

Introducing a new Tide~ initiative

Connecting Dialogues

Learning - to engage with global realities



A Tide~ Elephant Times Publication



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Connecting Dialogues [CD]

Learning - to engage with global realities

This publication introduces Connecting Dialogues, a new Tide~ initiative responding to challenges that became clearer in the context of the global pandemic. Events, since we completed the draft, events, not least in Ukraine, have brought new depth to these challenges and the implications for teachers, and other education practitioners, here in the UK.

CD is reflective, stimulated by the pandemic experience, concern about global issues, and awareness of growing division in society. We also reviewed Tide's past work to consider aspects that are relevant to future thinking. Links are made to that work.

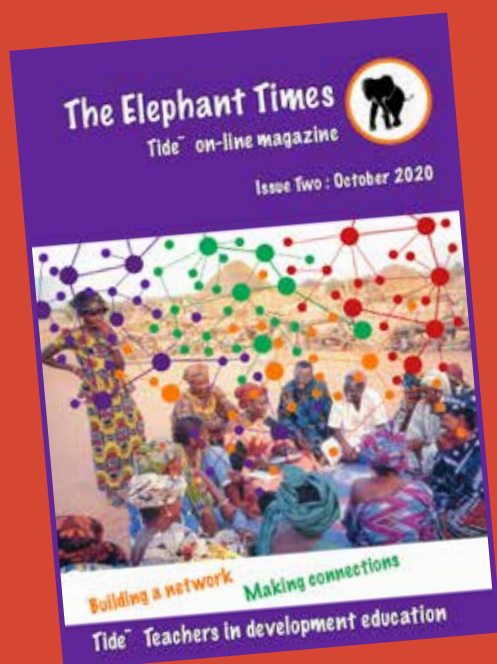
CD is a framework for action. We outline initial ideas for work in 2022. We seek to grow a network through creative opportunities for teachers.

CD is ambitious for change but all it is offering is a 'space' to bring practitioners together to be creative - and to have new conversations. Creative about meeting the learning needs of young people growing up in a complex and uncertain world.

This document is a draft in the sense that network activity will further define and inspire ... and shape Connecting Dialogues.

Tide~ invites you to get involved - to share ideas - to work with others to develop curriculum - to take a lead with new resources - to write articles for the Elephant Times magazine.





Elephant Times ... thinking afresh



We seek to **grow a network** - that engages with dialogue about global issues from a teacher perspective, - that explores 'dialogues of tension' between countries or people north-south and east-west, - that links the local to the global.

Tide~ as a teacher network has a role to stimulate our own learning ... and to offer opportunities to explore a variety of perspectives on global issues. Tide~ experience demonstrates that working as a team enables supportive challenges, creative engagement with the issues and better outcomes. Such creativity is pivotal to developing both the primary and secondary learner stimulus in a way that enables dialogue skills.

Elephant Times* [ET] on-line magazine was launched in July 2020.

[Copies of ET can be found here](#)

Connecting Dialogues [CD] will build on this, using the Elephant Times magazine as a focus for creativity.

Articles: will share the work of Tide~ groups - prompt reflection - spark debate - share inspiration - feature ideas and resources on offer from other organisations.

We seek teachers at any stage in your career - from primary and secondary schools - to develop online groups to work on specific projects.

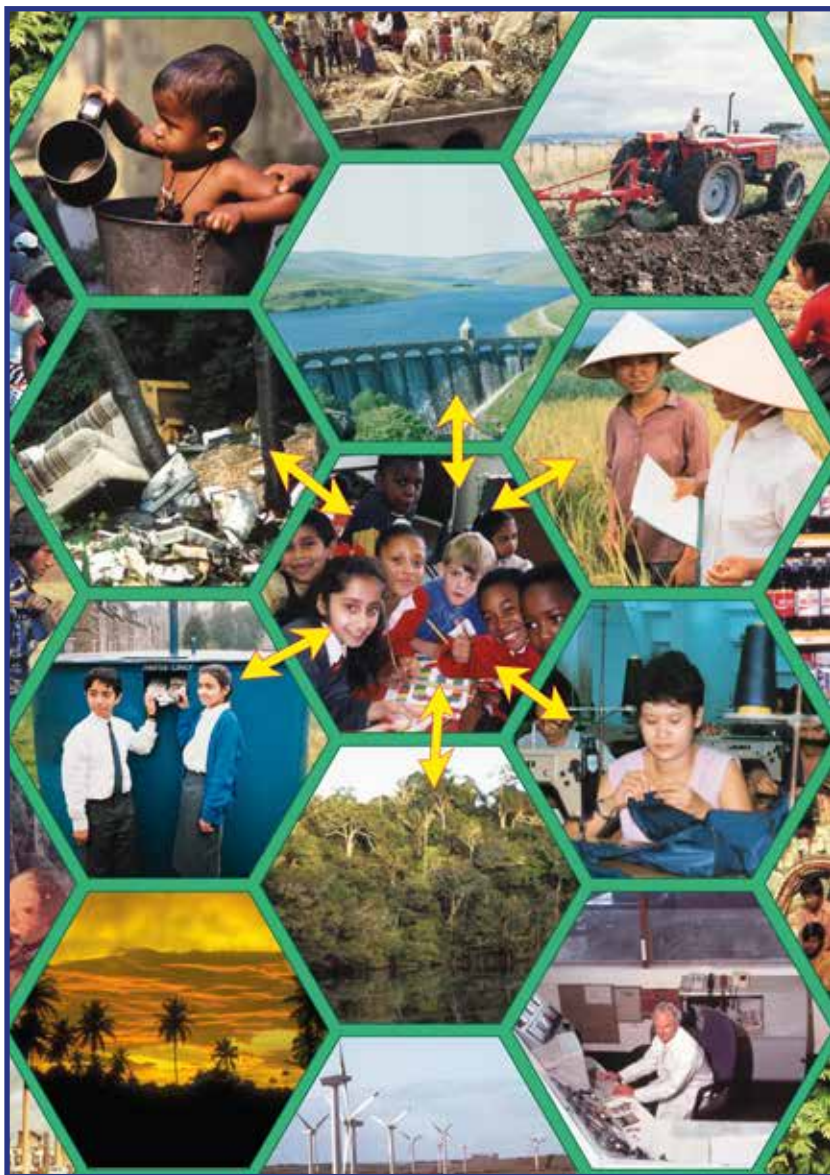
Please express your interest: [use this form](#)

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In the classroom - making connections.

Poster from Key Stage 2 pack: [‘Learning today with tomorrow in mind’](#)

In the preface to that pack Tim Brighouse wrote: *“Whatever they do teachers make the future. They create tomorrow as they ‘unlock the minds and open the chambers of the hearts’ of their pupils.”*

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Acknowledgements

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Rohini Corfield & Vipin Chauhan supported that process.

[List below January 2022]

It draws on, and links to, a range of recent Tide~ work and in particular contributions from:

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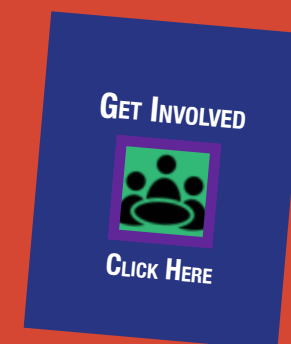
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Tide~ Connecting Dialogues seeks to involve a wide range of school practitioners.
Including both those who are in their early career and those who have years of experience.

This project is
about people
sharing ideas

Thank you

Welcome
to those
who wish to
contribute



Introduction

The complexity and constant change of the issues that face us all in recognising our connectedness to other places and people cannot be underestimated. The Pandemic experience has reminded us of this.

Every day we are presented with news that can confuse, anger, baffle, frighten, irritate or annoy us. Information, values and ideas are contested, divisive, and often reduced to simplistic slogans.

We, like the young people we work with, are left with many questions about what is going on. **‘Connecting Dialogues’ is a new networking project to support teaching in response to such challenges.**

In this, an age of division, learners need the opportunity to explore such complexity: to engage with ideas and perspectives from different parts of the world; to experience constructive dialogue, even when they disagree; and to develop skills to access their own dispositions - to work things out for themselves.

Political leaders often suggest certainty rather than explaining dilemmas and difficult choices. They imply ‘right answers’ to what are complex issues. In these circumstances exploring complexity can seem controversial. This, we would argue, has implications for teachers’ professional role - to educate, not to indoctrinate.

This introduction reviews:

- ☐ What we hope learners will gain
- ☐ A core inspiration - and challenge

What do we hope learners will gain?



We are concerned about a 'rush back to normality'. Have we made the most of the Covid experience to think afresh?

In particular there is a need for approaches that enable a confident disposition to exploring division[s] and engaging with ideas about an uncertain future locally and globally.

We propose that learners need to build up their own critical process for assessing reality, even more so in the context of both social media and 'fake news', and the dynamic of changing awareness of complex matters, such as climate change.

The CD project seeks to develop a core approach to dialogue with an emphasis on enabling learners to:

- ☐ generate questions;
- ☐ engage with complexity;
- ☐ make connections;
- ☐ develop a confident disposition.

The potential for doom and gloom has increased, the pandemic highlights how this can impact on mental health and well-being ... and on outlook. As some climate change posters say -- "what is the point of learning if there is no future?".

Professionally we have choices. We need to consider the need for optimism and a positive outlook without just putting a "green wash" or a "white wash" on the realities. We need to engage with what Elif Shafak calls **creative pessimism**.

['How to stay sane in an age of division' - p87]

We propose that this is essential for all learners.

A key challenge is - **How we avoid new 'tick box' approaches that present certainty and offer little learning but seem to engage with the issues?** Many issues are complex and involve different viewpoints. Young people have an entitlement to engage with the complexity of contested ideas. An abundance of information can get in the way of making such ideas accessible to learners. The apparent short cut of "thinking for learners" and offering contested theories as if they are facts is, we suggest, not helpful, nor professional.

Prof Bill Scott wrote in ET4 about the need for greater co-operation between organisations seeking to support work in schools about issues such as climate change. See: ['How can we seize the opportunity to think about what profoundly matters?'](#)

Prof Mick Waters in ET2 explored the underlying issues about what is driving curriculum priorities - and the need for a rethink. See: ['A curriculum that educates ... rather than teaches'](#)

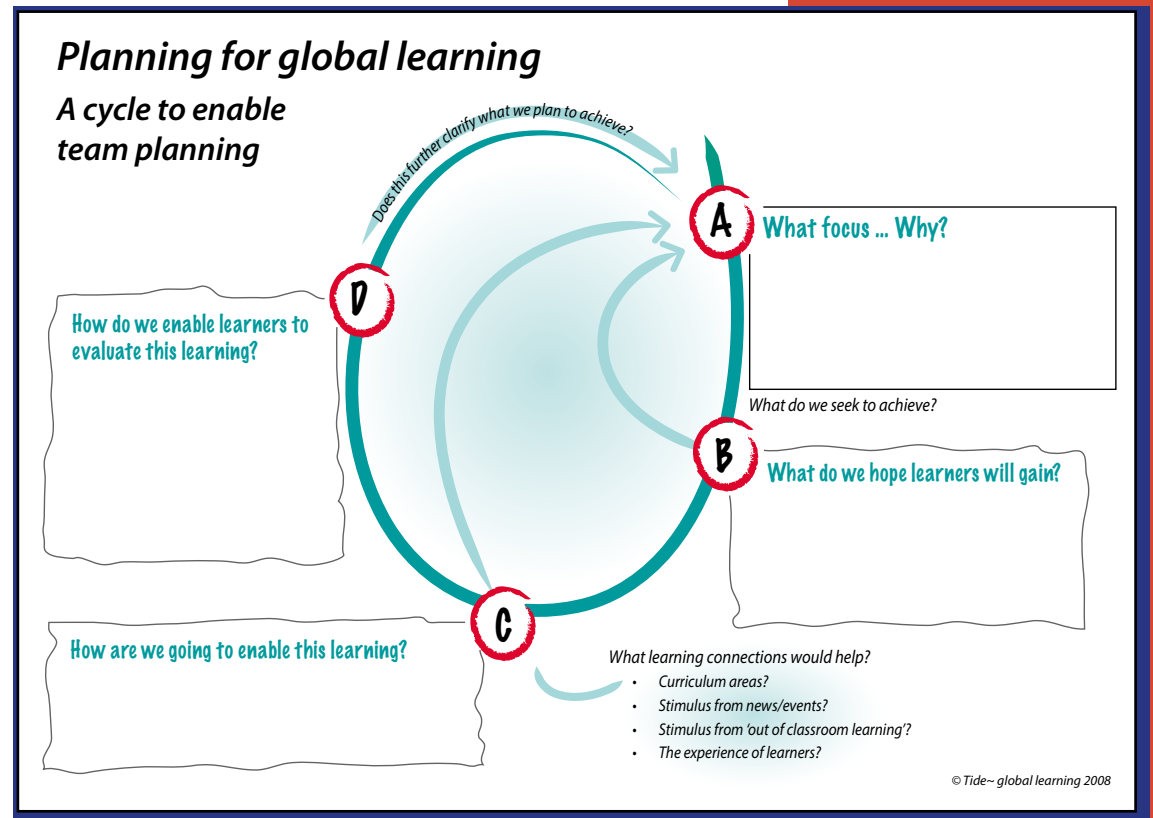
It is important that networks like Tide~ help review the implications for teacher professionalism in the context of: awareness of the issues; the skill development needs of learners relating to a changing and uncertain world; and how they feel about the issues. The emotional dimension is important too.

"As human beings... we are emotional creatures, even those of us who like to pretend not to be, especially them. Analyse, understand and reflect upon where negative emotions come from, embrace them candidly, but also notice if and when they become repetitive, restrictive, ritualistic and destructive."

[Elif Shafak 'How to stay sane ...' p. 89]

Planning to bridge the gap between a focus, often determined by curriculum knowledge, and what we want learners to gain reflects Elif Shafak's challenge about knowledge, information and wisdom. [See page 8]

Tide~ groups have found it useful to use planning activities, such as this cycle, to enable discussion about the implications of what it is we hope learners will gain.



Inspiration & challenge ...

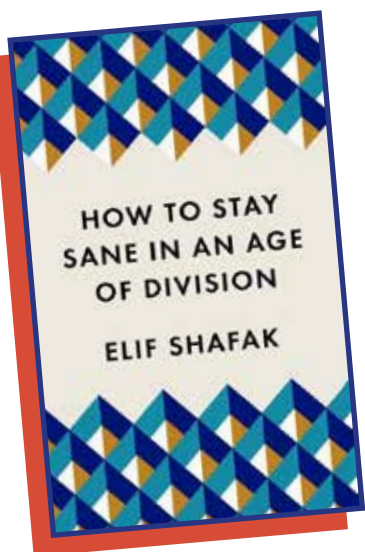
Elif Shafak's book **'How to stay sane in an age of division'** became a focus for taking stock during the pandemic that led to the **Connecting Dialogues** project. The book offers significant challenges but also an optimism about future possibilities.

It was introduced to us by Rohini Corfield in an ET article **'Decoding Diversity'** [ET3]

"Elif Shafak highlights the pivotal power of story, dialogue and active non-judgemental listening, enabling us to appreciate different perspectives; an approach Tide has been promoting for many years."

The book was the focus for network discussion as featured in **ET5 'Conversation'**. Key ideas centred on:

- ◇ **knowledge** - [that gives an illusion of understanding]
- ◇ **understanding** - [a realisation of how things are]
- ◇ **wisdom** - [an ability to act and think with understanding]



This quote captures the context ...

It is from Elif Shafak's 2021 H G Wells lecture featured in The Guardian.

See full article:

[How the 21st century would have disappointed H G Wells](#)

[This YouTube clip offers a good introduction to Elif Shafak](#)

Link
ET 5
Elephant Times
Conversation
How to stay sane ..



“ Were he [H G Wells] to have been alive at the very end of the 20th century, what would he have made of that world? I am especially curious to know what he would have thought about the unbridled optimism characteristic of the era, an optimism shared by liberal politicians, political scientists and Silicon Valley alike. The rosy conviction that western democracy had triumphed once and for all and that, thanks to the proliferation of digital technologies, the whole world would, sooner or later, become one big democratic global village. The naive expectation that, if you could only spread information freely beyond borders, people would become informed citizens, and thus make the right choices at the right time. If history is by definition linear and progressive – if there is no viable alternative to liberal democracy – why should you worry about the future of human rights, or rule of law, or freedom of speech or media diversity? The western world was regarded as safe, solid, stable. Democracy, once achieved, could not be disintegrated. How could anyone who had tasted the freedoms of democracy ever agree to discard it to the winds?

Fast forward, and today this dualistic way of seeing the world is shattered. The ground beneath our feet does not feel that solid any more. We have entered the Age of Angst. Ours is the age of pessimism. Ours is a world that is hurting. If Wells were alive today, what would he think of this new century with its increasing polarisation, rising populist authoritarianism, and the bewildering pace of consumption – including consumption of misinformation – all of which are exacerbated by digital technologies?

”

Opportunities for teachers - how will it work?

How the CD initiative shapes up will depend on many factors, not least the response from teachers - and of course world events.

We have offered three themes, each of which we chose because of key events in 2022. It is proposed that they will offer a focus for several projects. [See page 34 on]
Climate change is also an ongoing theme.

However as we write events in Ukraine cast a shadow on our thinking. They leave us stunned but at the same time lead us to reflect that debates about schools, and about learning in the context of liberal democracy takes on a new urgency.

Tide~ is now a fully voluntary operation. That brings new challenges and a key question: **In the age of Zoom can we recreate the processes that have been at the heart of many very creative Tide~ projects?** Projects that for example led to the [publications](#) available on the website.

Many of those who are now Tide~ Trustees or have leadership roles in education started their involvement with Tide~ as Early Career Teachers.

Teachers have used their involvement in such projects as a self generated professional development opportunity. For example to gain experience of roles in curriculum development, leading such a group or running a workshop for other teachers - and of course the team development of resources.

Get involved:

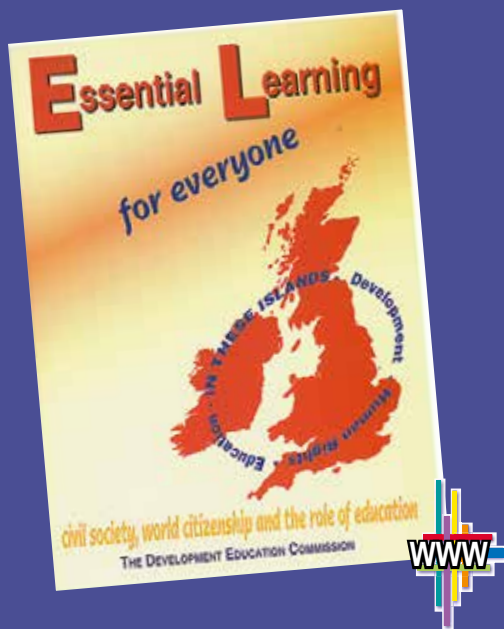
- ☐ Sign up and we will keep you posted about opportunities;
- ☐ Suggest a project - and we will see if others are interested.

Projects will provide opportunities to

- ☐ *engage with fellow practitioners;*
- ☐ *think creatively about curriculum design and development;*
- ☐ *explore ways of improving learner understanding of global issues;*
- ☐ *collaborate on the development of teaching resources;*
- ☐ *develop your confidence and skills in leading teacher groups;*
- ☐ *contribute articles to Tide~ online magazine.*

Essential Learning?

1



The pandemic amplified issues about global connections, inequality and justice. It also amplified debates about learning, education and schooling ... and about how we approach thinking about the future, and matters such as the implications of climate change. In this context it is a good time to ask:

What do we see as essential learning?

Tide~ advocates an entitlement curriculum that provides children and young people with knowledge, understandings and skills that are essential to enable them to develop to their full capacities, to be active in their communities and to be engaged citizens throughout and beyond their school careers.

Exploring the differences between pedagogical emphasis and curriculum relating to global themes in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland [both North and South] raises questions about the key drivers of educational policy.

'Essential Learning for Everyone' [1999] was one of the outcomes of a project set up by DEC/ Tide~ and 80:20 Ireland. It involved lead educators from each of the jurisdictions in 'these islands'.

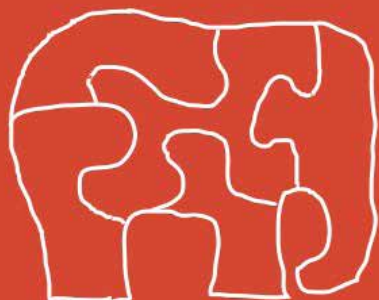
It is timely to revisit the questions that led to that initiative.

In this first section we review:

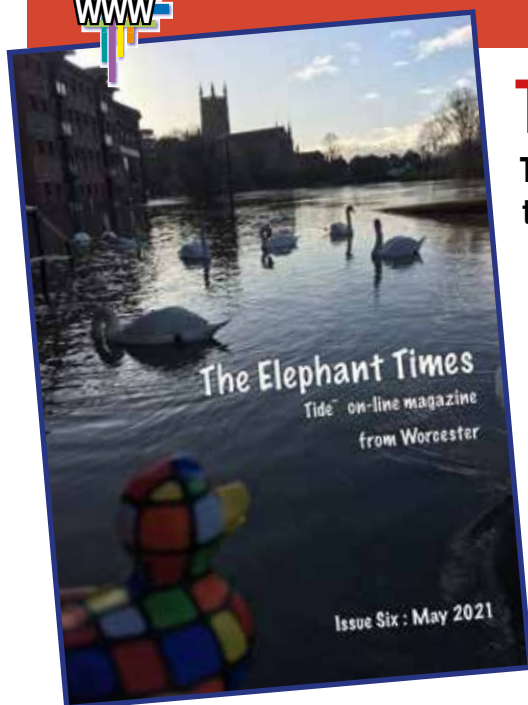
- ☐ The Ubuntu influence
- ☐ Essential concepts and core principles
- ☐ The implications of climate change

**Learners need
their own
critical reality
assessment
processes**

Ubuntu 10 Fundamental Values:



Democracy
Social Justice & Equity
Equality
Non-Sexism & Non-Racism
Human Dignity
Open Society
Accountability
Rule of Law
Respect
Reconciliation



“ There is a word in South Africa
– **Ubuntu** –
that describes Mandela’s greatest gift;
his recognition that
we are all bound together
in ways that can be invisible to the eye;
that there is a oneness to humanity;
that we achieve ourselves
by sharing ourselves with others,
and caring for those around us. ”

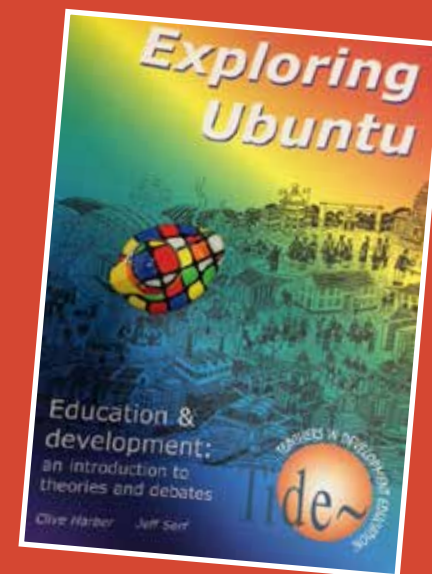
Barack Obama, at Nelson Mandela’s
memorial service, December 2013.

The Ubuntu influence

Tide~ had several projects highlighting matters relating to apartheid, not least the work enabled by a 2-week visit to Birmingham by [Desmond Tutu in 1989](#).

Post-apartheid there were projects that involved visits to South Africa and a group of Cape Town headteachers visiting Birmingham. The most significant were those that inspired our practice and led to publications such as ‘Towards Ubuntu’ and ‘Exploring Ubuntu’. [ET 1 features articles](#) by Clive Harber, Jeff Serf, Richard Woolley and Linda Clark reflecting on this.

Most recently, in May 2021, a [special issue of the Elephant Times](#) [developed in collaboration with the School of Education at the University of Worcester] had a focus on Ubuntu and its potential to inform a vision of education in a post-Covid world. The magazine included 10 articles each with a different focus ranging from inclusion and diversity to music and connections with nature.



Click on covers to review

Essential concepts for global learning

In the current context Tide~ advocates giving priority to four concepts:

- ❑ **Power.** How power is acquired, changed or challenged, and held in check; who holds it and how does that influence predominant values at any given time. This could include, for example, considering the allocation of finite resources in the world.
- ❑ **Global inter-connectedness and interdependence.** A quick look at any shopping basket, let alone the global pandemic, tells us that we are connected with the rest of the world in myriad ways. The big questions and debates of our time can only be understood in a global context: Covid-19, Environmental and Climate challenges, Refugees, migrations and border controls, Trade and Aid.
- ❑ **Local is global and vice versa.** Although a lot of concepts are expressed as if they are about other places (e.g., 'the South', non-industrialised countries, developing countries) the reality is that all those concepts are as real in our own place as they are elsewhere. Parts of the UK have high levels of poverty and deprivation. Some parts of all countries in Africa have extreme wealth and privilege. [See page 16]

Clearly there are differences but the key one is that it is so much easier to oversimplify other places because we know less about them. Which is why our 'local' is a good place to start thinking about the global.
- ❑ **Education** is about enabling learning (not indoctrination) and about modelling: if we hope that pupils will become active, engaged citizens, then we need to provide opportunities for them to be active in the life of the school and the classroom and we need to accept that they will have ideas and opinions that we may not always agree with. Our job, as educators, is to encourage and enable them to be critical thinkers.

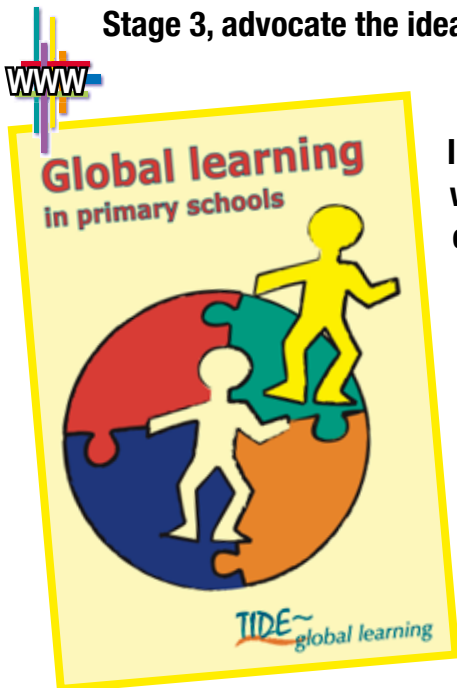
Core principles for global learning

We propose that these are essential to us all:

- ❑ **Awareness of self:** recognising one's own values, the influences on these and the possibility that these might develop, and the way one relates to the world
- ❑ **Awareness of others:** empathy with people in different situations and with different cultures, and skills to listen and ask questions
- ❑ **Research skills** to acquire and critically assess information
- ❑ **Recognising and respecting the validity of different points of view**
- ❑ **Forming one's own conclusions**
- ❑ **Recognising possibilities for future action**

An entitlement?

Both these Tide~ publications, with their focus on Primary and Key Stage 3, advocate the idea of entitlement.



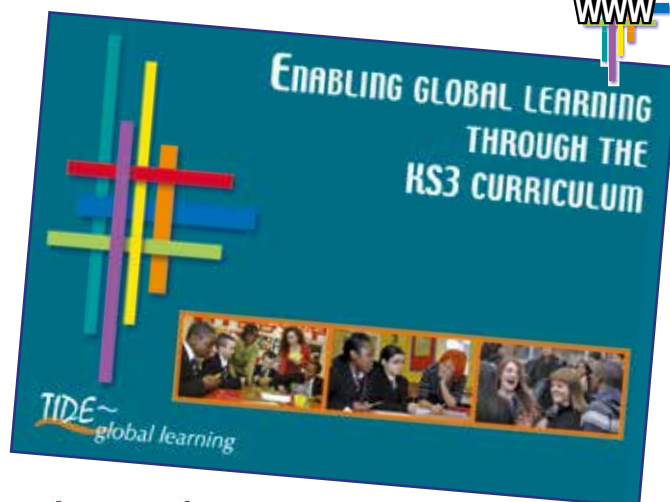
In the 2022 pandemic world that is grappling with new realities, not least relating to climate change, **there is a need to enable teachers and their students to revisit and develop the notion of entitlement.**

The project that led to the primary publication grew out of the consultation about learning in a increasingly globalised society. The paper [Bringing it all together](#) is worth a revisit.

'Enabling global learning' proposes that there is a need

to consider both the role of subjects and cross-curricular approaches.

It builds up an overview, drawing on the work of a wide range of Tide~ teacher groups, highlighting **the need for a more connected curriculum ... and therefore a more relevant learning experience.**



Learners are entitled to develop ...

- ◆ a positive sense of self, respect for others and a wider sense of social responsibility;
- ◆ skills of enquiry and critical thinking;
- ◆ the confidence to communicate and work as part of a team;
- ◆ an ability to engage with different perspectives.

Learners are entitled to engage with ...

- ◆ global issues [from natural, economic, social and political perspectives];
- ◆ the reality of interdependence;
- ◆ processes of development and change and the implications of this;
- ◆ the challenges of sustainability;
- ◆ perceptions of identities and belonging in a diverse society;
- ◆ debates about how we participate as citizens and recognize the rights of others in a democratic society.

Entitlement as proposed in 'Enabling Global Learning'



[Jo Fairclough](#) in this [ET3 article](#) talks about enabling students to take leadership of their own learning and the need for curriculum development to support that approach.

Climate Change ...

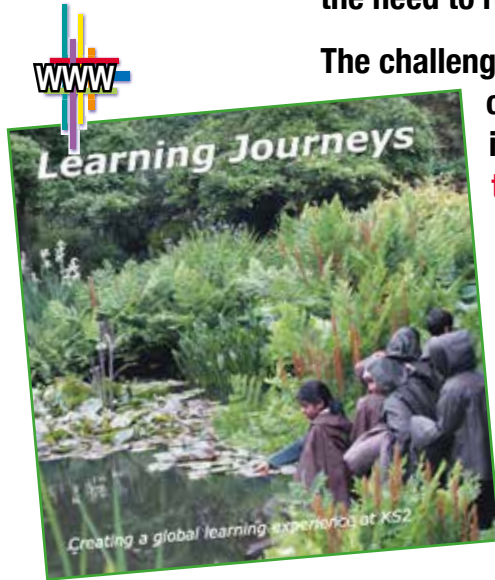
the need for debate about the implications for education?

It will be a while before we really figure out what happened at COP 26 but one thing is clear, Climate Change - is no longer “the elephant in the room”. There is a political consensus about the need to respond ... or is there? That is one we all need to question with care.

The challenge for schools and for teachers is no longer just about the need for an awareness of climate change, and the concepts of sustainable development, and for the school itself to reduce its carbon footprint. **It is about rethinking education so that it meets the needs of learners growing up in a complex and uncertain global context: - where every job will be a “green job” - where there will be a need for well-informed creativity about change at every level from the individual to the international.**

Prof Bill Scott in his article [ET 4] makes a strong case that challenges both schools and environmental education organisations about the creativity needed. He says ...

“Young people do not want more information or more history or greener exam questions; rather they want to be helped to be part of realising their own futures.”



Creating experiences at KS2

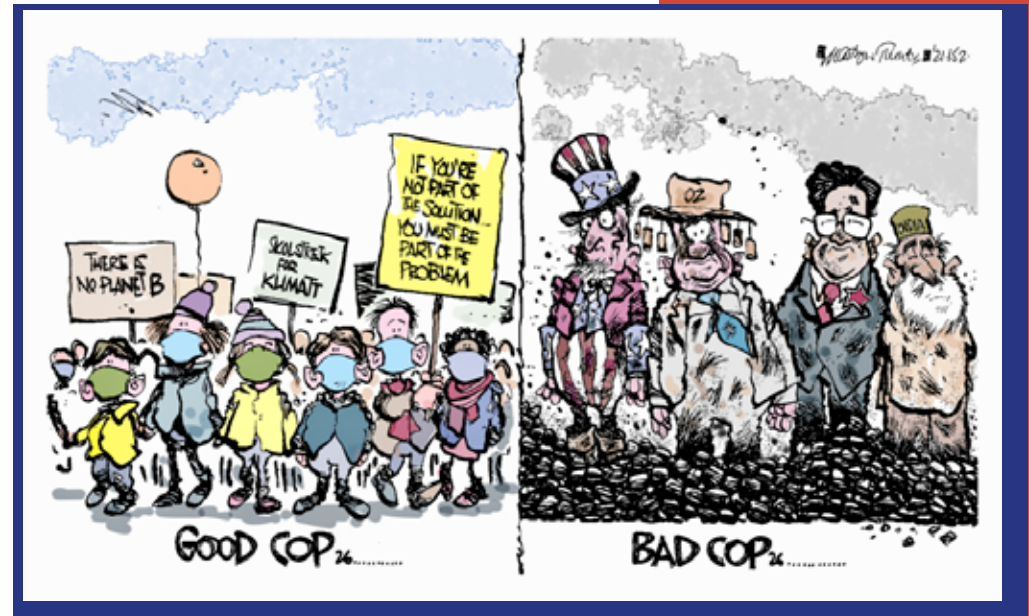
There is a need, he suggests, for **“conceptual comings together and curriculum collaborations”**.

Katie Riley shares her experience of the student climate strikes in Birmingham. The rest of **ET4** follows up those themes, in particular, addressing sustainability themes at Key Stage 2.

ET 4 concludes with an article by Jon Cree about his experiences in the Kalahari, reflecting on the need for us to have better connections with nature. **Creating such learning experiences is also vital to the agenda.**



ET 4 with climate change focus



Cartoon: Martyn Turner

The DfE have published a draft strategy: [Sustainability & Climate Change](#).

“It is good to see the first glimmer of interest from the DfE since 2010” [as one Tide~ member put it] ... but it offers little to get excited about in terms of curriculum innovation.

Wouldn't be good if the DfE sought teacher ideas about how to respond? Or better still offered **funding for teachers to have time out to be creative about the implications for their curriculum area, how that links to other curriculum areas and what real life experiences could bring that learning together.**

Creativity, now and in the future, is at the heart of a sound response to the crisis. This has to start somewhere. It needs to involve us all.

But what is more likely is that DfE will seek advice from a variety of organisations, [most of whom we would wish to support] but that they will end up competing for influence over an inappropriate system of central curriculum control and then imposing training on teachers - effectively like the cartoon.

The climate change crisis demands something more imaginative than that.

There have been many imaginative initiatives in schools, and by organisations, that could be built on.

[ET1 revisited questions about climate change](#) that Tide~ teachers raised some 13 years ago. Those questions also provided focus for Twitter dialogue linked to Cop 26.



GET INVOLVED

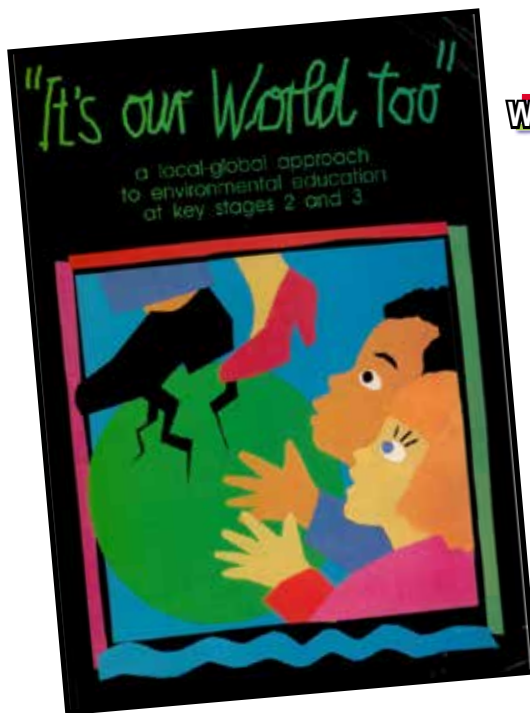


[CLICK HERE](#)

The question now is: **How should the Tide~ Network respond?**

What could we usefully contribute?

We would value your advice.



"It's our world too" - a local-global approach to environmental education was published in 1992 jointly with the South Yorkshire DEC.

It was the result of creative work by teacher groups in Birmingham, Derbyshire and Sheffield over several years. They came together in a series of residential weekend workshops at Loosehill Hall, in Castleton.

Inspiration was taken from the UNICEF Report: 'Children and the Environment' [1990] and the concept of inter-generational legal equity. Future generations have rights.

The project provided opportunities for teachers to use local field work as a stimulus to exploring issues of environment and development in other parts of the world.

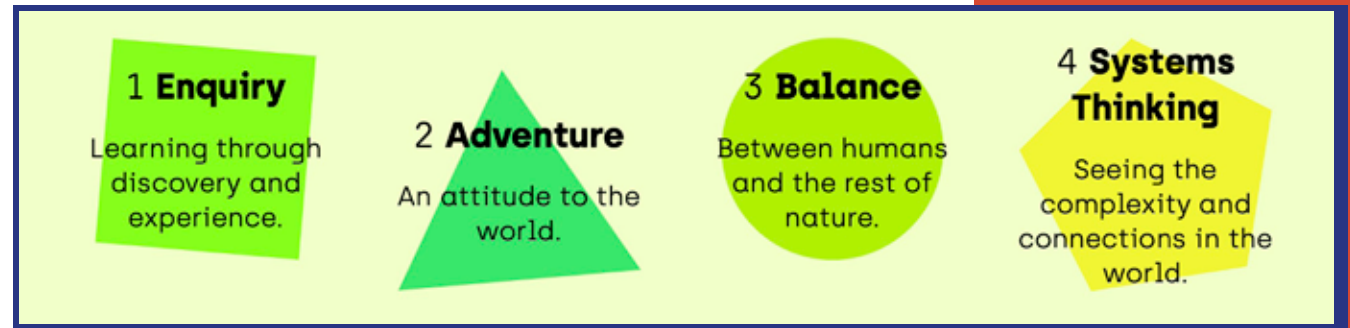
We highlight this example because there are ideas of value to current debates but also because of the process involved that **demonstrates the potential of a modest budget and teachers taking the lead.**

Another example: 'Learning today with tomorrow in mind'



The NAEE [National Association for Environmental Education] produce a very useful weekly briefing offering links to a wide variety of environmental education initiatives.

There is much to be inspired about - for example, the Ministry of Eco Education. Their curriculum focuses on four key principles:



They start with an education perspective and seek the engagement of learners. **There is much we can all learn from this but the most important is the value of the creative process involved.** Others can use their ideas but it is also vital to shape plans for your own group creative process.

Another recent NAEE weekly brief included a link to 'A new green learning agenda: approaches to quality education for climate action'. It features a report that might be a stimulus to our thinking. Authors Christina Kwauk and Olivia Casey set the scene:

"The values that drive the domination and exploitation of the natural world, which fuel climate change and increase humanity's vulnerability to zoonotic disease transfer, are the same values that drive the oppression, exploitation, and violence against vulnerable groups, especially girls and women"

Connecting dialogues - there is much to be creative about.

Enabling Dialogue

2

Covid-19 has accentuated the **trend towards “echo-chamber conversations”** when dialogue is most needed if society, local and global, is to overcome the threat of factionalism, and avoid people and communities retreating into silos.

Lockdowns, “working from home” and school closures became part of everyday life, each designed to reduce the number of social interactions. Hence, there is an even greater need for us to consider how we can support learners in talking with their peers, their teachers and the wider community.

Reasoned and reasonable discussion, are characteristics of a society where individuals are valued and communities respected. Further, they are essential to a democracy and, as with many democratic traits, they can be fostered or stifled in school.

Are we tending to talk to like-minded individuals, reinforcing our existing ideas, and our preconceived stereotypes?

In such echo-chamber conversations we are unlikely to be challenged to by different viewpoints or value systems.

This section explores planning for the development of skills, perspectives and approaches to dialogue.

Many DEC /Tide~ publications include suggestions for structuring learning activities.

If you are not familiar with the approach ‘Fat felts & sugar paper’ is a good starting point.

For full list see: [Tide~ Publications](#)



Connecting Dialogues Approach

We intend that 'Connecting Dialogues' will develop participative learning and teaching processes that enable and empower participants to:

- ❑ engage in critical dialogues about diverse experiences, locally and globally
- ❑ make connections between local experiences here [in our own place] and those in other parts of the world.

To do this we need to start with learner “dialogue skills” and review what they mean in practice, including from a young age.

Practically the project will make use of a wide range of existing stimuli and activities. We will also work collaboratively to generate new resources, particularly those relating to contemporary situations.



Spiral from 'Essential Learning for everyone'.

We suggest that teachers and schools review and develop the range of experiences that are on offer, for example, opportunities for learners to engage with the natural world, to grow things, or that enable ongoing dialogue between people in different schools, for example, those in urban and rural areas.

There is much good practice to build on, but also a realisation that many valuable facilities have been the casualty of recent cuts.



Dialogue skills ... & progression

Building dialogue skills is a long-term strategy. The CD project seeks to build up examples from across the key stages.

In this, an age of division, learners need the opportunity to explore complexity: to engage with ideas and perspectives from different parts of the world; to experience constructive dialogue, even when they disagree; and to develop skills to access their own dispositions - to work out things for themselves.

We can not teach everything -- the 'whole cake'.

We need to focus on skills so learners can learn to develop their own 'Critical Reality Assessment' processes to take stock of new information, to evaluate events and to review choices - their own - and those they influence socially or politically.



Dialogue skills ...

- ◇ to connect personally with people - people from other schools - people with diverse cultural or life experiences;
- ◇ to connect with the natural world - to connect different aspects of environment, locally and globally;
- ◇ to connect with political and economic perspectives locally and elsewhere in the world;
- ◇ to connect with people locally and elsewhere in the world who lack power, voice and visibility;

These skills contribute to a life long capacity to reflect on ideas and make connections between different aspects of learning.

Schools can only offer a slice of what there is to learn. That slice needs to enrich, to stimulate, to be rich in knowledge, and to offer many layers of experience that build understandings.

But the core is about the skills to connect ... [with the rest of the cake] ... and the ability to apply those skills over time to engage creatively and collaboratively with realities.

This, we advocate, should be an entitlement for all learners.

Local & Global Perspectives

There are global dialogues on our doorstep. The priorities for investment and economic development are as contested in the UK as they are in other countries. As are the models of development that either engage communities or impose plans on them.

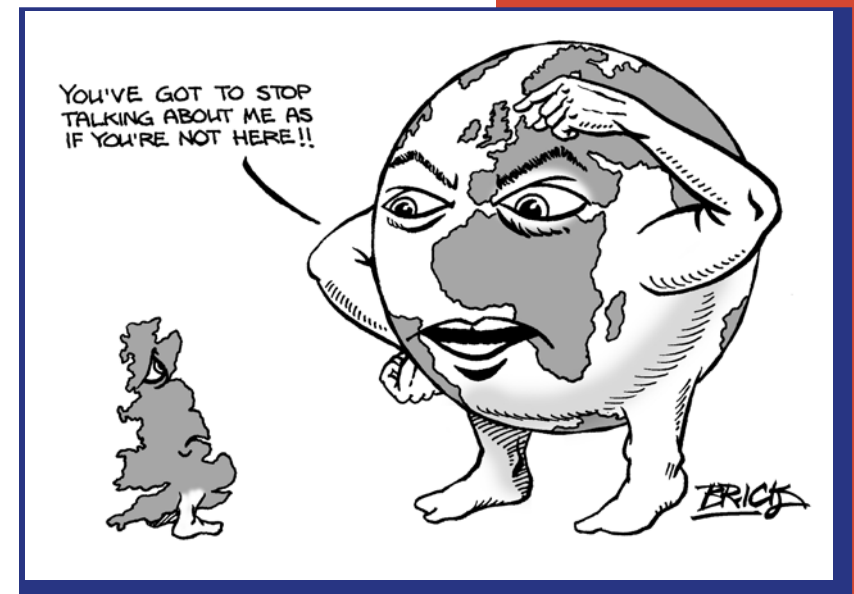
It is so much easier to oversimplify other places because we know far less about them; it is much harder to do that about our own place. This is why we should start with our own place and be very careful not to oversimplify other places.

The idea that things that happen locally have a role in understanding 'development' and 'the global' has been important to the Tide~network from the outset.

The word '**Glocal**', first used by educators in Japan, captures the basics ... that **to understand things globally we need to engage with what they mean in our own local part of the world;** ... and to recognise that most so-called "global" case studies focus on the "local" in different parts of the world.

See '[Birmingham a Global City](#)'. This offers links to other resources including a section asking: what could we learn from looking at Britain and Ireland as our local international relationship?

It also features '**Cities, people and change**' which explores the commonality of city issues all over the world ... issues such as Sustainability, Community Cohesion, Climate Change and Economic Well-being.



Do we in Britain still have a tendency to talk about the "global" as if it is some other place? That we are outside / above it?

How do you see the recent term 'Global Britain'?

Planning - processes to enable dialogue

Over the past 40 years Tide~ has developed an approach to curriculum planning that integrates skills and knowledge development, and places learners centre stage.

It has three key elements:

Stage 1: Preparation Set the scene in order to describe and define the terrain to be studied, to find out what learners already know, feel and think of that territory, and to identify and focus on the aspects that interest learners.

None of us is an empty vessel to fill with ideas or information. We all have pre-existing ideas, opinions, beliefs.

We may not always be fully aware of them, or where they have come from but they are there. Any learning process has to start by enabling people to examine their existing attitudes, opinions, knowledge and prejudices. In this way they can be supported to be open to ideas and to opening their hearts.

This stage also establishes a climate for learning: setting the ground rules for what we expect of one another, building trust in one another, agreeing how we want to work and learn together.

Enabling an enquiry approach

Preparation

Starter activities that help to:

- introduce content
- explore attitudes and perceptions
- generate questions for investigation
- enable students to make their own connections

Enquiry

Activities that help to:

- identify different sources of information
- interpret and critically analyse information
- explore different perspectives
- investigate issues in a global context

Synthesis

Activities that help to:

- review what has been learnt
- discuss key issues as a whole group
- reflect personally upon the learning experience
- make connections with other issues and areas of the curriculum

Stage 2: Enquiry Following the ideas identified as of interest in Stage 1, and/or of course those established by the National Curriculum or the syllabus of an exam board.

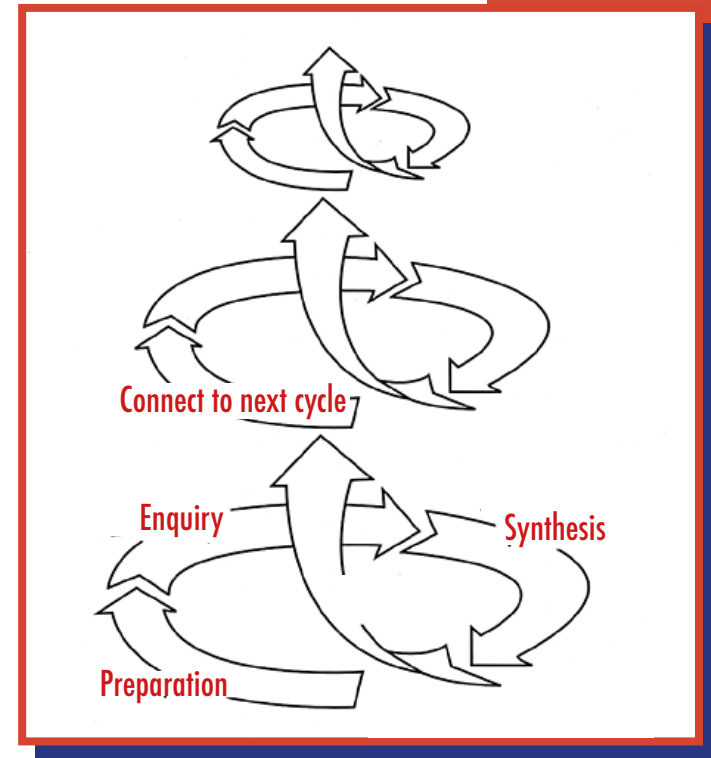
Tide's experience strongly suggests that when planning to learn about unfamiliar people, places or ideas it is crucial to begin by relating the subject matter to things that are familiar in people's everyday lives before expanding out. There are endless examples of development themes in our own lives that can be used.

When planning for new knowledge to be acquired, it is of course also important to consider the variety of classroom and non-classroom experiences that will enhance learning and maintain the interest and enthusiasms of learners.

You will want to collect together resources and stimulus material to prompt enquiry and discussion, and to investigate and question information.

Stage 3: Synthesis Pull it together to make sense of what has been learnt, reflect further on it, and identify areas for further study. This stage of a course is also the beginning of setting the scene for the next phase of learning.

This has sometimes been described as a spiral curriculum: a description that is helpful because it allows us to plan to revisit a subject without feeling that you are going round in circles! This notion of a spiral is also helpful in thinking about personal development. We can feel as if we are going round in circles: a more optimistic and accurate view is that we are continuing to develop.



Engaging Complexity

3



We are living in **complex and confusing times**, there are no easy answers to most current global debates and issues - but that doesn't mean we should ignore them or their complexity.

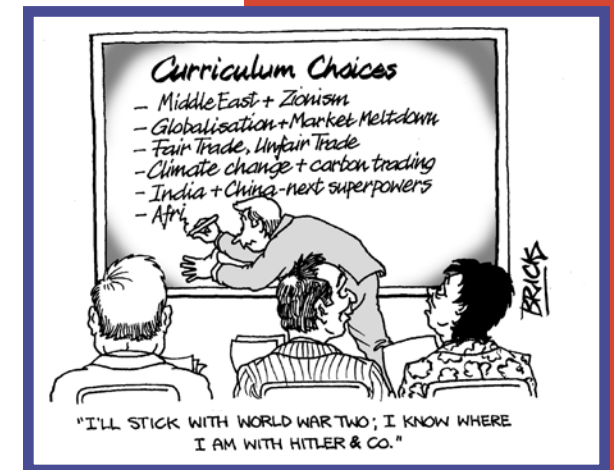
It is essential that people have the skills and enthusiasm to care about the issues and to analyse their complexity. It is not about finding new 'right' answers. It is about accessing different perspectives, and understanding the myriad ways that each of us influences what is happening now, and in the future.

To be able to do that requires us to support the capacity to think, question, debate, discuss, reflect and consider.

In this section we consider:

- ☐ core philosophical values and why this debate is vital;
- ☐ the need to make complexity more accessible;
- ☐ the need to explore bias and build skills to question our sources.

< *The Development Compass Rose offers a framework that makes complexity more accessible. See page 25*



At the core ...

Tide~ is about enabling creative work responding to global issues from a teacher perspective. Teaching is fundamentally about enabling learners to form their own opinions and develop the confidence to have these challenged and developed through respectful discussions and debate, informed by knowledge and insights. This is an essence of living in a liberal democracy. The values of such a democracy are at times usefully contested and debated, but they are also, all too often, undermined in all manner of ways. The Supreme Court finding that parliament was unlawfully prorogued in September 2019 is a clear example ... other examples are more subtle.

There is a need, from an educational perspective, to challenge such undermining when complex matters are presented with a simple certainty that closes down real learning. Such temptation to use schools to manipulate ideas is to be found in many organisations, political movements and even government.

This is at the heart of what Elif Shafak asks us to consider. [See quote >>>>]

It is useful to remind ourselves of the fundamentals that we value: an elected parliament with checks and balances; free and fair elections; the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary and the press; individual freedoms provided that you do no harm to others; the role of the state in promoting and protecting life, health and well-being of all, including laws to protect minorities and to promote equality.

Ian Dunt in [‘How to be a liberal’](#) offers valuable insights into the development of the liberal philosophy that underpins western democracies. He adds substance and political analysis to concerns about “an age of division”.

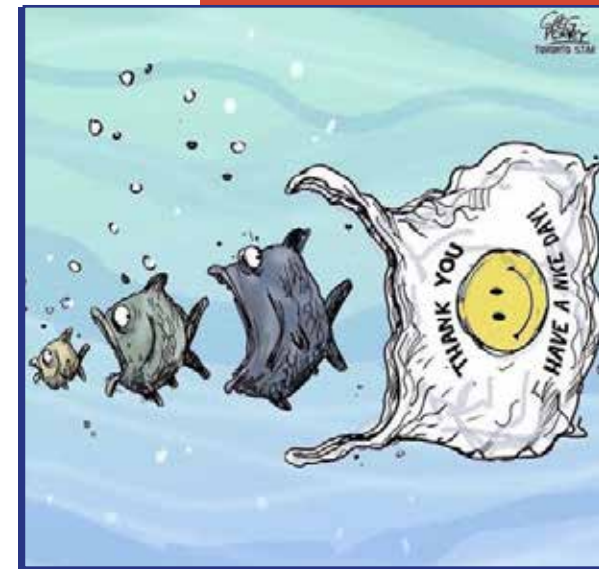
Mick Waters offers a good example in this quote from a recent NAEE blog ...

*“It is important that environmental learning in school is rigorous; while schools have leapt to support the campaign for reducing plastic usage, we need to go beyond the collecting of waste and a display, followed by an assembly saying, ‘**plastic is bad**’. All plastic is not bad: look around as you read this and imagine your setting without the plastic. **We need to take learning below the surface and deeply explore the issue.**”*

“Do not be afraid of complexity.

Be afraid of people who promise an easy short cut to simplicity.”

Page 89 in -
‘How to stay sane in an age of division’
Elif Shafak



Where to start?

Clearly your starting points will be determined by curriculum context, and the age and maturity of the young people involved. Their collective experience of dialogue approaches will also be important.

Dialogue skills need to be developed over time. Learners gain confidence in exploring ideas and views, and become less inhibited about asking what some may see as, naive questions.

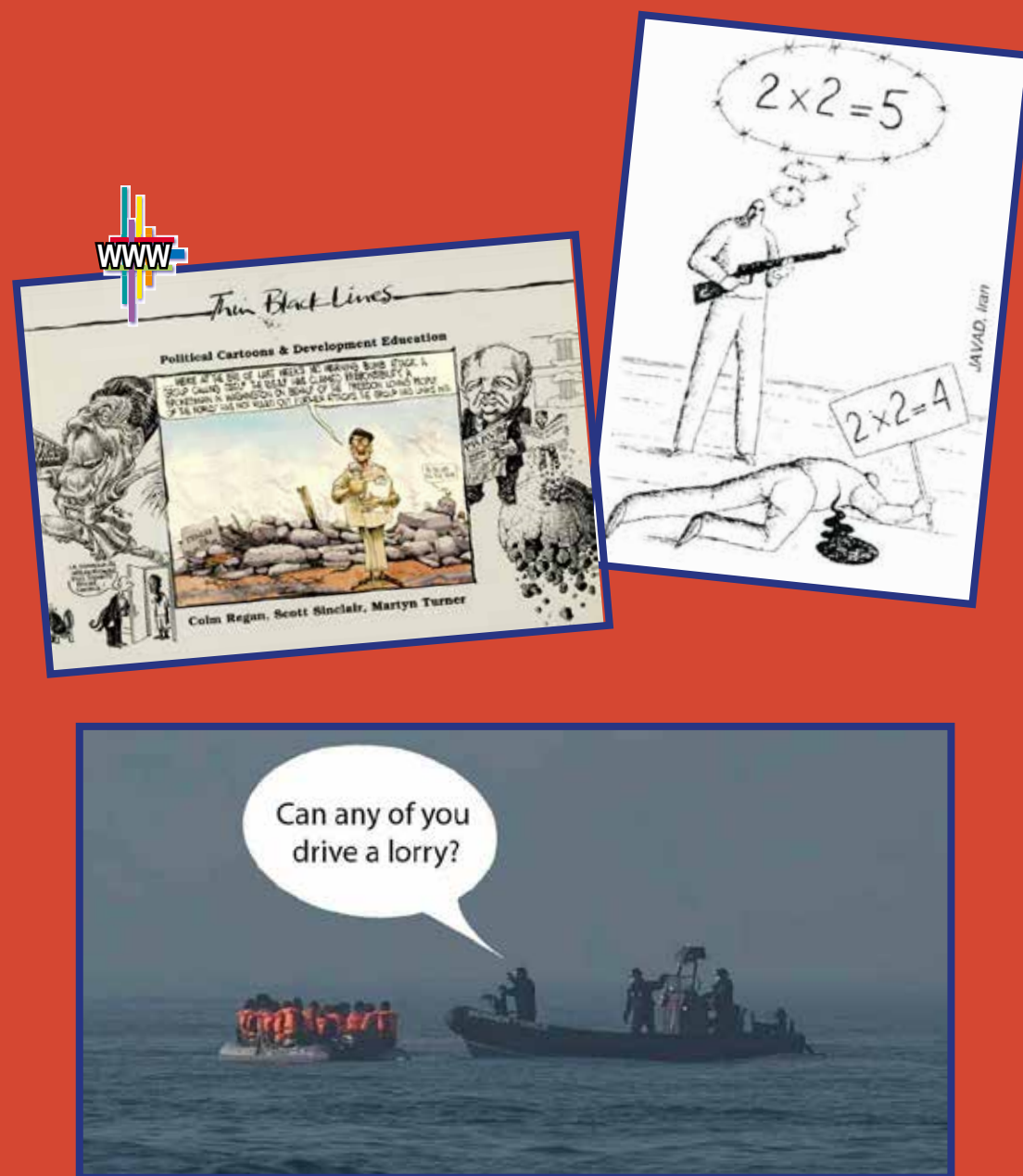
A story, a photograph, a cartoon, books, films, video clips, newspapers. All are sources that can be used to stimulate dialogue and then for learners to generate a web of relevant ideas and questions for further enquiry.

Essentially this approach is starting with the learner, they are generating the questions and setting the scene for engaging with the complexity.

The challenge for **Connecting Dialogues** is to apply such ideas and to generate up-to-date stimulus on key issues, for example in the first instance, relating to the **Global Pandemic**, the issues relating to **Commonwealth**, the international relationship between **Ireland and Britain** - but there are other possibilities that we intend to explore.

[Rohini Corfield ET3](#) introduces a stimulating reading list in her article '[Decoding Diversity](#)' ...

In ET 2 [Robin Richardson](#) takes stock of "a momentous year" in late 2020. **So many starting points ...**



Asking questions ...

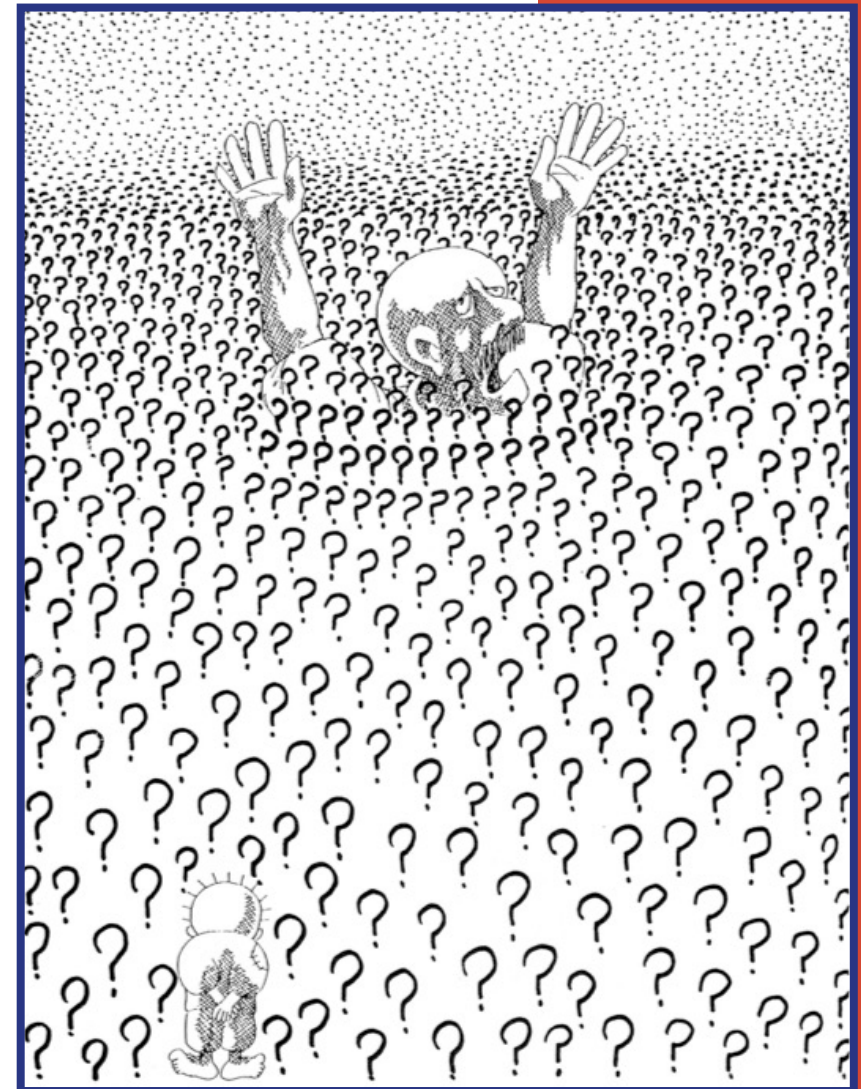
For us this cartoon highlights **the significance of asking questions to the processes of liberal democracy**. The questions drown out corruption and autocratic tendencies. Recent events remind us to value that. However, another perspective on the cartoon might be -- better not to ask too many questions for fear of drowning in them!

The ability to form **appropriate** questions is an important skill. It is built up over time and has an individual and group dimension. By introducing 'issues' in the more familiar context of the local community there is an opportunity, even with young children, to engage with a more nuanced debate relating to different views, contradictions and dilemmas. The value is limited if we only introduce such an approach when we get to challenging global matters.

The more so if we use simplistic, ridiculous, all-encompassing questions as a focus. Maybe it feels easier to pose such questions about other places. Like: Is Aid a good idea? Would that make any sense applied to your local community? Similarly: 'Was Empire good or bad?'



Photo: from ET publication: 'Birchfield - Commonwealth Connections'.



Cartoon by the late Naji al Ali. It is nearly 35 years since he was shot in London for the questions he asked through his cartoons. Hanzala, who features in many of his cartoons, is looking on.

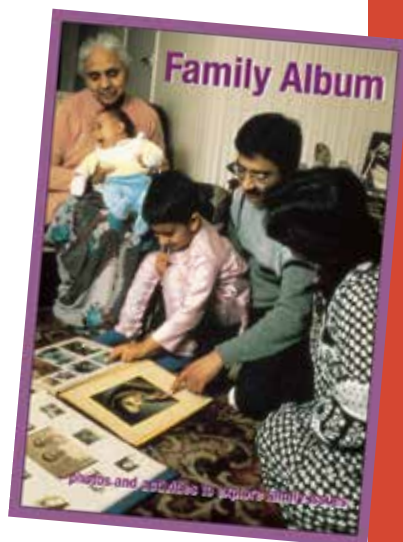
Naji al Ali features in the DEC/Tide~ publication: [Thin Black Lines](#)

In an age of YouTube and other social media it would be easy to underestimate the value of using photos as a basis for building the skills to engage critically.

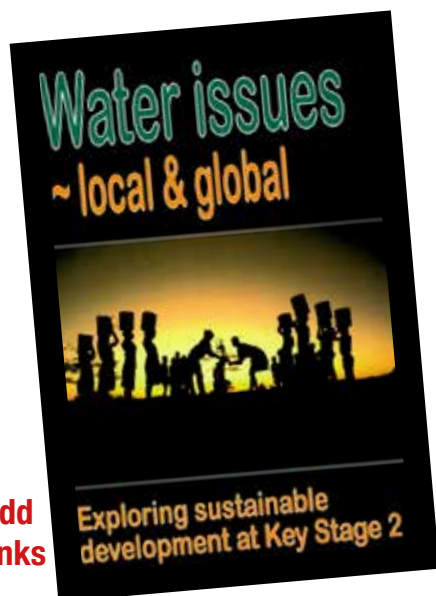
Well-chosen photos are also a valuable tool for building the collective skills of a group ... as outlined in the diagram. This photo from The Guardian was taken in Birmingham by Joe Giddens.

DEC/Tide~ has published many photo-packs. The booklet 'Family Album' illustrates the idea and activities well.

The selection of photos was about stimulating students to draw on their own observations and experiences rather than being 'case studies'.



Water Issues - local & global takes a similar approach using the photos to build up an enquiry agenda. A process that offers learner motivation as well as focus.



What do I see? - What questions?



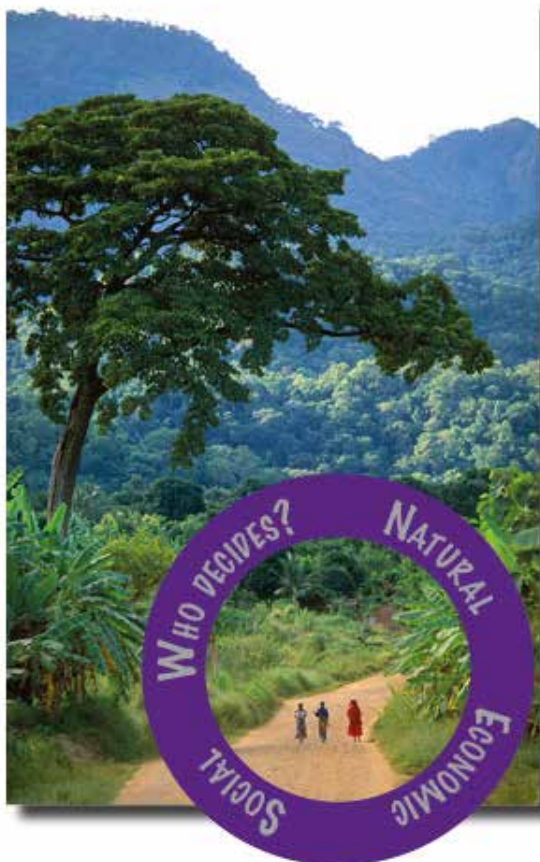
How do others in the group see it?



What questions would the group like to follow up?

'Saffiyah Khan challenges EDL demonstrators'

The development compass rose [DCR] is an example of a framework for generating enquiry questions. It seeks to make complexity more accessible to learners. Like the compass it can be applied to any place. It also enables debate about the connections between environmental, economic, social and political domains ... locally and globally.



The DCR highlights the nature of global systems - natural, social, economic and political - that influence local issues in all parts of the world. More importantly it poses the question: who decides?

By addressing decision-making and power, the DCR offers a structure to consider decisions involved in sustainable development. Decisions ranging from those made by international agreements and Trans National Companies to those we make individually.

The framework has been adapted for use in different contexts ranging from Key Stage 2 to 6th form.

[See article \[ET1\]](#)

This has links to original DCR consultation pack & 'Learning today with tomorrow in mind'.

See: [Development Compass Rose poster.](#)

See: [Introduction to DCR - Activities.](#)

The DCR can be used to generate questions in the context of different locations, e.g. this African tropical rainforest.

How do the people in the photo see the future?

What influences who decides?

Link

Introducing
development
compass
rose



The 3 pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals

The CD initiative seeks to build up dialogue skills, to engage complexity on global themes, across the key stages. **This will involve generating new material ... and making good use of resources produced by others.**

It will also use Tide~ experience, for example, from publications such as these. Some like 'Lenses' are recent, others like 'Get the picture' are older but the ideas are worth revisiting.

The 'handbooks' [Primary and Secondary] featured on page 13 provide an overview.

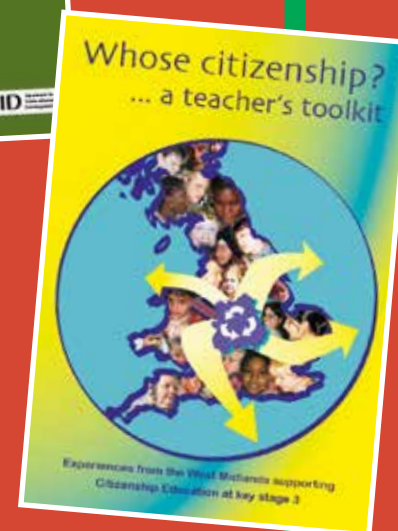
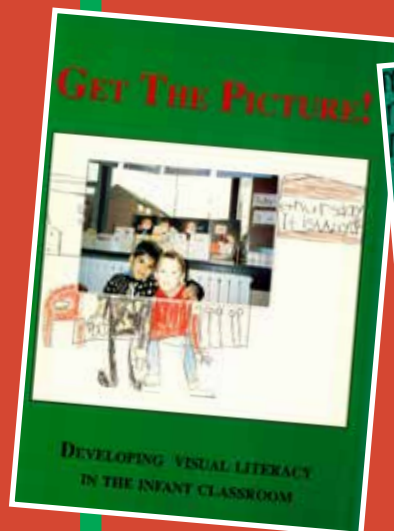
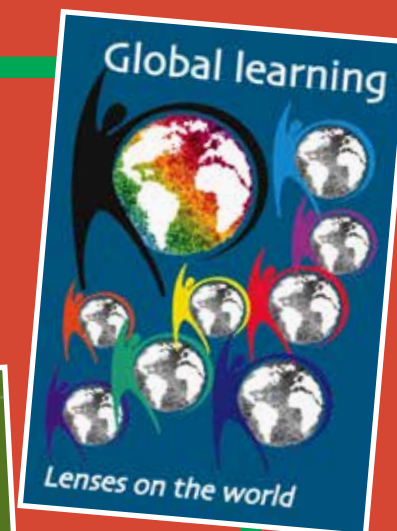
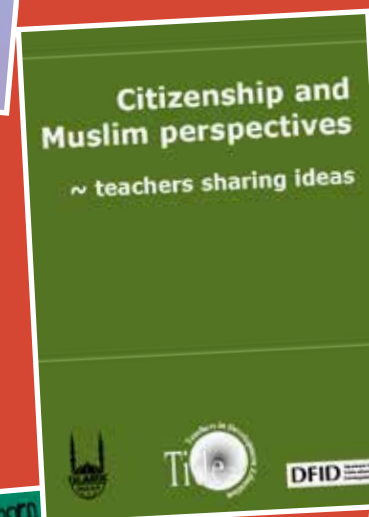
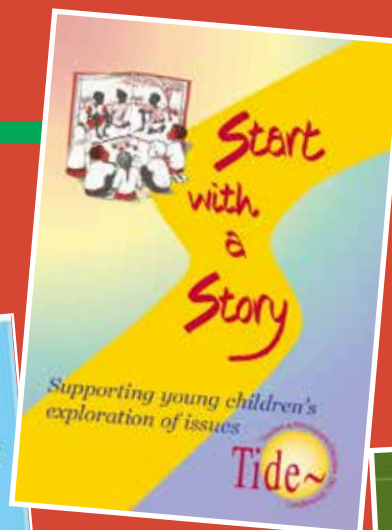
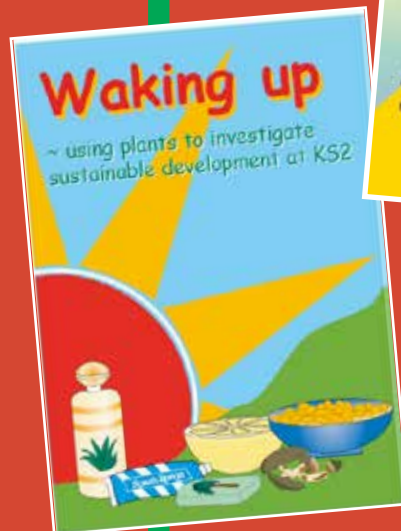
The [website publications list](#) offers over 60 publications to review or download.

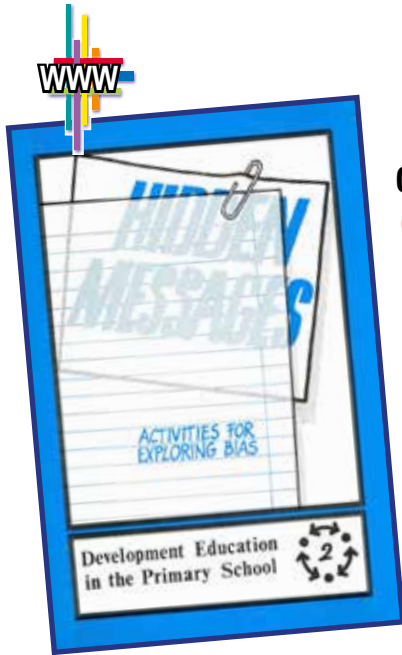
Three ET articles reflecting on projects leading to publications:

[Margaret Barnfield \[ET4\]](#) on Primary Science project.

[Sarah Snyder \[ET5\]](#) on case study about Mali - 'Where camels are better than cars'.

[Bill Elgar \[ET1\]](#) reflecting on resources following up a Tide~ study visit to Ghana.



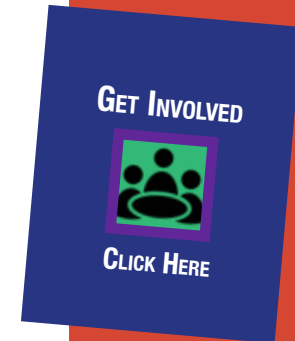


Exploring bias

Challenging matters such as racism, sexism, homophobia ... is vital but nevertheless **exploring bias is an essential skill**. All written material has bias so there is plenty of material that can be used to develop this skill before you introduce the additional complexity of newspapers. **'Hidden Messages' published in 1986 still has a message!**

However the development of what some call a 'culture war' has confused the message for young people. Some groups or organisations hold such a fixed view on particular issues that they deem it to be unacceptable to question those views. That, we suggest, is not a healthy approach to learning.

As the label 'woke' gets wider use there is perhaps a need for new material to unpack such issues **What do you think?**



Different newspapers often offer their own 'spin' on events. Building an awareness of this, for example, focusing on particular events is important. The scope increases if you also use social media sources.

Newspapers contain a wealth of material for discussion and debate about issues. Not only the articles and headlines. Photographs, letters, cartoons and advertisements can also provide a useful source of material for discussion.

See Tide~ Resource: [Using Newspapers](#)

**We all need to be able to question our sources
- to have our own 'Critical Reality Assessment'
processes - to be able to detect bias.**



The politics of bias: Euros 2021

The death of George Floyd moved people from a wide range of backgrounds, in many countries, to raise concerns about racism. **Yet even a symbolic gesture like 'taking the knee' became the focus for division.**

- ❑ How do we generate open discussion about these matters?
- ❑ How do we avoid trivialising the issues - as part of a 'culture war'?

The Government indicated that Black Lives Matter should not be promoted in schools. There was a risk schools interpreted this to mean they should not discuss the issue at all. To do this, we would suggest, is to fail to meet young people's learning needs. An understanding of the cause is fundamental, if not BLM the organisation as such.

What happened in summer 2021, at the **European Football Championships** illustrates the dilemmas. The Euros provided a welcome focus of attention, excitement and pride for many people, especially after lockdowns.

The row began over the decision of the England team to 'take the knee'. It soon escalated. The Home Secretary condemned the decision as 'gesture politics', and did not condemn people booing their own team, saying it was a matter of personal choice. As the situation became more inflamed, a leading footballer, Tyrone Mings, intervened on social media. [See cuttings - page 32]

It soon became clear that the matter was more complex and that the popular view was not as narrow as was being presented in the media, or as was assumed by some politicians.

Are anti-racist aspirations more widely held than is often assumed?



You don't get to stoke the fire at the beginning of the tournament by labelling our anti-racism message as 'Gesture Politics' & then pretend to be disgusted when the very thing we're campaigning against, happens.

Link: [Tweet: Tyrone Mings - England international and Aston Villa footballer](#)

Social media has been a key resource in giving our players a platform and has been a positive tool in so many ways. In fact, I feel like this generation of England players is closer to the supporters than they have been for decades. Despite the polarisation we see in society, these lads are on the same wavelength as you on many issues.

There are things I will never understand.
Why would you tag someone in on a conversation that is abusive?
Why would you choose to insult somebody for something as ridiculous as the colour of their skin?
Why?

Unfortunately for those people that engage in that kind of behaviour, I have some bad news. You're on the losing side. It's clear to me that we are heading for a much more tolerant and understanding society, and I know our lads will be a big part of that.

Link: [What is national pride?](#)
[from Gareth Southgate's article Dear England](#)

First they took on the England team. Then they lost. And now, in their infinite wisdom, they're taking on the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). They're going to lose that too....

They made two mistakes. The first was setting themselves up against the national football team, which is a frankly insane thing to do, but becomes more insane when they reach the finals of an international tournament. The second was to forget that the public is anti-racist. You can motivate people to the right on immigration, free movement and asylum. But when it comes to basic anti-racist sentiment, the vast majority ascribe to it.

Link: [Ian Dunt writing in politics.co.uk Weekly Review](#)

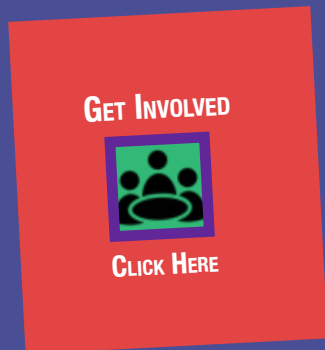
The Euros - setting the scene

See Elephant Times 2.4 - How do we know?

Add
link

Get involved with Connecting Dialogues

4



Connecting Dialogues seeks your support:

- ❑ to enable creative **connections** between teachers [and other education practitioners] from across the country;
- ❑ to **grow a network** that engages with dialogue about global issues from a teacher perspective;
- ❑ to contribute to approaches that improve learner opportunities [at all ages and in different subject areas] to develop their **dialogue skills and capacity** to deal with complex global realities.

Practically this means the development of:

- ❑ a new Tide~ website [launch in May 2022];
- ❑ the Elephant Times magazine as a 'creative space' to prompt reflection, spark debate and share curriculum ideas;
- ❑ teacher Zoom groups to work collectively on particular projects. In the coming year we propose three experimental themes:

The Global Pandemic; The Commonwealth; Ireland & Britain.

These themes all offer an opportunity to explore global perspectives. Events in 2022 also enable us to anticipate additional stimulus from the media.

Initial ideas are outlined in this section.

The ideas that we give priority to will reflect the interest generated by people in the network.

We seek to
bring added
value
and support
to the
innovatory
work of many
teachers
and
organisations



A global pandemic

The impact of the global pandemic is still uncertain. We are living through it and we cannot know when, or even if, it will be over. Although the expression 'get back to normal' has been used, is that even possible? The experience of living through the pandemic is life-changing for us all.

Perhaps more than ever before it is now obvious that uncertainty is a constant: the only thing that is certain is that there will be uncertainty.

Our interconnectedness with the rest of the world is now beyond dispute. Something happens in Wuhan and the entire world is affected.



The relationship between what we used to think of as private and public has altered in dramatic ways: we've been told to stay at home; we have been instructed in personal and public safety.



- ❑ **How should we help young people think about the pandemic, talk about it, express feelings about it, make some sense of it?**
- ❑ **How do we enable and encourage learners to have some optimism about their futures in a time of uncertainty?**
- ❑ **How, at a time when we have become more isolated, do we enable learners to be outward looking and engage with experiences of the pandemic in other parts of the world?**

Plans ... and aspiration

Plans - An Elephant Times magazine with a focus on the Global Pandemic has been published. [Click on cover]
It is designed to get some dialogue going.



It emphasises the global, asking: *What can we learn from studying the course of past pandemics - about their spread, and how people reacted?* For example 'Hamnet: The Journey of a flea' imagines how the 16th century plague spread along trade routes.

It is also important to offer opportunities to discuss personal reactions and reflections on the Covid-19 experience.

'Vaccines are a Global Matter'. There is a need for curriculum innovation to support learning about the complexities involved.

We invite suggestions, ET articles about your work and offers to join a group.

It is clear that, even if we in Britain are all vaccinated, we will not be safe if Covid-19 is able to mutate in parts of the world where vaccines are not available or prohibitively expensive. That is just one argument in support of the need for a global strategy.

GET INVOLVED



CLICK HERE

Aspiration - to form a *Zoom group, with teachers and other education practitioners, to develop stimulus material to **enable dialogue about Covid-19 as a global issue.**

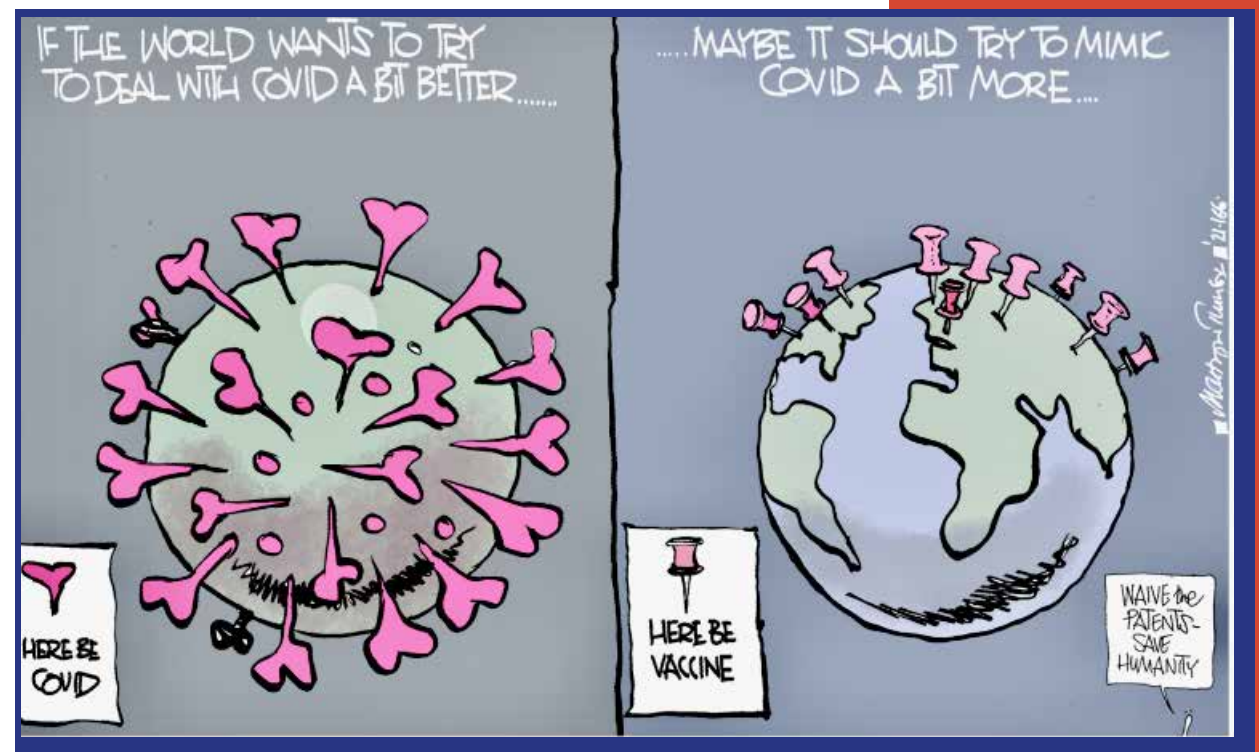
Please express your interest.

GET INVOLVED



CLICK HERE

* **Zoom:** offers the opportunity for a group bringing together teachers from different parts of the country.



Cartoon by Martyn Turner

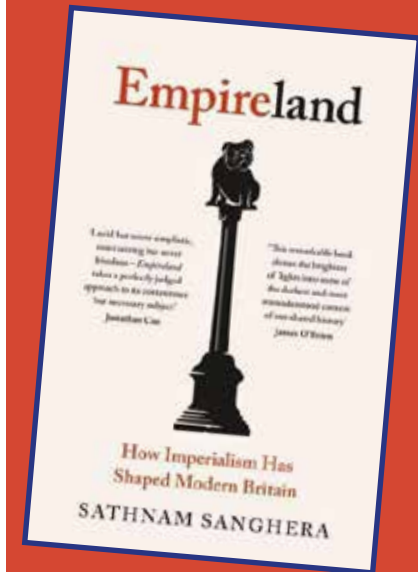
Connecting Dialogues

The Commonwealth

Birmingham is hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2022. There is an opportunity to use the interest this will generate to stimulate learning about the Commonwealth. **Where did it come from? Where is it going? How do we build an awareness of its complex and contested history?**



Inspired by the debates Sathnam Sanghera raises in 'Empireland' Tide~ is exploring the proposition that there is a need for a **'Commonwealth Awareness'** initiative to enable all learners to engage with the importance of this legacy without being overwhelmed by it or pushed into taking sides [either way] based on a 'culture war' approach, and very little learning.



FORWARD - TOGETHER Birmingham's motto revitalised in a sculpture -- all pulling together
NOBODY'S HOME WITHOUT A STRUGGLE WE ALL COME HERE FROM SOMEWHERE

Plans ... and aspiration

Plans - In Spring 2022 a series of Elephant Times magazines highlighted a Commonwealth theme.

This has been done in a way that complements, and offers added value to, other work that is planned in response to The Games, in particular that led by ...

[Birmingham Education Partnership \[BEP\]](#)

[ET 2.2 Commonwealth Awareness?](#)

This features challenges from **'Empireland'**.

"The challenge for us as educators, in the build up to the Games, is to open our minds to such challenges ... and work on the implications for what we teach."

[ET 2.3 'Three people - Three life stories'](#)

This is about **three life stories**. It shares the reflections of three Tide~ members who, as children, came to the UK. It then explores some of the issues.

ET 2.4 takes the theme: How do we know? to explore a variety of Commonwealth themes.



[Birchfield - Commonwealth Connections](#)

is a supplement to ET 2.4

Aspiration - That opportunities in 2022, linked to The Games, enable the network to review the potential of ongoing **'Commonwealth Awareness'**. We invite Heads and Teachers to share experiences and ideas in a special ET later in 2022.

[Please express your interest.](#)

GET INVOLVED



[CLICK HERE](#)

Sign up
Tide~
Commonwealth
Update



[Phil Glendenning's article in ET3](#) features the experience of **First Nation Australians** in the context of Black Lives Matter. These experiences and those, for example, in Canada, are also important to thinking about the Commonwealth.



Ireland and Britain

In December 2021 it was 100 years since the Anglo-Irish agreement that led to the setting up of the Free State a year later.

The CD project will use this opportunity to consider the potential for learning about global issues by focusing on **our most local international relationship**.

Michael D. Higgins [The Irish President] recently suggested that:

“Only by remembering complex, uncomfortable aspects of Britain and Ireland’s shared history can we forge a better future.”

[See article from The Guardian](#)

This observation is also significant to thinking about the Commonwealth.

[Half the lies are true](#) was published some 35 years ago as a follow up to a event that brought education practitioners together from both sides of the Irish Sea. We are inviting people to revisit this book as a stimulus to thinking about current awareness.

How do we see these matters 35 years on?

In partnership with 80:20 DEC/Tide~ set up a project bringing students from Birmingham, Belfast and Dublin together to share experiences through a series of workshops and conferences.

This project evolved over four years involving other partners and issues. It also focused on the build up to the Good Friday Agreement. See [Let’s Talk Review](#).

There were many other areas of co-operation between the two organisations, not least the [Development Education Commission](#) that involved lead curriculum people from each of the five jurisdictions in ‘these islands’.



Plans ... and aspiration

Plans - To consult practitioners in **Ireland and Britain** about the potential for new resources.

The plan is to start by revisiting some of the ideas and debates highlighted in 'Half the lies are true'. Then to use this as a stimulus for teachers and other education practitioners, from Britain and Ireland, to take a lead on thinking afresh about the value of seeing this relationship as a stimulus for learning about global matters.

- ❑ How do young people see this - our most local international relationship?
- ❑ What can we learn - from our history?
- ❑ What can we learn from more recent events such as The Good Friday Agreement and Brexit?

Tide~ is working with the Irish Development Education organisation [80:20](#) to produce a special ET publication.

As part of that process we would welcome:

- ❑ proposals for ET articles, or reviews of resources, that reflect on aspects of the matters explored in 'Half the Lies are True';
- ❑ reflective ET articles from some of those involved in Let's Talk.

GET INVOLVED



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Aspiration - to develop an ET publication with a focus on **'Ireland and Britain'** involving contributions from both countries in Autumn 2022.

What are your hopes for Ireland in 100 years time?

A favourite inclusion is the *Punch* cartoon commenting on Lloyd George (the Welsh Wizard) and the Government of Ireland Act 1920.



The Kindest Cut of All Welsh Wizard: "I now proceed to cut the map into two parts and place them in the hat. After a suitable interval they will be found to have come together of their own accord. (Aside) At least I hope so. I've never done this trick before."

From 'Half the lies are true. Ireland/Britain: a microcosm of international misunderstanding'.