Advocacy and Leadership

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Advocacy in a nutshell

Advocacy is a political action by an individual or group. It aims to influence the decisions made by political, economic, and social organisations. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization does. These include media campaigns, public speaking and producing research. Lobbying (often by lobby groups) is a form of advocacy where a direct approach is made to decision-makers on an issue. Lobbying occurs frequently in modern politics and is carried out by many organisations, groups and individuals. For example, it is estimated there are 15,000 full-time lobbyists based in the USA’s capital city of Washington DC.

Whomever you wish to lobby, there are some basic tips for doing advocacy well.

Advocacy Cycle

Firstly, follow the Advocacy Cycle. Begin with knowing what you want to change and then follow the cycle from action to action. Once you have monitored and evaluated your progress the cycle begins again with the question of whether there is anything else you now wish to change.
How to do advocacy

- Define a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound) message of maximum five statements to explain what you are advocating for.
- Build your advocacy process under the umbrella of bigger processes – create links with bigger initiatives (for example, Oxfam’s campaigns, international movements, or local initiatives).
- Find supporters and testimonials from institutional representatives and celebrities – give your campaign a face (within or out of school).
- Make a strategic plan.
- Use the tools you have (documents, laws).
- Choose the right time to approach decision makers/politicians.
- Be on time to the appointment and bring materials (a copy of your statement, references and articles supporting your proposal).
- Monitor each step and review the strategic plan.
- Evaluate and document your progress and learning.

Strategic plan

1. Get organised: Is it a useful campaign on the selected issue? Are you the right people to propose a campaign? When should it start and finish? What is the cost of the campaign? What resources do you have? What resources do you have to find? How?
2. Analyse the problem: What are the issues that you want to transform? How can you move people from indignation to action? In order to solve the problem who should do what? Who can convince them to take action? When should decisions be taken?
3. Policy work: Carry out action research activity to gather evidence and thoughts on solutions and recommendations. Be credible! Keep focused on the objectives and verify your sources. Be target-oriented and show the impact on people’s lives through storytelling.
4. Define your strategy: What is the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound) objective you want to achieve? Who has the power to influence it? What are the external conditions (PEST analysis - Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors)?
5. Power analysis: Which institutions are defining the rules? Who will lose power changing the rules? Who will be empowered?
6. **Targets:** Who are my targets?
7. **Risk analysis:** What are the risks of your proposal? What can go wrong and how will you avoid this?
8. **Generating pressure:** You can do this through (a) persuasion (clear, logical arguments); (b) mobilisation (creating a win-win incentive); and / or (c), denunciation (creating moral pressure)
9. **Evaluate:** 1. *Have we raised awareness on our advocacy targets?* Are advocacy targets aware of the issue and its importance, and do they understand your messages and objectives? 2. *Have we achieved policy changes?* Have advocacy targets adapted their policies to reflect your lobbying and advocacy demands? 3. *Have we achieved practice changes?* Have advocacy targets actually changed their actions, and made decisions that reflect your lobbying and advocacy demands? 4. *Have we achieved any change in people’s lives?* Have these changes in policies and practices resulted in a positive impact on the lives of people affected by the issue?

**Contacting the Institutions**

- Analyse the environment of the institution (How is the institution organised? How can we get in touch with someone to bring up your proposal?)
- Get the contact details for the person (look for the right professional figure for addressing your communication and try to engage with that person directly)
- Build a network (among students, families, local organisations, online communities, etc.)
- Prepare your meeting (formal clear document, share tasks among the representatives, bring a plan B in case plan A is not approved)
• Show best practices on the same issue
• Show off your statement in every way (for example, include logo and key messages on email)
• Offer publicity for the institution and thank them for their support in advocating for your cause.

**Media**

• Create your news.
• Find the gap where information is needed.
• Create direct connections with media journalists.

**Some advocacy terms**

Terms taken from the South Voices on Climate Change Advocacy Toolkit¹.

**A Campaign**
A project or organised course of action designed to achieve a specific response from a particular audience.

**Activism**
Mobilising activity of supporters and/or beneficiaries in order to generate publicity and/or lobby and pressurise decision makers.

**Alliance Building**
Generating, mobilising and coordinating support from other groups and organisations for a particular solution to a problem or issue.

**Awareness Raising**
Increasing the knowledge of the public (or sections of the public) concerning the existence of a particular problem or issue.

**Lobbying**
Direct approaches, usually through face to face meetings, to decision makers or individuals with high influence in order to persuade them to take a particular course of action.

**Policy Work**
Investigating issues and problems, gathering evidence and identifying recommended solutions or courses of action.

**Public Campaigning**
Generating and mobilising support from the public (or segments of the public) for a particular solution to a problem or issue.

**Public Education**
Increasing the understanding of the public (or sections of the public) concerning the nature and/or causes of a particular problem or issue.
