

‘For a Better World’

**The Global Dimension
in Education:
Knowledge and
Attitudes of Students,
Pupils and Teachers in
Northern Ireland**

Research Summary

Authors: Ian McCutcheon, Damian Knipe,
Teresa Cash, Tracey McKay

(June 2008)

DFID Department for
International
Development



**ST. MARY'S
UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE**
A COLLEGE OF QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST





Contents

Introduction and Background	2
The Global Dimension in Initial Teacher Education	7
The Global Dimension in Post-Primary Schools	10
The Global Dimension in Primary Schools	11
Conclusions and Acknowledgements	13

This document is a summary of research undertaken between 2005 and 2008 by the St. Mary's University College Global Dimension in Education Project. Full research reports with data containing in-depth analyses and interpretations of the results are available from St. Mary's University College online at:

<http://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/academic/education/gde>

Acknowledgements - This research has been carried out with the kind assistance of:

- The Department for International Development which has funded the Project.
- Students of St. Mary's University College who participated at each stage of the research.
- Members of the academic staff at St. Mary's, who kindly facilitated focus groups and questionnaire administration.
- Principals and staff in post-primary and primary schools, who facilitated classroom access for researchers in a welcoming and efficient manner.
- Pupils and teachers who responded to questionnaires and participated in focus groups in an honest, enthusiastic and informing way.
- Ms. Emily Park for administrative support.
- Dr. Margaret Reynolds, Dr. Gerard McCann and Ms. Stella Murray who provided much welcomed guidance for the research team.

Introduction and Background

In 2004, St Mary's University College completed a major research project on the global dimension in education in the formal education sector in Northern Ireland. This research was commissioned as part of Phase One of Enabling Effective Support (EES) in Northern Ireland and resulted in the report, *The Global Dimension in Schools in Northern Ireland*, by the Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies (CADA). The staged introduction of the revised curriculum in Northern Ireland and the results of the EES Phase One research project concluded that an initiative to integrate knowledge, values and abilities relating to the global dimension into existing courses of initial teacher education was needed. Given these factors, St. Mary's University College, funded by DFID, launched an initiative under the title, The Global Dimension in Education.

The Global Dimension in Education Project in St. Mary's University College involves: the development of taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels that promote expertise in teaching the global dimension; the development of an on-line course in teaching the global dimension; the development of certification in the area of the global dimension; the establishment of on-campus access to development education resources and on-line sources of information and materials and the production of a reference guide to 'The Global Dimension in Initial Teacher Education'. In addition, a research project was embarked upon, which would explore knowledge of and attitudes towards the global dimension in initial teacher education (ITE) as well as in post-primary and primary education.

This summary outlines the research that has been carried out by the Project, in which approximately 500 students, pupils and teachers took part. This research to explore the knowledge of and attitudes towards the global dimension in ITE, post-primary and primary schools, gives an insight into students' levels of knowledge on global issues and their opinions about the most appropriate ways to embed the global dimension into initial teacher education. It will also inform the College of the levels of knowledge and the opinions of the young people at school in Northern Ireland. Ultimately its aim is to understand how to equip students for entry into the teaching profession and to make recommendations about the ways in which the global dimension in education can permeate the curriculum and further become part of school life in Northern Ireland.

The Department for International Development (DFID) has defined the global dimension in education in the following way:

"Education plays a vital role in helping children and young people recognise their contribution and responsibilities as citizens of this global community and equipping them with the skills to make informed decisions and take responsible actions."

By including the global dimension in teaching, links can be made between local and global issues. It also means that young people are given opportunities to:

- Critically examine their own values and attitudes
- Appreciate the similarities between peoples everywhere and value diversity
- Understand the global context of their local lives
- Develop skills that will enable them to combat injustice, prejudice and discrimination

Such knowledge, skills and understanding enable young people to make informed decisions about playing an active role in the global community. The global dimension can inform the whole school ethos, leading to a school that is "inclusive, just and democratic and promotes social and environmental responsibility, respect and co-operation." (www.globaldimension.org, 2007).

The Global Dimension in Initial Teacher Education

As a first element to the research, a longitudinal study was carried out tracking the changes with regards to global dimension knowledge and attitudes of a Bachelor of Education (BEd) year group from their first year in 2005/06 until third year in 2007/08 using a pre/post-test questionnaire and a retrospective pre-test. Final year students in 2005/06 who had no global dimension input to their degree were also compared with final year students in 2007/08 who had one year of input from the College's Global Dimension Project.

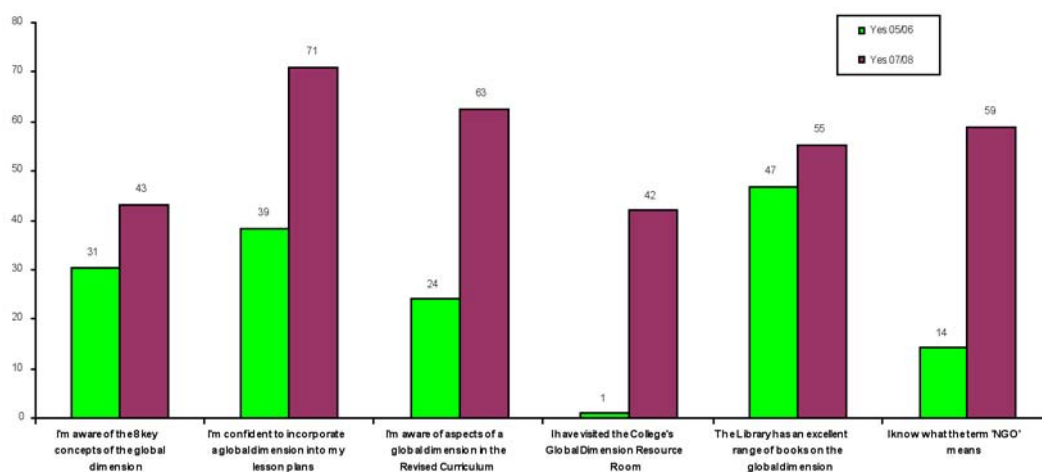
A review of literature found that there was a general lack of research on the opinions, values and attitudes held by students of initial teacher education when addressing the various debates surrounding the global dimension. This literature review informed a research methodology centred heavily on the ways in which St. Mary's students perceive their own knowledge of the global dimension, their attitudes towards various global issues and an examination of their inclusion of a global dimension in their schemes of work and lesson plans during their school experience.

It was decided by the research team that two studies would be carried out concurrently: one longitudinal and one comparative. A questionnaire was devised to gauge the knowledge, values and attitudes of students with regards to the global dimension in education. The questionnaire asked students about their knowledge of the global dimension, the ways in which they would try to help people living in poverty, their involvement with NGOs and how they felt their time in St. Mary's had affected their knowledge of the global dimension.

The questionnaire was administered to 153 first-year BEd students at the beginning of the 2005/06 academic year as a baseline for the longitudinal study and was again administered to this year group in December 2007 to 83 students. These students were now in their third year of studies at St. Mary's. Students in this cohort also participated in focus groups in May 2006 and again in April 2008. The data collected from this cohort in 2005/06 and 2007/08 was used to track the changes in students' knowledge of and attitudes towards the global dimension in education over two years.

Final year students in 2005/06, who had no direct global dimension input to their degree, completed the same questionnaire, as did the 2007/08 final (fourth) year cohort who had attended one global dimension conference in the College.

Fig 1. The development of students' knowledge and awareness of the global dimension from 2005/06 – 2007/08

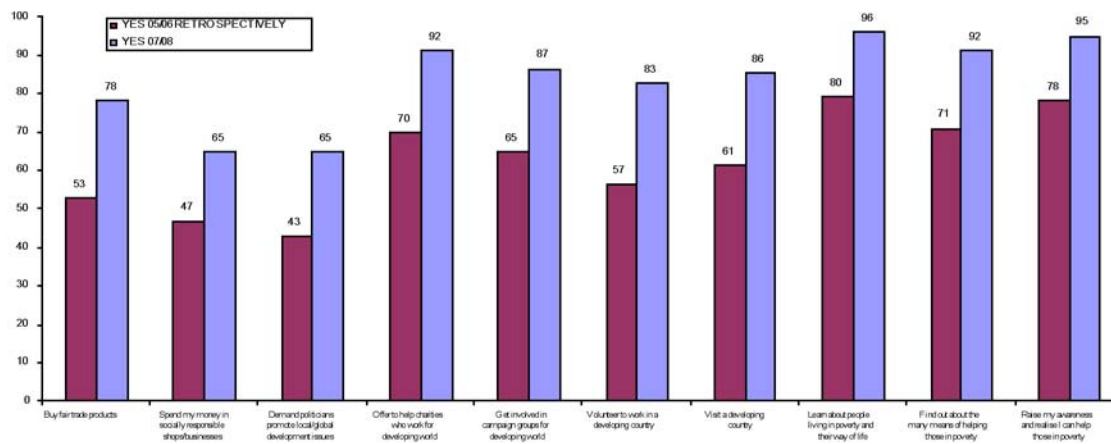


The longitudinal study found that the number of students who had confidence to incorporate the global dimension in their lesson plans increased by 32% over two years. Twelve percent more students in 2007/08 reported to be aware of the eight key concepts of the global dimension than in 2005/06. Those students aware of aspects of a global dimension in the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum increased by 39%, and 45% more students knew what the term NGO meant in comparison to two years previously.

The focus groups held with third-year students in 2007/08 indicated that a misconception about the global dimension exists among students. Evidence suggests that many believe it to be simply geographical rather than an embedding of the eight key concepts: global citizenship, conflict resolution, diversity, human rights, interdependence, social justice, sustainable development and values and perceptions. There was, however, evidence that some students were effectively embedding a global dimension in their lessons during school experience.

In the questionnaire, students were presented with a list of ways that could potentially help people living in poverty and were asked if they would engage in any of those activities if the opportunity arose. When asked to reflect on what they had learned over their two years in the College, third-year students in 2007/08 reported that they were now more likely to engage in such poverty-relieving activities than they were when in first-year. For example, in 2007/08, 78% of third-year students reported that they would buy fair-trade products compared to just 53% who would have done so in 2005/06, while 20% more students believed in 2007/08 that they would volunteer to work in a developing country than would have done two years previously.

Fig 2. Longitudinal study: what would you do to help those living in poverty?



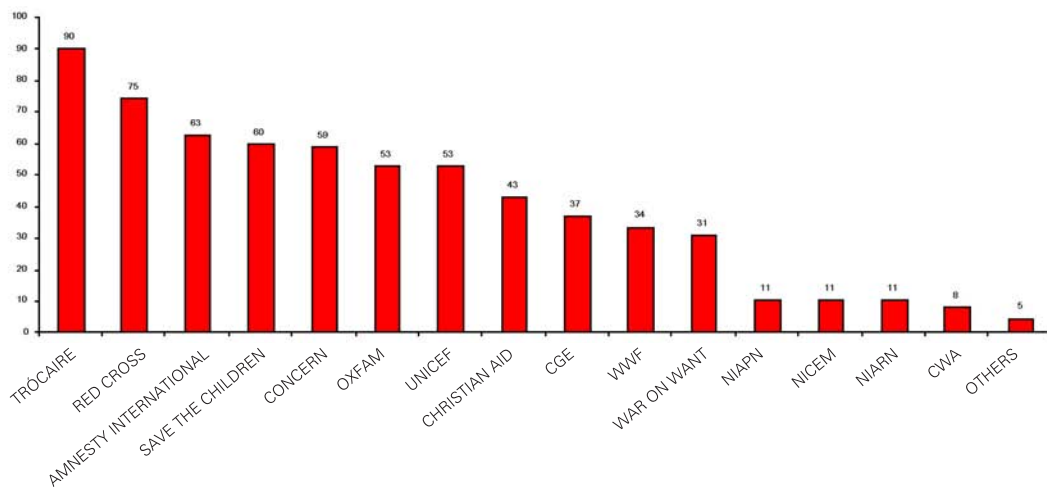
During the period that the Project was in place, the number of students that had contact with or used resources from NGOs increased by approximately 30%. St. Mary's students were most likely to have contact with large, global NGOs such as Trócaire and The Red Cross. Locally based NGOs such as the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network and the Chinese Welfare Association have had little contact from St. Mary's students.

The Project resource room has seen a rise in the amount of students availing of the many resources from NGOs available on a range of global issues. In the longitudinal study, the number of students who reported using the resource room increased by 41% over two years and in the final year comparative study it increased by 30%. Many of the students participating in the focus groups in 2008 mentioned the project resource room as a place that they visited to acquire resources for incorporating the global dimension in their lessons during school experience:

“The Global Dimension Resource Room is very good. I asked the staff there and they gave me different leaflets and magazines.” – Third-year student, April 2008.

In addition to more students having contact with NGOs, 45% more students in the longitudinal study know what the term ‘NGO’ means. While this is but a small indicator of knowledge, it is important because it is a term often used in literature dealing with global issues. If students are to effectively embed the global dimension within their lesson plans, then they must be equipped not only to be able to access the necessary resources, but to understand those resources so as to communicate them in the classroom.

Fig 3. Third-year students' contact with, or use of resources from NGOs (2007/08)

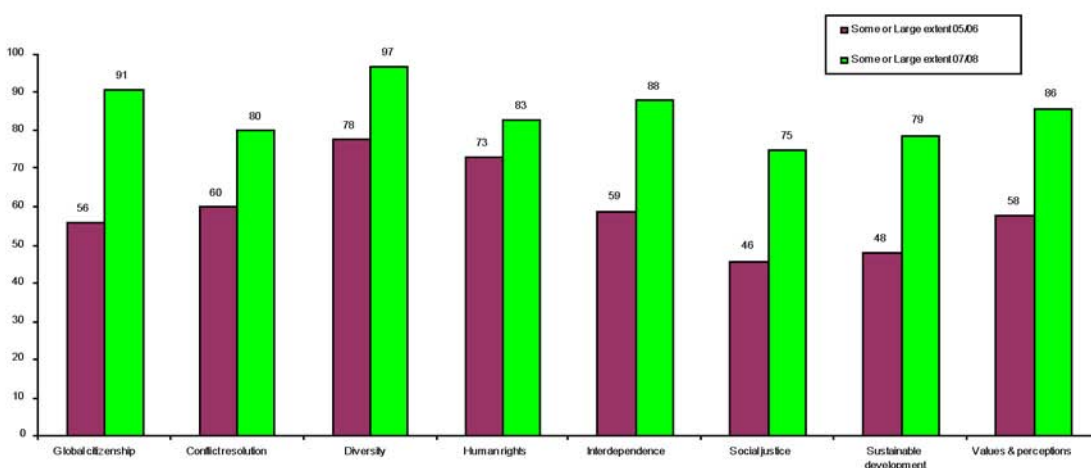


DFID has stated that “the global dimension can be understood through the eight concepts.” (www.globaldimension.org, 2007). It is therefore fair to say that an understanding of the key concepts is essential for those graduating from initial teacher education, to effectively embed the global dimension in the classroom.

The research undertaken with St. Mary’s students has examined their knowledge of the eight key concepts. In the questionnaire, students were asked to name the eight key concepts. While many more students were able to name the concepts in 2007/08 than had been able to do so in 2005/06, over half of the 2007/08 respondents could not name any and only one in ten were able to name all eight key concepts. These results do however, show a substantial increase in students’ knowledge over the two years of the Project. For example, the amount of students able to name ‘sustainable development’ as a concept increased by 23% in the longitudinal study and in the comparative study, 22% more students with only one year of direct global dimension exposure were able to name diversity as a concept than those with no global dimension input.

The Global Dimension Project can be seen to have positively influenced students’ knowledge of the global dimension, as students were asked in the questionnaire: to what extent has your degree or whole College experience contributed to your understanding of the eight key concepts? Students overwhelmingly believed that their time in the College had contributed to their knowledge either to a large or a very large extent.

Fig 4. Longitudinal Study: To what extent has your degree or whole College experience contributed to your understanding of the eight key concepts?



The Global Dimension in Initial Teacher Education – Key Results

- More students were aware of the eight key concepts of the global dimension in 2008 than in 2005/06.
- The number of students claiming not to know any of the concepts has fallen by approximately 20% since 2005/06.
- Students overwhelmingly believe that their time in the College has had a very positive influence on their knowledge of the eight key concepts.
- The amount of students in the longitudinal and comparative studies reporting a confidence to incorporate a global dimension in their teaching has risen by 32% and 25% respectively over two years.
- Those students who are aware of a global dimension in the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum rose by one third over two years.
- Focus groups have suggested that many students incorrectly interpret the global dimension as a geographical, area-study endeavour.
- More students are now likely to engage in a range of activities with the aim of alleviating poverty than were in 2005/06, including: buying fair-trade products, getting involved in campaign groups and volunteering to work in developing countries.
- The number of students in contact with or using resources from NGOs has risen by 30% over two years.
- Students are more likely to be involved with large, global NGOs than local, Northern Ireland based organisations.
- There has been a 41% increase since 2005/06 in the amount of students availing of resources from NGOs in the Global Dimension Resource Library, yet still less than half of all students surveyed report to having used the room.
- Focus groups have provided some evidence of students incorporating a global dimension in their lesson plans during school experience.
- When asked to give examples of when their College experience had contributed to their understanding of the global dimension, 39% were able to give an example of an event organised by the Project.
- Students incorporating a global dimension in their teaching during school experience often found that young children were able to understand and engage with global dimension issues in a surprisingly mature and enthusiastic way.
- Many St. Mary's students believe that to further enhance their knowledge and confidence, the global dimension should have a formal presence in their degree programme – through timetabled lectures showing practical examples of schemes or work and lessons plans that incorporate the global dimension.

The Global Dimension in Post-Primary Schools

The literature review for this second element of the research identified a distinct lack of academic research that took into account the voice, values and attitudes of the pupil in explorations of the development of a global dimension in post-primary schools. It was therefore decided to examine the values and attitudes of young people in post-primary schools and of teachers, in an attempt to gauge current levels of knowledge about the global dimension in the post-primary sector.

The research on the global dimension in post-primary schools saw researchers travel to eleven post-primary schools across Northern Ireland to administer questionnaires relating to the global dimension in education to Key Stage 4 and A-level pupils. The views of teachers, in both primary and post-primary schools were also sought through postal questionnaires. The questionnaire asked pupils and teachers: to rate their own knowledge of the global dimension key concepts; about the importance of learning about the concepts; about their involvement with NGOs; and about the most appropriate ways to teach and to learn about the global dimension. Teachers were also asked about their knowledge of the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum, while pupils were asked about the effect of the media on their knowledge of the global dimension.

The sample consisted of eleven schools across each of the five Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland. The schools included: 3 voluntary grammar; 2 controlled secondary; 2 maintained secondary; 1 controlled grammar; 1 voluntary maintained; 1 controlled high school; and 1 grant-maintained integrated secondary. In total 371 post-primary school pupils completed questionnaires and 51 teachers responded to postal questionnaires.

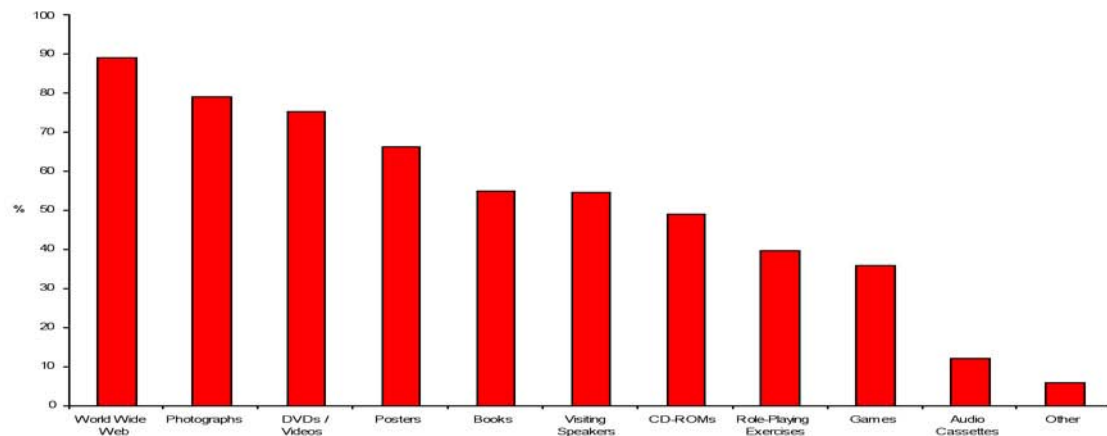
Approximately 85% of pupils and teachers surveyed believed that it was important to learn about all of the global dimension key concepts in school, while both were most likely to rate their own knowledge of the concepts as 'average'. (36% of pupils and 50% of teachers). Teachers' self-rated knowledge of the key concepts was generally higher than the post-primary pupils', with many more teachers rating their knowledge as either 'good' or 'very good'. These results have shown that pupils and teachers appear to have a fairly good understanding of the concepts which DFID describe as being central to understanding the global dimension in education.

In addition to their knowledge of the global dimension itself, teachers were asked if they could see links between the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum and the global dimension and whether they felt that they were being shown enough support from their school to effectively embed the global dimension in their teaching. Three quarters of the teachers said they could see a global dimension in the revised curriculum, but 94% felt that they needed to be shown more support to enable them to effectively embed it in their teaching – through in-service training and relevant resources being made available.

“At the centre of the new curriculum is ‘learning for life and work’ that incorporates local and global citizenship and education for employability. One key issue is to prepare young people as contributors to society and that doesn’t just mean their own community, but a global one where open-minded, broadly skilled people can work together.” – Post-primary school teacher

Pupils and teachers were asked about the formats they consider to be best for learning about the global dimension. Pupils rated ‘the internet’ (89%), ‘photographs’ (79%) and ‘DVDs’ (76%) as most effective, while teachers believed ‘visiting speakers’ (88%) to be most effective and agreed with pupils that ‘the internet’, ‘photographs’ and ‘DVDs’ were the next most effective teaching methods. These results suggest that active teaching methods are most appropriate for communicating the global dimension to young people and that pupils will find didactic approaches uninteresting.

Fig 5. Formats considered by post-primary pupils to be most effective for learning about the global dimension



Post-primary pupils were also asked about the effect that the media had on their knowledge of the global dimension key concepts. Almost three-quarters of the pupils believed the media to be a major influence on their global knowledge, while 40% reported that they regularly use television to find out about the concepts. When asked to write down the places that they felt were mentioned most in the media in relation to the concepts, pupils most commonly referred to the USA, Iraq and Africa. This is an interesting finding as pupils often referred to countries, yet specific countries on the African continent were rarely mentioned. There was evidence of critical thinking among pupils with relation to the media, with some believing that the media has power beyond simply reporting facts.

“The media has the ability to twist events and perceptions whatever way they like.”
Post-primary school pupil

“The Press can be one-sided and have ulterior motives in their writing which can obviously influence. Generally I feel the media definitely influence and develop our interest in these areas.”
Post-primary school pupil

Given the importance attached to the media by pupils, teachers can make use of it as a tool through which to approach the global dimension themselves, through stimulating classroom discussions about news or current affairs programmes and encouraging critical thinking.

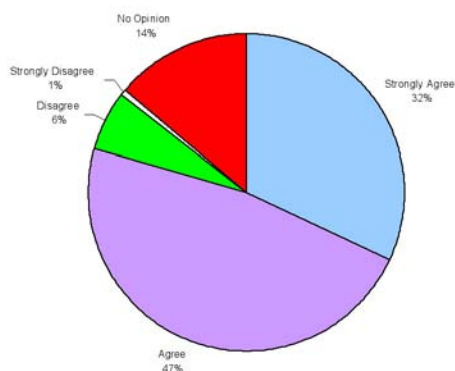
“It [the media] highlights important issues... [and] leads to conversation with friends.”
Post-primary school pupil

Pupils and teachers were asked about their involvement with NGOs and voluntary groups inside and outside school. Approximately 15% of pupils were involved with voluntary groups inside schools, while 20% were involved with groups outside school. One-quarter of the pupils claimed to have had some kind of contact with NGOs which were presented as a list. As was the case with St. Mary’s BEd students, the NGOs that had seen most contact with post-primary pupils were large, international NGOs, while local groups had seen little contact from pupils. While just a minority of pupils were involved with NGOs, 79% agreed that schools should offer young people the opportunity to organise groups in school to campaign for change. This suggests that there is a thirst among pupils to take action on global issues, but that there are no appropriate structures set-up in schools to enable them to do so.

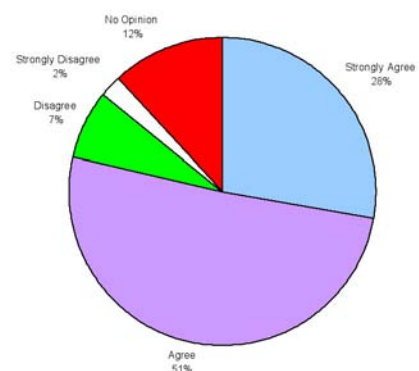
The Global Dimension in Post-Primary Schools – Key Results

- The vast majority (86%) of pupils either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that it is important to learn about all of the global dimension concepts.
- The pupils most frequently rated their own knowledge of the global dimension concepts as 'average' (36%), with most of the remaining responses being fairly evenly split between 'good' and 'poor'.
- One-fifth of all pupils surveyed are involved with voluntary groups outside school and 14% are involved with groups inside school.
- Pupils reported 'school' as being most influential in stimulating their interest in each of the global dimension concepts.
- One-quarter of the pupils surveyed said that they had no interest in the concepts.
- Seventy per cent of pupils believe that the media is a major influence on raising young peoples' interest in global issues and pupils most frequently highlighted the USA and Iraq as places mentioned in the media in relation to the global dimension concepts.
- The majority of pupils believe that the internet and images are the best media for teachers to use to communicate the global dimension in their lessons.
- The majority (95%) of teachers who responded to the questionnaire agreed that it is important for pupils to learn about the global dimension in school.
- Half of the teachers rated their knowledge of the global dimension concepts as 'average', with 19% rating it as 'very good'.
- The majority of teachers surveyed (94%) feel they need to be shown more support and encouragement from their school management team to assist them in successfully embedding the global dimension within their own teaching.
- Teachers rated 'external speakers', 'DVDs/images' and the 'internet' as the most effective methods for communicating the global dimension to young people.
- Three-quarters of the teachers reported that they were aware of aspects of a global dimension in the revised Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Fig 6. I think schools should offer young people the opportunity to organise groups that raise awareness of global issues and campaign for change – post-primary pupils



needs and the needs of others – post-primary pupils



The Global Dim Primary Schools

The research undertaken in primary education involved researchers meeting with 172 Key Stage 2 pupils in eleven primary schools in Northern Ireland and recording their responses to questions asked about images relating to each of the global dimension key concepts.

An innovative research methodology was required which enabled the pupils to understand the eight concepts that make up the global dimension in education and to give their opinions on these concepts. It was therefore decided to use images to represent the key concepts. Pupils were shown the images on a laptop computer and were asked what they could see in the pictures, how the pictures made them feel or what they made them think about, and whether they had ever learned about the types of things they had seen in the pictures. These questions were common to all the concepts, however, for the concept of conflict resolution the pupils were also asked what they would say to the boys or girls in the pictures if they came to their school and what would they like to see happen next. Pupils were also asked about where in the world they would like to visit, to give a fact about that place and to name the language spoken there.

- Europe, Africa and North America were the most common places pupils would like to visit with the most common reasons being that they want to see how people live, help with poverty and learn about other ways of life.

“I would like to go to Kenya because I would like to meet the tribes to see what way they live.”

- Few pupils stated that they wanted to visit places for fun or relaxation.
- Half of the pupils could not give even one fact about the place they want to visit.
- Two-thirds of pupils gave the correct official language that is spoken in the place they wish to visit.

“I’d love to go to Australia... their native animal is a kangaroo and their language is English.”

- The majority of participants were able to identify the general theme of the global dimension images they were shown to represent each of the eight key concepts.

“There are lots of different people and they are all the same and equal, they just look different. Some of them are younger, some of them are older, different skin colour.” (Diversity).

- Images of conflict, poverty and destruction of the environment made the majority of pupils feel sad and angry.

“It makes me feel angry because if animals came to a beach like that, there would be a lot of rubbish there and the animals could get hurt.”

- In addition to expressing their feelings about the images, many pupils were able to give opinions on what they would like to see happening in the images, for example, wars ending, people no longer acting in a discriminatory way and people recycling.

“I would like to see them stop it and to have a bit of peace in their hearts and stop it.”

“We should stop littering because this is the only Earth we have, there is no other place we can go.”

- When asked if it was important to learn about these things in school, the vast majority of pupils agreed, claiming that to do so will enable them to do something to help in the future.

“It is important to learn about these things because then we will know how exactly we can help.”

In terms of a global dimension, the Northern Ireland Curriculum at Key Stage 2 specifically makes reference to mutual understanding, moral character, citizenship, cultural understanding, ethical awareness and education for sustainable development within the three curriculum objectives, to develop the young person as an individual, as a contributor to society and as a contributor to the economy and the environment.

The research carried out into primary school pupils' knowledge of and attitudes to the global dimension asked pupils if they had ever learned about the issues in the images in school and to give examples of times when their teachers had explored issues relating to the key concepts.

Conflict Resolution

The vast majority were able to give examples of lessons about conflict resolution, with many examples of lessons relating to bullying and to guest speakers from NGOs.

"Last year we studied bullying with our teacher, and the teacher showed us videos about what you would do if you saw people being bullied."

Diversity

Almost all of the pupils said that they had learned about differences between people in school. Many pupils specifically mentioned it in relation to geography and having learned about respecting others.

"For example the different colours of people and their different lifestyle... we should treat them the same and there shouldn't be any fighting going on between us."

Sustainable Development

Every pupil was able to give an example of a lesson about sustainable development. Most pupils learned about it in science and many mentioned pollution, renewable energy and deforestation.

"We have done work about polluting the land and the air, and we are doing work about not cutting down trees because it is getting rid of animals' homes."

Interdependence

Almost three-quarters of the pupils said that they had learned about interdependence at school. Unfair trade and countries relying on help from each other featured heavily in pupils' responses.

"We are learning about the EU at the minute, and that might come into it. We learn about how the countries work together."

Human Rights

Two-thirds of the pupils reported to having learned about human rights at school. The right to education and children's rights were most commonly mentioned by pupils.

"The NSPCC in assembly said that children have the right to have education just like us and even if they don't have parents, they still have the right to have education."

Global Citizenship

Eight out of ten pupils gave examples of learning about global citizenship. Most of the examples were in relation to learning about religion and respecting other peoples' beliefs.

"Our teacher told us about South Africa getting their own rights, because there were white people who took over the land of the black people."

Social Justice

The vast majority of the pupils reported that they had learned about issues relating to social justice. Many mentioned Trócaire's Lenten campaign and specifically mentioned the issues of child labour and alleviating poverty.

"We did a talk about child labour where the children make rugs or mats, and there is a sign on the back of them that says the thing wasn't made by children."

Conclusions

The research into the knowledge of and attitudes towards the global dimension among St. Mary's students has yielded some very encouraging results and has shown that the Global Dimension Project in the College has had a positive effect on students' ability to understand what the global dimension is and how it should be approached in the classroom. The results of the research show that this type of initiative can act as an example of good practice to other ITE institutions wishing to ensure that their students are prepared to bring a global dimension into the classroom, who in-turn will prepare young people to take action. It is also clear that there is still scope for the continuation of the Project, to embed the global dimension into all aspects of college life and further permeate the initial teacher education degree within St. Mary's.

The young people and teachers who have participated in the research consider themselves to have a fairly good level of knowledge of the eight global dimension key concepts, but it should be noted that individuals have been known to over-estimate their knowledge in such surveys. The majority of pupils and teachers in this research have expressed opinions that would suggest they are in favour of the global dimension becoming a more prominent part of school life and one which they would be prepared to engage with in many different ways.

Acronyms

BEd	Bachelor of Education degree
CADA	Coalition of Aid and Development Agencies
CGE	Centre for Global Education
CWA	Chinese Welfare Association
DFID	Department for International Development
EES	Enabling Effective Support
GDE	Global Dimension in Education
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIAPN	Northern Ireland Anti Poverty Network
NIARN	Northern Ireland Anti Racism Network
NICEM	Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature



<http://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/academic/education/gde>