This project had three aims:

a) to identify the needs of teachers in the implementation of global citizenship education

b) to identify the needs of primary and secondary school pupils in terms of what they want to know or understand with regard to global citizenship and world events

c) to identify the needs of teacher trainers and trainees in their preparation for teaching global citizenship.

The background to the project was also threefold: the introduction of the citizenship curriculum in English schools, which was to include global citizenship; the issues of local, regional and international identity already recognized by the West Midlands Commission on Global Citizenship; and the impact of globalisation, the new world order and recent conflictual events which had implications for teachers tackling controversial issues.

The research took place over two years, 2002-2004, and was a qualitative study in 6 primary schools, 6 secondary schools, 13 Local Authorities and 3 initial teacher training institutions in the West Midlands. The methods used were interviews with teachers, pupils, LEA staff and college lecturers/students; observation of lessons; and the use of pupil researchers who conducted interviews and generated photographic material.

The full report comprises: an introduction; literature review on global citizenship education; pupil findings; teacher findings; LEA findings; teacher education findings; a pictorial section on how pupils ‘captured’ global citizenship; examples of ‘good practice’ in global citizenship; and resources recommended by teachers on global citizenship. This ‘key findings’ sheet selects the main issues from each of the respondent groups, and provides our synthesis of the major implications.

(The Gambian Assembly at a primary school)
Findings from the Pupils

- Pupils had a sophisticated concept of global citizenship - the valuation of everyone, cooperation or unity, interconnectedness, and being involved by helping the environment or by being willing to protest. They thought everyone was or should be a global citizen, although some singled out outstanding figures or (selected) political leaders. They saw themselves as global citizens in the main, but thought their age or insufficient care about others or the world may not let them qualify.

  “People who changed the world so I know how people changed the world. (Year 4)”

- Questions about identity and belonging revealed a complex appreciation of local/global, particularly for young people of mixed ethnic backgrounds. Pupils were aware of the dangers of stereotyping others according to their origin, and raised issues of racism and discrimination. While they did not see themselves as citizens of the West Midlands, one strong loyalty was to the school.

- For curriculum, pupils were keenly interested in the 'wider world', wanting to know about substantive issues such as differences in wealth and poverty, child labour, health, religion and language, as well as (for younger children) animals and food. They had concerns about human rights and justice, and wanted more political education. There was a criticism that the National Curriculum was insufficiently international in outlook.

- An outstanding mention in terms of what pupils wanted to know about was war - in the current context, and not 50 years ago. Pupils wanted to understand the reasons for war and the reasons for hate. They wanted to know precisely what was happening with Iraq, who was making decisions, why oil was such a big factor and why some countries fight and not others. They perceived hypocrisy in the rationale for the war, and displayed a keen sense of justice. They wanted to be exposed to different sides of the question, although unanimously condemning Tony Blair for his actions and his unlistening stance.

  “I was going to say..., to find all about Iraq and the consequences of war, like you know, there will be millions of refugees and people fleeing their homes. I think you never find anything like that out at school, you have to find out yourself from libraries or going on marches and things. (Year 9)”

  (A student researcher interviewing his classmate)

- Learning about global citizenship is closely linked into teaching and learning styles. Pupils cited particular methods they had enjoyed in this area – debates, doing research, school links with other countries, having visitors or going on visits, doing charitable work and leading their own learning.

- Frustrations were also expressed about learning. A major gripe was insufficient depth, with no time to really get into something or to discuss and question. They objected to not being presented with alternative points of view, not dealing with contemporary issues, and not having global studies as part of a core curriculum. Resources appeared not to be a concern.

- Pupils had a good insight into the minds of teachers in their dealing with global citizenship issues, recognizing that teachers thought pupils might get scared about war or upset if ethnic or national differences were discussed - and that many teachers were very wary of expressing their own opinions. Pupils however wanted uncomfortable information, and wanted to know what teachers thought.

  “We don’t get opinions from other people around the world, it’s just like we get it straight from Tony Blair on TV or some of the teachers they just tell you plain facts without any opinions and how they feel about it. (Year 9)”

September 2004
Findings from the Teachers

- There was no single definition of global citizenship or education for global citizenship, some focusing specifically on the global/international and others more on PHSE issues of morality and roles in the community.

- The national curriculum was seen as an obstacle to the flexibility required for education for global citizenship.

  "In every subject you have a curriculum, a scheme of work, laid down by the DFES that prescribes what you should teach to varying degrees of detail, at it’s most ludicrous you get materials DFES approved trainers trained to teach them that virtually gives scripts for certain lessons and I think that that is an undue level of prescription and I don’t think it’s a successful recipe for developing citizenship education any more than it’s a successful recipe for developing literacy. I think you have to try and teach as well, give people theoretical knowledge, free people to develop exciting ideas and materials and then share them but that whatever the central institutions claim to the contrary that is not the favoured model’ (Headteacher, Secondary School).

- Education for global citizenship can be taught through existing school subjects as well as a subject called citizenship, though again the national curriculum was seen as an obstacle to a more integrated or cross curricular whole school approach.

- A range of curricular areas were seen as important in the content of education for global citizenship – cultural heritage, current events, development issues, local-global connections.

- Diversity was seen as the key word in the methods that need to be used to teach education for global citizenship – discussion, visits, visitors, the internet. Links with other countries were seen as particularly important.

- Teachers’ perceptions of learners’ needs were that pupils were interested in real issues and had a strong sense of fairness and justice. In particular there was a need to provide pupils with a better more in-depth understanding of major issues such as the Iraq war.

- Many teachers felt uncomfortable with teaching controversial issues in the classroom and had received little or no training in this regard.

  "Personally, I’m not very skilled in it at all, and I often have to go and read up about things or people before I present it to the children because I’m not that sort of…you know, I haven’t got that knowledge stored in my brain and I’m not aware myself, so there’s definitely a need for awareness (Headteacher, Primary School)."

  "I tell you, all I’ve got is this great big booklet from this organisation, this private organisation that teaches and runs all this, the Westminster Education Consultants and it says ‘Induction Handbook’ and it’s very nice and all gold covered, and there are all sorts of things that frighten me to death in there’ (Teacher, Secondary School).

- There is presently perceived to be a shortage of teachers trained to teach education for global citizenship.

  "If this (education for global citizenship’ is going to be sustained nationally, it’s not going to happen unless people are trained at teacher training level, and that’s the big stumbling block for me (Teacher, Secondary School)."

- The overwhelming emphasis on literacy, numeracy and examinations were also seen as a barrier to the introduction of education for global citizenship.

- There was anxiety and uncertainty about the issue of assessment in education for global citizenship – what was to be assessed and how.

- In terms of resources, teachers mentioned the need for a wide range of new resources but particularly for up to date information and for resources that covered mixed age and mixed achievement classes.

  (Primary students’ work on diversity)
Findings from the Initial Teacher Training Institutions

• Seen as ‘new’ and ‘inexperienced’, student teachers found themselves in a difficult position in promoting global citizenship education in school, especially in decision making in curriculum contents.
• Initial teacher training was mainly skill based, which was valued by student teachers; yet they also would have liked to explore actual global issues and ways in which to incorporate them into their teaching.

Findings from the LEAs

• One of the needs which LEA personnel especially identified for teachers was ‘a need to understand the importance of global citizenship education’.
• There were many ideas which LEAs wanted to pursue to support teachers, such as training and visiting schools, yet their perceived lack of allocated time for global citizenship education seemed to prevent them from pursuing those ideas.

Key implications

1. Pupils need to know about and understand significant contemporary global issues and events, particularly war and conflict, but also the political background to issues of HIV/AIDS, poverty, pollution and human rights.

2. Many teachers however lack confidence and feel underprepared in tackling controversial global issues, in terms both of knowledge and methods. They fear children would be anxious if war were discussed, that ethnic tensions in the class would be heightened, or that they should not present their own views.

3. Both teachers and pupils feel constrained by the National Curriculum apparatus. Teachers are concerned about exams; pupils feel they never have time to do anything in depth.

4. Some committed teachers and schools have provided excellent examples of how to develop global citizenship education within the National Curriculum apparatus. However, for widespread change this curriculum ideally needs to be loosened; and more urgently teachers must be empowered through ITT, INSET and Networking to gain the skills and confidence to tackle important global concerns.

There is a limit to how controversial you can be in schools and how political but these are very important issues and kids are entitled to explore them. Why would kids feel a sense of responsibility in the globe unless they had the opportunity to explore these issues?

(Headteacher, Secondary School)

For further information on the research, please contact:
Centre for International Education and Research (CIER)
School of Education
University of Birmingham, Edgbaston
Birmingham, B15 2TT UK
Tel: 0121 414 3967 (CIER Administrator)
Email: S.Gallagher@bham.ac.uk
http://www.education.bham.ac.uk/research/cier