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Re-orientating ITE to address global learning



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This document has been produced by Sara Bennett, GLEAN ITE/ NQTs Network Manager. Any errors or omissions remain those of the author.

Why GLEAN?

GLEAN is a membership network to support, share and inspire more and better global learning across the south-west of England.

What do we mean by 'global learning'?

Learning that gets to the heart of education: creative and inspiring, fair and just, respectful

of difference and optimistic about the future.

It places learning firmly in a global context and equips learners to participate confidently in our changing world as active global citizens who can change things for the better.

GLEAN can provide support for 'student voice', NQTs, ITE practitioners and trainees, Heads, teachers and other school staff.

Interested? Join us at www.glean.org.uk

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Steps to improve the ITE global learning experience

Since Spring 2009, GLEAN (Global Learning Network South West) has been working with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers and student teachers (trainees), supporting them to build a better understanding of global learning and to embed global learning practice.

Sara Bennett, GLEAN ITE/ NQTs Network Manager, has been gathering data from south-west trainees about their ITE experience and the support they have received to embed global learning practice. Various themes emerge which can point ITE providers towards taking some simple steps to improve the ITE global learning experience.

This paper addresses those emergent themes, illustrated through the words of the trainees themselves, and suggests possible responses that ITE providers could make to this feedback.

It is worth noting that some trainees felt very positively about their ITE experience in terms of the support and encouragement it gave them to develop and embed global learning practice. This paper concentrates on less positive feedback – on feedback from trainees that indicated the need for change, but this does not mean that some excellent practice wasn't highlighted.

What is 'global learning'?

DEA is a national organisation that brings together educational agendas related to globalisation and poverty, sustainable development and community cohesion. DEA's vision is for all citizens to understand the global challenges we face and develop the capabilities to create a more just and sustainable world - www.dea.org.uk

DEA defines global learning in the following way - 'In a fast changing, globalised world, education needs to help people understand the wider world around them and make the global connections between issues such as poverty or climate change and their own lives. It should prepare them to live and work in a global society and economy and engage them to make the world a better place'.

GLEAN is a regional network based in the south-west of England, which aims to support, share and inspire more and better global learning - www.glean.org.uk

GLEAN defines global learning as: 'Learning that gets to the heart of education: creative and inspiring, fair and just, respectful of difference and optimistic about the future. It places learning firmly in a global context and equips learners to participate confidently in our changing world as active global citizens who can change things for the better.'

Why now?

We live in increasingly diverse communities in the UK. The global world impacts on our lives in many different ways – the food we buy, the clothes we wear, the markets where we trade, the world wide web that we surf, the music we download.

The choices that we make increasingly have a global impact – our energy choices can influence other continents, our consumer choices may dictate what a poor family earns. Our use of modern technology means that our 'neighbours' can be thousands of miles away.

Today's children and young people are global citizens, drawing influence and inspiration

from everywhere on earth.

When we face challenges in this 'interdependent' world we have to solve them together. This means that we have to understand each other – we have to get to know each other better – and we need the skills and techniques to build trust.

The case for embedded global learning is simple yet profound. It places education in its widest and most compelling context – the real world in which we live and interact.

Why ITE?

Because that's where it starts for teachers. It is in the ITE experience that trainees start to develop professional thinking and practice, professional values and ethical positions. Quite simply, a strong and positive emphasis on global learning in the ITE experience makes for better teachers.

In the words of one trainee

'Working within the context of global learning helped me to move beyond just teaching the material, to actually engaging with the material. I had worked with resources about refugees in my first teaching placement, but never thought about what it might mean to be a refugee until we explored global learning. Then I took a much more empathic approach to the work'

Trainees spoke about how grappling with global learning on their ITE programme gave them the confidence to be **'bold and optimistic'**. Trainees talked about being more **'analytical'** and about making more **'ethical'** choices as a result of considering global learning.

One trainee said that global learning **'Helps me to be grounded in the 21st century, and in supporting young people to become global citizens, making moral and ethical choices that we desperately need them to make in order to secure our future'**



What the trainees have to say

Over 500 trainees from a range of ITE providers gave feedback on their teacher training experience in relation to global learning. This feedback has informed the analysis and findings in this paper.

Ten key themes suggesting the need for change emerged from this feedback, and these themes are analysed below.

Too late ...

#1

'We did get a bit on the course about global learning, but it was late on in the programme and with hindsight I wish that it had been there at the outset'

'By the time I even heard about the concept of global learning on my PGCE course, I felt the course was pretty much over anyway and I wanted to go back and re-do stuff and think about the implications that global learning would have had. That was frustrating'

Teacher training courses have to pack in a lot of content! It's hard for ITE providers to give space to all the issues, initiatives, skills etc. that trainees need in order to thrive in their careers. Inevitably, some things drop down and even off the agenda.

In talking to trainees in 2009-10 however, it became clear that they felt that global learning should not drop down or off, but instead be highlighted early on in the course. Trainees were suggesting that the concepts of global learning needed to be introduced in the first term, and then returned to once they had some classroom experience under their belts, and re-explored from a more practical perspective.

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Introduce trainees to the key global dimension concepts early on in their course, and return to them from a more practical perspective at key strategic points during the course

#2

Not valued ...

'The Global Dimension and global learning issues got a mention, but barely. It felt like the provider knew they should get it on the course in some way, but they didn't really know how to do it, or care very much about it'

'We had one lecture, but the lecture was all about how it had to be embedded in thinking and planning, and yet this was almost at the end of the course and I'd never heard of it before, and hadn't done any embedding in thinking and planning! So it felt like lip service. I think I thought it was more important than they did'

Sometimes the intentions of ITE providers, and the way in which those intentions are received, doesn't add up. Providers might think that they are doing a good job of giving out a clear message about the importance of global learning and how it should influence teaching practice, but if that isn't how the programme is received – then that needs attention.

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Audit your provision, mapped to building an understanding of global learning, and see if there are any surprises. *Is it as prominent as you think it is? Does it carry the weight that you thought it did on your programme? In what way is it visible in your programme – on the website, visually in your teaching spaces, in taught modules, in your dialogue with your partner schools?*

#3

Aspirational but not practical ...

'I felt that we were told a lot about how we had a duty to support young people to be 'active global citizens', but no time was spent on the practical ideas that might make this a reality in the classroom'

'We focused on the theory of global learning stuff, but didn't get beyond this which was disappointing. I wanted to be a magpie – gathering treasure that I could use in the classroom, but we never seemed to get beyond agreeing that it would be a good thing'

Theory is crucial, and should not be ignored or take second place to practice, but practice matters too. For most trainees, developing excellent and appropriate resources that enable issues to be addressed and subjects to be covered in the classroom is just as important as understanding theory.

There are many excellent resources developed for use in the classroom by organisations such as GLEAN, Oxfam, British Red Cross, Unicef and the WWF. There are many excellent websites where teachers can download ideas and activities for use in their work – starting with www.globaldimension.org.uk. ITE providers don't need to develop the resources themselves, but they do need to get better at knowing where they are and signposting their trainees to them.

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Build your understanding of useful global learning resources and introduce your trainees to them through teaching and your virtual learning environment. See GLEAN's 'Weblinks' for support

#4

No time for self-reflection ...

'On my course we were always being told that we had to become self-reflective practitioners, but there was so much content that there was no time to actually do this. When we looked at global learning, I really wanted time and space to talk about my views and to hear the views of others, but there was no time'

'I think lots of assumptions were made about the values of the trainees themselves – that we were all anti-racist, committed to social justice and to a sustainable world, but actually I don't think this was the case. I felt that we could have had more challenging sessions in order to explore our own values and the values from which we would teach. But there was no time for this'

Building in adequate time for self-reflection on an ITE course is challenging but vital. Trainees must develop critical thinking and questioning skills through their ITE experience if they are really to become teachers with the ability to influence the lives and choices of their pupils for the good.

In turn, trainees will go in to the classroom and promote critical thinking amongst their pupils, and must have been supported with key strategies to achieve this. Tutors in ITE need to consider the strategies that they use for encouraging critical thinking – using open rather than closed questions, avoiding knowledge recall, encouraging trainees to develop their own questions and so on. By mirroring this self-reflective and creative

approach to learning, trainees are given the best chance of gaining confidence to do this in the classroom.

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Consider how you foster self-awareness and self-reflective practice amongst your trainees

#5

Mixed messages ...

'Some staff on the course were global learning evangelists, others felt it was an irrelevance. I found myself trying to weave a path through these two opposing views'

'I felt it was a bit of a roller coaster. One minute you'd be working with a member of staff who said that global learning was core to what teachers did, next you'd be with someone who said it had little relevance to teaching at the early stages, and should be left to more experienced teachers'

If trainees are getting mixed messages about the importance of global learning, then this has to be addressed. If ITE providers aren't positive role models for global learning, then how can trainees develop ideas and the confidence to engage?

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

To ensure trainee entitlement to a consistent and sustained high quality training, providers should put global learning high on the staff CPD agenda, and create meaningful opportunities for staff training, discourse and development. All staff should be up to date and engaged with the global learning agenda, and the other educational initiatives and issues that impact on global learning such as the Community Cohesion duty of care. Senior Management should address the issue of consistency around institutional values and practice, and ensure that this consistency is reflected in the trainee experience

#6

Support to teach controversial issues ...

'I didn't feel that we had any support around issues like challenging racism or Islamophobia in schools, and as a beginning teacher I really felt that this support should have been there. We can't support the development of confident global citizens unless we ourselves are supported to develop confidence and skills in managing controversy'

'I wanted help to become the kind of teacher I want to be –supportive and respectful but with zero tolerance for bullying, racism and homophobia. I even asked for this help when we were exploring global learning, but was told that it could only come with practice and with years of being in the profession'

Children and young people are aware of local and global controversial issues, and often care deeply about these issues. 21st century

teachers must develop the confidence and the skills to facilitate meaningful debates for the young people in their care. This is challenging in the ITE arena which is so focused on curriculum delivery. Arguably, we still have a profound mismatch between what young people want and what trainees feel equipped and able to deliver.

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Providers need to ensure full access to a comprehensive range of resources for trainees, resources which support them to develop the skills, strategies and self-reflection necessary to approach controversy with confidence. These 'resources' should include professionals in the voluntary sector and members of their local and global communities. Providers need to think where this sits in their taught sessions, their assignments and their discourse with trainees

#7

Cross-curricular nature not understood ...

'My subject area doesn't lend itself neatly to global learning like some subjects do. I wanted more support to understand how my subject could tackle global issues and global learning'

'I am training to teach in a subject that has global learning written all over it. I

was disappointed that the less obvious subjects weren't persuaded that they too might have a role to play in this agenda'

Both the new primary and secondary curricula place an emphasis on cross-curricular themes and learning. Schools and teachers are tasked through cross-curricular work with developing an ever-growing sense of identity for young people, in finding security in being part of something bigger, in knowing what it means to support and work with others in a global community. There is a strong emphasis on making sense of the big issues that affect the world and ensuring that we are all able to live together peaceably.

Some trainees reported a mismatch between this and their tutors' understanding of and confidence in supporting this cross-curricular approach, particularly trainees in subject specialisms not traditionally associated with global learning. The DEA have produced a useful guide for secondary schools on embedding global learning in all subject specialisms.

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Ensure that all staff understand the cross-curricular nature of global learning, and the opportunities for embedding global learning in their subject specialism. Ensure that this understanding is reflected in teaching and in trainees project work and assignments

#8

Piecemeal and not embedded ...

'Global learning kind of came up now and then, but then seemed to disappear for a while and we all forgot about it, and then – oh yeah, global learning. I didn't feel there was any consistency'

'It got highlighted twice, and it was like we had done it on these two occasions, so it didn't warrant a mention at any other time'

To qualify as an exceptional ITE Provider, providers need to ensure that trainees have a high quality and coherent experience when it comes to cross-curricular themes and dimensions such as global learning.

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Providers need to embed global learning in their planning and ethos. It needs to feature in publicity material, course handbooks, taught modules, assignments, assessment and in reading lists

#9

Championing the agenda ...

'I felt disappointed that my ITE provider wasn't more able to shout about the importance of global learning. I felt they weren't using the potential influence they had in a positive way, to support teachers and schools to rush to this

#10

agenda'

'I wanted more of it and more often and in more different ways. I wanted visual reminders of the importance of global learning all over college, I wanted the placement schools to be encouraged by the ITE provider to take this seriously, I wanted my fellow trainees to be caught up in the importance of it all – but no!'

In some instances, enthusiasm for global learning seemed to be greater amongst the trainees than it was amongst the providers. This shouldn't be surprising. Providers are overwhelmed with the ground they have to cover with trainees in a short space of time. Providers juggle a complex set of priorities in order to best support trainees to thrive. It's no wonder that not everything gets the attention it probably deserves.

Ask the questions – how happy are you with

- *Your website...*
- *Your prospectus...*
- *Your printed materials...*
- *Your taught course...*
- *Your partner school relationships...*

in relation to global learning?

Identify 2-3 key areas that you would like to focus on to effect positive change and get help to make those changes!

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Become part of a local or regional network for global learning, and where possible engage in joint projects, research and publications. Join GLEAN!

Schools not interested ...

'I built up a real interest in global learning whilst in college, but was disappointed when I went into school and they were indifferent'

'We covered some very interesting stuff about global learning on the course – I think that was largely down to one member of staff. Then I went to my school placement and they had never heard of it and didn't want to know'

ITE providers don't always have as big an influence on their partner schools as they'd like to! But, messages can be sent to schools about the type of provider that you are, and the types of schools that you hope to work with.

ITE PROVIDER ACTION

Think about your discourse with your partner schools, and how you might encourage and influence them to take an active interest in global learning. If opportunities don't already exist, think how you might create them. If you provide training opportunities for partner schools, consider the possibility of including some training on global learning. If you produce a newsletter for your partner schools, consider including articles on global learning. If you write up case studies about trainees experiences in schools, consider writing these from the perspective of global learning

The importance of global learning

Conclusion

This briefing paper focuses on comments made by trainees in the south-west of England.

In order to provide an insight into possible changes and areas for improvement in ITE, I have focused on the reflections of those trainees that demonstrate where work needs to be done, but much was said that was positive. Where good practice in issues of global learning existed, that practice was recognised and valued by the trainees.

In summary

- 77% of trainees identified global learning as 'very important' to them in their ITE experience
- Only 31% of trainees felt that their ITE experience had met their expectations with regard to supporting, encouraging and embedding global learning practice
- 63% of trainees felt that their ITE provider could quite easily make simple changes that would 'significantly improve' global learning input to the ITE experience

Clearly the trainees believe that global learning is important and that it can be strengthened and promoted in teacher training. In response to this, ITE providers can

1. **Map the presence of global learning in their teacher training programme**
2. **Forefront it and the values that sit behind it in publicity and written materials**
3. **Encourage more and better global learning amongst partner placement schools**
4. **Signpost trainees to global learning resources**
5. **Strengthen the discourse on the teacher training programme about issues such as global learning**
6. **Build global learning into staff CPD**
7. **Better support trainees to deal with controversial issues in the classroom**
8. **Join a global learning network for support and inspiration**

ITE providers can make adjustments when it comes to global learning, and clearly trainees want them to.



PHOTO: 'GLOBAL DIMENSION DAY', MARJON



PHOTO: 'GLOBAL SPACES', HILLFIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL, BRISTOL