

Global Learning ~

and thinking about the curriculum

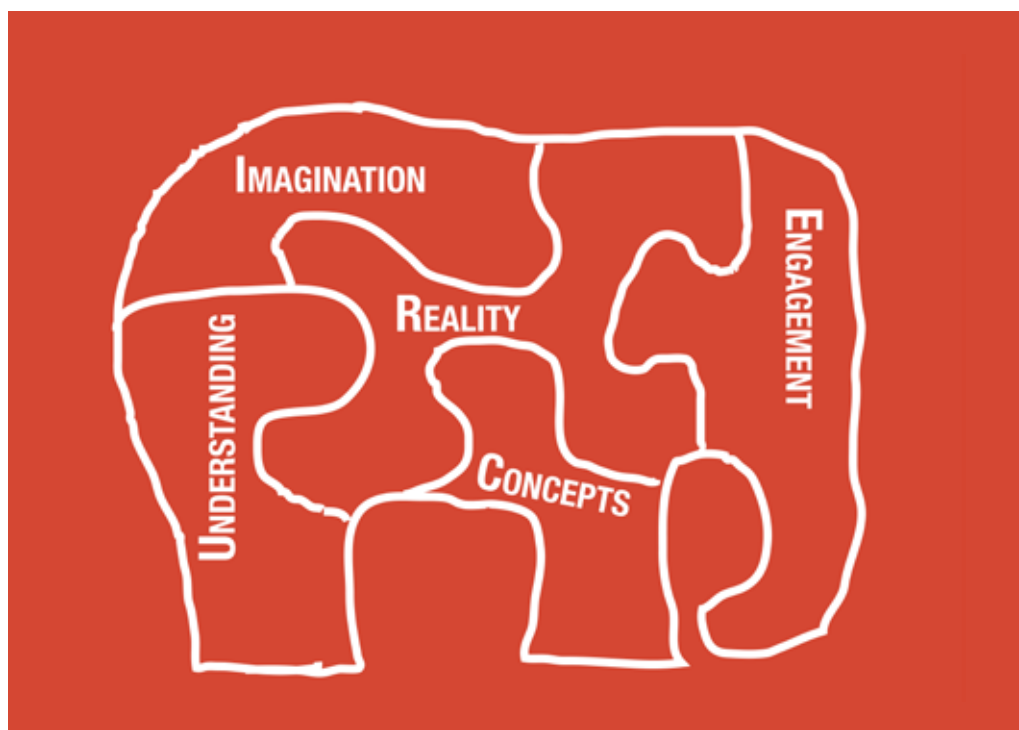


This statement is a contribution to the debates about the curriculum that the Francis Review is generating.

Making that which is complex accessible involves the skill to ask good quality questions.

The [development compass rose](#) (DCR) activities help learners to work on their own frameworks for enquiry. In this visual, the DCR is encircled by the sustainable development goals.

Elephant Times Association



Why does global learning matter?

Can we agree on the ambitions of global learning?
For us, it continues to be:

Global learning aims to ensure that children and young people are educated in such a way as to enable them to cope with and participate in our rapidly changing, complex and often confusing world.

In this age of inter-connectedness, division, complexity, and uncertainty the need for global learning remains as important as it ever was. Here we sum up key aspects of what we have learnt from teacher creativity over the last fifty years. We hope that this will inspire people - that such approaches to curriculum are 'doable' - that collaboration with students and team work with colleagues can make a difference - that this can enhance the quality of what schools have to offer.

Global learning: an approach not a subject

We came to understand that global learning is as much about how people teach and learn, as about what they teach and learn.

Global learning is not about new subjects, or new timetabled content. Instead, we worked collaboratively with teachers, and through them, their students, to develop projects about all aspects of the life of a school: the so-called 'hidden curriculum', the subjects taught, and extra curricular activities: because all offer opportunities to develop children and young people's skills, dispositions, knowledge and understanding for effective participation in today's inter-connected and complex world.

We resisted the idea that global learning is about "the good cause"; a mindset that many, including government, can hold. For example, thinking that the purpose is to eradicate poverty, or to endorse a justice campaign, however valuable that might be is not the aim. Nor is it to raise funds for good causes. We are concerned that such emphasis can be driven by the idea that children and young people are a 'captive audience' in school, rather than an educational agenda.

We remain cautious of calls to change the school curriculum that pay little, if any, consideration to how teachers teach and how children and young people learn. **For us, the focus of those seeking to influence the curriculum should be on what children and young people are entitled to learn: skills, knowledge, understandings and dispositions.**



The curriculum is stuffed ~ we cannot teach everything -- the 'whole cake'.

Schools can only offer a slice of what there is to learn.

That slice needs to enrich, to stimulate, to offer many layers of knowledge, skills and experience that build understandings - and enable an awareness of the whole.

An Entitlement Curriculum

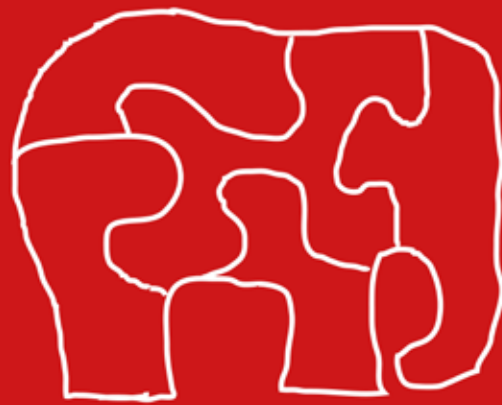
We came to understand that global learning was best understood in the context of an entitlement curriculum that states what children and young people in our society are entitled to learn, including skills, knowledge, understandings and dispositions. We emphasise that such an entitlement is backed by the aspiration "Success for All" - and that curriculum implementation starts with a focus on specific learners.

An entitlement curriculum goes beyond global learning - but should include it. From the perspective of global learning, the following elements are crucial in an entitlement curriculum:

The development of essential skills and dispositions, inc:

- ❑ **Awareness of self:** enabling learners to consider their own views, to develop their ideas, values and opinions, and to understand where and how these opinions are formed.
- ❑ **Awareness of others:** developing empathy with people in different situations and from different cultures, recognise and respect the validity of different points of view, and develop the skills to listen and ask questions
- ❑ **Ability to connect:** with people, the natural world, with a variety of social, economic and political perspectives - locally and globally.
- ❑ **Research skills and curiosity:** to acquire and critically assess information and form one's own conclusions.
- ❑ **Questioning:** being curious, wanting to find out more, understand better. Note that this, for us, is not about putting people down, or trying to trap someone. It enables learners to develop a structure to their own enquiry. Used appropriately, it enables us all to hold power to account.

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.

Work in South Africa inspired our practice and led to Tide~ publications including [‘Towards Ubuntu’](#) and [‘Exploring Ubuntu’](#).

The study of essential concepts and knowledge:

- ❑ **Models of development:** Local and global. By exploring different ways that local communities are develop, we can make complexity accessible, so that when we move on to explore development elsewhere, we can better understand what common and shared aspects of development are everywhere - and what are not.
- ❑ **Human Rights:** Examining the history of how human rights have become enshrined in law, enables us to consider which values societies do and do not hold dear, and to consider our own values.
- ❑ **Environmental Sustainability:** We cannot hope to consider local approaches to sustainability without understanding how decisions about the environment in one country impacts on other countries. Environmental systems function at a global level.
- ❑ **Power:** The concept of power underpins all the essential concepts. How is power acquired, changed or challenged, and held in check? Who holds power and how does that influence predominant values?

The use of appropriate learning processes:

- ❑ **Participation:** Developing the skills to participate in democracy requires that we acknowledge that this is about children and young people as citizens now as well as in the future. Participation in their own learning and schooling is an essential ingredient of learning to live in our complex and interconnected world.
- ❑ **Team work:** Children and young people can learn well when working with one another. Teachers can enable student agency without prescribing it: offering opportunities to engage with complexity, with teamwork, consideration of one another. This, of course, links to emotional intelligence and the ability to know that more than one thing can be true, that we can hold contradictory emotions, that we are complex, as is the world.

There is a need to offer space ...

❑ Space - for our own learning as educators

- ◇ Opportunities to enhance knowledge and experience relating to global issues and current events.
- ◇ Giving context to reflecting on learner needs.

❑ Space - for thinking about curriculum e.g. ...

- ◇ Developing curriculum appropriate to learner needs.
- ◇ Enabling student generated enquiry routes, and cross curricular experiences.
- ◇ Making the most of learner interests and motivation.
- ◇ Using a variety of stimulus - e.g. the local environment; the media; support organisations etc.

❑ Space - for team work

- ◇ Opportunities to co-operate creatively with other teachers – in school, across schools, via networks and subject associations.

❑ Space - for developing professional quality

Tide~'s recent work on the educational implications of the climate crisis has yet again endorsed the need for space to enable teacher creativity and innovation.

How do we encourage decision makers to offer such space?

“The problem today is that the world values answers over questions. But questions should matter more.”

Elif Shafak 'Three Daughters of Eve'

Core challenges

This approach, like others, presents challenges - we highlight four ...

Complexity

The subject matter of global learning is everywhere all the time. And yet, all too often, the assumption is that the global is somewhere else, not here. It is vital to make connections between the local and the global - we are part of the world, not an exception to it. Moreover, it is easier to engage with the complexity of an issue when it also links to a familiar context. We can too easily fall into the trap of oversimplifying the complex, simply because it is 'far away'.

The challenge therefore is to find ways to avoid oversimplifying the complexity of our global interconnectedness. A core task of educators is to equip students (in age-appropriate ways) to form their own opinions, by offering opportunities to gain knowledge, understanding, insights and to explore different viewpoints, evidence, and perspectives.

How should teachers deal with different values and viewpoints?

The role of teachers is not to indoctrinate learners but to open up possibilities. To live in the modern world, learners of all ages need to be able to engage in constructive dialogues with others whose opinions they may not share, and to be able to listen, reflect and learn.

Curriculum and teacher development: co-production

Teachers have the potential to be experts in curriculum development when given space, time and support to be creative. Every one of our projects over the past fifty years has been co-produced with teachers and their students.

Our experience tells us that education is more effective when it is a shared experience - between teacher and teacher - between learner and learner. Teacher development must also be a shared enterprise, because teachers also learn more effectively when sharing experience with fellow professionals.

Teacher support

We have indicated the need to develop reflective/critical thinking in learners so that they are able to question, discuss, evaluate, act. In our view we cannot develop the skills and dispositions essential to reflective learning if teachers do not share and display the same attributes. **Reflective learning requires reflective teaching.**

ETA ~ an archive looking to the future



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Elephant Times Association (ETA)

Global Learning and thinking about the curriculum

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This document is part of an archive project reflecting on the creative work of the many hundreds of teachers involved in DEC [Birmingham] and later the teacher network Tide~ global learning.

The Archive, due to be launched in March, will make ideas and resources available to stimulate teacher led curriculum initiative.

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