

CLASS 1 HANDOUT - DEFINING GLOBAL EDUCATION

WHAT IS GLOBAL EDUCATION?

Global education is a term used internationally to describe a form of education which:

- enables people to understand *the links* between their own lives and those of people throughout the world
- increases understanding of the *economic, cultural, political and environmental influences* which shape our lives
- develops the *skills, attitudes and values* which enable people to work together to bring about change and take control of their own lives
- works towards achieving *a more just and sustainable world* in which power and resources are more equitably shared

Most teachers talk about the need for a global dimension in the curriculum and the ability of students to take a *global perspective* on contemporary events and issues. This is different from the term 'international' which refers to connections between countries, as in 'international relationships'.

The key organising concept is *interdependence* which highlights the complex web of interrelationships existing between people, places, issues and events in the world today. Exploration of *local-global* connections is at the heart of global education, since these dimensions are inextricably related and relevant to all subject areas.

Global education places particular emphasis on curriculum process as well as content and is accordingly characterised by approaches to teaching and learning which are both *experiential and participatory*. It draws on two long-standing traditions within education. The first is concerned with learner-centred education and the development of the individual, the second focuses on the role that education can play in helping create a more just and equitable society.

The emphasis in global education is therefore on *both changing self and changing society* for neither is possible without the other.

The notion of a global dimension in the curriculum sounds big because in a spatial sense it is, incorporating as it does the entire planet. It is important to note that the terms *global* are not interchangeable since *international* refers to relationships between countries while 'global' refers to the whole planet.

Key concepts essential to global education

1. *Interdependence* – Understanding how people, places, economies and environments are all inextricably interrelated, and that choices and events have repercussions on a global scale.
2. *Diversity* – Understanding and respecting differences and relating these to our common humanity.
3. *Sustainable development* – Understanding the need to maintain and improve the quality of life now without damaging the planet for future generations.

4. *Social justice* – Understanding the importance of social justice as an element in both sustainable development and the improved welfare of people.

5. *Human rights* – Knowing about human rights, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6. *Conflict resolution* – Understanding the nature of conflicts, their impact on development and why there is a need for their resolution and the promotion of harmony.

7. *Values and perceptions* – Developing a critical evaluation of representations of global issues and an appreciation of the effect these have on people's attitudes and values.

8. *Global citizenship* – Gaining the knowledge, skills and understanding of concepts and institutions necessary to become informed, active, responsible citizens.

(adapted from *Developing the Global Dimension in the School Curriculum*, DfES - <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-1409-2005>)

GLOBAL ISSUES

Common problems we share

Global issues are those that are found in various parts of the world so that they are experienced by many people in many different places. If one considers these issues first at a general level it is clear that in different ways we all face dilemmas relating to inequality (wealth and poverty), injustice (human rights), violence (peace and conflict), and the environment (biosphere) for example. Global issues are, of course, experienced locally and personally, but in diverse ways. They refer to major problems that we often share in common as part of the human condition.

Global issues are thus also local issues. In our own communities, and in our schools, on a daily basis, we are faced with questions relating to inequality, injustice, conflict and the environment. Global issues matter because they are common problems that require our attention. They require our attention because we will all be facing them at some time or another and because other people are sharing similar experiences in different contexts and trying to resolve them too.

Can you think of issues happening locally in your area that are also global issues?

Conflict in Syria or Afghanistan might not be the same as conflict in our local area or backyard and should not be considered so but, both are conflicts and similar questions can be asked about both. Thus in any conflict situation the parties concerned are likely to differ about: a) the nature of the problem; b) the extent of the problem; c) the origins and history of the problem; d) the resolution of the problem; e) they are also likely to both misunderstand and mistrust each other. These five commonalities can provide a valuable template for exploring any conflict situation.

Local-global connections

Because global issues always have a local face, this can remind us that they are often connected. Events in distant places impact on our local communities, and events locally and nationally also affect lives very distant from our own. When a major company closes, hundreds of people may face unemployment. A natural response is for people to appeal to management, politicians or the government to ameliorate this situation. However, the decision to close that company may have been made on the other side of the world in the offices of a giant transnational corporation over which local politicians and national governments have little control **{Can you think of any examples of how this might have happened in Kenya or elsewhere in Africa?}**.

When people living near the coast or in low lands are threatened by more frequent flooding they often turn to the community, county, nation etc for support. While local and national bodies tasked with such matters can help in a variety of ways, from better drainage schemes to improved flood defences, they cannot put an end to the problem. One of the effects of global warming is a slow but continuous rise in sea levels. Low-lying coastal areas, around the world, will increasingly be under threat because the burning of fossil fuels by rich countries over the last 200 years has contributed to global warming. **Can you think of ways those in poor countries are affected of may also contribute to the problem?**

The rise of interest in ethical shopping, in developing nations especially, has come about because people began to ask questions about the sourcing of items such as their coffee, jeans, trainers and food. Most people, it seems, have little interest in where such items come from; nevertheless, their production connects us inextricably to people and places far away. Who made them? Where do they live? Under what sort of conditions do they work? How much do they get paid? Are they appropriately rewarded for the work they have put into that product or do the profits benefit someone else? Those living in the rich world we probably contribute to global inequality and injustice every day, not just in an abstract way but in relation to particular people and families. Ethical shoppers face up to this by acknowledging the nature of such links, confronting such practices and challenging consumerist culture (Clark, 2006).

Impact on the future

Both the ‘goods’ and ‘bads’ of the society we live in arose from the countless decisions made or not made by our forebears. Our lives today are marked, for better or worse, by the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, by the colonial empires that once existed, the impact of two world wars, the nuclear arms race, and longstanding cultural prejudices. History may be in the past, but every day we live with its consequences.

Similarly all the choices, large and small, that we and others make today will influence the future and the lives of future generations. Rubbish dumped in the sea will not only foul beaches elsewhere but beaches in the future. Continuing to burn coal as a fuel will affect the lives of our great-grandchildren. **Are there any other happenings you can add to this list considering where you live?**

Taking more than our fair share of the world’s resources, whether land, water, oil or food, may contribute to resource wars in the future. And not helping young people understand about the world and how it is changing will leave them ill-equipped to deal with the issues that they will have to face in the future.

Importance of Global Education - Why adopt a global perspective?

A global perspective offers students and teachers:

- an approach which takes into account the whole of human society and the environments in which people live
- an emphasis on the future, the dynamic nature of human society, and each person's capacity to choose and shape preferred futures
- an opportunity to explore important themes such as change, interdependence, identity and diversity, rights and responsibilities, peace building, poverty and wealth, sustainability and global justice
- a focus on cooperative learning and action, and shared responsibility
- an emphasis on critical thinking and communication
- an opportunity to develop positive and responsible values and attitudes, important skills and an orientation to active participation.

(Source: *Global Perspectives: A framework for global education in Australian schools*-
www.globaleducation.edu.au/verve/_resources/GPS_web.pdf)

One can no longer make sense of everyday life unless this is set in the context of living in a global society. In particular the process of globalisation has changed the face of the planet. We live with a multiplicity of global linkages, far distant events and decisions continually impact nationally and locally. The current world order is deeply shaped by the forces of globalisation. There is greater integration, e.g. the European Union, African Union, transnational corporations, fashion, but also greater fragmentation, e.g. resurgence of nationalism, ethnic and religious conflicts etc.

The Earth Summits in 1992, 2002 and 2012 highlighted the crucial issues of environment and development which need to be resolved if we are to create a more just and ecologically *sustainable society*. These issues have global, national and local dimensions to them and education has a crucial role to play in creating awareness of such issues. Too often in the past educators have focused solely on the extent of the problems rather than the range of solutions. Global education is thus about educating in a spirit of hope and optimism which recognises the rights and responsibilities of both present and future generations. See '*Four challenges*' [<http://www.teaching4abetterworld.co.uk/docs/download16.pdf>].

The utilitarian and market driven ethos of society today is often at odds with the need to work towards a more just and sustainable world. Traditions such as global education, however, speak to the wider human condition, which is why it can inspire teachers and students taught alike. It is an essential ingredient in any formulation of effective education. It is time now to make more widely known the good practice that exists and new initiatives that are currently emerging.

The Global Dimension in the Classroom - <https://globaldimension.org.uk/classroom/>

There is a global dimension to every aspect of our lives. The air we breathe, the food we eat and the clothes we wear link us to people, environments and economies all over the world. The decisions we make on a daily basis have a global impact. The classroom is a great place to start exploring these issues.

Schools use a range of terms to describe activities intended to support global learning such as development education, global citizenship, global education, intercultural education, the global dimension and education for sustainable development. Our role as teachers is to inspire and mentor our students to become global learners. A global learner is: *Critical; Creative ;Self aware; Globally aware; Open-minded; Inquisitive; Reflective; Connected; Willing to engage with global challenges; Keen to take action for a better world.* Just imagine how vibrant a classroom with such learners can be! Let's all work toward creating such a classroom through this course.

Educational responses

A long-standing concern

How one might teach about global issues has been a concern of educators for several decades. Not surprisingly there is a wealth of expertise available and a plethora of materials for use in schools both locally and internationally. Can you think of materials and resources that are available locally which you can use to teach students about global issues?

SOURCES

**Hicks, D. *Teaching for a better world: Learning for sustainability.* Available at:
<http://www.teaching4abetterworld.co.uk/global.html>**

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