Global Dimension in Initial Teacher Education: adopting a subject-based approach

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of a three-year research and development project which aimed to embed the global dimension across initial teacher education in one institution. It highlights some of the facilitators and barriers to embedding the global dimension on the PGCE using a subject-based approach. In particular it focuses on ITE tutors' motivations to engage with the global dimension.

1   Introduction

This paper provides a look at aspects of a three-year research and development project which aimed to embed the global dimension (GD) into an initial teacher education programme (ITE) via the PGCE programme in one higher education (HE) institution. With policy interest in the GD increasing and more engagement with global learning at the school level, the project sought to ensure the teacher education community in the HE institution had the capacity, expertise and enthusiasm to deliver the GD in the classroom.

The project team adopted a subject-level approach to incorporating the GD into ITE at secondary level and a more (but not fully) cross-curricular approach at primary level. The design of the project and research analyses were informed by previous literature on incorporating the global dimension in teacher education (e.g. Merryfield, 1993; Gadsby and Bullivant, 2011; Belgeonne, 2009) and approaches to change management in education (e.g. Havelock, 1970; Rogers, 1971). The subject-level approach was used because it was felt it would enable more in-depth interaction with the GD – the GD becoming a core activity of the course and embedded within subject knowledge. It would mean working closely with ITE tutors, many of whom provided support to the initial funding proposal. Wider, PGCE level support was provided once subject-level data had been collected.

The project team took as its framing focus the cross-curricular policy focus on the GD and specifically the eight key concepts of the GD.

This paper explores three research questions:

1. Why might a subject-based approach to integrating the global dimension into ITE be used?
2. What factors influence ITE tutor engagement in the global dimension on their PGCE courses?
3. How can best practice for embedding the global dimension in ITE be enhanced?

While previous research has looked at ITE trainees' knowledge and experiences (e.g. Bennett, 2010; Holden and Hicks, 2007; McCormack and Flaherty, 2010), GD provision across institutions (e.g. Hunt, et al 2011; Merryfield, 1991), learning from international study

visits and/or volunteering (Martin, 2007; Gilliom, 1993) and the incorporation of the GD into specific ITE subject areas (e.g. Gay and Jones, 2002; Firth and Winter, 2007; Power and Horsley, 2008), there has been less insight into both the use of subject-based approaches to embedding global dimension in ITE and the perceptions of ITE tutors towards the GD in ITE (Gilliom, 1993 being an exception). This section highlights some initial thoughts from the project team of using a subject-based approach to embedding the GD in ITE, a more thorough analysis is forthcoming.

2 Research methods and development interventions

The process of intervention with the subject-based approach was for the project team to work alongside ITE tutors. I was aware of my own belief in the importance of the project and the sense that the GD should be incorporated into schooling (and thus teacher education) – but also knew that tutors might not have the same motivation. To counter potential difficulties we located the project within government policy frameworks at secondary and primary levels, promoting ourselves as a 'free' resource to tutors. As 'change agents' we would potentially be acting as catalysts, solution givers and process helpers depending on the needs of the tutors (Havelock, 1970: 7). We were careful to present the project as something that would not require significant time inputs from tutors (unless they wanted this), particularly in the early stages.

In the first year (2009-2010) the project team worked with three PGCE courses: Business and Economics, MFL and Science. In the second year (2010-2011), RE, ICT, Music and Primary joined the project. In the final year of the project (2011-2012), Citizenship, History and English have become involved in the project. In terms of data collection with PGCE subject teams and feedback / interventions with PGCE teams Table 1 highlights the process that has (generally) taken place:

Table 1: Process of engagement

Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Tutor interview	Feedback sent to tutor	Contact with tutors about further possible adaptations
Group interview with trainees	Tutor meeting to plan interventions	Interviews with NQTs (from previous years intake)
Individual interviews with trainees.	Project team work with tutors to adapt aspects of the PGCE	Interviews with teacher in year two of teaching (interviewed in year one).
Observations of key 'global' sessions	Interviews with NQTs (from previous years intake)	Interviews with current trainees
Analysis of any relevant learning diaries	Interviews with current trainees (indiv./ group)	Interview with tutor.
Review of course handbook		
Review of Blackboard site.		

In year one the focus of data collection was on gathering information on understandings of the GD, current practices on the PGCE, experiences in placement schools and how best the team could work with the subject area. NQT interviews help gauge the extent to which they understand and engage with GDs in their teaching. Interviews were semi-structured which guide, but don't determine, the interview process. All interviews were recorded and

transcribed. Observation guides were used where appropriate. Table 2 provides a summary of data collection that has taken place to date.

Table 2: Summary of data collection

	Tutor interviews	Group trainees interview	Individual trainees interview	NQTs interview	Session observation	Handbook / blackboard review
BEE	3	3	2	1	Yes	Yes
Science	2	1	3		Yes	Yes
MFL	2	1	1	1		Yes
ICT	1	1	2	4		Yes
Primary	4	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
RE	1	1	3	1		Yes
Music	1	1	1		Yes	Yes
History	1	1				
English	1		1			
Citizenship	1	1			Yes	

Initial data was developed into 15-20 page documents for subject tutors providing detail on where the GD is currently located on the PGCE, factors encouraging and discouraging the GD, as well as possible suggestions for adaptations to the provision. Based on this feedback the project team, working with tutors planned and executed various interventions which are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Interventions / adaptations to PGCE courses

	Feedback to tutors	GD resource pack	Policy information for trainees	Adaptations to GD teaching sessions	GD in hand book	Team intervention in teaching sessions	Examples of other interventions
BEE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		GD conference
Science	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		GD in outdoor learning activities
MFL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes (TF)	
ICT	Yes	(partly)		Yes			
Primary	Yes	Yes	Yes				
RE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	planned	Yes	Links to mentors; GD conference
Music	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			GD in teaching practice; links to mentors
History	On-going						
English	On-going						
Citizenship	On-going						
PGCE secondary		Yes	Yes	Yes			

In terms of analysis of research data, this account is my take on the research process and data collected. It is one interpretation of a reality, which is 'perspective-bound and partial' (Usher, 1996). Other researchers would collect and interpret the data differently.

3   Data analysis

In this section I respond specifically to the research questions outlined in the Introduction.

3.1   Adopting a subject-based approach to embedding the global dimension in ITE

Incorporating the GD at a subject level is seen as particularly appropriate in contexts where trainees spend large amounts of time in subject groups and where their teacher identity will be defined by their subject (i.e. particularly at secondary level). One tutor describes this:

> *I think it can only happen that way at secondary to be valued… the students do see themselves at secondary as subject-based first … so we know right at the end of course who should be attending … so there is a much closer pastoral supervision of what they're doing. The other thing is it's only at the subject-level that they can see it as meaningful at that initial stage … I think that's a strength of doing it subject-based.*

Embedding the GD within the subject knowledge, skills and pedagogical practice of a trainees' experience can provide an in-depth interaction with global learning. The GD is shaped to trainees' subject knowledge making it relevant to what they know and what they are/will be expected to teach. In terms of embedding within subject knowledge it is possibly the most immediate and appropriate approach.

The success of adopting a subject-based approach is reliant on the engagement of subject-level tutors. Tutors are the gatekeepers to the subject area and the students – thus active (not passive) buy in with tutors is necessary for success. Yet this is not always straightforward (see: Factors Influencing Tutor Engagement below). Moreover, sustainability can become an issue if ITE tutors change roles within institutions and the engagement with individual tutors hasn't yet developed into subject-level buy in.

How a tutor (and subject) engages with the GD through their subject differs across courses, meaning there can be little continuity of learning across subjects for trainees. For example, while one tutor might spend some time teaching trainees what the GD is, how they might teach it and give them space to practice that teaching; others may make only short reference to it, meaning overall these trainees are less equipped to teach global issues in schools. Shortfalls in coverage can be met with cross-curricular teaching sessions and resource packs for trainees.

Finally subject-based approaches to embedding the GD into ITE are labour intensive – particularly for the change agents and especially if they are acting as catalysts, solution givers and process helpers (Havelock, 1970). In this scenario, relationships need to be developed and sustained, data collected, recommendations made and adaptations made – at every subject. If time is an issue for change agent, other approaches may be more viable.

3.2   Factors Influencing Tutor Engagement

Tutors are central to the success to embedding the GD via a subject-based approach. This engagement is not straightforward nor is it guaranteed. There are a number of factors which appear to influence tutors' engagement. Here I analyse data on tutors' perceptions of and

motivations for engagement with the GD. I also discuss the relationship(s) between researchers and tutors.

3.2.1 Tutors' motivations for engagement with and perceptions of the global dimension in ITE

The following data is developed from interviews with tutors. It shows a range of motivations for engaging with the GD, potential reasons for not engaging and explores how tutors understand and perceive the GD. The following extracts indicate a positive engagement and motivation towards the GD:

Personal interest – International development / development education is a personal interest of some PGCE tutors e.g. through previous studies or travel.

> *I did an MSc in Development Studies while I was a teacher.*

> *It was a personal interest of mine …*

Opportunity - For some tutors engaging with the GD opens up the subject area and offers trainees' a range of opportunities that might not be possible in a more closed curriculum. For them, this is a positive and enriching opportunity:

> *There's a very small amount on syllabus really … (where they are it's) generally not very overt but they're in there in places. So it's a matter of hopefully getting teachers to realise they can be more critical about what's going on … .*

> *Certainly they'll (trainees) be going away having been told it is something you should be bringing into your teaching. And if you're not then you're missing a wonderful opportunity.*

Linked to subject area – Many tutors are able to see the links between the GD and their subject area:

> *I'm confident that (X subject area) can really support it, and I'm confident that we already doing part of it because of the nature of the subject.*

Important for children – interestingly the importance of the GD for children's learning at school level was given less priority than I thought it might. Often when children were included in discussion, it was around students and multiculturalism, with global perspectives used to enhance inclusion, rather than global learning as important for knowledge, skills and values development.

> *When I'm thinking about global perspectives … I'm always trying to think about the children that are in our classrooms in the inner-city London schools and the ways in which the students value those racial cultural and ethnic backgrounds that the children have …*

However, one tutor noted the importance of the GD in developing the knowledge and skills to be global citizens of the future:

> *I'm trying to get our trainee teachers to have some idea about how young people who are growing up in the 21st Century need to have a wide view about what this great civilisation and humanity of ours is all about and to understand the links and the interdependence of our and their lives and to be able to see are there some responsible ways that I can work for citizens of the future … I'm wanting to help them have the knowledge to see – I can't be insular and I can't be necessarily nationalistic … I want these young people to have a voice. I want them to be able to challenge in*

terms of Fair Trade or I want them to be able to understand human rights and those rights may not necessarily be being upheld …

Contrastingly other tutors found it more difficult to (initially) engage with the GD, either because they did not see the links with the subject area, viewed it as a potential add-on to their workload and therefore not integral to their teaching.

Optional and not directly linked to subject area – For some tutors there was a less immediate connection between the GD and their subject area. For tutors to become involved became a choice and not something integral to what they were teaching. It was external, outside of what they did and there wasn't a strong personal connection with it.

… If I was involved in something like this I would want it to be something very focussed.

I think it's more difficult for other subject areas to engage … where you might have to manufacture something.

Limited understanding or enthusiasm – For some tutors the initial meeting highlighted a lack of awareness of the global dimension.

how do I know I'm doing it or when I'm not doing it because if I'm going off on some tangents somewhere .. .

I'd need some direction though as this is a new aspect for me.

Say in school – you got lumbered with that job – you sort out the global dimension …

On the project there was a correlation between how tutors perceived and engaged with the GD in the initial interview and the extent to which they engaged with the project throughout. Those who expressed a personal interest or saw the opportunities in the global dimension could be classified as early adopters or early majority (Rogers, 1971) in terms of what they were already doing or the subsequent changes they made to their courses. Those who appeared less engaged in the initial meetings might more likely be the late majority (Rogers, 1971), sceptical of change and needing a weight of pressure of motivate full adoption.

Gilliom (1993) outlines perceived difficulties motivating and incentivizing teacher educators to support and carry forward the goals of global education. He calls for a 'critical mass' of teacher educators supported by institutional and peer practice (which ties also in with the 'weight of pressure' argument needed to encourage late adopters above). He states:

The chances of achieving significant change are largely dependent on faculty members coming to understand the rationale for global education, buying into the significance and the urgency of the movement, and recognizing potential global connections in the courses they teach (Gilliom, 1993:45).

3.2.2 Relationship between researchers and tutors

Relationships between change agents (in this case the research team) and tutors are crucial for success in embedding the global dimension in PGCE courses. Various factors appeared to shape this relationship (see: Havelock, 1971 for further discussion on these issues), for example, insider/outsider status; status and expertise of change agents and length of engagement. In this case the research team were mainly contracted into the HE institution to carry out the work and therefore had to develop relationships largely from scratch. Moreover, they were located in office space away from tutors meaning everyday interactions with tutors

were largely missing. Time was needed to craft strong and sustainable relationships with tutors. The researchers found that where tutor's initial engagement with the GD in terms of their subject area was weak – the relationship between tutor and change agent became more critical.

3.3 Suggestions for best practice when adopting a subject-based approach to embedding the global dimension in ITE

In a practical sense, the following suggestions highlight the research team's initial ideas on what might enhance best practice when embedding the GD in ITE via a subject-based approach.

- Using a motivated 'insider' to act as a cheer-leader for the project – to engage and cement relationships with tutors. This might suit someone in a position of authority within the institution.
- It is also important for managers to embrace and encourage change, establishing strong relationships with ITE managers from the start.
- Embedding the GD in ITE as an on-going process – regular CPD and forward planning is important to get the most out of it.
- Cross-curricular teaching sessions and resource packs for trainees can go some way towards making up any shortfalls in coverage.
- A process of engagement which moves from individual buy-in towards a whole subject approach should be a goal. This would minimalise disruption from individual tutors changing jobs.
- A handbook or guidebook which notes the various stages of possible engagement would be useful (see McGough, forthcoming). This could identify what an 'embedded' GD might look like and what the stages of engagement might be.

In terms of taking this research forward, a more thorough interrogation of the interview and observational data in a paper which draws more fully on other accounts of the GD and securing change in ITE, will provide more nuanced and informed insight into the complexities of incorporating the GD using a subject-based approach. This paper is forthcoming.

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