

Building trainee teachers' confidence in cultural diversity and global citizenship

This module for third year BA Primary Education students was designed to develop understanding of international education and global citizenship and their contribution to the primary school

curriculum. It provides student teachers with practical ways to introduce knowledge, skills and attitudes related to global issues into the classroom.

What did Brighton Peace and Environment Centre and the University of Brighton want to achieve?

The [University of Brighton Faculty of Education](#) has been looking at ways of embedding global citizenship into its courses, in response both to government initiatives and to issues students encounter working in increasingly multi-cultural and multi-faith communities. This module was set up to provide trainee teachers with an opportunity to look in depth at the challenges and opportunities of exploring global citizenship in primary schools and to give them more confidence in managing some of the issues they will encounter.

How did they set about doing this?

The course was set up by a team of three lecturers from different departments at Brighton University and a visiting lecturer from [Brighton Peace and Environment Centre](#) (BPEC) - who brought different perspectives, interests and approaches. They developed a 10-session module, with each lecturer taking responsibility for two or three sessions. The module is optional and is repeated twice a year, with around 25 students each time.

It was felt that many students did not experience or learn about cultural diversity at their own schools so they are facilitated to work through their own thoughts and queries around identity and diversity before discussing how they might go about exploring them with pupils. *"People may begin to teach how they have been taught at school"*, says Ruth England, visiting lecturer, *"so it is important for them to critique their own school experiences"*. The emphasis is on global citizenship as a way of developing critical thinking skills and exploring the complexity of the issues rather than providing a final answer, which is often a new concept for students used to a focus on exams.

Sessions cover a range of themes including the experiences of black and minority ethnic pupils and what teachers need to be aware of in a diverse classroom; challenging assumptions about people and places; evaluating resources, exploring the use of language, images, and artefacts; how global citizenship can be embedded in foundation subjects; the influence of the media and how it shapes our view of the world; and different educational models and their relationship to the [Millennium Development Goals](#).



Students' work linking History, Design & Technology and Global Citizenship.

"... the personal experiences that were shared, by both students and staff ... gave a valuable context to the issues raised."

At the end of the module, students work in pairs to prepare a scheme of work for the primary classroom with a focus on the global dimension. They present this and write a commentary including a rationale and challenges and issues they had faced or were still grappling with. Themes addressed have ranged from the journey of a t-shirt to the transatlantic slave trade.

How well did they achieve their aims?

Both staff and students said that having a group of lecturers with different specialisms has brought a great deal to this module, giving a range of perspectives and a variety of teaching and learning approaches. Highlights noted in student feedback include *“being taught by people who are evidently passionate about what they teach”* and *“the personal experiences that were shared, by both students and staff, which gave a valuable context to the issues raised”*.

“I feel I have gained a new awareness of the nature and potential of international education in the primary school. I have been introduced to a range of theory and resources that I will use in my future practice and have developed a new range of strategies to produce critical thinking in the children I teach.” Student

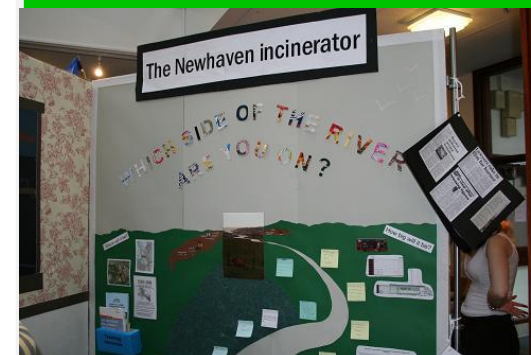
The staff have been impressed by the sensitivity the students have demonstrated in responding to the challenges of engaging with the global dimension and the evidence in their presentations of reflection on issues covered in the course. Because the module is repeated, staff have been able to learn from any gaps that emerged and further develop their sessions for future groups, for example working in greater depth on causes of poverty and challenging stereotypes.

“I believe that the students are very inspired by teaching the Global Citizenship theme. This term they gave some most thoughtful, innovative presentations and the thinking, sensitivity and consideration that went into the work was a joy to see.” Kevin Fossey, Senior Lecturer, University of Brighton, January 2009

What do they plan to do next?

While the course is a valuable introduction to teaching the global dimension, staff have expressed concerns that unless it is built into all modules, even students choosing this optional course will feel that they have covered global citizenship and will move on to the next thing.

An audit of global citizenship provision across the School of Education and research into students' experiences of global citizenship during their BA Primary Education will be used to consider areas for further action. Discussions are also taking place about how the School of Education's work on global citizenship can support the University's focus on education for sustainable development.



Students' work engaging with local concerns: debating the issues around a new incinerator in the area.

“...the thinking, sensitivity and consideration that went into the work was a joy to see.”