

Research Briefing Nº 82

Learning About Development

This research reports on four research and development projects looking at how development education can and does take place within schools in England. It aims to act as a guide for teachers and educators interested in being involved in the Department for International Development's (DFID) Global Learning Programme (GLP) for schools in England.

GLP aims to support schools to deliver effective teaching and learning on development and global issues at Key Stages 2 and 3 (ages 7 to 11 and 11 to 14).



Key words: development education; international development; global citizenship; transitions to secondary school; young people; Key Stage 2; Key Stage 3; curriculum and qualifications

Key findings

- Learning about development themes tends to be covered predominantly in geography. It is also covered to a lesser extent in citizenship, science, personal social and health education (PSHE) and religious education (RE) at secondary level (Key stage 3). At primary level (Key stage 2), themes related to development usually take place through a more topic based approach.
- Geography provides a major opportunity to increase learning about development and global issues.
- The quality of teaching and learning about development and global issues can be substantially enhanced if the school has a positive school ethos on engaging with wider world issues and themes, and encourages pupils to see themselves as global citizens.
- Many schools have a link with a school in a developing country or raise money for an international development aid agency. All too often schools' engagement stays at this level of charity and 'wanting to help others' without moving towards an approach that promotes social justice and mutual understanding.
- Specific courses and examinations on international development such as the World Development A-Level provide a good opportunity for more critical and reflective approaches to learning.

Development education: an approach to learning about global and development issues through recognising the importance of linking people's lives throughout the world. Students learn about the challenges our world faces and develop critical thinking skills to consider issues such as poverty, inequality and sustainability. It helps students to make sense of the world, to support change towards a more just and sustainable world, and to understand their role within a global society.

What we did

Development and global themes/ issues have been part of the life of many schools for over thirty years. International development agencies such as Oxfam, Christian Aid and CAFOD have played an important role in influencing this practice. In the UK, as in many other industrialised countries, government ministries with responsibilities for aid and development have provided funding for development education. DFID, the ministry responsible for this area in the UK, funded a range of projects between 1997 and 2010. Since then the focus has been on three programmes: international volunteering; school linking; and a strategic programme for embedding global learning in schools, the GLP.

GLP began in 2013. Evidence to support its development and implementation includes research undertaken by the **IOE's Development Education Research Centre (DERC)**.

Findings in this briefing summarise four research papers produced by the Centre as well as more recent evidence emerging from the GLP in terms of the engagement of curriculum subject bodies, schools and teachers.

How we did it

DERC produced 4 relevant research reports:

1. **'Global Dimension in Secondary Schools'**. Research was based on a combination of analysis of existing data, surveys to 12 schools known to be actively engaged in this area and questionnaires to a range of supporting organisations.
2. **'Global Learning and Subject Knowledge'**. This research was based on a review of current literature on subject knowledge and research carried out by Masters students at the IOE for their science, RE, mathematics and modern foreign languages dissertations.
3. **'Geography and Development'**. This report was based on analysis of existing geography literature and relevant school examination courses.
4. **'Learning About World Development at A-level'**. This research report included both quantitative and qualitative methods including questionnaires to 151 students within 9 schools and colleges.

In addition, evidence from the GLP is being compiled and analysed through whole school audits by participating schools, feedback from professional development courses, and qualitative research with a range of schools to review ways in which global and development themes are being introduced.

Further information

[Bourn, D. & Hunt, F. \(2011\). Global Dimension in Secondary Schools. DERC Research Paper No.1. London: IOE/DERC.](#)

[Bourn, D. \(2012\). Global Learning and Subject Knowledge. DERC Research Paper No.4. London: IOE/DERC.](#)

[Lambert, D. & Morgan, J. \(2012\). Geography and Development: The Role of Development Education in Geography Curriculum. DERC Research Paper, No. 3. London: IOE.](#)

[Miller, G., Bowes, E., Bourn, D. & Castro, J.M \(2012\). Learning about World Development at A-Level. DERC Research Paper, No.7. London: IOE.](#)

Contact

Principal investigator: Dr Doug Bourn, Department of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment, Institute of Education, University of London

Email: d.bourn@ioe.ac.uk

Phone: +44 (0)203 073 8309

Doug is based at the IOE's Development Education Research Centre (DERC)