes to a 27% return rate. Seventy-seven percent of those that responded have used the *UP Standing* materials. Of those responses, 61% were used in formal education, 13% in youth work, 13% in faith-based or church settings, and 6% response is attributed to both adult community education or in the “other” option. The material was used diversely in schools across economic and religious sectors. It has also been used in a variety of different subjects in schools, which include, but are not limited to, History,
Citizenship, and Religious Education. It has been a resource that has been used across different ages, educational sectors, economic levels and subject matters.

The questionnaire and interviews revealed that the DVD is by far the most used resource of the *Up Standing* materials. This is partly due to the fact that the booklet and educator’s guide were released after the DVD and some only received it recently, so therefore have not had the opportunity to use the written material. The written material has however been used to supplement the DVD; some facilitators found the educator’s guide helpful to form their lessons and used it for ideas, although most created their own curriculum to use in the classroom. The DVD resource has been greatly used and loved due to the fact that people can hear the voices and have a visual representation to go along with the story. As the use of the DVD far surpasses the use of the educator’s guide and story booklet, the feedback that I have received has largely been regarding the film.

**FIG 1:** To what extent did *Up Standing* help participants explore human behaviour in times of violence?

- 82% To a great extent
- 18% To some extent
- 5% Not at all

**FIG 2:** To what extent did *Up Standing* help participants think about ethical decision making?

- 77% To a great extent
- 18% To some extent
- 5% Not at all

**FIG 3:** To what extent did *Up Standing* help participants deepen their understanding of the Troubles?

- 50% To a great extent
- 45% To some extent
- 5% Not at all

**FIG 5:** To what extent did *Up Standing* help participants to engage with new narratives?

- 64% To a great extent
- 36% To some extent
- 5% Not at all
It is clear from the results of the survey and the conducted interviews that the *UP Standing* materials have had a positive response and impact on those viewing it. When asked if the *UP Standing* material helped to explore human behaviour in times of violence, 82% agreed it did “to a great extent” while 18% agreed “to some extent” (Fig 1).

Regarding whether it helped those viewing the material to think about ethical decision-making, 77% said “to a great extent” and 18% felt it did “to some extent”, with one respondent feeling it did “not at all” (Fig 2). Ninety-five per cent of the respondents indicated that *UP Standing* helped deepen understanding about the “Troubles” to either some or a great extent (Fig 3). It also encouraged viewers to challenge indifference to a great extent (59%) or at least to some extent (36%) (Fig 4). Its impact also helped those hearing the stories to engage with a new narrative as 64% felt it did so “to a great extent” while the remaining 36% agreed it did “to some extent” (Fig 5). Of the responders that have used the *UP Standing* curriculum, there was not one person who filled out the questionnaire who did not feel the material impacted their groups or classes in at least one of the above categories to some extent or a great extent.

The above responses point to the fact that the *UP Standing* stories have made an impact on those viewing it. As I’ve embarked on this research, I have heard many stories to substantiate this. Two teachers separately felt it has helped students understand the Troubles in a new way, by making it more personal. The Troubles can be seen as something that happened “back then” instead of recognizing the impact today; recognition of sectarianism on the bus or in sports has brought to the forefront that it is not something that has gone away. One teacher at
a school said, “On more than one occasion [students] have come forward to speak up and it was influenced by what they had seen [on UP Standing].” One girl heard two boys talking negatively about another boy and told the two boys that it made her uncomfortable to hear them speak like that and it would also make others uncomfortable; the boys were very apologetic in response. Each interviewee has said that the reception to the stories was very positive. One student came to speak to her teacher to ask questions after viewing some of the stories and said she’d like to work in reconciliation someday. An interviewed teacher said multiple times that the kids “loved it.”

The use of stories has been a very useful way to encourage dialogue about making ethical discussions, understanding different historical perspectives on the Troubles and understanding one’s role in sectarianism. One school administrator that I spoke to said that he feels it’s very important to talk to the students about upstanding when they are in school because if they don’t learn to do so when they are in school, there is less of a chance that they will do so when they leave. He has felt the UP Standing material has been very good to challenge the students so they are “aware things don’t have to be as they are”; they can be part of positive change. Another facilitator wrote, “We have found it to be an excellent resource in looking at how we respond to conflict. We particularly like that the resource comes from a non-judgmental perspective.” The non-judgmental perspective in UP Standing helps facilitate good discussions around ethical decision-making within groups and classrooms.

In use with young people, two stories have stood out: “Get on the Bus,” and “A Different Song.” The former has been especially useful as it’s a story that many can relate to; the bus can be a “grey area” between the safety of school and home, and bullying can be experienced there today. One teacher stated that it is also a helpful story to refer back to when speaking with youth to recognize that if “one doesn’t speak up, others will not listen.” Boys tended to relate well to “A Different Song” due to sectarian chants and prejudices being felt in sports today. These stories were particularly effective with youth as they illustrated a way that students could act on now. Other favourite stories that were mentioned include: “A Knock at the Door,” “A Lonely March,” and “The Good Neighbour.” It seems the favourite story is the one they can most relate to; each person is impacted in a different way depending on their own individual story.
The feedback for the material was astoundingly positive, although there was some resistance noted. One teacher noted apathy and sectarianism from some students in her classroom during the teaching. Limitation of time due to exam specifications is also a hindrance to the material being used more fully. In addition, some teachers may not feel comfortable sharing the curriculum due to their own personal history. One facilitator said that there didn’t seem to be any resistance to the material, as long as someone else would teach it. It was noted that the stories are shared in a non-judgmental way, although it must be noted that care needs to be taken when deciding which stories should be shared in relation to the others; for example, not to show only three stories where Catholics are being bullied by Protestants or vice versa. While the amount of resistance discovered was not extensive, this is key to note.

As I have had the privilege of exploring the impact of *UP Standing*, I have been struck by the number of stories that have come out of this research. As we can evaluate the impact of stories through the stories of others, I have also noticed that hearing stories has also compelled others to share their own stories. I believe that this too should be included when considering the impact of *UP Standing*: it not only tells stories, it encourages further storytelling. The stories have opened the space for youth to share of their own experience of sectarianism in school, on the bus or in sports. A facilitator using the resource in a faith-based setting stated that “one lady became upset and tearful saying that it was too soon to revisit these issues although by the end of the session was glad that she participated.” Others were able to share of their own feelings “of guilt [from the past] and fears for the future.” There were stories of people watching the stories to discover they had been present during the event or perhaps had been in similar situations; hearing these stories opened a space for them to share their own experience and perspective. The stories that have been shared through *UP Standing* go beyond the recorded stories; those that have engaged in dialogue after viewing the film have heard stories of those
they are with. The number of stories that emerged from this resource goes beyond what could be written or recorded; in this way, the impact of *UP Standing* is truly beyond measure.

A noteworthy discussion from a teacher in an integrated school has shown both potential and impact on the students who have viewed it. After experiencing the *UP Standing* material, some of the students are keen to teach it to other students. The sixth form students are preparing to teach to younger students. This shows both initiative on behalf of the sixth form students, but in addition it is felt that the younger students will respond more honestly and openly with their peers. When a teacher or facilitator is in the room there may be the desire to please them. It’s more important that they will discuss the topic than to give right or wrong answers. “It’s important to name a prejudice,” the teacher said, and this is one way to encourage greater honest dialogue amongst the students. In addition, the students teaching can potentially share their own stories of upstanding to inspire those listening. This is a creative way that a school is using the *UP Standing* materials to continue to encourage dialogue and engagement within its school.

The positive feedback regarding the *UP Standing* materials has been immense. The comments I received of gratitude are beyond what can be written in this paper. However, here is a sample of the comments:

- “[It’s an] excellent resource for creating awareness and encouraging discussion.”
- “It’s a great resource with very high production value. Well done.”
- “[It] clearly outlined the actual impact of sectarianism on communities and the difference individuals can make when they have the courage to speak out against it.”
- “The *UP Standing* DVDs are a highly effective way of introducing a whole staff to controversial issues as each story provides a platform for firmer discussion and exploration.”
- “We found it an excellent resource in looking at how we respond to conflict...we are very thankful to Corrymeela for putting together such a valuable piece of work.”

There is no doubt from the feedback that the materials have been of great use and positively received.

The extent of the use of the *UP Standing* material is difficult to gauge. While 77% of those that responded have used it, the extent and number of people that have heard it varies
and is difficult to qualify. One respondent alone, teaching with a co-facilitator, has used it in multiple schools to an estimate of 300 students. Of those that have not used the UP Standing educational material, the reasons given indicated that many had intentions to do so but had either received it only recently or had not yet reached the stage of the course to use it. In addition, it is difficult to track exactly how many have received the curriculum. A distribution list was kept by ‘Facing our History, Shaping our Future,’ but did not account for those that had been given multiple copies and passed them on. With this in mind, it is important to note that UP Standing’s use goes far beyond the data collected through the questionnaire and interviews.

The interviews and questionnaire responses have been valuable in discovering how UP Standing is being used and its impact on those that are viewing it. The stories gathered are just a few amongst the many that are generated from watching the DVD and engaging in discussion. It has challenged people to consider ethical decision-making and to upstand in difficult situations. It has also helped young people to understand the Troubles from a new perspective and recognize that sectarianism can be challenged in different ways. UP Standing is an effective resource that has inspired, impacted and challenged many who have experienced it.

CHALLENGES TO RESEARCH

I am pleased with the conversations and data from those that filled out the questionnaire and took the time for an interview. However, it needs to be mentioned that there were some challenges to my research on this project. My intention from the beginning was to interview teachers or facilitators from a broad range of contexts. It appeared to be an especially busy time for many and I sadly was not able to secure some of the interviews I had hoped to. The main “voice” that is missing from this material is that I was not able to speak to someone from a Catholic school. One interviewee is from an integrated school in a predominately Catholic city, so I don’t think this group was fully missing, although I would have appreciated an
additional source. In addition, I was not able to formally interview anyone using the material in a church context. The questionnaire data does include information and comments from both Catholic schools and church based facilitators, so thankfully some of this information is present. The above challenges are important to note when considering the information presented in this project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation of any project can bring about possibilities for improvement or reveal potential changes. As the UP Standing DVD was released in April 2013 and the printed materials around December 2013, it is not surprising that distribution is one potential for greater use. While a DVD was sent to every post-primary school across Northern Ireland, it’s difficult to know which teachers it has reached and how it’s being used. One teacher I interviewed received the material because another teacher felt it didn’t relate to his class; he happened to pass her and asked if she’d like it. It is difficult to know how many additional teachers, youth workers, or people of other professions may be interested but they do not yet know it exists. I have found that many who are familiar with the materials are often recommending it to others to use; they could potentially be a great resource for distribution as they have seen its impact. Continued promotion of the UP Standing materials could certainly help more people become aware of the resource and the impact it can make.

I have also discovered that the UP Standing material has been used extensively with youth as 72% of the responses using the resource did so with groups that were under 18 years of age. I assume that the numbers of those hearing the resource would far surpass this percentage as one facilitator or teacher may have access to large numbers of students or youth that they may be showing it to. One observation that I heard more than once is that the majority of the stories were told by adults. “Get on the Bus” was particularly utilised for this very reason – it was a situation that was relevant to the youth that were viewing it. As one teacher put it, most of the stories were “beyond their current ability to act on.” “A Different Song” was another favourite because youth could relate to sectarian violence. The other stories certainly inspired, challenged ethical decision-making and brought a different
perspective to the Troubles, but may not have been as relevant to their actions at their stage of life. Perhaps additional stories more relevant to younger age group could bring even greater impact.

One suggestion that came to my attention during an interview is the possibility of adding one or more stories about by standing. Having stories of those that were bystanders could enrich the dialogue around the topic. Is it ever right to by stand, as opposed to always be an upstander? If one is a bystander, how do you know what could have happened if a different choice had been made? Hearing stories from this different perspective could perhaps add further enrichment to the already rich dialogue around this topic.

My last suggestion is perhaps more of a personal musing. As I have been exploring this project, I have also been studying with others from conflict and post-conflict nations. There are many similarities between Northern Ireland and other nations, and I think UP Standing has potential to have great impact outside of Northern Ireland, especially in other post-conflict nations. According to the questionnaire, the material has been shared in the USA, England, and the Republic of Ireland. In speaking to a friend from Serbia, she speaks of many similarities between Serbia and Northern Ireland and thinks the UP Standing materials could be useful there. This would require the need for translation into other languages and the insertion of translated subtitles into the film. I think this could be an interesting possibility to explore.

While there is always room for potential possibilities to work towards for improvement, there have not been many suggestions regarding improvement. The responses I received have been very positive. UP Standing is a great resource that has been enjoyed by those that have used it; the mentions of gratitude have also shown that it is greatly appreciated. With greater
distribution its use and impact could continue to gain momentum in the coming year. Potential additions of translation could spread its use outside the English-speaking world and additional stories of by standing and youth-focused stories could make it even more challenging to those viewing it. However, regardless of mentioned suggestion, *UP Standing* is a high quality film and the materials have already made a great impact.

**CONCLUSION**

While the *UP Standing* material was only been released in April 2013, it has already been used and heard by many. The stories told in the DVD and story booklet have had great impact to those that are hearing it. Rich dialogue has emerged from the discussions that follow the stories and listeners have felt compelled to share their own stories within this context. The material has had little resistance to its use and has been an excellent resource to be used in schools, youth clubs, churches or other contexts. While there is always room for suggestions, the vast majority of response to the *UP Standing* material has been incredibly positive and given with gratitude. The *UP Standing* material has certainly made great impact to those that have viewed it already, and has great potential to continue to impact many as it continues to be used in the future.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leah Judge works for an ecumenical faith-based organisation. She completed a Certificate in Conflict Transformation from St. Mary's University Texas in May 2014 and has a B.A. in Mass Communications from Black Hills State University. Originally from the U.S.A., she has been living in England for several years and is shortly moving to Northern Ireland with her family to live there permanently. Leah can be contacted via email jonandleahj@gmail.com
‘UP Standing - Stories of courage from Northern Ireland’ features diverse accounts from people who stood up to violence, discrimination or prejudice in Northern Ireland. It provides a window into often untold stories of courage that individuals have shown in the context of a divided and often violent society. This evaluation has been undertaken to assess the impact the resource has had on those educators, young people and individuals who have engaged with it in a range of contexts.

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