The teaching of citizenship in schools in the UK is not new. David Kerr, in his report (1997) on the teaching of citizenship in English schools, finds that it has often concerned itself with national loyalties and with civics education. It has tended to be seen as more relevant for older students than younger ones. Furthermore, Kerr comments that it has usually tended to reflect the dominant ideology. In tune with the growing awareness of our increasingly global society, we find Tony Blair (1998) calling for the strengthening of ‘the concept of world citizenship in our schools and colleges’. This is laudable but the key question must be: what does this notion of world or global citizenship embrace?

A Curriculum for Global Citizenship

Oxfam believes that education is a key element in the elimination of poverty, distress and suffering and the creation of a more just and equitable world. Education for Global Citizenship can help achieve this. (Oxfam 1997 p.6)

This, in essence, is the justification for the curriculum framework for global citizenship which was drawn up in 1997 by Oxfam’s Development Education programme in close consultation with key educationalists, in the belief that all young people have an entitlement to an education underpinned by an active commitment to responsible global citizenship.

The great strength of the Global Citizenship (GC) Curriculum is that it does provide a working framework for significant attitudinal change. It is not a content-driven curriculum but rather one which seeks to promulgate values and attitudes which, we would argue, are appropriate for any context, North and South. The document was extensively disseminated as part of the process of public consultation on the review of the National Curriculum in England and Wales for 2000. It stimulated much discussion and interest particularly in relation to themes of citizenship and sustainable development, both of which emerged, and remain, particularly strongly in debates around both the content and the purpose of education.

Seminars were held in England to promote and discuss the GC curriculum document and such was the high level of interest generated by these seminars and the document itself, that Oxfam DE has produced a summary version to meet teacher demand and has launched a Global Citizen Link network of practitioners and others who wish to keep in touch with and contribute to global citizenship debates.

At the heart of a curriculum for global citizenship is a commitment to education predicated upon critical and respectful dialogue, relevant experiential learning, informed negotiation and decision taking and a sense that citizenship is a lived experience rather than a taught concept. Indeed, Oxfam considers that the key elements for responsible global citizenship should embrace:

**Skills of:**
- critical thinking
- ability to argue effectively
- ability to challenge injustice and inequalities
- cooperation and conflict resolution

**Knowledge and understanding of:**
- social justice and equity
- diversity
- sustainable development
- peace and conflict

**And the values and attitudes of:**
- sense of identity and self-esteem
- empathy
- commitment to social justice and equity
- value and respect for diversity
- concern for the environment and a commitment to sustainable development
- belief that people can make a difference

Certainly such thinking should not be seen as only holding relevance for addressing what could happen in schools; it surely has a wider, more ambitious vision than that. Indeed Oxfam sees a global citizen as someone who:

- *is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen*
- *respects and values diversity*
- *has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally*
- *is outraged by social injustice*
- *participates in and contributes to the community at a range of levels from the local to the global*
- *is willing to act to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place*
- *takes responsibility for their actions* (Oxfam 1997)
From policy to practice

It is, indeed, encouraging that the revised National Curriculum for England makes specific reference to global citizenship in geography and, throughout the revised Curriculum as a whole, there are many references to local-to-global issues, to international dimensions and to sustainable development, as well as other very important issues.

There are growing numbers of examples of how teachers are taking the Curriculum for Global Citizenship and making it work in their own particular contexts. For example, Oxfam DE England team, Sutton and Croydon LEAs and Local Agenda 21 officers have collaborated on four school-based projects where students have been exploring themes of global citizenship such as fair trade and sustainable water use.

Schools in Tower Hamlets in London are incorporating the curriculum for global citizenship into their Global Footprints work, a DFID and EU funded project being coordinated by the Humanities Education Centre. Just to cite a few of the many examples of interesting work being done by DECs, we can note that Derby Rainbow is developing some Early Years work, DEED is undertaking an innovative project with Bournemouth University, Manchester DEP is incorporating the Curriculum into some of work with PGCE students whilst NEAD is taking it as the basis of its ‘Just Business’ GCSE Business Studies project.

It is certainly encouraging that so many educationalists, both in the formal and the informal sectors in the UK and wider afield, are finding the thinking underlying the Curriculum for Global Citizenship both relevant and helpful.

The question of what education is for and what it should entail always remains; this is both healthy and challenging.

Removing barriers

When we, as practitioners, invite young people to be active global citizens, it may be the case that those young people will quickly come face to face with the realities of where power structures are located within their own locations and communities. In a recent article in the TES, Julia Bard asks:

What if children are powerless in their community? What will the citizenship curriculum teach them about being members of several communities based on locality, ethnicity, religion or shared interests? (TES Friday magazine 4.6.99 p.24)

The micro-political dynamics at play within any school community, as well as the views of teachers themselves, will shape the way citizenship is conveyed and experienced by young people. Certainly one might query how active citizenship will be interpreted within the structures of schools, which by nature are so often hierarchical and authoritarian. Indeed, there are many very real issues being raised. How, for example, should citizenship be assessed? Can a student fail citizenship? How will citizenship sit within the hierarchy of traditional subjects? For a global citizenship curriculum to become an entitlement for all pupils, the development of a supportive whole-school ethos must surely be essential. We would suggest that, whilst the content of the school curriculum is of vital importance, there are other factors determining the whole-school ethos which require consideration. These would include the nature and purpose of hierarchical structures within the school, the relationships between members of the school community, the sense of community the school enjoys and the nature of the participation of individuals within that community.

We would suggest that one of the challenging aspects of the current proposals for the teaching of citizenship in schools in England is the clear signal to look beyond the school and the classroom (QCA 1999). The proposals talk of active citizenship both inside the school and in the wider community. For Oxfam DE, the salient point must surely be how ‘community’ is interpreted and what values underpin this call for active citizenship. We would want to emphasise the critical element of active citizenship rather than the compliant and we would agree with Clough and Holden’s (1998) assertion that active citizenship is ‘to do with providing opportunities for debate, decision making and participation and in so doing, assisting action competence.’ (p.22)

The notion of citizenship, whether local or global, is predicated upon the assumption that structures are in place and are accessible so as to enable people to fulfil their rights and their responsibilities as citizens. It assumes a ‘belongingness’, yet there is no doubt that for far too many in our unequal world, the term remains problematic in terms of lived experience. We have only to look at the recent crisis in the Balkans to be reminded of how complex the issue of nationhood and citizenship is. Indeed, we do not even have to look beyond our own backyard for confirmation of the fact that people can live in a community yet not feel part of it. For example, what does the child excluded from school feel about that community? What does the refugee excluded from citizenship feel about the host community? For many young people, multiple identities, which bring with them inclusions as well as exclusions, are very much part of the experience of living in an increasingly interdependent world where few places remain untouched by the uneven and often differentiating effects of globalisation.

We would suggest that tensions can be discerned within the thinking of the QCA proposals for, on the one hand, they call for respecting and valuing diversity yet on the other hand, they call for an arguably homogenising concept of citizenship. The emphasis is on enabling pupils to ‘participate in society as active citizens of our democracy’ (QCA p.28) (authors’ emphasis). Oxfam’s Curriculum for Global Citizenship argues for an ethos which is neither homogenising nor essentialising and clearly recognises diversity and difference.

As Friedman (1994) asserts, ‘In any given community some people may indeed be excluded from the practice of full citizenship.’ (p.11) Friedman also argues that ‘children and future generations’ are the most likely groups to be excluded. Oxfam is only too aware of the stark disparities which exist both North and South and the gulfs between the included and the excluded. In its discussions of global citizenship Oxfam would want to draw on the experience of people, often
Now’ campaign highlights many of the issues facing countries in the South in implementing a basic entitlement of universal primary education (UPE). However, the campaign has also recognised that the right to UPE on its own is not enough; the quality of UPE is also of paramount importance.

The Oxfam DE team would argue that this should include the right to a curriculum for global citizenship for all. Some people might question how we can consider the right to a curriculum for GC when 125 million primary-school-age children (Watkins 1999) are not even able to attend school. However, in response we can cite many examples where the poor quality of education on offer and the lack of an appropriate curriculum result in children and parents opting out of formal education. The experience of South Africa under the apartheid system demonstrates that it is wrong to say that any curriculum is better than none. Thousands of black children and their families risked their lives to assert quite categorically that it is not! So the ‘Education Now’ campaign is not just calling for UPE but for quality universal primary education. This includes equal access, adequate training for teachers and resourcing for schools, and an appropriate and relevant curriculum, which has justice and equity at its heart.

Constructing new meanings of citizenship

At an international level, Agenda 21 and the UN Jomtien Conference of 1990 (which called for universal primary education by 2000) all started to look at an entitlement for education on a global scale and so could be said to have laid foundations for a curriculum for GC.

Clearly, the concept of global citizenship will have different meanings and resonance in different countries. In newly independent or devolved countries such as Hungary or Scotland, for example, the importance of re-affirming a notion of national citizenship may take precedence at this point in time. Of course, the very word ‘citizenship’ carries with it a certain amount of baggage, which is sometimes hard to leave behind. According to a number of recent surveys ‘citizenship’ is not a term that interests most school pupils, but this is probably because of its narrow interpretation. A recent survey of 400 PGCE students revealed that, for them, citizenship is a negative concept, conjuring up middle-class neighbourhood watch organisers from Tunbridge Wells. (TES 16.4.99) By its very nature ‘global’ citizenship cannot be reduced to a series of state-imposed legal and civic rights and duties; it opens the door to a more holistic and creative view.

The term ‘global’ offers an immediate challenge to a reductionist view of citizenship and hopefully opens up a space for a new construction of the term. The forces of globalisation will make it increasingly urgent for us all to play a part in ensuring that a notion of global citizenship begins to take hold. This will need to be backed up by rights and responsibilities, and eventually enshrined in international law. Some steps are already in place for this. The Pinochet case and the war crimes tribunal in the Hague and Arusha (however problematic) have given some encouragement to the notion of international justice. Plans are under way for an International Criminal Court to bring to justice all those responsible for gross violations against humanity.

Globalisation has meant that the decisions of some of the most powerful international bodies such the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation impact on most people’s lives. Yet most of these organisations have no democratic accountability or participation. There is no redress, for example, for banana farmers in the Caribbean over loss of their livelihoods as a result of rulings by the WTO. Although human and civil rights have been addressed by UN charters, as yet, many basic rights are not enshrined in international law.

Oxfam’s ‘Education Now’ campaign

Oxfam has been campaigning for the past year for one of these basic rights, the right to education. Staff and partners world-wide identified this as one of the preconditions for the alleviation and eventual eradication of poverty. The ‘Education Now’ campaign highlights many of the issues facing countries
It then goes on to say that ‘Majorities must respect, understand and tolerate (authors’ emphasis) minorities.’

So, whereas in Tanzania they are talking about friendship, in the UK we are only talking about tolerance. Furthermore, in the Tanzania Civics syllabus, gender equality is given high priority but no specific mention is made of this anywhere in the UK document.

What seems most frustrating for Tanzanian educationalists is the slow rate of change at the school level. At present Tanzania has to spend much more of its budget on debt service than on education. This pitifully small amount means that there are not the necessary resources to communicate with and train teachers or to produce relevant materials.

**A global movement for educational change**

In October 1999 a group of international schools linked to the International School of Geneva will be involving pupils, teachers and the wider community in developing a Convention on the Rights and Responsibilities of the Global Citizen. Using the definition of global citizenship in Oxfam’s curriculum document, they hope to go on to produce a document which will enable schools world-wide to ‘appraise their own levels of commitment towards encouraging a sense of Global Citizenship within their community.’ This is not to say that the document on the global citizenship curriculum which was produced by the Oxfam GB DE team is immediately transferable everywhere. This would obviously be the height of arrogance. But we believe that there are universal ideas and values which underpin it and which could be interpreted in different country contexts.

To respond to the forces of globalisation, educationalists must also start to organise. We have been on the defensive for too long, responding to changes initiated by governments. We need to form a movement which can lobby for change at the international as well as national and local levels. We need to share good practice and learn from each other how to make best use of scant resources. We should seek to create an international network and thence a movement of educational practitioners who are committed to the values and ideals of global citizenship.

Through teacher exchanges and educational links as well as through the work of many DECs, the beginnings of a fragile network are already in place. We are not sure exactly how this can be strengthened or developed although a start has been made by UNED UK Education Group through the Education 21 agenda which is lobbying for the implementation of Chapter 36 (Education) of Agenda 21. This is an open group for everyone who is interested in education for sustainability and there is an opportunity for DE and EE colleagues to work together. Representatives have taken part in lobbying at the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) and set up an international network for Education NGOs. This forum has potential to take forward such a movement but it is up to us all to play a part. So far, environmental educators have had much more success than development educators in promoting their agenda at an international level. We need to learn from them and work with them to establish a concept of global citizenship which incorporates both agendas.

Of course there will be some conflicts of interest but we need to work towards new understandings. The DEA ITE group has had some success in this, with input from EE as well as DE specialists, in devising the Charter for Active Global Citizenship.

‘Global citizenship’ cannot be a static term, although the values which underpin it must be unequivocal and universal. It could be argued that environmental education and development education, as well as other ‘adjectival educations’ are outdated terminologies now. If we work together towards education for sustainable development, we can bring our agendas together in an international movement for global citizenship.

With the explosion of global communications there has never been a better time to do this. It will certainly not be easy; there are many constraints and difficulties but surely we have nothing to lose and everything to gain?

To quote Oscar Wilde, ‘a map without utopia on it is not worth consulting.’ But let’s make it a world map.

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