

# Roundtable discussion: Can global learning help prevent extremism?

Friday 13 July 2018, City Hall, London

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# Summary and recommendations



## 1. Objectives

The objectives of the discussion were to:

1. Raise the profile of global learning and its contribution to tackling extremism by:
  - Sharing research and learning from Think Global's Start the Change project: a baseline research study and a film on how the project is making a difference.
  - Share learning and experience from global learning network organisations' involvement in BSBT (Building a Stronger Britain Together) and other related projects.
2. To explore and plan how to
  - Scale up existing activities and projects
  - Better work together across the global learning network to tackle extremism.

## 2. Think Global's Start the Change project

Think Global has been working in collaboration with partners [Forum for Freedom in Education](#), Croatia, [Youth Center Of Dravinja Valley](#), Slovenia and [Centre For Creative Development "Danilo Dolci"](#), Italy on an EU funded Erasmus + project called [Start the Change](#). The focus of Start the Change is:

*educating and supporting young people and teachers to start up intercultural and peace-building projects aimed at preventing radicalization and developing sensitivity and mutual appreciation.*

Start the Change provides a platform for young people to have a voice in this wider debate and supports teachers to work with young people to create safe spaces in schools for discussion and nurture the active citizenship of students.

In the UK Think Global has worked with [HEC Global Learning](#) and [Durham County Council](#) to engage with 10 schools across London and North East England.

There are three main strands to the project:

- Research and training,
- Active citizenship and volunteering in school, and
- Celebration and achievement.

This roundtable discussion explored research we conducted in 2017 with the schools involved in the Start the Change project, and posed the question: *Can global learning help to prevent extremism?*

## 2.1 Research report: Shifting the Agenda on Extremism and Education

The research report, titled *Shifting the Agenda on Extremism and Education* was completed in July 2017 by Think Global research consultant Louise Wilson.



The research was carried out through:

- 10 workshops across 8 secondary schools, each of approximately 2 hours, with 7 to 10 students.
- Worksheets completed by students during the workshops and collected for data analysis.
- 17 interviews with teachers across the same 8 schools.
- An online survey of young people; with 316 respondents from across the same 8 schools
- A brief review of literature on key topics, including young people's understanding and attitudes towards radicalisation and extremism, UK government policy on extremism prevention in schools and youth social cohesion initiatives in the UK.

In order to ensure that young people are given the skills and tools to become critical thinkers and active citizens, the report recommends to:

*Support schools:*

- develop active citizenship initiatives to empower young people.
- explore ideas in collaboration with students.
- create safe spaces for young people to share their opinions.

*Support teachers:*

- help students think critically and foster resilience to prejudice.
- facilitate discussion of sensitive topics and extreme views.
- deal with issues proactively.
- better understand and engage with issues which arise as a result of social media.

A summary of the report can be found on the Think Global [website](#).

## 3. Discussion

Participants had been asked to reflect on the following, prior to attending the discussion:

*Organisations:*

- a. How is global learning unique in its approach to tackling extremism in all its forms?

- b. If funding wasn't an issue how would you make an impact in terms inspiring critical thinkers and active citizens?
- c. What would your call to action be for the global learning sector to take this forward?

*Young people:*

- a. What have been the benefits for you in taking part in a global learning project?
- b. If you had £1 million to create a space/opportunities for young people to have these types of conversations what would that vision look like? And how would you achieve it?

### The Long Table Etiquettes

1. This is a performance of a dinner party conversation
2. Anyone seated at the table is a guest performer
3. Anything is on the menu
4. Talk is the only course
5. No hostess will assist you
6. It is a democracy
7. To participate simply take an empty seat at the table
8. If the table is full you can request a seat
9. If you leave the table you can come back again and again
10. Feel free to write your comments on the tablecloth
11. There can be silence
12. There might be awkwardness
13. There could always be laughter
14. There is an end but no conclusion

Alia Alzougbi, Head of HEC Global Learning Centre facilitated the long table discussion. She reminded all participants of the importance of engaging in discourse which directly affects us: **'Nothing about me without me'**. This methodology was used to encourage all participants to engage and feel confident to share their opinions and views. Furthermore, it ensures that the conversation is not dominated by any one person or group.



The discussion had 3 main parts:

- Firstly, to better understand what we mean by 'global learning' and 'extremism',
- Secondly, how the two can come together and be of benefit to a school and
- Finally, what would participants recommend to policy makers.

### 3.1 Definitions

The participants were asked how they would define 'extremism' and 'global learning'. This table captures the discussion and notes made by the participants.

Extremism	Global learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Narrow minded perspective- fear of other perspectives</li> <li>→ When people who feel misunderstood and victimised, start doing bad things to get attention.</li> <li>→ Not respecting other people because they are different</li> <li>→ Doing bad things because other people don't believe what you do</li> <li>→ When people act on their views in a detrimental way</li> <li>→ Someone being forced to do something</li> <li>→ Doing harsh things to people</li> <li>→ Treating people badly</li> <li>→ Feeling threatened</li> <li>→ Extremism highlights the dangers of single stories</li> <li>→ Lack of exposure to many views- how can we move away from these views?</li> <li>→ Single story</li> <li>→ Extremism exploits vulnerable people</li> <li>→ Talking to the extremists (good/bad) about why they have certain views helps you put yourself into their shoes</li> <li>→ Views and actions that differ greatly from the societal/personal 'norms'</li> <li>→ When people take their views to another level</li> <li>→ Can it be positive? "We are all extremist in some ways – it is about realising that and being open to discussion and change"</li> <li>→ Radical thought can be positive as it shows coming out of comfort zone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Learning about people from people</li> <li>→ Thinking from another person's perspective</li> <li>→ Not to judge too quickly</li> <li>→ Start the change project</li> <li>→ Critical thinking important learning: don't disagree too quickly, listen to everyone's point of view, listen closely and don't argue</li> <li>→ Fake news: finding out what is fake or true</li> <li>→ Ask the right questions</li> <li>→ Events around the world</li> <li>→ The ladder of inference</li> <li>→ Learning about different events around the world that are important</li> <li>→ Different to geography</li> <li>→ Put yourself in other people's shoes</li> <li>→ Link to arts and music</li> <li>→ Looking at a global issue e.g. migration, climate change etc and relating it to your own life and community</li> <li>→ Different media, different perspectives, different faces of an issue</li> <li>→ Contemporary issues- living in the present</li> <li>→ Being in the world-wide context rather than the daily and familiar</li> <li>→ Global learning means listening and sharing experiences with each other</li> <li>→ Going to other countries to learn about their culture</li> <li>→ Learning from each other on a global scale</li> <li>→ Global learning is sharing and talking about shared and different experiences and learning from it</li> <li>→ The importance of how we are all connected, the issue in schools is that the curriculum is compartmentalised so these big topics</li> <li>→ Schools: looking at how the brain works requires a lot of depth in making decisions and it takes time to come to the best decision</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Questions and Responses Raised During the Long Table

#### How can London as a global city lead the way to counter violent extremism?

- London as a global city should empower all communities to engage, discuss and debate their shared histories, their present struggles and their hopes and dreams.
- We need to be leading in the arts and entertainment industry through films and documentaries, protest poems, storytelling, songs and music, which reflect and celebrate the resilience and diversity of our great city.
- Maybe we need to be the ones who change the lens through which we look at extremism. We need to get to the root causes of the issue- is it a question of poverty? Mental health? Lack of opportunities? Lack of critical thinking?
- In many ways we are leading the way, through our resilience and unwillingness to be divided or the scapegoating of one community.
- We need to give young people the tools to think critically and access the right information.

#### Do we wait too long before engaging young people in policy decisions?

- Do young people even get asked? And is it ever too late to be in the discussion on extremism?
- Are decision-makers ready to embrace creativity and 'radical' ideas?
- Are young people not allowed to believe what they want to believe?
- How can we create opportunities for young people to influence policy?
- At a school or community level, young people need to be given opportunities to create positive change, to have their voices heard, and to make smart choices.
- Schools need to ensure that young people are given better decision-making tools.

## 4. Next Steps

The long table methodology was used to ensure that all voices around the table were heard due to the diversity in age and experience. The young people were reminded that they were experts in their own lives and as this was a conversation about young people, it was vital to have them at the table.

Having young people engaged in the discussion changed the dynamics of the debate and added value to the outcomes. Furthermore, it ensured that the next steps were realistic and relevant to both students and teachers.

There were two key recommendations and some action points which arose from the discussion. For the more detailed discussion behind these points, please go to [Appendix 2](#):



#### 4.1. Creating Safe Spaces to Express Yourself

- Educators to use their position with students and within schools to create opportunities, through lessons or extra-curricular activities, to share their voice in creative and political ways.



- Training to be provided to educators and students to deal with controversial issues and encourage discussion and critical thinking.
- Collaborative work between youth groups, schools and local organisations to use arts, music and sports to promote broader understanding of issues faced by

young people and encourage collective social action.

#### 4.2. Fearless Policy Makers

- Create a Global Learning and Youth Action Group which would include schools, global learning organisations and subject-associated organisations to lobby government to engage a cross-section of young people in the decision-making process of relevant policies.
- Training provided to policy makers to better engage and understand the complex nature of issues faced by youth today.

### 5. Concluding Remarks

The roundtable discussion ended with Alia Alzougbi asking all participants to reflect on the discussions and to think about the role global learning can play to help prevent extremism. They were then asked to write down a pledge of what they intended to do within their professional capacity:

- To continue to teach classes around school about our 'Start the Change' project so they can spread the word to everyone!
- To help others (family and friends) learn to think more critically in situations
- To start more conversations about this topic and not be afraid for speaking out loud about it
- To encourage myself and others to gain a platform to share our voice, through either creative industries or political pathways.
- To promote more input from younger generations.
- To continue to teach children to think independently. Ensure that through body language and verbally I'm allowing children a safe space for discussion.
- To put myself in other people's shoes and think about my actions.
- Actively seek out ways to make the value of global learning more explicit in challenging extremism
- Have local councils collaborating with schools and feedback to City Hall/National/International level.
- Develop and promote global learning and critical thinking through my regional teacher networks (citizenship and SMSC)

- Raise the profile of children's voices: their words, stories, experiences to be used not my translation.

The roundtable discussions highlighted the link between preventing extremism and global learning. The skills gained through a global learning approach including critical thinking and active citizenship are key to ensure that young people have the capacity to analyse and understand controversial issues. It also empowers young people with the tools they need to create positive change in their locality and globally.

It is hoped that this roundtable summary and recommendations, alongside the research report: ***Shifting the Agenda on Extremism and Education*** will help policy makers within the education and development sectors to reimagine the best ways to help prevent extremism.

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# Appendix 1

## Attendees

Yvonne	Luce	Education Programme Manager	Global Education Derby
Gwanwyn	Mason	Policy Officer, Mayor's CVE Programme	MOPAC
Elettra	Pellanda	Education Project Officer	Positive Negatives
Rochelle	Robertson	Pastoral Lead	ELAM
		Year 12 Student	ELAM
		Year 12 Student	ELAM
Charis	Young	Researcher	UCL
Vaughn	Davies	Teacher	Virginia Primary School
		Year 5 Student	Virginia Primary School
		Year 5 Student	Virginia Primary School
		Year 5 Student	Virginia Primary School
Alia	Alzougbi	CEO	HEC Global Learning Centre
Manju	Patel	Associate	HEC Global Learning Centre
Richard	Hurst	Education Development Advisor – Sustainability Education	Durham County Council
Judy	Chaussalet	Head of Development	Think Global
Faaria	Ahmad	Programmes Manager	Think Global

## Appendix 2

### Discussion on Next Steps

#### ***Creating Safe Spaces to Express Yourself***

The young people and educators identified that there is a lack of time within school hours and safe spaces in local areas and online where young people can learn about global issues, develop their critical thinking and most importantly express themselves. It was further stated, that in schools and community spaces which lack diversity- creativity and critical thought can be stifled by a single-story narrative.

Several young people involved in the discussion felt that it is important to have dialogue with people who have extreme views. It was felt that only through discussion can we create a shift in people's mindsets. However, it was agreed that young people and teachers would need appropriate training to have challenging conversations.

With spaces for creative expression and sports, young people can meet diverse groups of people, create and share music, film, art, poems, competitions and social action projects which reflect their stories, shared histories and allows them to deliver critical and cultural interventions. Furthermore, it challenges the status quo and allows people to recognise the vulnerability and lack of rationality behind extremist views.

Therefore, the creation of more safe spaces would benefit both young people and educators to share ideas, thoughts and receive training. Global learning provides the key tools for debate, discussion and analytical reflections which are crucial to broaden minds. Schools, libraries, youth centres and even tech companies need to create opportunities and spaces for young people to raise issues they face, to talk through global and local issues, to harness their energy and aspirations, and to meet people from different walks of life.

#### ***Fearless Policy Makers***

The participants of the long table felt that there was not enough being done by policy makers to challenge draft legislation and policies. Furthermore, that instead of thinking outside the box and being creative in their ideas- policy makers were seen to adopt standard policies which lack relevance to young people today.

It was stated that policy makers should become braver and step out of their comfort zones, because there needs to be a shift in policy and a willingness to defy the norms. If we want to have policies which are relevant and understood, we need policies to be coproduced with those it is affecting: ie policy for young people must engage young people. Through this approach, there would be a deeper

understanding of the needs of young people and teachers, and highlight the need for a multi-pronged approach in finding solutions.

There needs to be multi-agency collaboration at government level, for example the Department for Health working with Department for Education when dealing with preventing extremism within schools. Another example would be the NHS working with schools through any rehabilitation of their students. The education sector needs to proactively engage young people in critical thinking and active citizenship, and mainstream and social media need to ensure that unbiased news is readily available. Finally, greater investment in young people who are disenfranchised, would ensure increased political activism, higher aspirations and a better understanding of their role as global citizens.