

Making globalisation work for the world's poor

Launched in December 2000, the Department for International Development's white paper 'Making globalisation work for the world's poor' sets out the government's agenda for tackling world poverty. The following articles provide critiques of the paper.

David Lambert discusses terminology and reflects on the various definitions of 'globalisation' from a geographer's perspective.

Teaching about globalisation

I work with both novice and experienced geography teachers and see 'globalisation' as the latest in a long search for an acceptable way of expressing a particular aspect of the curriculum. In former times, for example, we spoke of understanding 'development' guided by classic economic models (eg Rostow's 'stages of growth'), which divided the world into developed and underdeveloped nations. Actually we still do, but at some time the term 'third world' was applied to development studies, partly because it articulated a certain measure of political awareness. Later still 'north and south' became more acceptable, though it seems attempts to change perception more radically by reference to the 'majority world' for example, were less successful.

The issue I am raising here is more subtle than merely to point out that favoured terminology occasionally changes. The choice of such terminology is significant, for it represents to a degree how we understand the world through, in these cases, how the world is 'scaled'.

Geography teachers are well aware that their curriculum selections must engage pupils with material at a range of scales, from the local to the global, but many are also aware that such scale divisions are not merely the 'given' way of dividing up the world, but actively shape how we see the world. Whether the latest round of redundancies announced by Corus, the Netherlands-based owner of most of the British steel industry, is studied in the context of *global* manufacturing (the scale of big business) or in terms of the likely impact of closing the Llanwern plant on the *local* economy (the scale of people's lives), governs to a significant extent the content of the lessons. As has been observed by several contemporary geographers in the academic study of geography, whether in the university or at school level, there are some scales that are relatively ignored in favour of others that then take precedence in our thinking. At present it appears that the global is being promoted, possibly at the expense of what is increasingly referred to as the scale of the body which allows for investigation of real lived lives, for example, consumer choices, diversity and local affinities and resistances.

But what is 'global'?

The term 'globalisation' was entirely unknown before the mid-1970s. The impact of the NASA satellite image 'EarthRise' was probably influential in establishing a new

form of consciousness of the 'borderless' free-floating globe in space. But according to David Harvey (2000), American Express may have been responsible for establishing the idea through its promotion of the global reach of its Card. Harvey continues:

'The term then spread like wildfire in the financial and business press, mainly as legitimisation for the deregulated financial markets. It then helped make the diminution in state powers to regulate capital flows seem inevitable... And by the mid 1980s it helped create a heady atmosphere of entrepreneurial optimism around the theme of liberation of markets from state control... and thereby became part of that package of concepts that distinguished between then and now in terms of political possibilities.' (ibid p. 13).

'Globalisation' is therefore a term, according to Harvey, adopted and promoted by international capital. There is nothing wrong with that, in my view, so long as this is freely acknowledged. Educationally, it is a problem when difficulties with the term go unacknowledged, when the term itself is allowed to exist as a 'fact'. There is a sense in which the current G8 discourse, and indeed the tone of the British Government's recent DFID White Paper 'Making Globalisation Work for the World's Poor', is complacent about this – one reason, maybe, that world leaders often seem so perplexed by the level of anger exhibited in the anti-capitalist/globalisation protests. For the British government to suggest that globalisation can somehow be 'managed' or tinkered with *in the interests of the world poor* flies in the face of history.

Two cheers for the White Paper

Because capitalism dictates that wealth accumulates in just a few hands, it is entirely predictable that, since the liberalisation of world trade and finance, inequalities have increased. According to the *Forbes* magazine (9 July 2001), there are now 538 billionaires in the world with a combined wealth of \$1.73 trillion, which is more than the GDP of France. Though I applaud the White Paper in identifying poverty reduction as a moral issue, the apparent rejection of 'free market fundamentalism' and the unequivocal acceptance that the benefits of globalisation have been unevenly spread, *there is nonetheless a reluctance to see 'globalisation' itself as a political construct*. There is a

'TINA' (there is no alternative) attitude to globalisation, seeing it as an inevitable event/process/new epoch/context, with inevitable results that somehow can be harnessed to have essentially benign impact. This, *from an educational point of view, surely needs to be challenged.*

The White Paper fails to acknowledge the motives and the power behind the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the General Agreement on Trade and Services (Gats), and whose interests are served by global 'liberalisation' of trade. As the journalist Nick Cohen asserted, '*Europe, Japan and America want Gats because it will open the Third World to their conglomerates*' (Cohen 2001).

What is 'globalisation'? It depends on whom you ask (what sort of authority do they have?) and what their perspective is (where they are 'coming from?'). Always in these kinds of situations, a good question to ask is 'in whose interest'? Thus, whose interests does 'globalisation talk' serve? And in relation to the White Paper, in whose interest is it that the UK government promotes 'effective governments and efficient markets', for example, or 'open' trade across the world?

Education and globalisation

There is certainly acceptance in the White Paper that the globe – its environments and its populations – are 'interrelated'. 'Twas ever thus of course! What I would like to see, from my position as a geography educationist, is an invitation to examine the *nature* of the links and how they 'play'. Economic, political and social processes do not operate over space as if space were just a neutral 'stage'. Space, and scale, are social, political and economic constructions and as such are dynamic, changing, unstable and open to challenge.

Thus, David Harvey denies that there can be a choice between 'particularity' or 'universality' in our thinking (Harvey 2000: 16). That is to say, we cannot engage in 'globalisation talk' without consideration of other scales including that of individual people ('body talk'). It is possibly the lack of such a '**relational perspective**' that in the end explains my problem with the White Paper. The old slogan 'think globally act locally' (or was it 'think locally act globally'?) is familiar enough though hugely challenging. It is as if too much over-enthusiastic 'globalisation talk' is designed to obscure the relational ethic that must underpin development and environmental education. As Machon and Walkington have recently observed:

'This returns us to the theme of all personal and private actions having social or public consequences. Geography's distinctive spatial perspective is able to develop a realisation that local (or private) actions result in global (universal) or geographically dispersed consequences. This notion is central to the themes of globalisation and interdependence, linking citizenship and geography at secondary level' (Machon and Walkington 2000: 185).

The challenge for educationists, and in particular

geography teachers, is to find strategies to bring the complexity that interdependence implies into the classroom. Globalisation and all its effects are not then meekly accepted as inevitable, and neither is the pupil simply left with a disempowering cynicism or ungrounded frustration about the unfairness of it all. Some political, economic and social theory will help thinking and reflection, and geography can help bring ideas and information in and out of focus, in specific places and across space. As Machon and Walkington also argued:

'We have noted that central to the notion of being a reflective citizen [sometimes referred to as 'deep citizenship' in contrast to the "more passive, shallow or narrowly liberal citizenship" (p 184)] is the idea that young people must have an understanding of how the world works. In particular we would argue that this understanding of geographical processes, simultaneously economic, social, environmental, physical and political, is fundamental... for pupils to begin to develop ... a sense of their role as global citizens ... because of the subject's sophisticated sense of scale' (ibid: p185, my emphasis).

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Isobel Allen and Angela Grunsell, both from Oxfam, argue that any government commitment to reducing global poverty must also be supported by a real commitment to global citizenship education.

'Someone who doesn't own a car can hardly be expected to catch a bus to the bottle bank. Discuss.' (Alan Woods, 2001)

If globalisation is to work for the world's poor, social, political and economic structures must ensure equity, justice and equality of opportunity for all to participate in, and enjoy the spoils of, this brave new world. International agreements must enshrine such structures. Governments must demand such structures. People living in democracies must vote for politicians who support such structures, or persuade politicians to support such structures. People must not only understand but also be willing and capable of action in support of such structures. Education is pivotal in this process.

There is a fractured discourse in education, best summed up by Kemmis' definition of opposing 'views of education': 'job slots' versus 'members of society' (Kemmis 1983), which has constrained attempts to put skills, knowledge and attitudes for active participation in our global society at the heart of education. The first step is an inclusive debate about which skills, knowledge and attitudes we are concerned with here, and the realisation that reason, as well as compassion, dictates that poverty in our global society is as unacceptable as racism or slavery.

One starting point for educators concerned with developing pupils' global understanding is to use existing frameworks for whole school approaches to incorporating a global dimension into the curriculum as a basis for discussion and debate. In this way, teachers and young people (whether already familiar with development education or not) can begin to develop, critique and plan their own maps of the global dimension, which have a coherence and language which is theirs. There are several concept frameworks available: DfES's global dimension document; Oxfam's Curriculum for Global Citizenship; Teaching and Learning Scotland's global dimension document, for example, each covering similar ranges of knowledge and skills but with distinctive differences of emphasis, structure and presentation.

The process begins engagement with what this dimension contributes to and in education. It can begin to fulfil the need, in the words of the Development Education Commission, *'to move away from using the education system to manufacture pre-determined attitudes. The process has to be more dynamic and more inclusive. Young people need skills to respond to situations as they arise in their lifetime. Such situations are tending to grow in complexity and scale as we experience increasingly global economic, social and political systems; as we understand more of the global nature of environmental systems'* (Regan, Sinclair 1999).

Here we can start to build together an understanding of the

issues, knowledge and skills that make up both the local and global dimensions of all our lives. These are issues that reach all the way from bullying in the school playground to national and international war, from racist taunts in the playground to ethnic cleansing, from putting your McDonalds litter in the bin to being in a position to challenge McDonalds' business practices. We all have to engage with this territory of everyday issues, which are global.

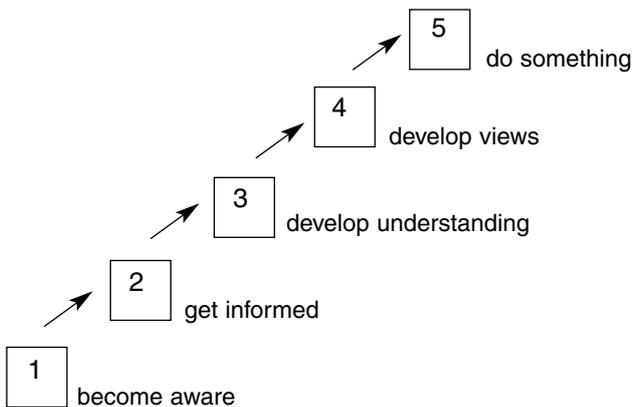
If schooling is about preparing young people for adult life, then we have to engage with the kind of life they will face: life in a globalised world. The new curricula of England, Scotland and Wales all make explicit national desires for young people, concerned with their ability to participate actively and constructively in their own communities and society. For example, the introduction to Learning and Teaching Scotland's 'Education for Citizenship in Scotland' states:

'...young people's education in school and pre-school settings has a key role to play in fostering a modern, democratic society whose members have clear senses of identity and belonging, feel empowered to participate effectively in their communities and recognise their roles and responsibilities as global citizens' (LTS 2000).

Theoretically we have government commitment (endorsement of the importance of the global dimension) from DfES and DFID, which offers openings not only to acquire the skills for life in a global society, but also to be able to make a difference in it. This jars somewhat with the continuing political rhetoric about educating young people in skills for economic competitiveness: the achievement discourse, the basic skills emphasis. The 'members of society' view is only weakly and marginally represented in aspects of schooling which 'count'. Tony Blair continues to talk about renewing democracy, putting a premium on fairness, and the global social challenges facing us, but he does not make these things the aims of schooling. Schooling he speaks of in management terms, referring to competition and productivity (Blair 2001). These two views of the purpose and scope of education should not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, being able to actively participate in a global society and being able to make one's way economically within it are two halves of one whole. The challenge is how to marry the requirements of a subject-centered curriculum with evolving whole school purposes and processes in ways closer to meeting the real needs of tomorrow's adults. Despite DFID and DfES's endorsement, these concerns about skills for participation in society are not addressed in the new draft Standards for Qualified Teacher Status (England 2001) nor as yet in inspection ethos and frameworks. It will be interesting to see whether the new QTS Standards framework in Wales, which should reflect the Assembly's prioritisation of Education for Sustainable Development, provides a different model in this respect.

DFID's globalisation White Paper argues that for globalisation to benefit the world's poor, public opinion must

be formed and mobilised to demand policies that drive governments to meet international development targets. Oxfam's analysis of globalisation *'points to a critical gap in the accountability and democracy in the governance of international institutions and transnational corporations and the impact this has on poverty and inequality in the world. This is a world where 70% of world trade is controlled by 500 companies, many of which boast revenues that far surpass the majority of poor nations'* (Oxfam 2001). Poverty leads to conflict and unrest, to unsustainable environmental practices, to a downward spiral in terms of education and opportunity, to marginalisation and to increased poverty. Only through education can we start to bring about the huge mind-shift necessary to make poverty rationally and morally unacceptable to people across the globe. We believe that education for global citizenship can enable young people to take the first steps to understanding this, and then having the capacity to move from understanding to action. At present, most people in the UK experience this new world through the globalisation of consumption – from food to



fashion – by international business. Desires are shaped, colonised and made uniform. When you 'just do it' (Nike) or 'eat/sleep/drink' (Coca Cola) you may feel you belong to a worldwide community of some variety. Young people are highly exposed to this. At the same time – further compromising their opportunities to build an identity for themselves – opportunities for local forms of belonging, of finding 'unbranded' space, are disappearing:

'Corporate obsession with brand identity is waging a war on public and individual space: on public institutions such as schools, on youthful identities, on the concept of nationality and on the possibilities for unmarketed space' (Klein 2000).

These attempts to brand-homogenise young people, forcing global consumer identities on them, are growing in ferocity and reach. That so many young people are switched off from political involvement isn't surprising in this climate, nor are the expressions of powerlessness and dislocation evident in some young people's anti-social behaviour.

But, these are the challenges that political, economic and

cultural globalisation offer development educators. That experiences of distance and difference, of time and place, are in flux; that all aspects of our public lives as citizens and our private sense of ourselves are now subject to global systems and processes; this is the reality in which we live and in which we educate children.

Globalisation and new communication technologies simultaneously deconstruct distance and difference. People can and do make instant and personal links across huge geographical and cultural distances, making distant others 'real'. The possibilities of this new era in terms of organisations and people joining forces is evident, for example in the current moves of NGOs to partner and campaign internationally. Globalisation offers us both exploitation and injustice, but new technologies also offer opportunities for direct contact which could begin to blow the whole thing apart.

'A different agenda has taken hold, one that embraces globalisation but seeks to wrest it from the grasp of the multinationals' (Klein 2000). Naomi Klein's optimism here is not unfounded, and education for global citizenship is vital to build a movement of people committed to just, equitable and sustainable development, and willing and able to act to make globalisation work for the poor.

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