

# Using an Integrated Curriculum to enhance primary students' understandings of Global Citizenship

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## Abstract

Global citizens are willing to take responsibility for their own actions, respect and value diversity and see themselves as contributors to a more peaceful and sustainable world. To elicit some understandings of this concept for our primary students we can foster understanding of world issues and a commitment to change, especially to the eradication of global poverty and inequality, which then may help them to shape a better future for the world and become better global citizens. However the primary school curriculum is sometimes seen as being fragmented and disjointed, with each learning area claiming its own place and time in the teaching program. Some learning areas dominate the curriculum, with an emphasis on skills-based approaches in order to comply with testing regimes. The notion of global citizenship seems at odds with such approaches. There are, however, important ways to integrate Key Learning Areas in an effort to develop some deep knowledge and deep understanding in students and connect them to their 'real' worlds outside of school. Primary students' understandings of global citizenship can be enhanced and developed through an integrated curriculum approach and can assist students in connecting and improving their 'real' worlds. This paper will examine various perspectives on enacting being a global citizen and will consider how an understanding of this concept can be enhanced in primary school students utilising an integrated curriculum.

## What is Global Citizenship?

Global Citizens participate in shaping a better shared future. They acknowledge the unity and interdependence of human society and have a sense of self and an appreciation of cultural diversity. They actively support social justice and human rights and build peace and sustainable futures in different times and places. Global Citizens in 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia also develop meaningful relationships with our neighbours in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

Global Citizens are open minded and develop new ways of thinking about the world that make them predisposed to take action for change. They take responsibility for their own actions and respect and value diversity by contributing to a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.

Because of this, teaching about Global Citizenship is more than just developing a base of knowledge and skills. It also entails promoting positive values and participation and therefore is relevant across all key learning areas encouraging teachers to use an Integrated Curriculum approach to learning in the primary school.

This paper examines the underlying understandings and philosophies of the five learning emphases for global education, developed as part of the Global Perspectives

Framework (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008), and then considers how these emphases can be incorporated in a classroom teaching program to enhance global citizenship.

### **The Five Learning Emphases of Global Education**

The Global Perspectives Framework for Australian schools developed by the Commonwealth of Australia in conjunction with AusAID, the Global Education Project, the Curriculum Corporation and the Asia Education Foundation lists the key five learning emphases reflecting themes in global education as Interdependence and Globalisation, Identity and Cultural Diversity, Social Justice and Human Rights, Peace Building and Conflict Resolution, and Sustainable Futures. All five learning emphases are interdisciplinary and so provide direction for an interdisciplinary approach to teaching. This framework emphasises that a single disciplinary approach to educating future global citizens will not assist because global citizens need to take aspects of many parts of their education and put them together if they are to be problem solvers and risk takers for the future.

#### **Interdependence and globalisation**

One of the specific Australian education policies that impacts on the teaching of global education in our schools is Engaging Young Australians with Asia from *The National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools* (2006). This document identifies the broad knowledge, understandings, values and skills required to engage with Asia in the context of existing policies and practices in teaching and learning. It states:

For Australia, the countries of the Asian region are of critical importance. They are our closest neighbours and major trading partners. They represent the cultural heritage of a growing number of Australians and their rich traditional and contemporary cultures provide opportunities for our social, creative and intellectual development.

Educating Australians for a world in which the Asian region plays a major role requires a substantial response by Australia's education jurisdictions and schools. As a nation develops so too does the body of knowledge valued by it. In Australia we 'have grown up in a society which has historically acted as if the only really important ideas, cultures, beliefs and norms are those with their origins in western Europe and latterly North America (AEF, 2000, p. 5).

It reflects work undertaken since 1993 by all education jurisdictions and schools across Australia in integrating the study of Asia across learning areas, including Asian languages. It is vital for our future for Australia to be globally connected, but in particular, to establish strong and meaningful connections to our geographically closest neighbours, those of Asia. Our future is inextricably linked to the strengths of the relationships and understandings we forge with Asian countries. (Cosgrove, 2000)

To become a harmonious, creative and prosperous 21<sup>st</sup> century society we must deliver timely, flexible and clever responses to the challenges set before us. If China rises, as predicted, to be the world's largest economy by 2050, five-year olds starting school in Australia today will be at the peak of their working lives when this occurs and will be strongly influenced by our links with China throughout their lives. It is

therefore imperative that these young people understand Asia culturally, economically, geographically and historically and appreciate something of the diversity of Asia's peoples, cultures, environments, belief systems and societies. Our students need to develop informed attitudes, know about contemporary and traditional Asia and connect Australia and Asia.

An Australia in which a unique, vibrant, creative culture has blossomed, a culture that understands its Indigenous connectedness to land and is fed as much by the influences of the great civilisations of Asia as by those of Europe (Gantner, 2003, p.24).

To achieve these aims we must engage our students in learning that is both meaningful and significant and instils in them a desire to change and improve their own world through understanding and positive action. Positive engagement with our Asian neighbours will enhance students' abilities to contribute to the world they will inherit. Through engaging with Asia students will develop a better understanding of their own community and respect and value the diverse cultures of the world. Thus teaching for global citizenship, aiming at interdependence and globalisation must incorporate the ideas from the *Engaging young Australians with Asia...* statement.

### **Identity and cultural diversity**

Understanding and valuing ourselves is the first step in understanding and valuing others. By building a strong sense of self through identifying and valuing our own cultural heritage and developing and contributing to reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians we are more able to value the cultural heritage of others and accept diversity. We must promote the rights and identities of others and develop in our students a sense of community and shared values at a local, national and global level. Through the ability to critically analyse the stereotyping of ethnicities and culturally diverse groups we can assist our students to develop tolerance, understandings and empathy for cultural groups regardless of their backgrounds.

As one aspect of this the *National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools* (2005) identifies the importance of teaching languages other than English in our schools. It identifies the relationship between the study of languages and of countries and cultures where the language is spoken and the link between language learning and the enhancement of Global Education. It maintains that the learning of languages enriches our students educationally, intellectually and culturally; enables intercultural communication skills that will help to avoid misunderstandings and enhances employment and career prospects for the individual. The learning about cultures and intercultural understandings and an enhancement of the notion of global citizenship can be brought about through the teaching of intercultural languages.. The world can be viewed from different perspectives, thus building communication and negotiation skills. Thus teaching for global citizenship, aiming at identity and cultural diversity must incorporate the ideas from the *Statement for Languages Education...* statement and must also consider issues of reconciliation with our indigenous citizens as well as intercultural understanding. .

## **Social justice and human rights**

There must be some overriding values that we are all teaching and learning towards. The United Nations has established some key guidelines to assist not only educators but all members of society to consider when they consider what it means to be human and how to human in a peaceful community. Some understanding of Human Rights would seem to be a good platform for such communities.

The preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established at the United Nations in 1949 says:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms... (UN, 1949)

There are other conventions also developed by the United Nations especially the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) that establish some fundamental principles that can guide Human Rights Education. The United Nations has really done the hard work, to have all those nations work together to establish what these rights should be is an enormous undertaking. Now as educators we need to ensure that we work towards them, by ensuring that everyone knows of them, that they learn the skills that will enable them, and that they apply the knowledge and skills in the wider community. As Bickmore (2008) argued, teaching for social justice and human rights requires three dimensions - processes and skill development for justice in conflictual human relations; substantive knowledge about conflict and justice questions embedded in subject matter; and engaged agency in the unjust institutional contexts beyond the classroom. Thus teaching for global citizenship, aiming at social justice and human rights must incorporate the ideas from the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child among other United Nations'

statements and must consider the skills and processes of teaching these as well as the authenticity of the teaching in the real world experiences of the child.

### **Peace building and conflict resolution**

McLeod and Reynolds (2010) argued that there are five essential characteristics of peace building; it should be transformative, it should invite emotions, it should be value laden, it must build intercultural understandings, and it should be global education. McLeod and Reynolds argued that the key to peacebuilding and social justice-based curriculum is focussing on the articles of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child as a guide to good practice.

Peace education should be transformative. Approaches that depend on transmitting past 'important' knowledge do not encourage an engaged and critical citizenry - they provide no critical function and thereupon no vision or hope (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, p. 95). To institute a peaceful community does require a form of transformational education with a transformational curriculum. It must do this to enable those whose voices are not being heard to participate. The United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples notes in Article 15:

- 1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.*
- 2. States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.*

Peace is not possible when groups of people, particularly indigenous peoples, are not acknowledged in our schools and classrooms.

Peace education should be caring. Nodding (2002) argued that teaching should be the caring profession. A genuine caring environment with opportunity to converse with others in an atmosphere of respect would seem to foster a peaceful community of learners and teachers.

Peace education invites emotions. There is an increasingly important body of research literature that emphasises the importance of the emotional ties between teacher and students that assists to build communities of learners and these emotional ties are also crucial in building peaceful communities. Engaging with others requires emotional attachment and emotional responses Goleman (1995). The idea that students need to consider emotions, be in touch with their own emotions and try to ascertain the emotions of others is crucial for peaceful existence.

Peace education is value laden. It would be hard to envisage a values education program that did not have as an aim some approaches to peaceful living. Values are the cornerstone of the way in which we approach our relationships towards other people, institutions and our wider environment locally, nationally and internationally. Aspin (2002, p. 13) argued that the individual judgements and activities are

‘determined at the level of the culture of a community’ – these give human beings their most fundamental conception of the meaning of life. The *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (2005) acknowledged that education is as much about building character as it is about building skills, and that a specifically focused values-based education assists with self esteem, optimism, commitment to personal fulfilment, and enables students to exercise ethical judgement and social responsibility (Commonwealth of Australia, p. 1).

Peace education must build intercultural understandings. A huge issue in an increasingly globalised world is the issue of how to promote intercultural understanding, enabling students to be able to work with those of different racial, ethnic, cultural language and religious groups, to learn about social justice and to promote human rights in peaceful ways. There is a tension, when teaching about diverse cultures, between some universal overriding principles that transcend cultural differences (such as human rights, peace, democracy, civil rights and responsibilities) while acknowledging the cultural differences in our society, working with the tensions that these necessarily create, and celebrating such diversity (*UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education*, 2007).

Peace education should be global education. Global education is about learning about others. AUSaid lists a myriad of issues that need to be dealt with in global education, with only one of them being peacebuilding. However many of the other issues contribute to peace building or the lack of it. Issues such as human rights, health, refugees, rural development, sanitation, urbanisation, desertification and natural disasters are important areas of study in global education. Taking a global perspective on issues that can enhance peaceful communities is a very important aspect of establishing peaceful pedagogies.

Thus teaching for global citizenship, aiming at peace building and conflict resolution must incorporate the ideas from the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child among other United Nations’ statements and must be transformative, it should invite emotions, it should be value laden, it must build intercultural understandings, and it should be should be globally linked .

### **Sustainable futures**

The importance of educating our students for a sustainable future cannot be underestimated. *Educating for a Sustainable Future: A National Environmental Education Statement for Australian Schools* (2005) acknowledges that schools have a powerful and important role to play in preparing and empowering students to assume responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future. To truly embody and enact the knowledge, skills and values of global citizenship we must assist our students to examine and change personal lifestyles to secure a sustainable future; to identify, investigate, evaluate and undertake appropriate action to maintain, protect and enhance local and global environments; to challenge preconceived ideas, accept change and acknowledge uncertainty and to work cooperatively and in partnerships with others.

A sustainable future may be achieved through developing in students a sense of optimism about the future coupled with a realistic understanding of the difficulties

and challenges ahead. Students must be taught to recognise and discuss the relationships between ecological, economic, cultural, political, and social aspects of sustainability. Through providing our children with opportunities to contribute to a sustainable world they will be able to “appreciate the wonders and peoples of the Earth; live in a world where everyone has sufficient food for a healthy productive life; assess, care for and restore the state of the planet; create and enjoy a better, safer, more just world and be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally”. (UNESCO, 2005, n.p.)

As the world becomes a “smaller” place we must help our students to understand the interdependence of communities and all life forms and the impact that decisions made in one place can and will have in another place. This interdependence and globalisation can have both positive and negative effects as we are inextricably linked through cultural, economic, environmental, geographical, political, religious, social and technological issues. By giving our students the knowledge, skills and values to make critical choices about these issues they are able to identify and take action to stop the spread of the negative effects of globalisation. Thus teaching for global citizenship, aiming at sustainable futures must incorporate the ideas from *Educating for a Sustainable Future: A National Environmental Education Statement for Australian Schools* and must emphasise our global interconnectedness in many ways

### **Integration of Global Citizenship in the primary curriculum through Visual Literacy**

How, as educators, are we to provide all of these opportunities for our students while still covering the “3 Rs”? This is particularly topical in view of the fact that there are current national curriculum discussions which are moving towards a more disciplinary focussed approach, especially in social education (ACARA, 2009). This can be problematic when pursuing globally sustainable futures. Teaching for global citizenship must involve teaching through an integrated curriculum model, where we can focus on the use of concepts, rather than being topic-based (Henderson, 2004; Taba, 1971) and so if curriculum guidelines are to be laid out in discipline specific lists, then there must also be some assistance to put it all together in some conceptually meaningful manner so it can be used as authentic knowledge to develop global citizens. Through the use of a concept focussed curriculum educators can teach skills, knowledge, values and understandings that can be transferred across the different Key Learning Areas that encompass the primary curriculum. In particular we are advocating the use of visual literacy, often still underused in discussions of integration, as a key approach to integrate different learning areas of the curriculum into conceptual frameworks to enhance global citizenship.

The NSW Board of Studies (1996) defined curriculum integration as the “purposeful planning, by teachers, of strategies and learning experiences to facilitate and enhance learning across the key learning areas (n.p.)” It can be said to be an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, holistic, connected, interwoven, thematic, linked or correlated curriculum. An integrated curriculum encourages students to see the interconnectedness and interrelationships among disciplines. It provides students with immensely more meaningful learning experiences as they find more relevance in the lessons being presented and encourages a greater use of higher order thinking skills as students are encouraged to construct knowledge rather than just memorise facts.

Integration of the curriculum can be achieved through focussing programming on key concepts and processes where significant themes, problems or issues can be examined using the skills from one key learning and the content from another, or through focussing on the use of the skills and values that transcend all key learning areas and establish links and authentic connections.

However in recent years an integrated approach to primary curriculum has been less evident due to pressures on teachers to attain certain benchmarks as required by national and state testing regimes. Teachers have argued that a skills approach within certain disciplinary areas, with particular emphasis on English and Maths, has been necessary in order to get higher mark in these tests. With less time allocated to other areas of the primary curriculum in NSW, for example, there has been an attempt to put all the other learning areas together in an integrated manner in COGS (NSW DET n.d.) units to be undertaken in the afternoon for 2 hours per week. These units include SOSE/HSIE, Creative Arts and Science and Technology primarily but they are restricted in time and also in use of other learning areas (there are specific skills to be taught in each of these learning areas and so English and Maths skills are avoided because of lack of time). The recent Cambridge Primary Review (2009) and Rose Review (2009) in England have acknowledged the difficulties of implementing integrated curriculum in primary schools. Both have recommended a more integrated approach, and a resultant decrease in emphasis on time devoted to solely teaching a particular discipline, so that students see learning as an authentic experience.

There are times when it is right to marshal content from different subjects into well-planned, cross-curricular studies. This is not only because it helps children to better understand ideas about such important matters as citizenship, sustainable development, financial capability and health and wellbeing, but also because it provides opportunities across the curriculum for them to use and apply what they have learned from the discrete teaching of subjects (Rose Review, 2009, p. 16).

The Cambridge Review (Alexander, 2009) moved away from the established discipline areas altogether and in place of History and Geography in the primary curriculum argued for Citizenship and Ethics, and Place and Time as learning areas, with three of the key aims of primary education to be encouraging respect and reciprocity; promoting interdependence and sustainability; empowering local, national and global citizenship; and celebrating culture and community. The Cambridge Review argued that 30% of the primary curriculum should be located in the local community and not designed by central government. The opportunity to locate curriculum in the local area and local area issues allows so many of the global learning frameworks to be furthered.

To assist our students in becoming citizens of the world that will care for and build a sustainable future we can use texts such as 'Belonging' by Jeannie Baker to show how just one action can start something that can change a street and then a community, a country and perhaps the entire world. We can show that belonging is more than just inhabiting, that to truly belong we must enact a sense of community and shared values and work at and contribute to it. The book can help us to build a sense of community and belonging in our own students. It can help us as educators to show students how

to identify and explore the opportunities to participate in and influence decision-making locally, nationally, regionally and even internationally. By deconstructing this text's visual elements as a part of their study of the English K-6 syllabus students are able to use the knowledge and skills gained in this Key Learning area to build their own understandings of what it is to be a global citizen and to apply this to other parts of the curriculum.

Teaching our students to become confident, well informed conflict negotiators, working to establish peacebuilding and conflict resolution, as well as social justice and human rights can also be achieved through the use of literary texts such as "The Enemy" by David Cali and Serge Bloch. The text reveals the stupidity of prejudice and propaganda and the futility of war. Students reading this text are asked to consider the shared lives of these two soldiers and the way they view each other. Through examining the issues of stereotyping of ethnicities or "enemies" we can teach tolerance understanding and empathy. The book focuses on the 'sameness' of the soldiers and of their lives. They each have homes, wives, families and they each are told by the powers that wage the war that the other is a murdering, inhuman monster. This text offers opportunities for students to consider how these soldiers could end this conflict that exists between them. Through the use of constructive role playing of the two soldiers and their plights students can not only act out disputing characters but can also appoint a mediator who can guide them through successful conflict resolution. As a reflective activity students can then be guided in discussion of successful conflict resolution behaviours that achieve the negotiation of mutually acceptable outcomes while maintaining positive relationships with each other.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has put together two aspects of curriculum development and planning to establish a way forward for classroom teachers in teaching for global citizenry. Firstly we have built upon the Global Education Project's framework of five learning emphases (2008) to clarify their meanings and to explain how these emphases can be implemented in primary classrooms. Secondly we have pointed out the necessity for the framework to be implemented in an integrated manner in the primary classroom. We have then provided examples of how an integrated conceptual approach to teaching practice, using visual literacy skills, can make this work in a primary classroom. We argue that teachers can use the five emphases - interdependence and globalisation, identity and cultural identity, social justice and human rights, peacebuilding and conflict resolution and sustainable futures - as conceptual underpinnings to a conceptually-based integrated curriculum approach. In examples we have provided we argue for the value of the skills of visual literacy to augment a global approach which can be meaningful for many groups of children in many locations.

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