

A student's viewpoint

How global learning shapes actions and decisions

Sixteen year old Paul Lichtenstern from [North London International School](#) explains what has helped him to develop an understanding of global issues, and what impact he feels it has had.

What aspects of the school curriculum and ethos have helped Paul to understand global issues?

The school has a strong ethos in which everyone is accepted for who they are. With fewer than 400 pupils, the young people mix across year groups, contributing to a family atmosphere. Its website states: *"We aim to make students more responsible for their own learning, to develop responsible attitudes to their environment and to have respect for other people and other cultures. Learning therefore takes on a global dimension."*

All students take part in a weekly Global Studies lesson in which they learn about different cultures and beliefs, exploring similarities and differences. Global studies is taught in a variety of ways: sometimes there are outside speakers; sometimes the students work in groups to research a religion or culture and present it to the rest of the class; and sometimes students give a presentation about an aspect of their own culture, so the class are learning about their peers as well as a range of cultures and beliefs. Paul says it is a really fascinating subject.

In the Middle Years Programme (MYP) of the [International Baccalaureate](#) (IB), which Paul is studying, subjects are taught as separate disciplines but the programme of work stresses the interrelatedness of the various subjects, facilitated through interdisciplinary days and the use of linking concepts called Areas of Interaction. These are: Environments; Health and social education; Human ingenuity; Community and service; and Approaches to learning. In every task and assignment in every subject, students have to consider one of these areas in detail, which Paul feels supports a global learning approach.

Global issues may be explored in any subject, for example, Paul's last Maths assessment involved analysing data about global poverty. A global perspective is a strong part of the Science curriculum in which students are required to consider the impact of science topics they are studying on different countries, cultures and contexts. One-sixth of their Science grade is gained from how they relate their scientific learning to the wider world. In Drama, Paul's class is currently exploring Japanese kabuki theatre and last term they studied kathakali dance from India. These are not studied simply as art forms. *"We always look at the history, why this happened, why it is important in the particular culture and why it might be important to us as well. It's much more than just 'this is what other people do'",* Paul explains *"it tries to show that we're one community in the world and the different ways we approach the same things"*.



Paul talking to Rt Hon Malcolm Bruce, Chair of the House of Commons International Development Select Committee, at DEA's launch of its [Global Learning Charter](#), February 2010.

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Which school experience has had the most impact?

Twelve students from the school travelled to The Hague to join 3,200 other young people from over 100 countries at a model United Nations conference. Paul was part of the Environmental Commission and he and the other North London International School students were asked to represent Mali, researching the politics and history of Mali and debating the issues from the point of view of a Mali delegate. Spending a week with others of the same age from all over the world had a great impact, as did the debates, which provided an opportunity to hear opinions on global issues from people from different countries and cultures.

Why does he think understanding global issues is important?

"It may sound clichéd", says Paul, "but we are the next generation and if the world is to be successful and we are to reduce poverty and injustice and deal with all the other issues around the world today, looking at the world from a wider perspective, not just what it can do for you, is one of the most vital things". Paul asserts that much of what he is today, the fact that he tries to be as balanced and fair as possible and not discriminatory in any way, is very strongly to do with what he has learnt at school.

Have experiences outside school contributed to his understanding of global issues?

Paul cites his culturally diverse cricket club, his membership of a world cinema club, family influences and growing up in London, a multi-cultural city where, in his experience, learning about different cultures is not an issue and difference is accepted, as also significant.

How will his global learning play a part in his decisions, thinking and work in the future?

Paul says: *"I think that any child's years of education will have an immeasurable effect on how they live their life. My international, diverse education will therefore obviously help me to be more accepting and internationally minded as I grow up, shaping many of my decisions and actions. Attitudes such as tolerance, understanding and acceptance are all traits that I and many others have learnt by growing up in a culturally diverse classroom. "*



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