TIde Talk

The first phase of what became the
West Midlands Coalition for Global Learning
extract from TIde~ Talk magazine 2003

Issue 1



Contributing to the West Midlands Coalition

Teachers in Development Education
Tide~

Developing frameworks to enable teachers, schools & LEAs to respond creatively to the challenges of global dimensions



West Midlands Coalition for essential learning

The coalition is a five year project enabling effective support in the new region ~ the West Midlands [see map]. Four key initiatives will provide a framework in the initial years of the project:

1. Citizenship, place and interdependence
2. Citizenship and sustainable development
3. Citizenship, diversity and identity
4. Citizenship ~ global dimensions at key stage 1

Each initiative will:

- explore the distinctive contribution of global dimensions;
- respond to the challenge of meeting the educational needs of young people growing up in an increasing globalise society;
- provide access to ideas, resources and basic support for a wide range of teachers;
- offer opportunities for involvement in creative curriculum projects and the development of new resources;
- offer frameworks for teachers and schools to design their own projects;
- build networks engaging people from different parts of the region in sharing ideas and building mutual support.

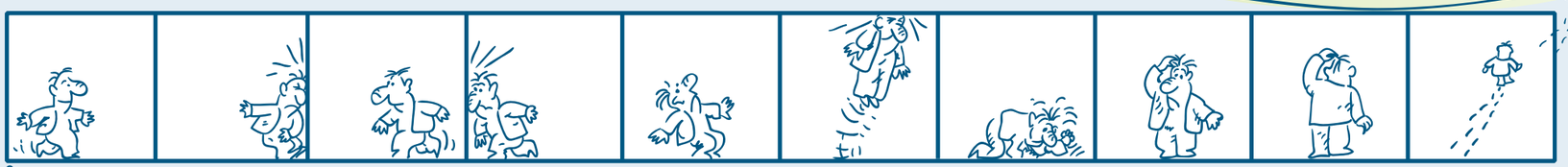
Much has been achieved to lay the foundations for this work since the publication of *Whose Citizenship?* which proposed the approach. That report like this project uses the concept of citizenship to reflect a wide range of contemporary concerns and debates, as well as addressing the citizenship curriculum.

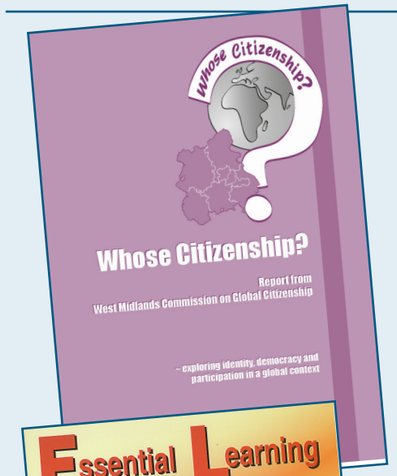


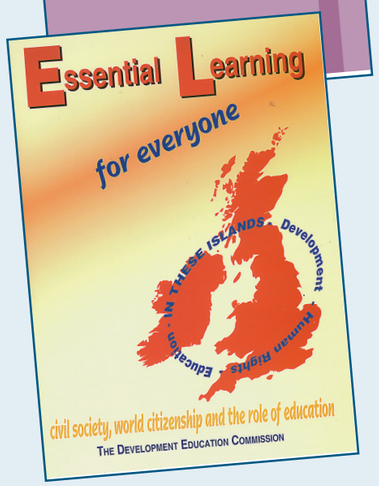
West Midlands Coalition

"Many of us identify ourselves by the boxes we put ourselves into or the boxes other people impose on us. We have to release our young people from those boxes and give them opportunities to break down the artificial barriers that restrict their expression and tie them up. They need to be freed to explore a new sense of belonging and a new sense of civil society locally, nationally and globally."

Anita Bhalla, Whose Citizenship? report.







The idea of the coalition grew out of the work of the Tide~ West Midlands Commission on Global Citizenship chaired by Professor Lynn Davies. The report ***Whose Citizenship?*** featured contributions from numerous teacher groups. It raised debate … and offered proposals for the future [see website www.tidec.org].

Essential Learning for Everyone was the title of one of the key documents from the Development Education Commission which involved key educators from each of the five jurisdictions in these islands chaired by the human rights lawyer Professor Kevin Boyle. [see website www.tidec.org]

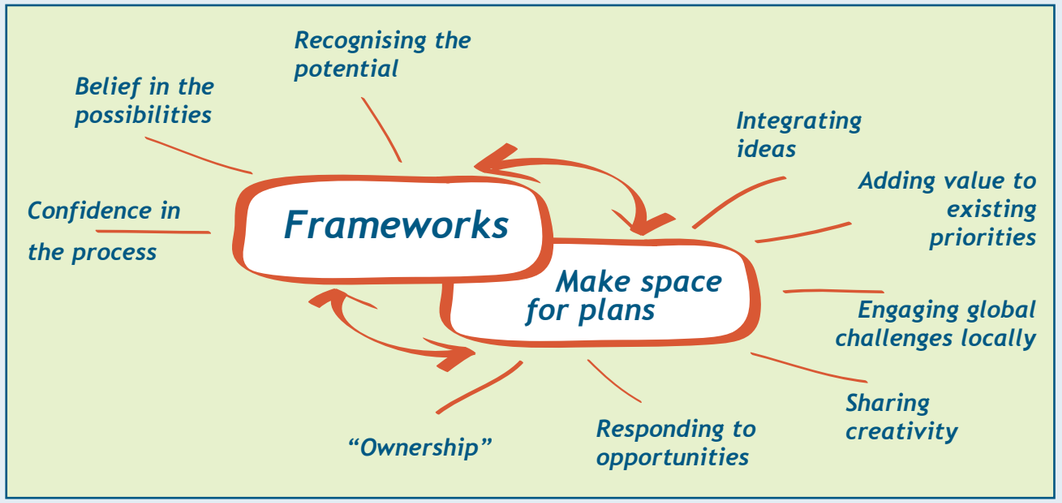
Learning from those experiences each of the coalition frameworks seeks to offer space for plans. It is however also important that we see the challenges in a holistic way. Each framework seeks to contribute to young people's sense of citizenship and potential to engage with change.

Change [as John Huckle puts it in Essential Learning]

"…a world of processes and contradictions rather than a world of objects and certainties … a dynamic world to be created rather than a static world to be accepted."

We aspire to designing frameworks:

- which give priority to enabling;
- which are inclusive;
- which share the responsibilities for change;
- which build on existing strengths and practices and bring added value to them;
- which build on the motivation and interests of those we work with.



Essential Learning raises many debates but at the core there are perhaps four key questions.



1. How aware are we of how young people see their citizenship?

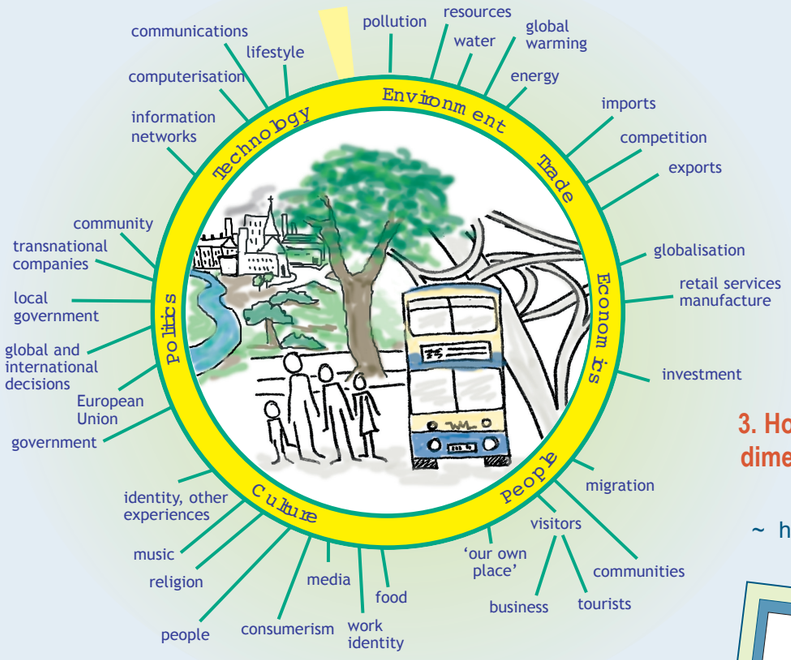
~ how do they see issues about war, environment, democracy, identity?



2. How do we see the West Midlands region?

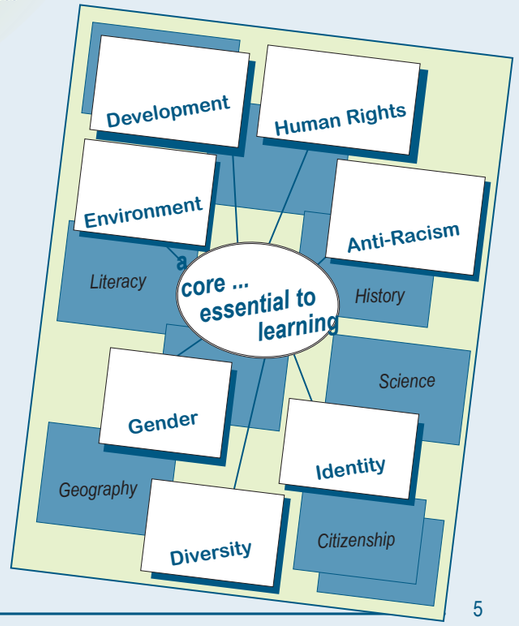
[that stretches from Oswestry to Rugby, Hereford to Stoke]

~ how aware are we of the nature of our connections with the wider world?



3. How do we bring together the many dimensions that contribute to a sense of citizenship?

~ how do we make this manageable for teachers? … and for young people?



4. How do we make use of the experiences and issues of citizenship in other parts of the world to bring insights into our own citizenship?





Spirals for change

Working on ideas about coalitions and partnerships across a region as large as the West Midlands brings many new dangers. The scale of the place and of citizenship issues can draw you towards short-cuts, and these short-cuts can quickly by-pass teachers. This poses a challenge for a network that, at its heart, is about "teachers enabling the professional development of teachers".

Many people are frustrated, not least young people themselves, about the danger of the core qualities of new enlightened policies being lost in the implementation. Such frustrations are heightened as the relevance of global dimensions takes on new vitality in the context of events that have unfolded since September 11th 2001.

This is not a time for short-cuts. There are many people concerned with education in different parts of the world who are facing this common dilemma.

A partnership of educators from Denmark and South Africa offered inspiration. They have recently produced a publication on what they call "the spiral model". It grapples with both the ideas and the practicalities of a teaching profession responding to contemporary challenges.

A summary ~ 9 key features of the spiral model:

- **Learning in context** It does not occur in a vacuum. Professional development needs to take account of the context. What is our context today?
- **Collaborative professional development** Teachers enabling teachers, supporting each other, questioning, developing their own thinking is vital to professional development.
- **Dialogue** enables teachers to grapple with new knowledge, professional issues, and class-room practice. More sophisticated understandings of what is going on and the implications for our profession can only be realised through dialogue.
- **Reflecting critically** on previous actions and enabling each other to evaluate experience.
- **Process** of implementing change. Discuss theoretical issues, try out practical implementation, share ideas and experiences – review theory – try out. This provides a cycle of planning and implementation which is inclusive and draws on the variety of skills and experiences in any group of teachers.
- **A flexible approach** enables teachers to respond to learning opportunities [for themselves and their students] when they arise and in the context of current events [locally and globally]. It challenges the assumptions of the "one size fits all" approach.
- **Democracy** Teachers take on responsibility for their own learning and their own professional development. The model encourages a high level of negotiated self determination. It also enables teachers to adopt those styles in enabling the learning of students.
- **Different perspectives** It is important to recognise there is not one single right way that can be adopted uncritically. This is important to our own professional responsibilities ….and to the skills young people need to gain from their learning.
- **The spiral goes on** ~ a long-term perspective becomes more accessible.

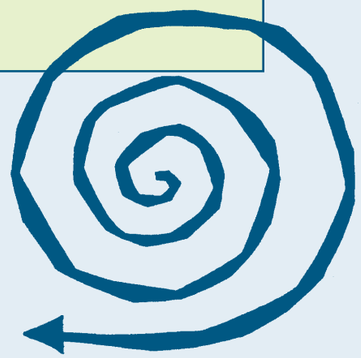


Dispositions for a project?

The Development Education Commission publication *Essential Learning* questioned many assumptions and in particular the fragmentation of approaches and the lack of emphasis on strategy. It proposed that “dispositions are key to thinking more clearly about strategy".

The following is an attempt to draft the dispositions of the *West Midland Coalition* project and to capture something of "the heart of project", reflecting the many debates and ideas which have shaped thinking.

- *This project seeks to play a part in a major cultural change in how global dimensions and development perspectives are seen by teachers, heads, advisers and educational policy makers.*
- *The project seeks to involve considerable numbers of educational professionals in a way that enhances their professionalism and engages them in the issues for themselves in the context of that professionalism.*
- *The project recognises that democratic ways, approaches to sustainable development, the valuing of diversity, confidence in identity or engaging with contemporary issues cannot be imposed on young people … [nor on teachers].*
- *The project recognises that there are no simple equations about the relationship between what goes on in schools and what goes on in future society.*
- *The project also recognises that the majority of young people are interested in these issues and, given the opportunity [or space], are motivated to engage with the challenges … and to work towards better futures.*
- *The project recognises the need to contribute to a popular understanding that such experiences can be of profound educational value to young people … and equip them better to engage with the dynamic of change.*



"A disposition can be understood as an ‘inclination or tendency to see, experience, feel, think and react to the world, events, our environment in a particular way’. A disposition is a way of *being* that is at the heart of things, not just a way of behaving."

DE Commission ~ Essential Learning