

# Assessing the needs for global and development education in South East London

**Rosemin Najmundin** reports on her research findings, which suggest that links between local and global are still often missing.

## Introduction

This feasibility study fits inside a larger study funded by DFID to locate appropriate GE resource centres around the UK. It is a good example of partnership between an LEA, Croydon; an NGO, Worldaware; and Local Agenda 21 – all wanting to work with the local diverse communities. It is hoped that this research can highlight good practice and identify ways to build on existing strategy.

Project aims were to:

1. Identify good practice in GE in schools and/ or communities in SE London.
2. Evaluate the need to promote GE within SE London.
3. Assess what are the best or most effective strategies to develop and expand existing school, community, LEA and NGO activities.
4. Plan two major events and a newsletter to inform schools about GE issues.
5. Write an end of project report making clear recommendations to enable a bid to be made to DFID to improve and build upon the GE work happening in SE London.
6. Identify models of working in GE with few overheads and large amounts of participation from schools and communities.

## Global education

The Citizenship curriculum for 2002 key stage 3 promotes a global dimension to citizenship but there is no official demand from education authorities for teachers to incorporate GE into their work. According to the DEA, GE aims to raise awareness and understanding of how the global affects the local. GE:

- explores the links between people living in the ‘developed’ countries of the North with those of the ‘developing’ South, enabling people to understand the links between their own lives and those of people throughout the world.
- increases understanding of the economic, social, political and environmental forces which shape our lives.
- develops the skills, attitudes and values which enable people to work together to take action to bring about change and take control of their own lives.
- works towards achieving a more just and a more sustainable world in which power and resources are more equitably shared.

GE uses active approaches (e.g. simulation games, role-play) to develop students’ ability to question and think critically. The emphasis is on helping students to understand the challenges affecting people in other countries, and how the students’ own actions might exacerbate these.

## Methodology

The preliminary research was conducted with small focus groups of teachers, advisers and communities. Existing facilities and quality of provision were assessed, omissions noted and relevant reports or research located. The methodology was participative with face-to-face discussions and limited paperwork, allowing equal input by those who are not confident with text. Questionnaires were used to get quantitative, statistical, information and open-ended questions were used in questionnaires and interviews to gather qualitative information and examples of practice. Six London boroughs: Bromley; Croydon; Lambeth; Lewisham; Merton and Sutton were involved in the research. 100 named individuals were contacted in schools, some of which were known to be committed to GE and others which were selected randomly. To assess how the south east of London fits into the overall picture, all London boroughs were requested to fill-in questionnaires and /or respond to a telephone interview. 30 black groups were also contacted. Information was also gathered by observing or participating in events with a GE element, eg. a major conference on Citizenship in Lewisham. As part of the research a conference called ‘Bringing the World into the Classroom’ was organised in collaboration with the Horniman Museum to share good practice and involve participants more deeply in the research.

## Summary of the main findings

Initial findings

Outcomes from a small number of educationalists involved in the preliminary stages of the research:

- We need a concrete, yet simple definition of GE.
- Environmental education appears to be better understood and valued than GE.
- London boroughs appear to focus predominantly on one or two issues, eg. Croydon works on the environment due to a large LA21 staff, and refugees due to the Home Office being located there. Lewisham concentrates on Citizenship using local examples. The link between local and global appears to be missing.
- There have been many changes with LEAs and how they are financed and run. In Croydon over 95% of funds now go directly to schools. The role of advisers has decreased in many London boroughs and they have to run events closely linked to their subject area, in order to sustain their post, so areas such as GE are not addressed.
- 10 out of 40 parents attending a meeting about assisting teachers stated that they were afraid to enter or visit their

child's school. Although not a consistent finding, it is necessary to think about the implication this raises in educational work with parents.

### Quantitative responses

- 4 times as many questionnaires were returned from primary schools as from secondary, however there was no real difference between their responses
- 25% mentioned the word 'environment' as an example of GE work
- Only 12% mentioned Citizenship and only 2 mentioned global citizenship as important to GE. 70% mentioned learning about others as important. 40% of the primary schools mentioned projects linked to other countries, often where their pupils were from.
- Diversity in SE London was mentioned in over 80% of the returned questionnaires as being an important reason or motivating factor for GE.
- Issues which link easily to the National Curriculum were the easiest to implement, with 25% of teachers stating this as a reason why they incorporate GE into their work.
- Over 50% of teachers and 60% of advisers who responded, apologised for not filling in the questionnaire. They stated either that they did not know much about GE but were keen to attend In-service training and learn more, or that limited time prevented them from attending an Inset focusing on GE.

### Qualitative responses

- The fact that GE is NOT statutory was mentioned in all discussions.
- Everyone who filled in the questionnaire referred to the importance of GE in their work. Those who stated that they did not do much on GE still felt the issue to be important and were interested in learning more.
- The interpretation of what GE means varied tremendously, but every participant in the research stressed the importance of including a range of issues focusing on aspects of GE.
- Responses indicated more work in GE in the primary sector than in secondary, but the quality and content of the work could not be assessed in this research method.
- Questionnaires received from the secondary sector were normally from Humanities staff, followed by EMAS (the service that supports ethnic minorities in schools). Responses from the primary sector included headteachers and a wide range of subject coordinators, including science, RE and literacy.
- Educationalists working in areas where a diverse range of people lived, or in multicultural schools said this was pertinent for including GE.
- Time was stated as the largest constraint against doing more issue-based work
- LEA advisers and consultants mentioned their changing roles and the roles of LEAs citing a need to focus on assessment or subject specific skills such as literacy and numeracy, rather than issue-based training such as GE.
- Many examples of GE work were mentioned, but this was the poorest section in the questionnaire. No copies of pupil work were received. However wonderful work is done by teachers and Heads were happy to talk about successful strategies – whether whole school approaches focussing on Creativity or topic-based work on a particular country.

### Conclusion

Aspects of GE were readily identified in schools and in various areas of the councils' work, however the focus was

often local or environmental and there is a need for global links to be developed. Respondents were not always aware of the relevance of their work in addressing GE. There are schools who still portray Africa as a rural village, rather than a continent made of very different countries and people. There is little discussion of the history, but a focus on poverty and people doing little more than fetching water and deforesting their land for cooking fuel! Such stereotypes do more harm than good and better methodologies and ready-to-use exemplars (which are plentiful) need to be provided.

An important outcome of the project was that a new centre did not need to be established, as GE can be embedded into work already happening in the boroughs. Otherwise organisations compete for funds and resources, which limits the quality and value-for-money of the work. Many of the schools participating in the research do not use email on a daily basis, so a virtual centre would have limited impact. Those who use the Internet requested one easy to find website focusing on GE, with ideas and lesson plans and with clear links to all the organisations involved in GE.

Although many LEA advisers and consultants say they have to focus on subject specific skills and assessment rather than issues such as GE, this differed significantly for advisers supporting second language speakers, working with refugee children or mentoring black children, who considered it essential to incorporate GE into all their work. There were a large number of black teachers present at GE-related Insets and conferences which the researcher attended. 50% of the black teachers at the 'Bringing the World into the Classroom' conference commented that they were often targeted by their school as the appropriate person to attend such events. It was felt that such stereotypes need to be addressed and all the participants at the conference mentioned the benefit and richness of having representation from different people irrespective of colour. Ways to support black staff may be needed.

During the six months of this research it became apparent that, no matter how busy teachers are, they are keen to have visitors into their classrooms to help deliver good quality GE. I had on average one call a day asking advice on a session, or for ideas on a particular theme or country. The personal touch is very important and training about GE for people who are meeting and working with teachers seems to be an efficient way of addressing this need. We need to constantly remind and provide support so that the GE agenda is kept alive, inspired and active.

**Rosemin Najmudin** taught science and mathematics for 14 years, incorporating DE into her work. As a consultant, she now promotes the work of black and ethnic minority organisations/ people.  
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