Global Learning for Global Colleges: creating opportunities for greater access to international learning for 16-25 year olds

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Abstract

This article explores the extent to which it is possible to incorporate global learning within the Further Education (FE) curriculum, drawing on the findings from the 'Global Learning for Global Colleges' (2009-2012) research and development project, funded by the Department for International Development (DfID). Against a background of increasing pressures on the FE sector, the project worked with six colleges in England to develop initiatives to promote global learning in the curriculum. Qualitative data were collected through observations, interviews, focus groups and reviews of student work. The research defines global learning as not just a focus on developing skills for responding to an increasingly globalised world, but an approach to learning based on a concern for social justice, developing learners who see the relevance of their learning about global issues for their everyday and future lives. A number of factors are identified as influential on the process of incorporating global learning: existing institutional priorities and overseas partnerships; personal experience and enthusiasm of staff; level of subject and profile of students; exam and syllabus requirements. The findings illustrate both an enthusiasm for global learning, with colleges developing creative ways of exploring global issues with learners, and numerous challenges. The research suggests that local factors are critical and that in the absence of a national policy requirement for global learning these local factors need to be supported, if colleges are to develop their approaches still further.

Introduction

This article considers the extent to which it is possible to incorporate global learning within the Further Education (FE) curriculum, and the factors that influence that process. Though policy statements argue for its importance, there is currently no statutory obligation for global learning within the FE curriculum, meaning the greatest focus of research into global learning to date has been on primary and secondary education. This article therefore contributes to a greater understanding of what might be feasible within FE. The issues discussed here emerged as part of the findings from the the 'Global Learning for Global Colleges' (2009-2012) research and development project, funded by the Department for International Development (DfID). The project aimed to "demonstrate how understanding about global and international development issues is an important component of the curriculum and learning experience for all 16-25 year olds[1], through a series of activities and initiatives with a number of Further Education colleges" (Development Education Research Centre website) and provided an important opportunity to investigate global learning within the FE sector. A key part of the project involved working with college staff, and it is their experience of incorporating global learning that forms the main focus of this article. We consider the changing FE context within which the project operated; outline a definition of global learning; present our methodological approach and findings, and in conclusion discuss the implications of those findings.

The further education context

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[1] The age range was extended from 16-19 to 16-25 at the request of the colleges to reflect the profile of their students.

In the run up to the UK presidency of the European Union and G8 in 2005, the then Department of Education and Skills in England published a document entitled *Putting the World into World Class Education* (DfES 2004). In his Foreword, the Secretary of State at the time, Charles Clarke, wrote 'One cannot truly educate young people in this country without the international dimension being a very significant and real part of their learning experience'. This policy document was intended to apply across all phases of education and was initially taken up enthusiastically by some in the FE sector in England, which was increasingly beginning to see the importance of a more international approach to its work (e.g. CEL 2006; 2007). Four years later, however, the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills' International Strategy for further education in England (DIUS 2008) admitted:

> "Whereas international education has hitherto been viewed as marginal to the FE local mission, this strategy seeks to place it at the heart of preparing our own learners for life and work in a globalised economy and multicultural society. This will require a change of mind-set – thinking globally in all that we do nationally and locally" (DIUS 2008, 10)

Looking at the history of 14-19 curriculum and qualifications in England, the reasons for this marginalisation become apparent. As Blum, Bentall and Bourn (2010) note in their research report for the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), few of the qualifications available to 16-19 year olds in England, with the notable exception of the International Baccalaureate, explicitly encourage or assess the development of an understanding of international dimensions. Looked at another way, what is absent is an overall curriculum framework that requires engagement with global learning. This absence has meant that post-

16 institutions have been influenced by other 'policy levers'. According to the Centre for Excellence in Leadership "FE funding methods, quality improvement strategies and inspection regimes take little or no account of them (international activities)" (CEL 2007, 7).

While the drive to bring a global dimension into all aspects of FE colleges' work took place under a previous government in England, we suggest that the observation made by FE leaders in 2007 still pertains today. The key national 'policy levers' that drove the behaviour of the FE sector in England under the New Labour Administration (Coffield et al 2008) continue to be influential under the 2010 Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (Hodgson, Spours and Waring 2011).

However, it appears that the debate about the 'global dimension' in FE has taken on a somewhat different flavour under the Coalition government. In their *New Challenges, New Chances* strategy document published in August 2011, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) focused much more on the FE sector's role in developing the skills needed to compete in a global marketplace and on the economic role that colleges need to play within their localities than on the idea of bringing an international dimension into the curriculum for all learners (BIS 2011). A similar stance is taken by the more recent Lingfield (2012) Review of Professionalism in Further Education. While the Association of Colleges, in conjunction with the British Council, has continued to offer an opportunity for FE colleges to gain an AoC International Charter[2], it is not clear how many colleges have taken up this challenge.

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[2] http://wfcp.org/wp-content/uploads/aoc-international-charter-guide.pdf

At a time of austerity in public services and funding cuts for colleges, the lack of a clear national policy steer and resources to support them in building a global dimension into all aspects of their work goes some way to explain why the energy may have gone out of this initiative to some extent, while still remaining important for some. Part of the explanation for a reduction in this work may also lie more broadly in the nature and role of FE colleges in the English education and training system, because as Raffe (1990) reminds us, it is often the context within which a reform has to take place as much as its content that will determine its outcome. Five major features of the FE college role and context stand out.

First, FE colleges are highly diverse organisations, ranging from relatively small sixth form colleges on a single site that cater largely for 16-19 year olds and primarily offer general education to very large general further education colleges, with multiple sites, serving the needs of adults as well as young people and providing qualifications from Entry to Degree level (see AoC 2012). A differential approach to any initiative might be expected from such a wide range of organisational types. Second, the FE college's role in its locality will vary according to the institutional arrangements in that area, or what Hodgson and Spours (2009) refer to as 'the local learning ecology'. In an area with a strong supply of advanced level general education provision for 16-19 year olds, for example, an FE college may see its major role as providing the vocational qualifications that are not offered by the other institutions, with a possible focus on qualifications and programmes of study that are less obviously amenable to the development of international awareness. Third, the FE sector, particularly general further education colleges, plays a very strong role in 'second chance' education and this determines the nature of its student population and the type of provision on offer (Lingfield 2012). Fourth, the majority of 16-19 year olds study for two or three years only and are focused primarily on gaining the qualifications they need for either work or higher

study. In this sense the FE college experience can sometimes be viewed by students as a means to an end not as an end in itself. As we have argued earlier, this viewpoint is not helped by the nature and role of qualifications for 16-19 year olds, which dominate and, in many cases, totally determine, the curriculum experience for these students (Pring et al. 2009; Hodgson and Spours, 2011). Finally, these features of English FE colleges, which could be seen as, at best, unconducive or, at worst, negatively aligned against the development of greater global awareness among young people, are all reinforced by the way they are funded and their performance is judged (Coffield et al. 2008). However, arguing from an equity perspective, FE college students are entitled to similar opportunities to be exposed to global learning as those in schools or universities.

While national incentives to offer an international dimension within the curriculum remain weak, individual colleges are still able to make choices. As we will see, influential factors affecting innovation include pre-existing initiatives and partnerships, the existence of key enthusiasts with experience at departmental and course level, the level and profile of students, college ethos and the level of engagement of senior leadership, and the ability to identify opportunities within subjects and across the curriculum and institution as a whole.

This mosaic of national and institutional factors provided the context for the project. The analysis of the data, discussed below, casts light on some of the opportunities and barriers to FE colleges attempting to build understanding about global and international development issues into the learning experience of all their 16-19 year olds.

Global learning

Global learning is one term, amongst others (see Bourn 2012), used to refer to an approach to education that prioritises a global dimension. The rationale for such an approach echoes that of policy statements quoted above:

> "that it is necessary to prepare people to live in a more and more globalised world, in a way that enables them to respond to the challenges of an interconnected world, to take responsibility for, and to advocate for, global solidarity and social justice" (Scheunpflug 2008,19).

There are various debates in the literature (Andreotti 2010; Bourn, 2012; Scheunpflug 2008) on how this works in practice, what the content of global learning might be and what might constitute the approach to learning and teaching.

Global learning content is often described in terms of topics of global importance that also connect to the experience of learners in their local context, such as environmental issues or trade. There is a strong emphasis on the need to explore "different concepts of development, of power and lack of power, of global justice, of inclusion and exclusion of individuals as well as groups, also of democracy in a national and global context" (Foghani-Arani and Hartmeyer 2010,10). In the literature, various characteristics or values explicit in this approach, as well as specific skills or competences to be developed, are also identified. These include valuing of diversity, recognising the equal worth of others and understanding how the local and global interconnect (Serf 2008).

However, the term global learning refers to more than content or values. It also describes a process "of learning from awareness to action" (Bourn 2008,12). Raising awareness of

issues, though important, is insufficient, as "learning is not a natural consequence of awareness raising" (Bourn 2008,18). Though the literature emphasises a commitment to action for a better world (DEA 2008), this does not mean prescribing learners' action or views (Andreotti 2010). The aim is for a learner to become "a free, self-determined world citizen, responding to the needs of others" (Scheunpflug 2008, 20). For this to be achieved learners need to be able to reflect critically on their own and others' perspectives.

Teachers play an important role in this process, by increasing:

> "their awareness and capacity to analyse and see the world from different perspectives, learning to listen and to negotiate in diverse and complex environments, and connecting to the worlds of their students in order to challenge and expand their boundaries" (Andreotti 2010,10).

The process of global learning is, therefore, essentially participatory, with space for learners and teachers to critically explore issues and possible action together (Scheunplug, Lang-Wojtasik and Bergmueller 2009). Moreover, it is a process that must be 'ethical and responsible' in how it portrays and engages with those who have historically been marginalised (Andreotti 2010, 12). In global learning in the UK (with its history of colonialism and then development assistance) the marginalised include, in particular, people in developing countries.

This understanding offers a broadening of the debate on global learning within FE, which to date has responded to policy influences by focusing primarily on priorities within examinations, for example geography (Lambert and Morgan 2011), specific courses with a

development theme (Bowes 2011), or skills related to the needs of the global economy (Blum, Bentall and Bourn 2010), leading to an emphasis on skills around inter-cultural understanding, problem solving and ability to work in a range of cultural environments (Bourn 2011). But as Newell-Jones (2007, 5) argues,

> "That education and training for a global society should lead to the acquistion of skills is not in question. However unless this includes essential skills in critical engagement and also leads to the adoption of impact-orientated behaviours, learning will be ineffectual".

The emphasis above on a concern for social justice and the importance of critical thinking offers a definition of global learning that moves beyond the impact of globalisation on a young person's life and how they make sense of the rapidly changing world around them, to incorporate a concern for how they learn and the impact of that learning. This means focusing on the learners' own value base, and considering the relevance of their skills for making sense of what is happening in the world to their everyday lives and future careers.

Methodology

This understanding of global learning underpinned our approach to the project, which we outline next. We also provide an overview of the colleges involved.

The project was primarily a development project, which included research activities. Therefore, rather than observing and analysing what colleges did as 'outsiders', we supported colleges in developing their approaches to incorporating global learning within the

curriculum, and then collected data on the initiatives they undertook, with the overall aim of contributing positively to learning within the colleges. The project was therefore conducted in line with Lincoln's (1995) criteria for the design of academic study, emphasising a mutually beneficial, collaborative approach, not one premised on the superiority of the researchers. Of equal importance was maintaining an ethical stance that chimed with our understanding of global learning and a critically reflective perspective, alongside encouraging that perspective in college staff. We developed the understanding of global learning outlined above to provide us with a theoretical framework and a starting point for reflection and dialogue with colleges.

Participating colleges

The project initially involved three FE and two sixth form colleges in England. One FE college withdrew after the first year, so two other sixth form colleges were invited to participate for the final year.

Across the project there were four different approaches to incorporating global learning chosen by colleges, in combination: curriculum development through particular subject areas, building on overseas partnerships, tutorials and specific events. All colleges focused on specific subject areas. Colleges A, C and F also had existing or developing partnerships with countries in Africa, which they linked to particular subject areas. Colleges A and D also focused on events, such as a Global Day or an Amnesty Launch and Colleges C and E incorporated global learning within their tutorial programmes.

The choice of subject areas was diverse, covering both academic and more vocational subjects, at different levels, with different types of students. Colleges chose subject areas

where global learning was not already the main component, so allowing us insight into what is required to incorporate global learning more fully into the curriculum, beyond what has been the focus to date. These choices were made in consultation with senior management, by considering the results of curriculum audits and by identifying staff interested in developing their areas of work through the project.

Table I below offers a brief overview of the colleges'chosen focus. Colleges were often already involved in a number of activities associated with global learning. However, this article refers only to those activities undertaken specifically for this project.

Table I: Overview of participating colleges and project focus

College	Type of college	College context	Project focus
College A	6th Form	Town based sixth form, 1 site. Wide range of subjects at Level 3 (A Level) and Level 2 (Intermediate Level). Over 50 Advanced Level subjects at AS/A2 Level. Over 1300 students. Existing partnership with two African countries.	A level Physics - developing low cost experiments for teachers in partner country A level Food, Nutrition and Health – developing food product with global dimension, making book on nutrition for partner country Global Day event, Extended Project Qualification projects with global theme.
College B	6th Form	City college, 1 site. Diverse intake. Courses at all levels. Strong on curriculum enrichment.	Level 2 Data Handling, Use of Maths and Level 2 Information Technology Qualification (ITQ) – worldwide statistics on traffic accidents, smoking, malnutrition and obesity
College C	FE college	City college, 5 sites. Diverse intake. Over 1,000 full and part-time day and evening courses. Courses in all 15 subject sector areas, pre-entry to higher education. Over 30,000 students. Existing partnership with one African country.	Level 3 Travel and Tourism (BTEC then changed to OCR) - sustainable tourism Level 1 Art and Design - art from partner country Level 1 Personal Social Development tutorials (Edexcel) – diversity and human rights
College D	FE college	City College, 5 sites. Diverse intake. Over 110 Courses for 16-18 year olds. Around 332 courses for adult learners.	Cross college extra-curricula and enrichment activities, including specific events. Foundation Level 3D Art - diversity and human rights

			Level 1 Business and Administration – understanding cultural diversity for business
College E	6th Form	City college, 2 sites. Diverse intake. 40 courses at AS and A2 Level, other BTEC and entry level courses.	International Graduate Programme for A-Level Modern Foreign Language students – exploration of issues such as climate change
College F	6th Form	City college, 1 site. Diverse intake. A Levels, GCSEs and Vocational courses. Developing partnership with one African country.	Level 2 Workskills for A level student volunteers - fundraising for exchange trip to partner country

Development and research activities

We undertook a large number of development and research activities during the project, all of which generated a range of qualitative data. Here we only discuss in detail those that relate to the findings in this article, concerning the perspectives of teaching staff and senior management on the incorporation of global learning in the FE curriculum. Data related to other aspects of the project, such as students' learning, are discussed elsewhere.

The development activities included initial staff development workshops with Colleges A-D on global learning. These workshops, along with a curriculum audit, identified existing practice and areas for further development. (Colleges E and F joined in the final year and were chosen because they had already identified a particular global learning initiative). Once colleges had decided how they would incorporate global learning, we helped teaching staff develop their ideas, providing resources and discussing possible pedagogical approaches, and continued to offer such assistance during the project. This took the form of developmental discussions, via email, phone or skype, as well as formal and informal meetings. We also conducted two workshops for senior management and teaching staff from all the colleges, mid-way and at the end of the project, where they compared their experiences. All of these activities provided valuable data in the form of notes, emails, presentations, materials,

flipchart records of group discussions, about staff experiences of incorporating global learning into their work.

The main research focused activities involving staff consisted of eight hour long semi-structured staff interviews (with seven teaching staff and one senior manager from Colleges A - D), thirty-eight classroom observations across all colleges and observations of ten events. The interviews focused mainly on staff experiences of incorporating global learning, and their changing understandings of their teaching in this area. All interviews were recorded, with permission, and transcribed. Respondents were asked to check transcripts and confirm permission for use in publications. For the classroom and event observations, we designed an observation schedule that, though mainly focused on student learning, also captured the types of activities, information and materials staff used, as well as any comments staff made that reflected their own personal views on global learning. The observations therefore provided an additional perspective on staff experiences, which confirmed, or raised questions, about the views they expressed in the interviews and informally.

We also conducted two qualitative questionnaires with staff, at the beginning and end of the project, and received eighteen responses in total. Although their primary function was to provide a baseline on existing practice and then evidence of project impact, they also provided some data on what staff felt would support the process of incorporating global learning more fully. We also examined college websites, publications, such as reports, and syllabus documentation.

Adhering to BERA guidelines and the ethical values implicit within our understanding of global learning, all data collection was carried out with the informed consent of participants and anonymity has been preserved.

The frequency of data collection varied and though structured to capture the beginning, mid-points and ends of initiatives, visits were also planned in response to individual college timetables. The greatest challenge was managing visits across a number of colleges, in different locations and co-ordinating our and college work timetables. Sometimes planned visits were not possible, for example, due to timetable changes or colleges delaying implementing an initiative. In the larger colleges in particular, senior management, though supportive, were not directly involved in the project and in College B the senior manager left half way through the project. We therefore concentrated on interviewing teaching staff, though we were not able to do this as often as initially planned. Finding time for interviews with Colleges E and F during the last year of the project proved particularly difficult. Staff were extremely busy, so, if necessary, we posed interview and questionnaire questions to staff in the informal development conversations, phone calls and emails, and workshops. This avoided adding to their already heavy workload.

All data were coded initially around themes informed by our original project aims and the key aspects of global learning we set out to observe. Data sets were then also revisited in the light of any newly emerging themes (Holton 2007), which included the themes discussed below in the findings. In the process of analysis we compared data sets. For example, we examined data related to individual staff and compared with other staff in the same college and across the colleges. We also compared particular subject areas, different types of curriculum initiatives, both within and between colleges. In order to ensure that we were

presenting a reality that was recognised by the staff in the colleges (Maykut and Morehouse 1994), draft findings were submitted for their comment.

The findings below emerge from both the development and research activities. The primary formal source of staff views are the interviews, which provide all the direct quotations. However, the data from observations, developmental discussions, workshops, and to a lesser extent the questionnaires and documentary sources such as college websites, provide important confirmation of our interpretations of staff perceptions and experiences. Therefore, though we have chosen to illustrate the findings with interview data, discussion under each theme represents the analysis of the full range of relevant data.

Findings and discussion

Our findings show that it is possible to incorporate global learning more widely into the curriculum within colleges. However, four major factors emerged from the data as influential for staff on how this process progressed:

- Existing institutional priorities and overseas partnerships
- Personal experience and enthusiasm of staff
- Level of subject and profile of students
- Exam and syllabus requirements

Existing institutional priorities and overseas partnerships

Existing institutional priorities, such as overseas partnerships with developing countries, were key factors influencing the incorporation of global learning within colleges. These priorities provided an important base from which to build. For example, in Colleges A and C, the teaching staff who had visited the partner countries had already submitted plans for how those visits would inform and enhance their teaching, so these colleges could develop existing work with staff who were already committed.

Given the pressures on colleges resulting from the changing national political and economic context described earlier, this was also a practical decision, as appropriate college structures and senior management support were already in place, a key issue in ensuring the success of such initiatives (Blum, Bentall and Bourn 2010). One senior manager (College A) explained the decision to restrict the global learning focus to building on their existing partnership work:

> "I think that's probably retrenchment...the context we knew was going to get financially hard and things were going to get a bit gutty in the next few years so....a sense of right, come on, let's see if we can focus this stuff that's already rolling along rather than starting from stop. So failure of nerve in a way, failure of energy and resource".

For the colleges without such partnerships, motivation came from a commitment to the concept of global learning. College B offered students the opportunity to complete a 'global citizen's programme', supplementing their study with a globally themed Extended Project

Qualification and opportunities to take part in volunteering or language learning and promoted this approach on their website. College D had senior-level strategy aims to improve the global awareness and capabilities of students through the curriculum and enrichment. They used project funds to appoint an internal co-ordinator for cross-college global citizenship activities.

Such college commitment to global learning is clearly important for its wider incorporation across the curriculum and building on existing work with developing country partners is an effective route for starting that process. However this commitment needs to be coupled with an overt exploration at college level and with individual staff of potential opportunities for incorporating global learning within the curriculum, as such opportunities are not always obvious. For example, one senior manager, though deeply involved in supporting the project, had not considered any links with his own subject area, as it was not one of the subjects chosen as the focus for the project. Similarly, events such as a Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) day, planned by College D with a local focus, were not initially recognised by staff as potential opportunities for learning about global perspectives.

Personal experience and enthusiasm of teaching staff

Staff experience and enthusiasm were particularly influential on the incorporation of global learning, especially when combined. Through the interviews and questionnaires teaching staff confirmed that their first-hand experience of a developing country, particularly through the partnerships, gave them a strong desire to involve their learners in understanding and making a difference to those communities the colleges were associated with. This experience and enthusiasm kept momentum going, ensured on-going development of ideas and commitment

of time and resources. For example, teaching staff in Colleges A and C used their free time to prepare for overseas trips, reported to the college on the success of the visits and inspired additional awareness raising and fundraising activities across the college.

There was also evidence of this reliance on personal experience in the types of teaching activities and resources we observed teachers using. Staff brought back artefacts, photographs and stories. Drawing on their experience positively affected the quality of teaching on global issues. Students were motivated by hearing about staff experiences and teaching staff reported having more credibility and authority. As the Food and Nutrition teacher (College A) said: "they (the students) have got pictures of me over there….and they like that. And that gives them……I think they sort of think……she knows what she is talking about".

The Art and Design teacher (College C) commented that sharing her experience made the students aware of her in a different way:

> "Well, I think that teachers do other things with their lives. I think that was big for them. They really had my passion for life and human beings confirmed, which I think was very, very important because I think a lot of them have come from such damaged backgrounds that they maybe feel very hurt".

Where teachers were enthusiastic but lacking in experience (Colleges B and F), they felt it affected their confidence. They also required more time to research and understand the issues, find resources and transform them into something relevant for their students.
As the Maths teacher (College B) reported:

"It does take a huge amount of research on our part because we aren't experts on these issues and that's perhaps why some sessions went better than others, because you really have to know the data and the issues yourself before you could get the best out of the students, which is very time consuming".

This lack of experience can also translate into less appropriate approaches to global learning. For example, during College A's Global Day, we observed learning activities during lessons and an outdoor, cultural, lunchtime event, which ranged from critical, challenging discussions in class on controversial issues (Female Genital Mutilation in Law) to activities that were at best superficial and at worst not entirely appropriate (e.g. a male staff member dressed in a sari). As the senior manager commented:

"some in-subject activities were absolutely right, some were a bit tenuous in their connections and some of the, if you like, 'festival' events during the lunch time period I thought were in danger of showing a rather crass misunderstanding of it".

For global learning to be incorporated more widely and appropriately, staff development around understandings of global learning is essential, a finding noted by previous research (Blum, Bentall and Bourn 2010). As Andreotti (2010) reminds us, teachers need opportunities to explore their own perspectives, gain or share relevant experience, and develop the ability to evaluate activities and materials critically before using them with students.

Level and profile of students

Having enthusiastic and well-informed staff is, however, not a guarantee for the successful incorporation of all aspects of global learning, from awareness raising to action. Although we would argue all students are entitled to experience global learning fully, there are issues to consider around when and how such an approach is introduced to different groups of students. The FE context is diverse, with colleges providing for the needs of varying locations and intakes (see Table I) and staff make decisions on global learning partly in response to their particular groups.

One key issue informing staff decisions was the students' ability to relate any learning to their future, something which is crucial if global learning is to have a long lasting impact (Newell-Jones 2007). Where students had a sense of their future direction, teachers were able to make connections between student career choices and global learning, thereby demonstrating its relevance and increasing students' engagement. For example, in College C it was clear from the classroom observations that Level 3 students studying travel and tourism understood that sustainability was a policy issue for companies. Similarly classroom observations of the Level 3 language classes (College E) confirmed that students hoping to work in places such as the European Parliament could see the links between various global issues and their future plans. In College A, the Food and Nutrition students were observed discussing how global issues linked to developing food products for particular markets related to their future career choices. Their Extended Project Qualification projects also offered opportunities to link global learning to their own interests, which made a difference to the level of engagement.

However, where thinking about their futures was challenging for students, teachers felt more limited in their approach. For example, the Maths and ICT teachers (College B) focused

mainly on awareness raising, because they said their Level 2 students "find the future very difficult to get to grips with. They cope with the historical past better than coping with realising where they're going to be and what they're going to be doing in five years time".

For other students the challenges were also more in the present, such as their attitudes to learning and to wider issues, and again this influenced what teachers felt was appropriate. In College D, one teacher focused on settling students into college and building their confidence as a group before introducing global learning. In College C, the Art and Design teacher took a different approach with contrasting Level 1 groups. The first had a range of learning needs, and two literacy Learning Support Assistants. Despite these challenges, the class was able to discuss and explore her experience in an African country, and issues of current affairs and local diversity:

> "They're one of the most tolerant groups I've had for many years – they were just so
> receptive to the idea…they've been incredibly tolerant of each other anyway right
> from the start".

As we observed, the second group was more 'challenging', more culturally homogenous and negatively vocal around issues like immigration. The teacher explained that many had previous school attendance records of below 50%, had been taught in very small groups due to extremely challenging behaviour, or were permanently exluded, with some abusing substances from their early teens. She suggested also that the learning environment had possibly been adversely affected by the removal of the Education Maintainance Allowance (EMA), which had previously encouraged attendance, commitment and respect for the

college student code of conduct. Understandably, she prioritised class routines and discipline for learning and delayed incorporating any global learning until much later in the year.

These examples demonstrate the scale of the challenge for FE in providing all learners with opportunities for global learning that reflect Scheunplug (2008) and Bourn's (2008) concerns for moving beyond awareness raising to a more critical exploration by learners of their own values and consideration of how global issues are relevant for their future lives.

Syllabus and examination requirements

As discussed above, the qualifications and, therefore, syllabus and examination requirements are of central importance in determining the curriculum experience for FE students. Responses to the staff questionnaires on existing practice at the beginning of the project and discussions at the staff development workshops clearly showed that those subjects with a specific syllabus requirement provided teaching staff with more opportunities for incorporating global learning. Syllabus requirements therefore exercised considerable influence over college and staff decisions about how to incorporate global learning.

The A level Food, Nutrition and Health syllabus specifications (College A) supported incorporation of global learning. The coursework (50% of final grade) involved students designing a food product, in which they were asked to consider: "How is global awareness going to impact on the development of your product?" Significant class time could therefore be devoted to exploration of global issues, with impressive results. In College C, the Travel and Tourism BTEC specification had a discrete unit on Sustainable Tourism, including three assignments, again providing opportunities to explore the topic in some depth. However, a

subsequent change to an alternative syllabus, in which it was only a theme, left the teacher wondering how much he could focus on this in the future.

Staff used two approaches for incorporating global learning into subjects with no relevant syllabus specification: choosing global topics as vehicles for skills-focused courses or using a global focus to provide an opportunity for revision and development of generic skills.

In skills-focused courses incorporating a global issue was relatively straightforward. For example, in College B, teachers chose worldwide statistics on issues such as smoking, or malnutrition as vehicles for practising various ICT and Maths skills. Similarly, in College C in the ITQ syllabus for Level 1 Art and Design, the teacher chose content on overseas art to practise Painting/Print-making skills, as well as including more critical reflection on the value of art produced for tourists, thereby linking to the global topics in the Personal and Social Development specification of the students' tutorial programme.

However, this approach was limited in impact. As the Maths and ICT teachers (College B) explained, combining global topics with subject skills was only relevant for particular courses:

> "For these particular groups, it's more about skills, so as long as they've got a subject to hang those skills onto, it was fairly easy. I'm not saying it would be as easy with all the IT subjects that we cover".

"If we were doing GCSE Maths it would be much more difficult to fit it into the course and be meaningful as far as the course was concerned, but for Use of Maths it really did very well".

The second approach is illustrated by the A level Physics teacher (College A), who asked students to research low-cost experiments demonstrating basic Physics concepts and produce a booklet for teachers in partner countries to use. As we observed, this helped the students revise their basic Physics and develop research skills. However, again there were limits to this approach, as the teacher had to consider effective use of class time, particularly as the level of Physics required for the overseas teachers was lower than that required for A level:

"It does take some time. No question. But if I wasn't doing it they'd be missing out. They don't need this project to pass their exam and unfortunately at a place like College A, unfortunately, or fortunately, depending on how you look at it, we are exam driven. We have to make sure we get good exam results to maintain our name as a college, so you could just not do these extra elements but then you'd be missing out on the rounded education of these kids."

It is clear that having a global learning syllabus requirement helps teachers justify using class time for exploring global perspectives. Where a global learning specification is not available teachers demonstrate they can be very creative, but they are limited in what they can achieve, particularly without overt permission and protected time to move beyond the syllabus. Other research has also shown that some staff may lose motivation to engage with global learning without clear syllabus specifications (Blum, Bentall and Bourn 2010).

The lack of a syllabus requirement also affects the availability of appropriate resources. For example, while much relevant information is available online (such as statistics on global issues for the Use of Maths Unit), there are few specifically designed global learning resources for those subjects with no global learning requirement, requiring teachers to adapt other materials. There may be ready prepared units, such as one on volunteering used by College F, but they require the addition of extra material to incorporate the global learning element. When asked in the staff questionnaires what they would need to incorporate global learning more fully, the overriding concern was lack of time and additional help. With the current pressures in FE, it is unsurprising that teachers do not possess the resources to compensate for syllabuses lacking in global learning. A curriculum approach such as that taken in programmatic awards like the International Baccalaureate, would arguably provide them with time and encouragement to incorporate global learning more fully. The historical lack of focus beyond certain subjects or particular skills for a global economy (Blum, Bentall and Bourn 2010), means colleges start from a low, unsupported base when trying to incorporate global learning more widely.

Conclusion

This project revealed the primacy of positive local factors as FE institutions responded to the challenges and opportunities provided by global learning. In post-16 education, the relatively weak and sporadic requirements of national qualifications to consider international issues meant that the major influencing factors proved to be those rooted within the participating institutions. Furthermore, national policy could even exercise a negative effect as powerful policy levers concentrated attention on examination attainment and course retention. For example, the removal of incentives for learners, such the EMA, contributed to a more

difficult climate for this area of teaching. The fact that global learning was taking place at all was testament to the commitment and ingenuity of the educational professionals involved and the ways in which they were able to configure and utilise what might be termed positive local 'enabling factors'.

The research identified a number of these enabling factors that facilitated global learning in the participating colleges. A crucial combination were institutional: pre-existing institutional priorities in this field; existing or recent overseas partnerships; the personal experience and enthusiasm of key members of staff, and explicit support from senior management. These factors were also found to be important in Blum, Bentall and Bourn's (2010) report on responses to globalisation within FE. Other influential factors proved to be the qualification itself, the level of subject and the profile of students. It proved easier to engage Level 3 learners than those at levels below, a issue that has not been identified in previous research. Those at levels below were more focused on their immediate skill development, were in the college for a much shorter period and found it harder to focus on the relevance to their future. It was the combination of institutional and learner factors that determined whether the very limited opportunities provided or required by existing qualifications to engage with global learning were used to advantage.

The primacy of local enabling factors over national ones had consequences for the project and for global learning more broadly. Most obvious was the degree of variability across the colleges and the pragmatic nature of the learning. Teachers grasped at opportunities to pursue global learning when it could have easily not existed at all. Variability could be interpreted as a flexible response to the immediate learning environment and the needs of the learners. However, it could be equally seen as 'hit and miss'. Too much appeared to depend on a set of

factors that could be here today and gone tomorrow; a concern, particularly around funded initiatives, highlighted in previous research (Blum, Bentall and Bourn 2010). Furthermore, the fact that lower level learners found it more difficult to engage with global learning suggests that divisions between general and vocational education might not be overcome by a relatively isolated initiative.

So what are the answers? The research revealed that there could be an enthusiasm for this kind of learning and that awareness of global issues in young people is needed more than ever. The research could be interpreted as suggesting different levels of intervention that coalesce to create a 'critical mass' of engagement. At the level of national policy, there will have to be some form of requirement so that unwarranted variability can be addressed. The question is what type of national intervention. Here there are several possibilities. The first and possibly clearest would be a 'core requirement' in student programmes of study, similar to that found in the International Baccalaureate or the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and a focus by awarding bodies on including global learning within individual qualification specifications. However, demanding something nationally does not always translate into an enthusiastic engagement by young people or their teachers nor the capacity to engage with the issues in any depth. Another approach could be the use of policy levers, such as inspection, to force compliance, although this runs risks of institutional game playing and an instrumental or even cynical approach.

The research suggests that local factors are critical and, therefore, those that enable need to be supported and strengthened. In the immediate future in which colleges will remain autonomous with little prospect of a 'national solution' from the government, the issue will be how to mobilise sectoral resources. A third suggestion, that builds on initiatives already

taking place in the further education sector, could be to focus on developing sector frameworks, such as the AoC International Charter mark and the 'Sixth Form Baccalaureate', currently being piloted in a number of sixth form colleges[3], that appeal to institutional identity and professional commitment and encourage students to demonstrate that they have performed above the requirements of their individual qualifications. Here too there is a role for higher education and employers to add their voices to the importance of global learning and engagement in an increasingly inter-connected world. At some point there will have to be a national demand, but this will prove all the more effective in the longer term if it comes in support of a pre-existing process of local and sectoral innovation and collaboration. We see global learning not just as an additional demand in the busy lives of FE professionals and a congested curriculum but as part of helping FE colleges to look outwards and to more effectively connect with their increasingly diverse communities.

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[3] for more detail see http://www.sfcforum.org.uk/sfbac

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