What does a globalized curriculum look like for diverse learners in primary schools?

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Children in our classrooms today come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and some have English as an Additional Language (EAL). Haslam *et al* define such children as 'learners whose preferred language/s are not English and therefore add it to their language/s' (2005: 97). The words diversity and globalization have numerous and contested meanings. We begin this article by looking at the multiple ways in which the ideas these terms express are conceptualized, especially for primary school children with EAL. We then explore globalization as a concept to see how it links with diversity so that relevant knowledge is generated using ideas from empirical and methodological studies. Finally, we consider how primary school leaders can bring a global dimension into their curriculum.

Understanding diversity and globalization in primary education

Our investigation was prompted by the fact that little systematic critical research has been done on the understanding of globalization, let alone its links with education for diverse pupils and those for whom English is not their first language. The literature on globalization and Europeanization (Dale and Robinson, 2010) tends to focus on the higher education sector and international dimensions on themes like identities, citizenship and governance. A systematic application of this concept in primary education – especially for bilingual pupils – is lacking, however.

Bottery (2008) considers that the accelerating pace of technology alone requires schools to invest time developing knowledge and understanding about globalization at an early stage, including in primary education. Dale and Robinson (2010) consider that primary schools have to address new challenges of global knowledge and looking at the process of inclusive education through the lens of globalization in curriculum topics to help meet the needs of pupils with EAL. One of the new challenges for primary schools is therefore to create experiences that will broaden children's experience of the world around them, beyond their homes and classrooms. We suggest that primary leaders need a clear, whole-school understanding of what globalization means for them in their particular context, regardless of their setting. This may require whole-system leadership (Wheatley, 2006) – whereby everyone in the system is engaged in serving the needs of all – which suggests the need to develop good relationships.

What is globalization?

Globally the population is diverse. Within nation states diversity is increasing, given growing migration and cross-cultural marriages. Globalization is therefore a concept that needs to be viewed through new lenses and perspectives to 'lessen ethnocentrism' (Dogan and Pelassy, 1990: 43). Ritzer suggests that globalization is 'the world-wide diffusion of practices, expansion of relations across continents, organisation of social life on a global scale, and the growth of a shared global consciousness' (2004: 160). This implies a need to develop a global culture in educational contexts through teaching and learning about technological globalization, economic globalization, demographic globalization and political globalization (Bottery, 2008).

Moloi *et al* assert that 'no country is untouched by globalization' (2009: 278). Consequently,

through the curriculum and the way it is implemented, all schools need to continue to develop their learners' global awareness and the skills of empathy, critical debate and understanding, taking cognizance specifically of pupils with EAL. Van der Merwe (2005) supports this contention, proposing that globalization needs to be understood by all as it is helping to erode the social and economic divide erected by gender, race, culture, religion and geography. This can only be beneficial to our learners and hence our future adults.

The link between globalization and diversity

Globalization, increased technological advances and the impact of mass popular culture have allowed the world to make knowledge accessible to more people. However, the concept of globalization remains contentious (Burbles and Torres, 2000). We believe that schools are uniquely placed to form and articulate the ideal of a democratic society by understanding what globalization is, communicating the ideal of a democratic society to children and encouraging them to use it as a standard for judging themselves and the diverse societies in which we live. This can be promoted in schools by listening to the stories and experiences of diverse learners, both directly – in planned classroom discussions, for example – and indirectly through, for instance, project work. Positive images of a globalized world can be displayed, with quotes in various languages from speakers with active voices, to give them value and help celebrate diversity and the need to value different cultures.

What does a globalized curriculum look like?

McKenzie and Van Winkeelen (2004, cited in Moloi, *et al.*, 2009: 279) suggest a six-point framework of competence for developing school practice for globalization:

1. Competing (drive towards improvements)

2. Deciding (knowledge underpins effective decision-making)

3. Learning (enabling effective learning)

4. Connecting (channeling knowledge internally and externally)

5. Relating (working in different knowledge-sharing relations)

6. Monitoring (managing intellectual capital).

According to Townsend (2011), competing describes the need for vision building with staff so they can use a globalization perspective to help to shape their curriculum and teaching and learning strategies. The decision-making stage focuses on establishing clear communication structures and systems to enable a whole system approach (Scott *et al.*, 2013) to curriculum development focused on teaching and learning. In the learning stage, there is an opportunity to re-focus global perspectives in pedagogy and assessment through, for example, learning about the Indian origin of the number zero in Maths. The connection stage allows time, space and people to be organized and reconfigured so as to harness resources and ensure that in the relating stage, curriculum planning and sharing takes place. The monitoring stage reflects on actions taken and plans the next steps. Mistry and Sood (2012) suggest that all the stages are interconnected. The process is therefore not to be viewed as a cyclical path but should instead be used flexibly to suit specific organizational contexts.

In developing a globalized curriculum, Shaffer (1994) identifies a number of challenges. First is the need to respond more effectively to local and wider environments. Secondly, leaders need to consider issues beyond narrowly focused, formal education systems. Taking these on board offers practitioners and leaders opportunities to clarify meanings and develop consistency of practice in embedding globalization. Third, leaders and practitioners need to understand the importance of forging and maintaining wider partnerships beyond

their immediate environment. However, the challenge remains for leaders to inspire staff to find the will and capacity (Chapman and West Burnham, 2010) to achieve equity through a globalized curriculum.

School leadership and globalization

Leaders are responding to rapidly changing economic, social and environmental conditions (Townsend, 2011). In primary schools, many curriculum responsibilities are divided amongst the staff. To develop a whole-school approach to establishing a globalized curriculum, strong leadership and shared ownership to make the globalization vision a reality (Scott *et al*, 2013) is required. The challenge is to encourage the whole school to think globally (Bogotch and Maslin-Ostrowski, 2010).

The National Curriculum (DfE, 2014) provides opportunities to promote global issues throughout school life and, more importantly, to infuse different global dimensions into practice. This may necessitate dialogue with different communities to develop a compelling vision of the globalized curriculum that promotes diversity (Chapman and West-Burnham, 2010) and enables learners to develop an enquiring mindset and entrepreneurial attitude (Scott *et al.*, 2013: 8). However, the call for a dialogue that embraces different viewpoints can be difficult. Shields advocates 'courageous action' (2009: 53) to listen to and 'truly hear' different perspectives. To understand globalization, we have to understand the interlinked concepts of diversity and systems leadership.

In our research questions we set out to explore the following questions:

- ■ what is current understanding and vision of globalization in primary schools?

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- ■ how are primary schools monitoring the impact of globalization?

- ■ what are the gaps in making children global learners?

- ■ what challenges remain for leadership?

We used semi-structured interviews with ten senior leaders and headteachers in primary schools in rural and urban settings in England. In undertaking interviews, we were mindful of our own value biases (Rust *et al.*, 1999) and remained professional in our fieldwork and post-data analysis. The senior leaders were categorized as the headteacher or key stage coordinators and were selected because they could offer a holistic philosophical and empirical position to explain the practices of the school. All the research participants were asked the same questions, on the assumption that they all had the conceptual understanding to respond. Reliability and validity were ensured through our data analysis process, in which we mapped outcomes against theory (Hammersley, 2008). Our sample consisted of five urban and five rural English primary schools, and the percentage of pupils with EAL ranged from 1–2per cent to over 90per cent. To meet ethical requirements (BERA, 2011), a consent form was presented to each interviewee, granting them the right to withdraw, anonymity and confidentiality (Bell, 2006). Data analysis was undertaken against the key research questions and mapped against existing literature.

Our findings

The data consisted of interview questions and respondent comments from both rural (R) and urban (U) primary schools. Where overlapping ideas were presented, they have been amalgamated into a single theme.

Understanding and vision of globalization

Our hypothesis was that urban schools (U) have greater diversity in their populations so embedding globalization into the curriculum should be easier than it would be in in rural schools (R), which have fewer children with EAL. In McKenzie and van Winkeelen's model

(2004), any drive towards improvement starts with a convincing vision, regardless of the context of a school setting. One urban headteacher commented that the 'children drive the curriculum', while a senior leader (u) referred to 'being fortunate to use the diverse cultures of our children to enhance the topic'.

Schools also need to know that children with EAL come from a vast variety of backgrounds, and that greater understanding of this by everyone in school 'will lead to less ignorance through challenging stereotypes' (headteacher, R). Pupils with EAL are 'already advantaged because they bring diversity of culture, language, dress code, music and religion, which makes the understanding of globalization within the topics easier,' one urban senior leader observed. The differences in children with EAL's cultural backgrounds 'already puts them one step ahead' (headteacher, R) in comparison to their monolingual peers.

Schools need to connect with their locality and beyond (McKenzie and Van Winkeelen, 2004: 7, cited in Moloi *et al.*, 2009) and introduce appropriate resources to enhance their curriculum and pedagogy, be they multicultural or mono-cultural settings. Developing an understanding and vision for globalization may take time to embed in the primary curriculum, but is likely to be faster if there is whole school ownership, will and capacity, and the drive to make this happen.

Embedding globalization in the curriculum
By looking at the pupil population of a classroom and identifying their needs, teachers are in a better position to make globalization as a concept less tokenistic. One rural senior leader commented that 'special annual events are okay, but appear to be tokenistic if not carefully planned to develop critical learning skills of learners of globalization through themes like fairness or housing or environment'. Another rural head reflected that 'we need to nurture learners' social skills and social

acceptance when we have little interaction with learners from other backgrounds.' Our data suggested that pupils' similarities and differences were being explored and celebrated through various topics, and thereby introduced children to a critical understanding of the world (Townsend, 2009). This connects with stage 3 (learning) and stage 4 (competence) of the McKenzie and Van Winkeelen model (2004). Our research demonstrated that embedding globalization in the curriculum needs to be championed by strong leadership and therefore requires enabling and supportive change management skills.

Monitoring the impact of globalization on learners with EAL
The evidence suggests that although general tracking, observations and assessments are carried out regularly, no specific systems are in place to monitor the impact of globalization within the curriculum, or the attainment of learners with EAL. A senior leader (R) commented that 'it is difficult to monitor for globalization because this isn't currently our school priority.' This comment echoed another rural headteacher'ss observation that there was 'no monitoring of impact of globalization as it is not a priority in our curriculum plan'. However, Biglow and Peterson (2002) advocate that it is leaders' responsibility to make globalization a priority if global literacy is to be developed amongst learners. Learning strategies can then be developed to make the abstract more concrete. In reflecting on McKenzie and Van Winkeelen's model (2004), we observed that monitoring (stage 6) the progression and attainment of learners was a whole system responsibility, borne by all staff in primary schools.

Gaps that remain in developing globalization in the curriculum
Some of the gaps in making global topics more accessible for learners with EAL have arisen because staff lack a clear understanding of what globalization means in the primary

school context. Staff need to untangle some of their topics within the curriculum to identify and make connections to the global aspects (stage 4 of the McKenzie and Van Winkeelen model, 2004). Many staff are already doing this, but they need greater clarity about how to link globalization and education. 'Alliances, partnerships and collaborations' (Moloi et al., 2009: 294) between local and distant communities and a creative and supportive school context then become critically important in bringing policy and practice together – that is, 'relating' (stage 5 of the McKenzie and Van Winkeelen model). Finally, Moloi *et al* point out, 'leadership for learning is crucial to responding effectively to the challenges of globalization' (2009: 293). This implies that not only do individuals need to continue to learn as reflective practitioners, they also need to promote a wider cultural and systemic learning across the whole school (Dickenson, 2013: 8). Reflecting on McKenzie and Van Winkeelen's (2004) model, evaluating different stages of implementing the ideals of globalization in the mission statement to practice is necessary if a holistic outcome for all school leaders is to be achieved.

Challenges for leadership

Our evidence highlighted the need to develop staff training that will allow the concept of globalization to permeate the curriculum. First, the concept of globalization needs to be understood by all those in the school. Alliances local and global will allow for resources to 'share assemblies with a global dimension', as one urban senior leader put it. Second, alliances can be formed between schools with different degrees of diversity so they can learn from each other through visits, exchanges, sustained communication and sharing ideas virtually. Third, embedding the ideas of globalization and the opportunities for cross-curricular planning it affords has implications for school leadership that can be facilitated by developing an enabling team structure.

Conclusion

Our research found that globalization has different meanings for different people. We observed that the concept was being embedded in a variety of ways, mainly through cross-curricular topics and twinning schools, sponsor schools and sponsored-learner links. Children with EAL are seen as having an advantage, as they might have more than one personal global connection in their home life and can thus be considered one step ahead of their peers.

However, there is little information as to how globalization is being monitored, as many school leaders could not identify how it was embedded in the curriculum. We believe that teaching globalization through topics promotes diversity and inclusion. Strong leadership is required across the whole school to drive change for promoting globalization within the curriculum. This may require courageous actions and forging partnerships and alliances with different stakeholders. The will and capacity for change are essential if primary schools are to develop a better understanding of the notion of globalization.

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