Meeting Educational Challenges:

The Case for Global Learning in the UK

Transforming our educational approaches in a complex, global world

Background to report

This report has been produced by a coalition of well established organisations and independent researchers that work on and around Global Learning in the UK to advocate for increased recognition, and implementation of, Global Learning approaches. The report has been shared with and endorsed by a much wider, cross-sectoral group of organisations from all around the UK.

Endorsing organisations

18 hours
Aberdeen for a Fairer World
CADA Northern Ireland
Centre for Global Education, Belfast
Christian Aid
Craven Development Education Centre
Cumbria Development Education Centre
Devon Development Education
DEED
Disasters Emergency Committee
Development Education Centre South Yorkshire
Dolen Cymru
Fairtrade Foundation
Fir Vale School, Sheffield
Friends of the Earth
Global Learning Association
Global Learning London
Global Link
Highland One World Global Learning Centre
IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education & Society
Leeds Development Education Centre
Liverpool World Centre
OASES
One World Centre Dundee
Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists
Oxfam GB
Research Centre for Global Learning, Coventry University
Reading International Solidarity Centre
Sazani Associates
ScotDEC
Scotland's International Development Alliance
TEESNet

The Geographical Association
The GLADE Centre
Tide Global Learning
Welsh Centre for International Affairs
WOSDEC

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Foreword

It is too easy to be complacent and imagine that Global Learning is covered within the national curriculum as part of the study of subject disciplines. We have to enable our young to come to terms with contentious issues and we need to trust our teachers to act in the best interests of the next generation. Young people today grapple with issues of identity, the implications of Black Lives Matter, the repercussions of enslavement, 'Me Too', 'Everyone's Invited' and ongoing images of strife the world over. Do we want their thinking and action to be influenced by our schools, or to leave that to random others on the web?

Sustainability and climate change are existential and raise all sorts of social, economic and ethical questions which any future citizen is going to need to consider. Surely few believe that we will achieve the 1.5-degree limit to warming. So what are Plan B and Plan C when we accept that there will be a greater rise during our children's lifetimes? We know there are enormous implications locally, nationally and internationally for people who will be displaced and implications for policies about migration, environment, resettlement, industry and economics, travel, tourism, food and population. What should we be doing now?

Obviously, the way in which we deal with such issues with young children when existential issues would harm rather than help is different from our approach with maturing adolescents, many of whom are already blaming older generations for not taking the issues seriously enough for so long. A gradual exposition is important and this should strike a balance between not overloading young children with stressful details and not 'sugar-coating' the magnitude and severity of the problem with teenagers.

This paper contains many case studies of schools across the country where Global Learning has been woven into the curriculum and learning experience of pupils. From traditional stories and Forest Schools with young pupils, to sustainability projects, to deeply embedded connections with schools across the globe, schools are showing what can be done... and with recognition in inspection, so often used as a reason for hesitance. There are examples of teenagers organising and managing conferences, with input from researchers and politicians, expecting that their resolutions will be taken seriously. And, of course, there is the importance of using planned science and geography studies to the full (as well as history, art, and statistics as vehicles for the understanding of our globe and its people). At the same time, teaching critical thinking is vital. Global Learning is multi-dimensional; it will need everyone to find ways of navigating the challenges - from writers to engineers, health workers to artists, financiers to scientists.

This consultation is a call to arms, setting out the facts, citing development, and urging wide support for the schooling community to address the issues facing our planet in a concerted and structured way.

Our young won't thank us for keeping quiet about things now and not helping them to understand the implications for reshaping how people live.

Mick Waters

Professor of Education and author

Summary

The serious domestic and global challenges that we collectively face demand a transformation of our educational approaches. Policy makers and educators alike are struggling to navigate the complexities of international developments as they impact locally on communities. It is clear that the happiness and mental well-being of children and young people is tangibly negatively affected by global issues and concerns.

It is equally clear that policy makers, teachers, and learners all need a greater understanding of the political, economic, environmental, and social issues that drive these challenges, fostering a sense of active global citizenship and maintaining community cohesion. There is an urgent need to develop the understanding, skills and values that enable critical engagement with the complexities of 21st century global economies and societies, and help us respond to potentially existential threats.

To address these needs, this paper advocates for increased recognition, and implementation of, Global Learning approaches - as a direct and timely response to changes to, and driven by: technology, society, climate, the economy, the world of work and international relations.

In summary, Global Learning can be defined as:
"Education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future"
(Dublin Declaration on Global Education to 2050).

There is considerable evidence that Global Learning is not a 'nicety', but essential in motivating and empowering our young people to face the enormous challenges that face us all. They are, it is clear, already engaging in this learning - on-line and through social media. Much of that learning is at best ill-informed and at worst cynically targeted and cunningly designed to disrupt the very fabric of their lives and our society.

Young people's thirst for this knowledge, as evidenced in; every major consultation of their views, through their activism on the climate emergency and, in every anecdotal face to face engagement, is clearly demonstrated. They, rightly, demand that political leaders take urgent and decisive action and honour promises that have been made. Failing to do so will undoubtedly have repercussions at the ballot box down the line as more young people reach majority and disillusion with mainstream politics. Global issues are a part of every child's life, and, as such, they need to be an essential component of their learning at all ages, promoting critical thinking and developing local - global relationships.

Global learning brings about several clear benefits:

- **Improved motivation of learners and teachers leading to**
- **Higher academic standards**
- **Improved social and community cohesion**
- **Improved behaviour & attendance**

Most countries with advanced education systems are developing policies and direct funding to support Global Learning.

Increasingly this is being promoted through ministries of foreign affairs, working with ministerial peers in education and through educational bodies, and both regional and local authorities. They are responding to the urgent calls for education to address global issues identified in key international agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals, and declarations by bodies such as UNESCO and Global Education Network Europe (GENE).

However, the UK is not currently one of those many countries and now provides no funding or policy support for any form of Global Learning - despite having done so in the past.

This paper lays out the evidence for the positive impact of Global Learning on society, the economy, and the individual.

It outlines the development of a workable basis for a national strategy that includes all the key stakeholders in education, and takes account of the differences in the four nations of the UK.

It cites evidence from a range of recent initiatives across Europe, and case studies from within the UK, that Global Learning contributes to wider public support for governments, stronger economies, and more cohesive societies.

Funding for civil society organisations, and research on Global Learning, is necessary to build capacity and expertise to implement such a strategy. Such funding should be linked to the intentions of, and progress towards, the Sustainable Development Goals.

1 **A Clear National Policy on Global Learning:** The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, as the key focal point for UK engagement with pressing global issues, must take a lead in developing a clear direction and strategy to deliver this vital pillar of education.

2 **A policy for all ages across all communities:** The development of this strategy must take account of the differing approaches and separate educational systems across the UK nations and include the key educational stakeholders across all levels of formal education and life-long learning.

3 **Invest in existing expertise to support teachers:** Vulnerable but valuable civil society organisations, and of course by extension teachers, must be given appropriate support and resource to build capacity and share knowledge and expertise to bring the most value to a shared UK-wide approach. This can build on existing wider sustainable development initiatives, but requires its own source of funding nationally and locally.

4 **Align with the international community:** A new strategy must be aligned with wider international efforts to meet the key SDG 4.7 target, with particular reference to the latest actions from UNESCO and the European GENE network. This should also reflect developing attitudes to decolonial and anti-racist practise.

Introduction

Good quality education equips learners with the knowledge and skills to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Strengthening our education system so that it provides society with thoughtful, skilled and imaginative responses to issues and processes that affect us, including the ability to address problems we don't even know about yet, is of key importance.

The current priorities for UK policy makers include education to support social economic mobility regardless of the background or location of learners, and an extension of the range of teaching and learning beyond 'core subjects' of maths, English, and science to include the increasingly relevant social and economic sciences, creative arts, languages and ICT, media literacy, and sports.

There can be little doubt that these priorities must address unprecedented and interconnected global challenges – rapid and unprecedented shifts in global society and attitudes in response to the climate crisis, major conflicts, the impact of global pandemics, rapid technological and communications change and concerns about economic development, inequality, and social cohesion.

Promoting critical thinking, developing understanding of both local and global issues, the common threads that increasingly connect them, and the skills to provide considered responses to such issues, should be an essential component of learning for all ages. As this document makes clear, there is considerable evidence that Global Learning can help to do this, raising the overall quality of teaching and learning in meeting current and future challenges.

The UK is not alone in having to deal with such concerns. At a global level the need for an education that equips people with understanding, creativity, and skills is clearly stated in the foundational Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by the world's leaders in 2015 [1]. Under Goal 4, Target 4.7 specifically states that by 2030, all learners should *"acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."*

In addressing such a task, the UK has an internationally respected education system. However, from being one of the leading countries in the world for Global Learning, the UK has fallen behind in developing policy to support this goal.

It is not at present implementing recommendations to meet SDG target 4.7 outlined above nor has it responded to the more recent UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development [2], or substantially engaged with a new 'Declaration on Global Education in Europe to 2050' [3]. This significant shift threatens the UK's considerable success in delivering globally foundational understanding and skills, particularly but not only through local and national civil society organisations (CSOs).
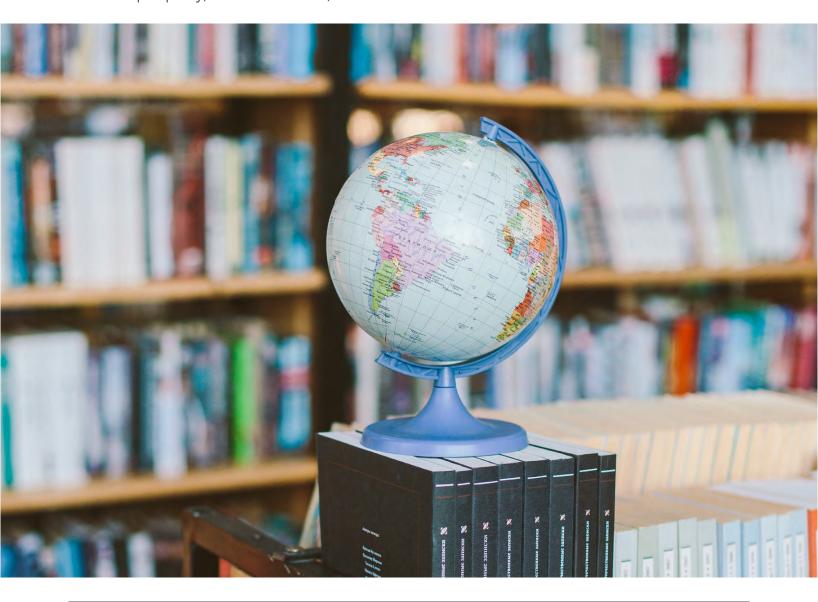
[1]   https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4#targets_and_indicators
[2]   https://www.unesco.org/en/global-citizenship-peace-education/recommendation n
[3]   https://www.gene.eu/ge2050

For many years, formal and non-formal educators in the UK offered a lead to other countries, specifically in Europe, in the design of their own programmes. Initially promoted by various Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs), such as Oxfam and Christian Aid, and subsequently through a wider network of local Development Education Centres and others, this work was until 2022 supported and funded through several government initiatives, such as the Department for International Development's 'Development Awareness Fund', and its 'Global Learning Programme'. Whilst there remains some support for global citizenship and sustainable development education in the devolved administrations, the UK government no longer provides any direct funding to initiatives that promote Global Learning.

Despite this setback there remains a broad network of educators and organisations who remain committed and enthusiastic to delivering this vital work to learners. This paper outlines the rationale, approach, and positive impact of this activity and argues that more could and should be done to equip all our learners with the knowledge to not only make a more active contribution to the UK's future economic and social prosperity, but also to a fairer, safer world.

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[4] DFID financial support for civil society, institutional and local authority Global Learning initiatives, when available, was valued at c. £9.7 million p.a. on average.

Global Learning

A range of local and national voluntary organisations and initiatives support educational processes that aim to develop positive outlooks to playing an active, knowledgeable and skilled role in our society: locally and globally. The specific emphasis of each of these organisations and initiatives varies, from attention to themes relating to poverty and economic development, to attention to climate change and the causes and effects of global ecological crises. Their use of approaches also varies, from information provision about particular issues to active learning approaches that engage learners in considering various perspectives and responses to such issues. Organisations will also use different terms within different education jurisdictions in the UK. These include, for example, development education, global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, learning for sustainability, global education, and global learning.

However, this diverse sector is supported in its work by a growing body of evidence and guided in its priorities by international initiatives. These include, as referred to above, the Sustainable Development Goals and its specific Target regarding education. In addition, for example UNESCO, in its 'Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development', proposes that *"… all people, throughout their life, are equipped and empowered with the knowledge, skills, including socio-emotional skills, values, attitudes and behaviours needed for effective participation in democratic decision-making processes, economic empowerment, awareness-raising and individual and collective actions at community, local, national, regional and global levels that advance peace and promote international understanding, cooperation, poverty eradication and tolerance, in order to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights, fundamental freedoms, global citizenship and sustainable development through education".* [5]

Related to such initiatives, Global Education Network Europe (GENE), an influential network of and for policy makers, developed a strong consensus across Europe via the European 'Declaration on Global Education to 2050' which was adopted in Dublin in 2022 [6]. In it, policy makers identified that a central task of education is the promotion of human rights, a culture of peace, sustainable development, and global citizenship. The Declaration describes Global Education and Learning as: *"…Education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future."*

What defines Global Learning?

What unites these various local & international approaches & themes in the concept of Global Learning is that they:

- Put learning in a global context, emphasising the way in which global issues affect and are affected by national and local events and experiences;
- Develop learners' understanding of such local-global relationships, including the economic, social, political and environmental processes that influence them, and the ways in which diverse societies are affected by and respond to these relationships and processes;
- Develop learners' skills of critical thinking, distinguishing between information, disinformation, assumptions and opinions: enabling enquiry into, discussion of and responses to the issues;
- Inculcate learners' interest and creativity in developing personal and collective responses to their learning.

What makes the approaches relevant to learners is that they see and frame education not only as a preparation for life, but as life itself: investigating and responding to real world issues.

In investigating various themes and issues, quality Global Learning develops:

- Abilities to make connections between what is happening in our own communities and in communities and countries elsewhere;

- Abilities to question and distinguish between different forms of information, data, facts, opinions;

- Confidence in and a belief and willingness to make a positive contribution to local, national and global developments;

- Understanding of the global forces on our lives and on those of other people;

- Self-reflection, critical dialogue and questioning of one's own assumptions and opinions about the world;

- Abilities to work collaboratively with others who may have different experiences, viewpoints and perspectives;

- A recognition of different perspectives that affect how particular issues are responded to.

Impact case studies

The success of such approaches of engaging with real world issues is shown through various school inspection and evaluation reports. For instance:

- An Ofsted report on an inspection of Castle Park Primary School in Kendal, a school that applies a Global Learning approach to its teaching and learning, noted that *"An imaginative approach to the curriculum inspires pupils to become confident learners. It promotes strengths in pupils in writing, science, art and increasingly, an awareness of global issues. Lessons and topics reflect the pupils' own interests. This generates better learning because pupils understand the meaning of what they are doing. Frequent links between subjects add further relevance for pupils, for example writing may be developed as part of geography and mathematics as part of a science investigation."*

- At Selly Park secondary school, Birmingham, a school already deemed 'outstanding' according to Ofsted, international school links, using Global Learning approaches, were introduced to further improve school results. By introducing issues that were relevant to students' experiences, the approaches not only promoted intercultural dialogue and mutual learning across different countries and cultures, but also improved students' confidence in taking the initiative in applying their learning to new activities and further learning.

- A Geographical Association commissioned research into the UK government sponsored 'Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning' programme concluded that during 2021, the first year of the Covid pandemic, the programme had improved secondary school pupil engagement with their learning and their knowledge of the issues being addressed, and that values expressed by pupils, and relationships amongst them, had improved.

[5] https://www.unesco.org/en/node/82093
[6] https://www.gene.eu/ge2050

Global Learning in Governmental Programmes in the UK

Awareness, understanding and skills promoted by Global Learning are increasingly called for in a globalised society and economy in which learning is an ongoing and lifelong process. [7] They can be and have been fostered in a variety of settings with, for example, the UK government's previous Global Learning Programme (GLP) aiming to foster the following outcomes:

- *pupils acquire knowledge enabling them to understand the causes and effects of global poverty and uneven development – including globalisation, social, economic and political processes – recent progress and challenges, and to consider what possible solutions exist;*

- *pupils develop skills through engaging with this knowledge to explore issues critically and to examine the actions individuals and communities can take to overcome global poverty, including their own responses;*

- *pupils explore their own values when looking at key global issues, considering issues such as fairness, human rights and tolerance.* [8]

This Programme had different iterations in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and resulted in a major step change in terms of engagement by schools in global learning. Over 10,000 schools were involved in the programme, benefitting from a range of professional development courses, access to resources and advice from a range of local and national organisations. A feature of the programme was its ongoing research and evaluation and production of reports that demonstrated its value and effectiveness. [9]

The success of the GLP was built on the previous work of the Development Awareness Fund (1996-2010), which strengthened the reach and impact of Global Learning across the UK, providing support to teachers and schools, and the creation and piloting of innovative new curriculum development projects.

Since 2022, in England, there has not been dedicated support for Global Learning initiatives, but a governmental 'strategy for the education and children's services systems' on sustainability and the climate emergency does exist. [10] Although the strategy lacks a lifelong learning perspective and does not give significant attention to the global connections of the issues it discusses – and hence misses a key component of learning in a changing world, it provides a context within which Global Learning can take place.

Within Scotland, there has been some continued governmental support for civil society initiatives for work at a local level on global citizenship. The main focus however has been on Learning for Sustainability (LfS) [11], which defines its methodology as:

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[7] See, for example, Understanding Global Skills for 21st Century Professions
and https://ukskillspartnership.org.uk/2021/05/worldskillsuk-launch-skills-taskforce-for-global-britain/
[8] https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1492723/1/DERC_ResearchPaper11-TheTheoryAndPracticeOfGlobalLearning[2].pdf
[9] https://globaldimension.org.uk/the-global-learning-programme/; https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1473867/1/franhunt2015-supportingwholeschoolapproachestogloballearning.pdf; https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1503404/1/DERCrp14brown_web.pdf
[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainability-and-climate-change-strategy/sustainability-and-climate-change-a-strategy-for-the-education-and-childrens-services-systems
[11] https://learningforsustainabilityscotland.org/

"An approach to life and learning which enables learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. An effective whole school and community approach to LfS weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development education and outdoor learning to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences." [12]

Organisations working within LfS are able to highlight their particular specialisms within the overarching LfS framework. For example, outdoor learning organisations can focus on this while highlighting it as a means of establishing a culture of LfS. Similarly, Scotland's Development Education Centres work with thousands of practitioners each year to emphasise the importance of Global Citizenship as a key means of achieving LfS. In this way, the component parts of LfS each have a well-established identity within the overarching framework.

Up until 2022 in Wales there had been specific support for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC), which included attention not only to primary and secondary education, but also to lifelong learning with examples of its relevance in Further Education [13] and in Adult and Community Education [14], since:

ESDGC is about:

- *The links between society, economy and environment and between our own lives and those of people throughout the world.*
- *The needs and rights of both present and future generations.*
- *The relationship between power, resources and human rights.*
- *The local and global implications of everything we do and the actions that individuals and organisations can take in response to local and global issues.* [15]

The 2022 Curriculum for Wales contains as one of its four purposes a reference to learners becoming *"ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world".* [16] However, dedicated resources for training and support for educators in implementing the six identified 'Areas of Learning', which take into account a global perspective and approach, is lacking.

In Northern Ireland, the curriculum includes reference to local and global citizenship with an emphasis on diversity, human rights, equality, participation and democracy [17], but support for work with educators and the public largely relies on international non-governmental organisations and on locally raised funds.

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[12] https://education.gov.scot/resources/a-summary-of-learning-for-sustainability-resources/
[13] https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/education-for-sustainable-development-and-global-citizenship-in-the-further-education-sector-in-wales_0.pdf
[14] https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/education-for-sustainable-development-and-global-citizenship-a-common-understanding-for-the-adult-and-community-learning-sector.pdf
[15] Ibid
[16] https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales
[17] https://ccea.org.uk/key-stage-3/curriculum/learning-life-work/local-global-citizenship#:~:text=In%20Local%20and%20Global%20Citizenship,Human%20Rights%20and%20Social%20Responsibility

Case study: Global Learning Programme

Managed and supported by Pearson [18] in England, the Global Learning Programme significantly relied on local organisations and professional bodies for its implementation including subject professional associations, Oxfam, and Institute of Education. Development Education Centres (DECs) in particular used their knowledge and skills to bring together teachers, introducing new teaching and learning approaches and resources and supporting teachers in collective development of new education programmes.

- At Carmel College secondary school, County Durham, a designated 'Expert Centre', part of the then government supported Global Learning Programme, 80 staff members from the College and from partner schools, used that support to: * Introduce new, enquiry based, active learning pedagogies in for instance Geography and Modern Foreign Language teaching; * Apply Global Learning perspectives into the existing curricula, for example that of English teaching; * Reform the Music curriculum by giving attention to how different cultures approach the use and composition of music; * Alert students to opportunities to make local-global connections and apply a global perspective to aspects of the curriculum.

- At Fleckney School and other schools in Leicestershire, such outside support led to collaborative work between schools on the design of new curricula, involving attention to the global dimensions of various topics and the introduction of new teaching and learning approaches.

In Northern Ireland, the Programme was managed by the Centre for Global Education, and between 2014 and 2018, 523 schools and 1,003 teachers participated in Teacher Professional Development programmes in Global Learning. The success of this programme illustrated the Global Learning sector's capacity to deliver effective training to teachers and schools when the resources are made available to do so. For example at St Kieran's Primary School in West Belfast Global Learning was integrated into the school's World Around Us (WAU) planning, identifying five achievable Global Learning targets for improvement over three years as part of the School Development Plan.

Attribution: Andy Aitchison / Oxfam

[18] https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/news-and-policy/reports-and-campaigns/global-learning-programme.html

The Global Learning community in the UK

The success of initiatives such as the Global Learning Programme would not have been possible without a strong body of support and expertise within the educational community. Since the 1970s there has been a civil society organisation-based movement that has promoted and supported learning about international development, global and sustainability issues within all aspects of education. Leading international NGOs such as Oxfam [19], Christian Aid [20] and CAFOD [21] have historically been strong supporters of the area. UNICEF UK [22] too has been a leading player in the field of global learning primarily through its Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) programme which has engaged over 5000 schools across the UK, and continues to grow. In Scotland the Scottish Government has funded the RRSA programme for all state primary and secondary schools between 2022 - 2025, and in February 2024, it was announced that participation in the RRSA programme would be funded for all state education settings in all London boroughs via the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit. The British Council, through its longstanding support for international partnerships, and as manager of the previous government supported Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning (CCGL) programme, has also been a major player in the field, working with 1800 schools. [23]

Case study: Rights Respecting Schools Award

At Langley Moor School, Durham, the Rights Respecting School programme has successfully been used to improve pupil listening skills, their self-respect, empathy and compassion, and their democratic practice. Pupils have been involved in discussion and implementation of children's rights and how they can be adhered to, administered and controlled by the pupils themselves.

A feature of the UNICEF UK programme – which is supported by the Scottish Government and many local authorities in England and Wales – is the professional development courses it offers to teachers. The Award aims to improve the lives of children in the UK by taking a whole school approach to putting children's rights at the heart of school policy and practice. A 2019 survey results showed that child rights education plays a key role in developing children and young people as active, engaged local and global citizens. There is evidence of direct impact on school culture through explicit empowerment of pupils: *"Our views are taken very seriously. Our opinion matters because we are the pupils, we know what it is like in the school and their [adults'] perspective is different from ours."* **(Primary pupil from a Rights Respecting School).** [24]

Such nationally supported initiatives were only made practical through the involvement of a wide range of local organisations and in particular a network of local Development Education Centres (DECs) that have acted as the grassroots contact for teachers, schools and communities. The support provided by such Centres does not lead to a replacement of existing curricula, but instead to an augmentation and improvement of existing teaching and learning, particularly through provision of CPD training, curriculum development support, consultancy, and the organisation of conferences for teachers and young people.

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[19] https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/
[20] https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/schools
[21] https://cafod.org.uk/education/education-resources
[22] https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/
[23] https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en/connecting-classrooms-through-global-learning
[24] https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2019/07/Impact-Report-2018_Final-170719.pdf

Case study: Impact of Development Education Centres

In Leeds, the local DEC has and is working with schools, such as Moor Allerton Hall, to adjust its curriculum so it better meets its core values around sustainability. While at Beechwood School the DEC has, according to the Headteacher, supported the staff not only *"to frame [...] themes in a way that's relevant and meaningful and that helps us to do what we feel is right for the children longer term"*, including by *"providing expertise has also helped bring together like-minded teachers/SLT from other schools, who feel disheartened, isolated and alone because they're on their own, and helped them do more by joining them up in a teacher network and showing them it's important."*

Each DEC defines its own areas of work in response to local needs and enquiries, usually working with schools, teachers, local authorities, youth and community groups, universities, volunteers, and adult learners. In England, most DECs are members of The Global Learning Network [25], while in Scotland the International Development Association of Scotland (IDEAS) [26] provides a platform for similar collaboration between local centres. The Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies in Northern Ireland (CADA-NI) [27] and the Wales Alliance for Global Learning [28] provide networks of initiatives in those jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland, organisations, such as the Centre for Global Education in Belfast [29], tend to be members too of the all-Ireland network of the Irish Development Education Association (IDEA). [30] Professional bodies such as subject associations for geography, science and citizenship have also made a major contribution, while the Teacher Education for Equity and Sustainability Network (TEESNet) engages those involved in teacher education in Higher Education institutions. [31]

A number of universities have research programmes concerned with Global Learning, for example UCL through its Development Education Research Centre (DERC). [32] DERC also provides the administration of a global network of academics, policy-makers, and practitioners involved in Global Learning, the Academic Network on Global Education and Learning (ANGEL). [33]

The lack of direct funding to bodies that provide support to schools and other educational bodies is a major challenge however. There are few opportunities or spaces to develop creative and innovative initiatives. Organisations rely on securing small amounts of money that schools have for professional development or from other sources such as arts, environment or community affairs. Only in Scotland has there been direct funding to local Development Education Centres. Also in Scotland, the expertise of these centres has been recognised by the government, and they have been invited to collaborate on the Anti-Racist Education Programme (AREP).

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[25] https://www.thegloballearningnetwork.org/about-the-network/
[26] https://www.ideas-forum.org.uk/
[27] https://www.cada-ni.org/
[28] https://www.wcia.org.uk/global-learning/wagl/
[29] https://www.centreforglobaleducation.com/
[30] https://www.ideaonline.ie/
[31] https://liverpoolworldcentre.org/teesnet/
[32] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/centres/development-education-research-centre
[33] https://angel-network.net/

Contribution to Raising the Quality of Education

There is considerable evidence that Global Learning can help to raise the overall quality of learning because it can empower and motivate both teachers and learners.

By making the learning more relevant to learners, it contributes to learners' further interest in learning. Global Learning approaches show the value of real world learning experiences, providing learners with a strong values base of compassion, fairness and social justice that can have a wider impact on society and democratic engagement. This can be seen, for example, in the evaluation report of the Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning (CCGL) programme:

"Students demonstrated an increased understanding of global issues, increased empathy and an understanding of their similarities with other students in the UK and around the world, and their role and responsibilities in shaping the world." [34]

This, and other evaluations and research into Global Learning's effectiveness, such as those collected and analysed by Bourn and Hatley, [35] show that where teachers had a sense of agency and had space to develop their own approaches, there was *"evidence of increased confidence"* and of enthusing fellow teachers. This evidence suggests that global learning approaches can be *"a valuable way of securing teacher retention, to give them confidence and motivation, and to remind them of the wider social purpose of education."*

The comments of one of the teachers involved with the Global Learning Programme (GLP) demonstrates the value of such programmes:

"[I] feel much more comfortable in my [...] questioning on big ideas and things like that [...] I've always known what's going on in the world make links and connections, I think I've felt more confident to do that; but actually being able to understood [sic] how important it is actually to do that and make it relevant to what you're learning."

The value of the Global Learning Programme was mentioned too in an OFSTED inspection with a primary school in Cheshire:

"The curriculum is very broad and supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They have a wide understanding of the world around them as a result of the many trips, visits and clubs the school offers. The school is recognised as an Expert Centre for the National Global Learning Programme for its positive contribution to a globalised world within the school curriculum. This enhances pupils' lives and gives them an understanding of both the challenges and the wonders of the world." [36]

In another primary school, there was evidence that Global Learning had helped to improve teaching at a school that had been rated as *in need of improvement*, resulting in it progressing to *good*. The inspection noted that:

"The school uses global education themes very effectively to set pupils' learning in a worldwide context and broaden their views of the world. This makes the learning more relevant and interesting for pupils, and so it contributes to their enthusiasm for learning." [37]

The value of programmes such as the Global Learning Programme in raising teachers' morale, confidence and enthusiasm was noted by several teachers:

Teacher 1
"I was at quite a low point ... and the whole idea of global learning obviously gave me that renewed focus ... through the training, it's given me the opportunity to...to do more things. Like the teacher training and stuff that I've never done before."

Teacher 2
"It's just given another dimension to the teaching in the classroom and it's like a bright spark of actually there is some stuff out there."

Teacher 3
"I think it's given me another lease of life, at least as a teacher, definitely. It's made a huge...for me a huge difference. Because I realise how passionate I am about it and I don't mind how much time I put into it. I just love seeing the changes in the children. That's why I'm a teacher. That really has kind of...that's what it's about for me." [38]

Apart from evaluations of specific programmes, and references to the effect of Global Learning in Ofsted reports, a number of broader investigations have also taken place:

In 2022, collaboration between staff at UCL's Development Education Research Centre and Bath Spa University led to an investigation into current levels of formal education engagement in Global Learning themes (in particular with regard to SDG Target 4.7) [39]. This research looked into how such themes are being delivered, areas of success, identifiable gaps, and what the priorities for policymakers should be. The report produced as a result of this investigation concludes *"that, despite lack of clear direction, guidance and resourcing from policymakers, there is a wealth of creative, imaginative activities happening in many schools in England that make direct connection to social, environmental and cultural issues."* It also noted a great deal of *"enthusiasm within many schools for encouraging learning that has a social purpose, is creative, participatory, and learner centred. There is also evidence that civil society organisations have played an important role in supporting teachers to deliver these initiatives within the classroom."*

Other research, for example by Manchester Metropolitan University, tends to confirm such findings and builds on it, for instance finding that teachers observed that their work using critical Global Citizenship Education – which forms part of Global Learning – had a particular positive benefit to 'low achieving students'. [40]

Case study: Global Learning and Mental Health

Applying a Global Learning approach can also be helpful in addressing the mental health of learners. In Cumbria the local DEC implemented a project with care-experienced young people. Using the practices and methods of GL the project improved participants': * mental health, through mindfulness practices and conscious bodywork; * ability to find and maintain support, by creating community connections with people and places and tools that help participants to navigate their pathways to the future; and * life skills, by improving their skills in communication, collaboration, creativity, compassion and resilience.

[34] IPSOS and Learn More, 2022 Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning – Evaluation of Impacts, London British Council

[35] https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10147491/1/OSW%20report_Revised.pdf?utm_source=osw-website

[36] https://www.egerton.cheshire.sch.uk/page/global-learning/6467

[37] https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1503403/

[38] These quotes are from evidence prepared by the Development Education Research Centre as part of its reports for the evaluation and final reports from the Global Learning Programme.

[39] https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10147491/1/OSW%20report_Revised.pdf?utm_source=osw-website, p 118

[40] https://www.mmu.ac.uk/media/mmuacuk/content/documents/esri/projects/teacher-resource-project/final-report-pedagogy.pdf, see for example p 21

Evidence of Need and Global Learning Responses

Concerns and interests of young people

Many young people are concerned about global and sustainability issues and would like such issues addressed in their education. [41] A report by Reboot the Future in 2023, based on interviews and focus groups with teachers, also identified a strong desire for global learning and sustainability themes to be reflected in every area of the curriculum. [42] What is problematic is the lack of clarity within education policy frameworks about how to respond to these concerns and interests. Schools and teachers are also under considerable pressure to deliver a full curriculum within time constraints. A challenge therefore is to ensure that global learning is not seen as an additional requirement pushed on to teachers, but rather a means by which they can enrich what they are already doing.

Attribution: Tori Ferenc / Oxfam

Global Learning: A useful 'set of tools'

What Global Learning can do is provide a framework not only for developing educators' approaches and learners' knowledge, but also a set of tools enabling learners to take forward their understanding into forms of social engagement and personal responses. In that context, promoting a global outlook can also be an important educational response to the dangers of xenophobia and 'fake news' by ensuring that learners have access to a range of voices and perspectives that can enable them to develop a more socially just world view.

Initiatives such as the Fairtrade Award programme showed that discussing fair trade became an important starting point for global citizenship. It enabled the development within the school of a stronger values base around areas such as fairness and enabling learners to make connections between global issues and their everyday lives. [43]

Case study: Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade School Award

The Fairtrade Foundation's successful programme involves more than 1000 schools across the UK. Investigating global trading and economic relations through a focus on what constitutes 'fairness' is a topic that can be tackled at both primary and secondary level and can be applied across a range of curriculum subjects including geography, mathematics, sciences, design and technology and citizenship. A report that evaluated the scheme from a Global Learning perspective (Bourn, 2018) noted that *"the theme of fairness was often seen as linked to a sense of empathy and awareness of the needs and conditions of farmers. It was noted that through a process of learning, empathetic skills can be nurtured: 'The children showed a great deal of empathy towards farmers who were not being given a fair amount of money for their work. They have been inspired to move the campaign forward to their parents and wider families. This topic is fundamental to developing a greater awareness of how young people live in other parts of the world which in turn can help to develop empathy skills."*

Votes for Schools is another organisation that has supported young people's engagement and participation in learning about societal, including global, issues. Their activities include debates on issues, leading to votes which are then passed on to policymakers so pupils see the impact of their actions. A number of OFSTED reports and direct feedback from schools commented on the value of such approaches. [44]

There has also been increased interest amongst both teachers and young people in addressing issues around cultural discrimination, the impact of antisemitism, and Islamophobia. Global learning approaches have been shown to provide a positive way of engaging with these questions. For example, Global Learning London runs training workshops on themes such as Towards an Anti-Racist Classroom, Exploring Our Biases, and Migration and Racism. [45]

Development Education Centre (Birmingham), later Tide-global learning, brought together teachers and other education practitioners in using a Global Learning approach to respond to both school curriculum and real world issues relating to e.g. sustainable development, human rights and local and global development concerns. Such collaborations have led not only to practical improvements in teacher competences and pupil learning, but also to a wide range of resources on various curriculum themes. [46]

Building on Existing Practice

Although government funding for Global Learning in the UK ceased in 2022 leading to a reduction in activities, projects, and programmes in the field, practice has continued in many schools, as has the work of various local Development Education Centres. NGDOs such as Oxfam, CAFOD, Christian Aid, and UNICEF also continue to provide support to schools. Initiatives such as the World's Largest Lesson [47] and Send My Friend to School [48] are popular with many schools, often providing a way into the implementation of further Global Learning practices.

Voluntary networks and other bodies supporting the field of Global Learning continue to operate, albeit at a much lower level of intensity than previously. Apart from the Global Learning Network in England, IDEAS in Scotland, the Wales Alliance for Global Learning, CADA-NI and IDEA in (Northern) Ireland, other networks and initiatives exist that promote Global Learning in the UK, including TEESNet (regarding teacher education) [49] , the ANGEL network (of academics and researchers), [50] and the Our Shared World network (which involves approximately 200 organisations whose work includes attention to SDG Target 4.7) [51]   .

Within the UK, there are a wide range of examples of good practice that reflect the richness of activity led by civil society organisations, professional associations and universities: practice that is relevant to the priorities and challenges which policy makers face.

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[41] For E.g, data from over 800 pupils for GLP showed an increased awareness of global interdependence. 93% of pupils stated they care about the planet; 91% of pupils want to make the world fairer; reducing poverty in the world was important to 75% of pupils and 75% of pupils think global issues affect their lives. (This from evidence prepared by the Development Education Research Centre for its reports on the impact of the Programme.)

[42] The Rebooting Education 2023 Report. London, Reboot the Future and Cambridge University Press, p.10.

[43] Bourn,D. (2018) Fairtrade in Schools and Global Learning, DERC Research Report no.18, London, UCL

[44] https://www.votesforschools.com/

[45] https://globallearninglondon.org/training-consultancy/

[46] https://www.tidegloballearning.net/all-publications

[47] https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/

[48] https://sendmyfriend.org/

[49] https://liverpoolworldcentre.org/teesnet/

[50] https://angel-network.net/

[51] https://oursharedworld.net/

Strategies and Models of Support Elsewhere in Europe

Across Europe widespread support, including financial resources, for Global Learning programmes and activities exists, provided by national and regional governments, the European Union and the Council of Europe. Within the EU, for the past 40 years, consistent support has been provided by the European Commission's 'Development Education and Awareness Raising' (DEAR) grants programme. [52] Aimed at civil society organisations and local authorities, the programme provides support for a variety of formal and non-formal education projects as well as for development focussed advocacy. The European Commission states the following as the rationale for their programme: *"Current and future generations face unprecedented interconnected global challenges, be they climate change or rising inequalities. The DEAR Programme empowers people to imagine ways to address these global crises and counter fear-based thinking. It fosters active citizenship to promote justice, human rights and democracy, co-responsibility, equity, and sustainable development at local and global level"*. [53] UK organisations (and local authorities and universities) have previously benefited considerably from the EU's DEAR programme to an estimated £2.4 to £3.5 million per year. [54]

Alongside this funding support, most national governments in Europe have their own strategies and funding programmes. [55] These vary from support for thematic projects, to design of school programmes, to teacher training, to policy dialogues to inform education policies.

Global Learning in Europe: Examples

Three, somewhat contrasting, approaches illustrate the varied emphases within Global Learning given by different governments in Europe:

- In Ireland, the Irish Aid 2021-2025 strategy focuses on building "a broader [public] sense of global citizenship" by means of Civil Society Organisations focussed grants that support primary school education, Initial Teacher Education in post-primary, community initiatives, research and networking amongst and with "schools, institutions, youth groups and the Global South." [56]

- In Belgium, the focus of the Global Learning grants programme of Enabel (the government development agency) is slightly different, providing particular attention to (education) policy dialogue with and amongst competent agencies and institutions, strengthening and innovating teaching practices, producing and sharing relevant knowledge and expertise. [57]

- In Portugal, a national strategy, launched in 2018, exists which focuses on support for initiatives that train educators, develop the capacity of Global Learning supporting organisations (including through better networking between different initiatives), producing formal and non-formal education resources, and research and evaluation. [58]

Global Education Network Europe

The support for Global Learning themes across Europe has been considerably enhanced by the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 agreed at the Dublin Congress in 2022. This was developed under the aegis of Global Education Network Europe (GENE), a network of over fifty ministries and governmental agencies of foreign affairs and education across Europe. [59] This Declaration included the following commitments to be made at a national level:

- Increased emphasis on Global Education within relevant national policies and strategies. This to include strengthening existing strategies with an emphasis on improving the quality of education.

- Enhance policy coherence and strengthen inter-ministerial cooperation

- Support efforts to strengthen work in youth organisations, civil society, adult education, peoples movements, diaspora communities and researchers.

- Develop adequate structures of support

- Support the development of appropriate quality assurance and evaluation mechanisms

- Seek to ensure adequate and appropriate resourcing for Global Education. [60]

Attribution: Gene

[52] https://capacity4dev.europa.eu/projects/dear_en

[53] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/polcies/programming/programmes/dear-development-education-and-awareness-raising-programme_en

[54] Fricke H J (2017): The European Union's contribution to UK based Global Development Education and Awareness Raising (paper produced for the UK's networks of Development Education Centres): https://www.academia.edu/117263934/EU_contribtions_to_UK_DEAR_final_sept_2017

[55] For an indication of what such programmes entail see for example publications by CONCORD (the European Confederation of NGDOs): https://concordeurope.org/2018/03/07/gce-funding-report-2018/ and by GENE (Global Education Network Europe, a European network of Ministries and Governmental Agencies) https://www.gene.eu/publications

[56] https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/publications/Global-Citizenship-Education-Strategy.pdf

[57] https://www.enabel.be/app/uploads/2022/09/note_citizenship_en_web.pdf

[58] https://ened-portugal.pt/site/public/paginas/introducao-pt-4.pdf and https://ened-portugal.pt/site/public/paginas/introducao-2-pt-3.pdf

[59] https://www.gene.eu/

[60] https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f6decace4ff425352eddb4a/t/64835ed41b579f3ca762f2ac/1686331105060/GE2050-declaration.pdf

Conclusion: A New Framework for Global Learning in the UK

This paper argues that the increasingly acute and interconnected global challenges we collectively face demand a thoughtful and concerted educational response. The latest research highlighted above shows the value and impact of Global Learning across a wide range of existing initiatives as well as positive endorsement from many educators to lead this approach as part of the wider curriculum. As well as improving critical understanding and skills of learners, there is strong evidence that Global Learning can bring greater cohesion in diverse classrooms. Crucially, it also builds pupil engagement and teacher motivation, both vital in an education sector under severe strain.

Education in the UK is out of step with many countries and international organisations in terms of equipping learners with the knowledge, skills and values base to engage in today's global society, and to work towards a more sustainable world. That there is a need for and interest in teaching and learning that applies such an approach is evident from the state of the world, from research into the effectiveness of existing initiatives, and from the enthusiasm amongst educators to be involved in Global Learning.

Despite this impact of and enthusiasm for Global Learning, there is a significant danger that without a more clearly coordinated and better resourced approach, the UK's historically powerful international leadership will be undermined - our future citizens will lack a relevant values base, will be less well equipped to understand, engage with and help solve the most urgent global problems and make a positive use of the economic, social, environmental and political opportunities that come our way.

The UK needs a strategy for Global Learning that builds on its achievements to date by including all of the key stakeholders in education. Such a strategy should take account of differing priorities within the four nations of the UK as well as a common commitment to international development and the intentions of, and progress towards, the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant European and global initiatives. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office would be in a good position to take the lead in bringing together relevant stakeholders to develop a strategy. To implement such a strategy it would be necessary to build and expand local and national capacities and capabilities, including through the provision of resources for civil society organisations and research.

This is why we make the following recommendations:

1 **A Clear National Policy on Global Learning:** The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, as the key focal point for UK engagement with pressing global issues, must take a lead in developing a clear direction and strategy to deliver this vital pillar of education.

2 **A policy for all ages across all communities:** The development of this strategy must take account of the differing approaches and separate educational systems across the UK nations and include the key educational stakeholders across all levels of formal education and life-long learning.

3 **Invest in existing expertise to support teachers:** Vulnerable but valuable civil society organisations, and of course by extension teachers, must be given appropriate support and resource to build capacity and share knowledge and expertise to bring the most value to a shared UK-wide approach. This can build on existing wider sustainable development initiatives but requires its own source of funding nationally and locally.

4 **Align with the international community:** A new strategy must be aligned with wider international efforts to meet the key SDG 4.7 target, with particular reference to the latest actions from UNESCO [61] and the European GENE network [62]. This should also reflect developing attitudes to decolonial and anti-racist practise.

We urge the FCDO to convene a meeting as soon as possible with appropriate counterparts at the Departments of Education in all UK jurisdictions, as well as with key education stakeholders and leading civil society practitioners from across the Nations to create a new framework for Global Learning.

Now is the time for Global Learning to become a core component of future education policy. As well as equipping many more learners with the knowledge to become more active and effective local and global citizens, this initiative should also build greater recognition and support for the Government's international development ambitions along with a wider network of organisations with a global outlook and remit — together making a more positive contribution to their community, country, and the world.

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[61] See https://www.unesco.org/en/node/82093
[62] See https://www.gene.eu/ge2050-congress

Case studies

It is hard to summarise the breadth and range of initiatives around the UK that support global education and learning, as the specific emphasis varies, from attention to themes relating to poverty and economic development, to attention to climate change and the causes and effects of global ecological crises. You can find a set of representative case studies on the Case for Global Learning website that attempts to represent this diversity, but there are many more projects both recently and currently active.

View case studies here: https://www.thegloballearningnetwork.org/the-case/the-case-case-studies/

Further resources and contacts

Regarding local support for Global Learning:

- The Global Learning Network of DECs in England: https://www.thegloballearningnetwork.org/

- IDEAS, the network of Scottish DECs: https://www.ideas-forum.org.uk/

- CADA-NI the network of international development organisations and initiatives in Northern Ireland: https://www.cada-ni.org/

- Wales Alliance for Global Learning: https://www.wcia.org.uk/global-learning/wagl/

Regarding teaching and learning resources see for example:

- https://globaldimension.org.uk/

- https://www.signpostsglobalcitizenship.org/

- https://www.tidegloballearning.net/all-publications

Regarding research into Global Learning see for instance:

- https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/departments-and-centres/centres/development-education-research-centre

- https://angel-network.net/

- https://projects.dharc.unibo.it/digestgel/

Logos of bodies supporting the Case for Global Learning