

# Global learning ~ leadership of learning group

Global change is dynamic and the underlying conceptual and moral issues are often complex. Awareness of the economic, social and political interdependence that affects all aspects of our lives continues to grow. The global nature of our environment is generating new understandings and concerns ... such as those relating to climate change. The future holds many challenges for young people.

*"We cannot address today's challenges with yesterday's perspectives. We need new visions of what is possible. We need new models to learn how to learn at multiple levels of scale, from the personal to the global. Increasing our capacity to learn [individually and collectively] is taking on a special urgency if we see ourselves caught, as I believe we are, in a race between learning and the possibility of self-destruction."*

Learning for a small planet: a research agenda ~ Etienne Wenger

## Tide~ Leadership of learning ~ think-group

A group of headteachers and senior managers [see list on back page] met to share ideas about how to bring these concerns together in the context of current school priorities. They also reviewed this in the context of challenges such as those generated by Every Child Matters, current curriculum reviews, citizenship, sustainable schools, global dimensions, entrepreneurship, enterprise, the Race Relations Amendment Act.

## The context

Young people are growing up in an increasingly globalised and rapidly changing society. This will affect all aspects of their future lives, socially, economically, environmentally and politically. This poses a major challenge for teachers.

This is the context for a wide range of educational challenges for schools. They relate to different aspects of curriculum, the experience of the school as a community and its wider partnerships locally and internationally.

## The agenda is big

"It is important that we deal with this." That we recognise that it is "earth shatteringly important" but little will be gained by simply making people feel guilty about not addressing it. There is concern about how we present the case.

There needs to be a process that is inclusive and open ended, that asks some big questions and provides the opportunity to talk about them.

To do this there is a need for many things including a more coherent framework and clearer processes for joined-up planning [for example between different curriculum areas]. Our discussions also highlighted the considerable amount of work already going on that could be built on.

## Challenge for Leadership but ...

Research of school leaders [such as that by The Hay Group] suggests that, compared to leaders in other fields, leaders in schools tend to be driven by high levels of personal value and passionate commitment.

It was felt that the majority of headteachers, given the opportunity to clarify the value of global learning, would be interested and recognise its potential to contribute to other goals not least those relating to strategies for learning and Every Child Matters.

It was however noted that concerns about competitiveness and changes in the world economic role of China and India, for example, also influence the tone of the agenda. It is proposed that work is needed so that we can see the agenda holistically with moral, technical, economic, geo-political dimensions all contributing to the learning opportunities.

There was discussion about the need for frameworks, toolkits and clear possibilities about work that is achievable but also a strong feeling that what is not needed is "a manual of how to do it" or a set of guidelines.

There is already a danger of responding to this global agenda by "being very busy" with many projects, at the expense of taking time out to reflect what would be most effective to do. Teacher space for thinking, our own learning and clarifying purpose and coherent planning were seen to be key.

This need became central to the group's longer-term plans and a proposal for experimental school based stimulus workshops to enable staff teams to engage, as a group, with such thinking.

## Learner needs and motivation

Global learning is at the core of responding to contemporary events and education visions of the 21st century. These visions also value:

- "student voice" and participation;
- a culture of a learners' curriculum;
- the idea that the next generation will "make the difference";
- learners existing interest, motivation and concern about the future.

There was also discussion about the specific needs of learners, the potential for them to have more of a lead role in global related initiatives and that how much more of this agenda could be driven by student ideas, concerns ... and motivation to understand.

There is a potential model focusing on:

- curriculum design
- moral leadership
- student voice ... and "talking the ideas"
- student responsibility for learning
- quality in study support
- frameworks of enquiry
- student global learning questions

If we are to build on this core potential we need to **"measure the things we value rather than value things we measure."**

The QCA, in its proposals for the secondary curriculum review, has identified the global dimension as a curriculum dimension. It too puts students' learning needs at the core ...

*"If we are serious about bringing learning to life, we must set it within a global context. We must excite tomorrow's scientists about the difference they could make to humanity, show our linguists how they can influence the business world, focus our communicators on the potential impact of the media and encourage our cooks, designers, inventors, peacemakers and builders by showing where the discipline of learning can take them.*

*A curriculum for the 21st century should encourage the development of critical thinking so that learners are not only aware of global issues and events from different viewpoints, but also realise that they can play a part in working towards local and global solutions".*

# There is much to build on

We did an activity using a matrix featuring things from our schools that are:

| ◆ <i>working well</i> | ◆ <i>that are "so so"</i> | ◆ <i>that are not working so well</i> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                       |                           |                                       |

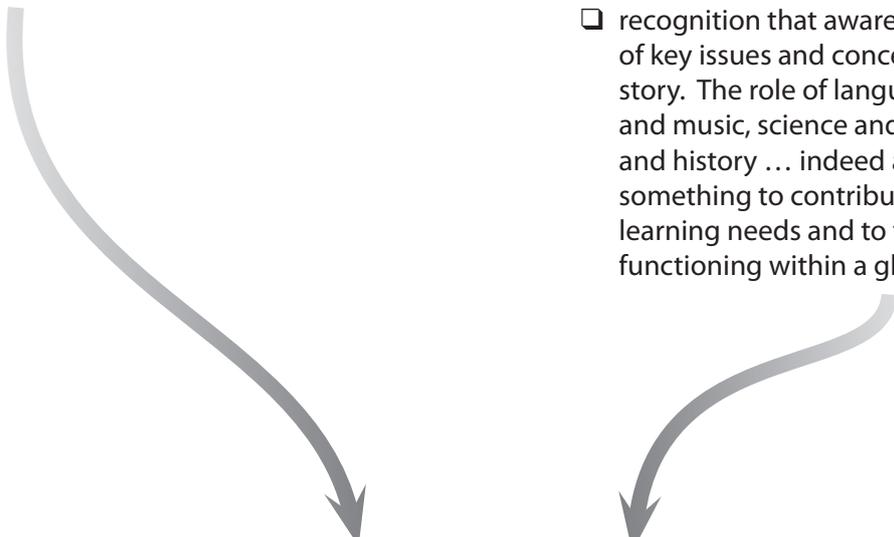
The group were able to identify numerous things from their schools that were going well. For example several references were made to links with particular parts of the world, school partnerships, making good use of visitors to the school, projects using gardens, as well as contributions by variety of curriculum areas.

Two key issues were highlighted about the "so so":

- ❑ Projects that are clearly visible and important [for example a global school partnership, or fitting alternative technology for power generation] that did not have the depth that they could have to maximise learning opportunities. This often led to frustrations about that style of work. There is a need to work on the learning potential.
- ❑ Teacher enthusiasm is key but was felt often to be variable. There is need to enable teacher creativity and ownership of the agenda.

Discussion about "not going so well" focused on the need for:

- ❑ systemic shift within the school;
- ❑ clarity about leadership issues and the importance of school ethos;
- ❑ a reflective culture and time for groups to work at all sorts of levels, including the whole school;
- ❑ opportunities to think through the issues;
- ❑ areas of curriculum to work together. Responses tend to be piecemeal ... working in separate "silos" rather than exploiting the opportunity for different areas to contribute to the same agenda;
- ❑ recognition of the wide range of curriculum that could contribute to global learning, including awareness of our own locality, community and interdependence;
- ❑ recognition that awareness and understanding of key issues and concepts is only a part of the story. The role of language development, the arts and music, science and technology, geography and history ... indeed all areas of curriculum have something to contribute to individual global learning needs and to the needs of our society functioning within a global community.



*There is a need for creativity in the Curriculum  
... and in every school*

## This debate needs also to address the basics

The fact that the agenda is important, and that it addresses the core role of schools in meeting the educational needs of learners, is perhaps not enough. We also need to address the basics such as:

- convincing people that it will improve the quality of education in schools;
- this can be part of responding to difficulties that schools are facing;
- the concepts of students doing very well and being good citizens are part of the whole ... they are not in conflict.

Some of the incidentals such as a world map in the hallway, murals around the walls etc should remind/simulate thinking about global dimensions. These too should contribute to the overall global learning.

The school buildings themselves are important. The more so because we are in the process of "building schools for the future".

- Will these buildings model sustainable development?*
- Will they contribute to thinking ... and global learning?*

## What next?

We hope to gain ideas from others contributing to this conference, to take stock and then design, trial and refine ideas for stimulus workshops and processes of professional development that can support school staff teams to engage the idea of global learning and its implications.

Alongside this we need further advice from school leaders about how best to engage all leaders in the issues raised ... and the idea of global learning.

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