



Cultivating a global outlook for the global economy



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Introduction: the need for global skills

If the next generation of school leavers are to contribute to a rapidly evolving global economy, they will need a global outlook. James Smith, Chair of Shell from 2004 – 2011, states unequivocally:

“It is crucial for the future challenges we face, both as businesses and as a society, for young people’s education to equip them to think globally. We live in a global world, and an interdependent economy and environment. We need employees who can interact with people from different cultures, and can innovate to help us meet future challenges around, for example, environmental sustainability. The education system has a crucial role to play in this.”

As Smith highlights, it is the education system that must equip young people with this global outlook. Yet our education system at present only does so adequately at the fringes. Some of the most privileged young people have access to prestigious qualifications that recognise the vital role of learning about interdependence, sustainability, globalisation and the wider world. The majority of young people miss out on this global learning, with ominous consequences for their individual life-chances as well as for the UK economy.

A CBI survey of employers has found that employability skills are the most important factor considered when employers recruit. Four fifths of employers (82%) value these skills. However, the survey showed that amongst the poorest performing of the employability skills exhibited by school-leavers were international cultural awareness skills; just 1% of employers were satisfied with potential employees’ skills in this area.

Carl Gilleard, Chief Executive of the Association of Graduate Recruiters, has emphasised this point, saying that some companies complain about “unworldly” candidates “who can’t even find their way around Britain” let alone the rest of the world. This lack of worldliness leaves UK school-leavers at a serious disadvantage in the global workplace, and leaves the UK economy at risk of falling behind.

Beverly Salt, Vice President of AstraZeneca plc, sums up the situation as follows:

“To compete globally we need staff who are excellent in their chosen discipline, have a strong leadership ethic and capability, are comfortable working in a global environment, interacting with colleagues from across the globe and preferably being willing to work in different countries.”



If companies cannot find graduates in the UK with these characteristics, they will look elsewhere.

As the evidence in this report shows, learning about global issues whilst at school helps to give young people these characteristics and skills, ensuring that the current generation of school leavers are able to access the very best graduate careers.

The benefits of global learning are not limited to getting a job. This report also highlights that global learning is an important driver of high attainment. Some of the world's most prestigious qualifications put global learning at their core; and evidence is growing that when students learn about interdependence, sustainability, and the wider world, they are more engaged in the academic process and accomplish more in school. Case studies throughout this document highlight the value that a range of teachers and students put on global learning. The report summarises this evidence and proposes that exam specifications across all subjects and in all school settings focus in on the global learning that young people and our economy require.

Think Global defines global learning as education that puts learning in a global context, fostering:

- critical and creative thinking;
- self-awareness and open-mindedness towards difference;
- understanding of global issues and power relationships; and
- optimism and action for a better world.



Global learning in prestigious qualifications

I have used international/global issues to take four schools out of special measures, improving Key Stage 2 SATS scores along the way. [I have taken my] current school from special measures to good in one go with an emphasis on creativity and internationalism.

Headteacher, Primary

The specifications of many of the most prestigious qualifications available to UK students have facets of [global learning](#) at their core.

The International Baccalaureate

A prized outcome of the [International Baccalaureate's](#) educational programmes for all age groups is the development of “*internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.*”

Described in the attributes of the [IB learner profile](#), these core values focus on the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that students develop through the IB's broad-based interdisciplinary frameworks: collaboration, sustained inquiry, critical and creative thinking about complex issues of local and global significance, ethical reasoning, a strong sense of fairness and justice, care for others, and respect for multiple points of view.

The [IB Diploma Programme](#) offers a balanced curriculum that develops cultural understanding, multilingualism, and global engagement across all subjects. Experiential learning, critical reflection, a new pilot course in Global Politics, and new opportunities for extended research in world studies aim to “*educat[e] the whole person for a life of active, responsible citizenship.*”

A whole term topic on fair trade resulted in the most purposeful writing I'd ever witnessed as students penned a letter to the CEO of their favourite chocolate company... The very purpose of writing and communicating became apparent to pupils and contributed to improved writing scores in optional SATS.

Classroom teacher, Primary

Case study

Impington Village College, Cambridgeshire

Impington Village College offers the International Baccalaureate to all of its students. As Fiona Swanson, a teacher at Impington makes clear:

“The entire ethos of the IB is based on the belief that, globally, the way forward depends on a better understanding of the interrelationships of people, nations and cultures all over the world. This is embedded in all the curriculum areas with the expectation that students will be able to make the ethos their own. While this certainly encourages IB candidates to engage with the local community, it also offers an obvious opportunity to extend their understanding of community to the global forum.”

“Those of us who teach it enjoy the same excitement. We share the journey with our students, learning with them that our contribution is important in mapping the future of global relationships.”

Former students at Impington highlight the positive impact that this global ethos has had on their personal and career development.

“The global element of the IB provided me with confidence to have a real belief in myself; to go out into the world to make a worthy difference, in whatever capacity I could offer. The IB gave me the distinctive know-how, ability, and necessary tools to begin to be actively engaged in the fabulously diverse world of the 21st century.”

Robert Mann, former student, Impington Village College

“I chose the IB Diploma Programme because I wanted a global education. But I didn't yet know what that actually meant. I wanted an education that was portable and not limited to a single cultural tradition. What I found was a whole orientation: an active emphasis on drawing connections, on seeing the big picture, on taking responsibility. I didn't just learn about colonialism, the debt crisis, and biodiversity; I learned what they have to do with me, and what I can do about them. The IB gave me confidence to embrace the unknown.”

Hannah Siurua, former student, Impington Village College

Credit: International Baccalaureate



Focusing on real examples of poverty has led students to take the subject more seriously, and consequently led to them working harder. This has a positive impact on outcomes because motivation is a key to success.

Trainee teacher, 11-18

The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

The [Cambridge Pre-U Diploma](#), like other prestige qualifications, combines strong subject specialisation with a focus on “*the skills necessary to deal with the complex, connected and rapidly changing world in which students live, study and work.*” The diploma achieves this through having a compulsory core component, [Global Perspectives and Research](#).

The foundation of GPR, Global Perspectives, guarantees breadth through a seminar-based exploration of key topics including: ethical foreign policies; globalisation of economic activity; global trade; science and politics of climate change; biodiversity; endangered cultures; and integration and multiculturalism.

The second part of the course asks students to investigate a chosen topic in detail and submit a single piece of extended work in the form of a research report in the second year.

By completing the GPR course, students will have demonstrated skills of critical thinking, reflection and empathy with regard to key contemporary issues and debates.

The Global Perspectives component is also available at Cambridge AS Level and the full GPR course is available as a stand-alone certificate for students who are not completing the Cambridge Pre-U Diploma.

[University of Cambridge International Examinations](#) say “*universities tell us that Global Perspectives and Independent Research (GPR) is an excellent preparation for undergraduate study as it gives real evidence of independent, critical thinking.*” They find that the course enthuses students and helps to improve attainment, particularly in higher education.

Case study

Gerry Rafferty, Head of Upper School, St Louis School, Milan

Gerry Rafferty has recently made Cambridge IGCSE Global Perspectives a compulsory subject for students at the school.

"Global Perspectives offers an exciting range of topics, highly relevant to young people today. In addition, the kinds of activities and assessment methods required will prepare students very well for Sixth-Form, Higher Education and even beyond. The subject matter will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the rest of the school as our Year 10/11 pupils share their experiences and learning with the other pupils and staff. Cambridge IGCSE Global Perspectives fits into the philosophy of the well-rounded learner – something we aim to engender amongst our student population."

Credit: University of Cambridge International Examinations

Case study

Amanda Barker, Geography Teacher, Stowe School and AQA Senior Examiner

"The global context comes into all aspects of geography, not just human issues...I think [the global context] engages students because it's relevant and current. Global information does seem to enthuse them – they like to look at issues in this way."

"Students are not learning from textbooks, they are conducting independent research via the internet. This teaches them to go away and find out information and research what is happening right now. They can then call on this experience in the exam. The global context to geography does help to raise their attainment, particularly in terms of independent learning."

Comparison between the global knowledge of pupils in my school and in another in the same area revealed that those in my school who are exposed to global learning are more aware, more outgoing, more confident while answering global questions and are more aware of their rights and responsibilities. This is very evident in their overall performance and in general discussions and debates.

Director of School, 11-16

IGCSEs

In recent years several exam boards have developed prestigious International GCSEs (IGCSEs). A common feature of these qualifications is that they include a course offering that specifically relates to global learning. University of Cambridge International Examinations aims to develop students' "ability to think critically about a range of global issues" in its Cambridge IGCSE [Global Perspectives](#) course. Edexcel's [Global Citizenship](#) course "requires students to demonstrate an understanding of the global community and the impact of power and politics." The [AQA Level 1/2 Certificate](#) in Geography gives students the opportunity to become informed responsible global citizens "by looking at how and why the world is changing, globally...and the choices that exist in managing our world for the future".

A-level qualifications are starting to incorporate global learning

Global learning features prominently in several A-level qualifications, such as Edexcel's [AS and A2 Geography](#) qualifications:

"A major strand of the AS is hazards with climate change as our greatest environmental challenge: the uncertainties, the inequitable nature of the causes and how the impacts will be played out across the globe including its potential exacerbation of global problems of conflict, water security, famine, and poverty. It also looks at local and global solutions (and key players in managing these solutions) against a background of national and personal self-interest."

In Edexcel's A2 Geography qualification, study units include 'The Contested Planet' and an opportunity to independently pursue in-depth research into a global issue such as food insecurity.

Similarly, [AQA's A2 Geography](#) allows students to study topics including 'Ecosystems: change and challenge', 'World Cities', 'Contemporary Conflicts and Challenges' and 'Development and Globalisation'. AQA emphasises that "the global dimension is absolutely fundamental to this course."

A common theme amongst many of the most prestigious qualifications is that they emphasise the importance of global learning as a core component of young people's studies. Learning about global issues in a critical, reflective way helps young people to perform well in these qualifications, and prepares them effectively for university study and life in a 21st century society and economy.

Case study

Simon Oakes, Geography Teacher, Bancroft's School, Edexcel Principal Examiner and IB Chief Examiner

Simon teaches at Bancroft's School in Essex, as well as being principal examiner for geography, citizenship and law for Edexcel and chief examiner for geography for the International Baccalaureate. He holds a PhD in Human Geography.

“Teaching about global issues contributes to our students’ high academic performance. It builds their capabilities for university and the workplace. Part of what we see as core knowledge in geography is an understanding of how global systems, networks and processes impact on us and shape the world around us. If students can really grasp ‘the bigger picture’, I hope this will help them to succeed in life, and in the workplace.”

“When I am drawing a system diagram of global trade processes on the whiteboard, in some ways I am doing exactly the same job (and delivering an understanding of the same kind of core knowledge) as when I drew systematic diagrams of longshore drift on the blackboard twenty years ago. Globalisation - a word we never used then - is of course a far larger-scale system. And many people would, I am sure, agree that it’s ultimately just as valuable for the majority of students to leave our classrooms with a sound understanding of how globalisation works as, for example, knowing how a waterfall develops (though we would want to keep curriculum room for that too!).”

“My students at Bancroft’s are really interested in and engaged with quite a few global topics, particularly ‘glocalisation’, diaspora studies, fair trade and associated ethical issues. Even kids who profess to be uninterested in politics are surprised by how much they enjoy exploring the rise of China and the other BRIC economies, for example.”

“I can see my students going into the workplace aged 21 and really impressing an employer with their holistic understanding of globalisation and global risk management. Whether this employer is a business seeking to understand the challenges and opportunities for global investment, or an NGO seeking to respond directly to global challenges such as poverty and climate change, this knowledge of global systems and processes is very powerful.”



The benefits of global learning for young people

The value of global learning in prestigious qualifications is supported by evidence that highlights how learning about interdependence and sustainability can help young people to do well academically.

Educators across both primary and secondary schools who have incorporated global issues into their work express strong confidence that this stimulates improved academic attainment, as can be seen from the case studies throughout this document.

I think the method of thinking that Cambridge Global Perspectives promotes (i.e. analysing and thinking about situations on a number of different scales and levels) is applicable to countless aspects of life in general - whether it's a situation you have to deal with at school or at work, a career choice, something in your personal life, the list goes on and on!

Alex Mackay, rated first in the world for University of Cambridge International Examinations' Global Perspectives course in 2010

Credit: University of Cambridge International Examinations

Teachers' views

Think Global also sought the views of a group of 24 teachers, headteachers and other school staff through a qualitative research study. Participants were asked whether they agreed that helping young people to think critically and creatively about global issues such as climate change, poverty and sustainable development could improve their academic attainment. All 24 teachers agreed, with over half (14) strongly agreeing. The group also displayed consensus on the reasons for this link between global learning and academic attainment. All but one agreed that incorporating global issues such as climate change or poverty can increase pupils' overall interest in education (with 16 strongly agreeing). Over two-thirds of the group agreed that learning about these issues can improve a young person's behaviour in class.

Research evidence

These findings from the front line are backed up by inspection evidence and wider research. A [2009 report from Ofsted](#) finds that learning about sustainability “*captured the interest of children and young people because they could see its relevance to their own lives...the pupils reacted very positively to being able to work collaboratively, to conduct research and to take part in debates and discussion. In several instances, this led to more positive attitudes to learning in general, better behaviour and attendance, and to improved standards and achievement.*”

Ofsted found a clear link between global learning and improved teaching and learning more generally: “*Most of the headteachers found that, over the course of the survey, education for sustainability had been an important factor in improving teaching and learning more generally. This was confirmed through lesson observations in a range of subjects across the sample of schools visited.*”

“My knowledge from the IB was also quite unique because it had an international focus. This broad knowledge was not just important for my studies, but put me at a great advantage for my whole university experience.

It encouraged me to think about cultures, to think about other experiences, and therefore to become much more a part of the whole university community.”

Joe England, Dartford Grammar School, UK

Credit: International Baccalaureate

The report also vindicates the approach of the qualifications bodies in putting global learning at the core of their most prestigious qualifications: *“In the most successful schools, education for sustainability was an integral element of the curriculum and all pupils and staff contributed to improving the sustainability of their institution.”*

Global learning brings a wide range of benefits for young people. Findings from Ipsos MORI's 2008 [survey](#) of young people's attitudes to global learning suggest that those who have experienced global learning in school are:

- keen to understand more about the problems in the world;
- more likely than average to believe that what they do in their daily lives can affect those in other countries and that people like them have the ability to make a difference;
- more open to people of different backgrounds than those who have not experienced global learning in school, and
- more likely than average to say that they try to do things to make the world a better place.

The Global Student Forum (GSF) for sixth formers ([Baker, 2010](#)) found that learning more about global issues gives young people confidence to advocate for change. For example, following the conference, most students (79%) felt more confident about explaining to others the importance of education in eradicating poverty.

Because today's students are intensely aware of and interested in addressing the world's most challenging issues, they become more confident and enthusiastic learners when their studies are set in a global context.



Conclusion: all young people should have access to high quality global learning to promote social mobility and ensure the UK economy remains competitive

In the World Sociology Unit of AQA Sociology A2 our results are outstanding: usually 100% pass rate and extraordinary high number of A and B grades. In WJEC World Development our results are also excellent with 100% pass rate and 80% A and B grades.

Deputy/Assistant Head, 16-18

Global learning features prominently in prestigious qualifications, and young people find global issues inherently interesting. Yet these prestigious qualifications are largely offered to young people from advantaged backgrounds, either in private schools or in international schools. As a result, there is an unmet desire for global learning amongst pupils and teachers across schools in the UK.

A 2008 survey of young people's attitudes toward global learning conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Think Global (Ipsos MORI, 2008) found that most pupils (78%) believe schools should help pupils to understand what people can do to make the world a better place. However, only around 50% of students say they had experienced global learning in school during the previous school year.

An Ipsos MORI survey of teachers similarly found a large gap between the proportion of teachers who think schools should prepare pupils to deal with a fast-changing and globalised world (94%), and the proportion who believe the current schooling accomplished this goal (58%) (Ipsos MORI, 2009).

Parents of school-age children want schools to teach about global issues such as environmental sustainability (84% of parents) and international poverty (73%). Three-quarters want schools to help young people to think globally (71%) and be responsible global citizens (72%) (Hogg and Shah, 2011).

We must address this unmet need if we are to give all young people the life chances that the most privileged currently enjoy. If we do not, we risk locking out less privileged students from the very best universities and the very best jobs. This will hamper social mobility for many years to come. By contrast ensuring all young people learn to think globally will benefit them individually, strengthen the UK economy and build citizens' capacities to create a more just and sustainable world.



Recommendations

- **Qualifications bodies should incorporate elements of global learning into all exam specifications:** As the national curriculum becomes less prescriptive and greater numbers of schools move to academy status, teachers and head teachers will have greater freedom to design school curricula that help young people to think globally. Qualifications bodies can encourage this shift towards a globally focused curriculum by ensuring that exam specifications include questions on global issues throughout all subjects and at all levels.
- **Introducing prestigious qualifications such as the IB Diploma, Cambridge Pre-U or IGCSEs can help schools to ensure they are preparing their pupils to enter the global economy, whatever their backgrounds:** whilst the qualifications available to UK students vary in the degree to which they promote a global outlook, some of the most prestigious qualifications have proven benefits for young people by incorporating global learning as a core component. Pupils from poorer families will particularly benefit from an opportunity to study these prestigious qualifications.
- **Teachers need high quality training and support on global curriculum-making:** changes to the national curriculum allow teachers and head teachers much greater scope to develop school-level curricula that enable pupils to think globally. Teachers will need high quality training and support, both in initial teacher training and through continuing professional development to enable them to bring their subjects to life by making the most of the global elements that do exist in exam specifications.

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