Sustainable communities: the role of global citizenship education

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This dissertation asks how global citizenship education can contribute to building sustainable communities. It concludes that creative community partnerships are needed to support and complement the role of global citizenship education in sustainable development.

Introduction

This dissertation looks at the relationship between global citizenship education and sustainable communities in the context of an increasingly globalised world which poses new threats and opportunities. Social challenges, such as immigration, racism, and conflict, which have been on the international political agenda for some time, are being heightened by the more recent global economic crisis and the impact of climate change. The impact of economic development on the environment has new significance in the context of emerging industrialised economies such as China and India. Meanwhile, Western consumerism has created a culture of excess, which is revealing itself to be unsustainable.

Although these challenges threaten social cohesion and the traditional sense of community, there is an increasing awareness of new forms of community citizenship, which have the potential to be agents of change for social, economic and environmental justice. The sense of outrage about increasing inequalities in both the global North and South is activating citizens to call for a new global order to build more equitable power structures. New forms of media are enabling global and local civil societies to use social network communities to campaign about issues that concern them, although there is
concern that social networking, texting and emailing are “undermining community life” which has become ‘dehumanised’ through the loss of face-to-face contact (the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales cited by BBC, 2009a: 1).

Social mobilisation and education are seen as key tools for communities to work together for sustainable development. Ongoing concern about immigration and social fragmentation in British communities has led to the term ‘community cohesion’ becoming mainstreamed in policy discourse, including education. Now ‘sustainable communities’ are being promoted, based on recognition that we have a responsibility to protect the rights of future generations to live on a healthy planet. The transition movement is taking off around the world as communities respond to the need to live with reduced oil.

At a time when citizenship education is still relatively new in some countries, its aims are changing in others in recognition of our global interdependence and shared rights and responsibilities as global citizens. This dissertation investigates how global citizenship education contributes to building sustainable communities. Chapter 1 provides the background in which the reasons why communities are not already sustainable are addressed. It then looks at how education is seen as key to promoting social change and equipping people with the skills they need for a more globalised life. Chapter 2 focuses on why global citizenship education is increasingly being promoted as a new approach to education, which involves not only the whole school as a community but the wider community too to work on local and global sustainability. Chapter 3 presents the findings of research I carried out in my local area of Yorkshire, England, with schools and NGOs working in partnership on local and global community issues. It concludes that although the needs of local communities will determine their priorities when it comes to global citizenship education, there is scope for more collaboration between education and other community service providers to build sustainable communities.
1. Education for Sustainable Communities

1.1. The need for sustainable communities

To appreciate how education can help in building sustainable communities, we need first to have a good understanding of the term ‘sustainable community’ and why such communities are important for our future.

Broadly speaking, sustainable communities are based on the principles of sustainable development. The Brundtland Report ‘Our Common Future’ defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987: 43). Sustainable communities do this by addressing “environmental, economic and social challenges to build a better future shaped and shared by all” (ISCVT, 2009a: 1). At the same time, sustainable communities respect “the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally also to make their communities sustainable” (Defra, 2005: 121). The hierarchy of challenges and needs will differ depending on the location and type of community but, generally speaking, a sustainable community is healthy and safe, inclusive, provides economic opportunity and prosperity, makes effective and fair use of resources and enhances the environment (Egan, 2004; UKOWLA, 2007). Therefore, it could be argued that the overall aim of sustainable communities is to manage their needs so that they do not become challenges for future generations.

Just as there are some social, economic and environmental challenges that affect us all regardless of location, there are some basic needs, or human rights¹, we share too. However, where we live can pose differing challenges which means that in some communities these rights are not met. By targeting the global challenges to these rights, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) act as a useful set of principles we should aim for to make all communities sustainable. Let me now address what I consider to be the main social, economic and environmental needs and challenges facing communities today.

It is generally agreed that the greatest long-term challenge for sustainable communities is coping with the effects of climate change. Climate change has become a growing

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¹ agreed upon in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
concern on the global level as it is “intensifying disasters, including extreme weather events, storm surges, floods and droughts” (UN, 2008a: 2). As with many other global challenges, it is the poor who are most affected. Climate-induced disasters this year alone include a cyclone in Bangladesh and East India and a typhoon in Taiwan, destroying homes and livelihoods of many already vulnerable people. Scientists predict that “375 million people may be affected by climate-related disasters by 2015” (Oxfam, 2009a: 4). The UN concludes that “climate change is an inevitable and urgent global challenge with long-term implications for the sustainable development of all countries” (UNDESA, 2009: 1).

Water and food security are the greatest threats of climate change. Rising sea levels and unpredictable seasons are affecting the livelihoods of farmers, thus increasing poverty not just for them but for those dependent on their food supply. Some communities risk disappearing altogether under water, with sea levels predicted to rise 50cm by 2080 (Oxfam, 2009b) whilst “several major cities that are dependent on water from mountain ranges face collapse” (Oxfam, 2009a: 4). Water-borne diseases are affecting the health of people in vulnerable areas. According to UN statistics “about 1 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water, and 2.5 billion lack access to basic sanitation services” (UN, 2008b: 2). The MDG to ensure environmental sustainability aims to “halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation” (ibid: 1). The UN predicts that “on average the world may meet the target of halving the proportion of the population without access to safe drinking water, but not the target regarding access to improved sanitation facilities”, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (ibid: 2).

Some countries are facing a food crisis due to the recent rapid rise in the price of basic foods and this is set to spread with the predicted global population growth. At the same time Western diets and consumption patterns, which some developing countries are emulating, are to blame. For example, a reliance on food imported from poor countries, intensive agricultural methods and a meat based diet are all using precious resources like water, fuel and land (WWF, 2009d). Oil production is reaching its peak, which means that many aspects of our life dependant on a ready supply of cheap oil will be threatened (EON, 2007). There is concern that water, oil and food shortages will give rise to more conflicts, like the food riots in Kenya last year.
The biggest challenge facing those of us in industrialised nations is changing the way we live to one that is more sustainable. The focus on rapid economic growth and consumerism in the West and emerging economies in the East has created a culture of want rather than one based on basic needs. The result is that “globally, people are using about 25% more natural resources than the planet can replace” (WWF, 2009a: 1). This means that “if global consumption continues at the same rate, by the mid-2030s we will need the equivalent of two planets to maintain our lifestyles” (WWF, 2008: 1).

At the same time, the activities of rich countries are threatening the already sustainable way of life of many indigenous communities. The scarcity of natural resources is leading to indiscriminate mining and logging, with promises of jobs and development no recompense for sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity being destroyed. For example, in eastern India, the rights of the Dongria Kondh tribe to continue living as they do on their land are currently in conflict with the belief of the Vedanta mining company that their ‘development’ project of jobs and improvements to education and healthcare is what people in the area want and need (Lawson, 2009).

It is only now that the rights of indigenous peoples are being recognised and protected, but there is still a long way to go. Agenda 21, the international treaty on environmental sustainability resulting from the 1992 UN Rio Earth Summit, called on governments to “promote development in accordance with indigenous practices” (UN, 2009a: Chapter 7). Unfortunately these traditional practices in sustainability have been threatened by the rush to modernise. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, signed in September 2007, is based on recognition that dispossession of indigenous peoples’ lands and resources has prevented them from exercising “their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests” and “that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment” (UN, 2007: 1). It is our patterns of behaviour around consumption and mobility, particularly in rich countries, that are most damaging not only to the environment, but to people in other parts of the world.

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2 but not ratified by the US, Canada, Australia or New Zealand
Consequently, “society is in serious ecological debt. Society needs a new vision.” (WWF, 2009b). For the World Wildlife Fund (WWF, 2008) this vision involves building in long-term economic as well as environmental sustainability. Yet it is economic sustainability that is most needed. According to Hopkins of the transition movement, the dependency of rich nations on borrowing to buy cheap oil has created economic debt for future generations (EON, 2007). Oxfam are also critical of the same governments who think nothing of spending $150 billion “bailing out just one company, AIG, during the financial turmoil of late 2008”; the estimated sum of money needed by poor countries to cope with the effects of climate change (2009a: 6). One of the problems is that neo-liberal approaches to economic development have tried to commodify the environment like everything else we use. Yet environmental preservation is a ‘public good’, which we cannot buy or sell on the free market but all share as a responsibility (Sen, 1999: 128).

However, before communities can effectively address environmental challenges, they must be cohesive and inclusive. A community where everyone has a sense of belonging is more likely to take pride in making their community work not just for themselves but for future generations. Social and economic inequalities at local, national, regional and international levels mean that the needs of communities are diverse. Economic prosperity is unfairly divided, not just between the ‘rich North’ and the ‘poor South’ but also within national boundaries. The richest fifth of the world’s population owns a massive 82.7% of the world’s wealth whereas the poorest fifth own a mere 1.4% (UKOWLA, 2007), and it is estimated that rising food prices could push a further 100 million into absolute poverty (UN, 2008a). In a so-called ‘rich nation’, the UK, an estimated 4 million children live in poverty with the economic recession expected to make the situation worse (Save the Children, 2009).

One of the reasons for economic poverty is job insecurity and low pay (UN, 2008a; Save the Children, 2009). The financial crisis has intensified the problem, with people all over the world losing jobs. This can have an impact on the cohesion of communities (Sen, 1999). Osler and Starkey (2005) and Kassem et al (2006) believe that contemporary globalisation has increased social exclusion by privileging macro-economic performance over the rights and welfare of citizens and creating a divide between those who have access to jobs and those who do not. This phenomenon is particularly visible now in the wake of the crisis with bankers and politicians in the
global North enjoying bonuses and expenses, whilst people in the global North and South are made redundant. The impact of the economic crisis on sustainability is something that the G8 acknowledge. In their meeting this year, they were forced to address the new global challenges, promising that “the global economy resumes growth along a balanced, equitable and sustainable path for the benefit of all, especially the most vulnerable” (G8, 2009: 1). As well as focusing on the economy, the G8 appreciate “the high social costs of the crisis in terms of unemployment and poverty” and “are committed to tackle the social dimension of the crisis, putting people’s concerns first” in order to build “healthy and engaged societies” (ibid: 2 and 6).

The social dimension of poverty relates to human and social capital\(^3\) which can be just as important for social inclusion (Sen, 1999; Willis, 2005). Sen (1999) sees human development as the economic, social and political freedom to live a life that one values or to take part fully in the life of one’s community. Economic poverty makes people particularly vulnerable to the other types of poverty and can lead to instability such as conflict within and between nations (Osler and Starkey, 2005). Rapid urbanisation and the global economic crisis are adding to tensions in communities that do not meet the needs of the people living in them especially when these needs centre on public goods or resources (UN, 2008a). For example, in South Africa unemployment and the recession have incited conflicts in townships over the lack of basic services with more than one million South Africans living in shacks, “many without access to electricity or running water” (BBC, 2009b: 1). Improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 is one of the MDG targets to tackle extreme poverty (UN, 2008b).

Other social concerns wrongly link unemployment with immigration. Although the competitive labour market has allowed migrant workers to be employed at lower rates of pay, the main reason for people leaving their homes is to flee persecution and conflict and in the UK very strict employment laws mean that asylum seekers cannot work. Negative media reports and campaigns by anti-immigration parties in Europe intensify the problem and cause tensions in communities where asylum seekers and refugees are placed. Examples can be found in both the global North and South of communities which have become fragmented and exclusive of minority groups due to immigration.

\(^3\) Human capital refers to a human’s productive capacity (Sen, 1999; Willis, 2005); social capital to the use of social relations between individuals and groups for their advancement (Willis, 2005).
In Italy and Northern Ireland, the arrival of Roma communities has added to social tensions (Clej, 2009; Lewis, 2009). The recession in South Africa has intensified xenophobic violence towards Zimbabwean and other African immigrants (Allen, 2009).

Unfortunately, migration is an issue increasingly affecting all societies and will only intensify as the global challenges which cause people to leave their homes remain unaddressed. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has expressed his concern at the rise in the number of refugees and internally displaced people worldwide in the last two years:

> We are now faced with a complex mix of global challenges that could threaten even more forced displacement in the future. They range from multiple new conflict-related emergencies in world hotspots to bad governance, climate-induced environmental degradation that increases competition for scarce resources, and extreme price hikes that have hit the poor the hardest and are generating instability in many places. (UNHCR, 2008: 1)

Increasing displacement will inevitably threaten the sustainability of communities.

As well as environmental, economic and social change, sustainable development depends on political change too. This means not only developing democratic societies where everyone has a say in how they are run, but equitable power structures so that everyone has equal access to resources. Power differentials are widely recognised as what creates the divide between those who benefit from globalisation and those whose lives are made worse (see Sen, 1999; Osler and Starkey, 2005; Kassem et al, 2006; UKOWLA, 2007) and debates on sustainability are often about who has access to natural resources (Allen and Thomas, 2000). According to Martinez and Garcia (2000), contemporary globalisation has eliminated the concept of the public good or community and placed the focus on individual responsibility “pressurising the poorest people in a society to by themselves find solutions to their lack of healthcare, education and social security” (cited in Kassem et al, 2006: 204). Hopkins observes that campaigning on climate change often struggles to engage people as the onus is on individuals to change their personal behaviour, which can be daunting and seem pointless (EON, 2007)

However, shifting the role of agent of change from the state to the community promotes more equitable power structures. “Empowerment is not something that is done to
participants, rather it is a more subtle process whereby people come to recognise their own situation and develop the ability to do something about it. People become subjects of their own development.” (Woodward, 2005: 10) Agenda 21 stresses the role that local communities, especially women, indigenous people and the young, can play in tackling the problems of poverty, development and the environment simultaneously (UN, 2009a: Chapter 3). By identifying solutions to community problems themselves, change is also more sustainable (ISCVT, 2009a). Calls for massive shifts in economic and political structures, or a ‘new global age’, are currently driving a people-centred approach to sustainable development which believes in “the power of communities – and their ability to help themselves grow stronger, healthier, more stable, more prosperous and more peaceful” (ICSVT, 2009b: 1).

His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, a prominent campaigner on sustainability issues, also believes in the importance of local, participatory and communitarian approaches to environmental management. For him, the challenge is to break away from traditional economic models of capital growth, rather “to see Nature’s capital and her processes as the very basis of a new form of economics and to engage communities at the grass roots to put those processes first” (2009: 5). Strategies centred on “community and environmental capital” alongside the need for financial capital, which “better empower all sorts of communities to create a much more participative economic model that safeguards their identity, cohesion and diversity” will be more sustainable (ibid).

Hopkins and Lipman observe that “the shift away from business as usual” with a focus on economic growth is well under way and the Transition Towns movement is a case in point (2008: 13). Recognition that government action on sustainability will be too late, and that acting as individuals is too little, is leading communities to see themselves as the answer to building collective resilience and happiness to live a better life with less oil (ibid).

Capacity building has become an important tool for communities to take ownership of solutions for sustainability. Agenda 21 stresses the importance of “capacity-building at the local community level in order to support a community-driven approach to sustainability and to establish and strengthen mechanisms to allow sharing of experience and knowledge between community groups at national and international levels” (UN, 2009a: Chapter 3). For example, the UN stresses that strategies to
strengthen community resilience should include disaster preparedness, particularly in extremely vulnerable areas, such as the African continent, because of “their high exposure to the effects of climate change” and “their population’s limited capacity to adapt to the consequences” (2008b: 2).

1.2 How education can help

Education has an important role in building the capacities of communities to be sustainable. This is best summed up in the World Declaration on Education for All4 (WDEFA), a key document putting education at the core of human development:

Education can help ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world, while simultaneously contributing to social, economic, and cultural progress, tolerance, and international cooperation.

(WDEFA, 1990: 6)

This rights-based approach to education is supported by the UDHR. As well as being a right in itself, education is seen as having a moral function, transmitting the values of a particular society. In the UDHR this is very much one of respecting the rights of others to enjoy the economic, social and political freedoms to participate fully in all types of community.

Everyone has the right to education… Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (UN, 2009b: Article 26)

Understanding, tolerance, friendship and peace provide an important base for communities to become sustainable. An understanding of the rights a community shares is more likely to unite said community in striving to protect them as conflicting rights can divide communities. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) takes the aim of education a step further, with respect for the environment as well as for humans (Unicef, 2009a: Article 29).

Importance is increasingly being placed on education as a development strategy to equip people with the skills needed for a sustainable future. Hoare notes that “the focus

4 Adopted by the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand in 1990
of development is shifting from charity and crisis appeal to sustainability – giving communities in the developing world the means to become self-sufficient. Education is central to this mission.” (2007: 1) The role that education can play in contributing to sustainable development is recognised by the UN. The UN’s goal is to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning. This educational effort will encourage changes in behaviour that will create a more sustainable future in terms of environmental integrity, economic viability, and a just society for present and future generations. (UN, 2009c: 1)

In other words, education for sustainability is not just learning about the environment, but includes the social, political and economic issues which are interrelated with environmental management (Osler and Vincent, 2002; Banks et al, 2005; Taylor and Nathan, 2005; Willis, 2005; Newell-Jones, 2007; QCA, 2009a).

Sustainability has become an important part of England’s education policy, with the clear aim of building sustainable communities.

Improving young people’s understanding of the importance of this agenda can be helpful in initiating them into the complex decision making processes around planning, delivering and maintaining sustainable communities, and through this understanding they are more likely to want to ‘participate’. So awareness raising amongst school pupils should be seen as an investment in the future of sustainable communities. (Defra, 2005: 65)

Newell-Jones believes that “there is a need for social justice and human rights to be at the core of education and training, alongside sustainable development” (2007: 7). The values of sustainability may be more apparent to some members of a community than others; not all may readily embrace them, especially if they imply sacrificing certain aspects of their lifestyle. Education can raise awareness of the rights and needs of a community and how the behaviours of one can impact on another. For Newell-Jones education should “actively promote a greater critical engagement in issues and lead to ‘impact-oriented behaviours’, in other words, actions which will bring about change at local, national and global levels” (ibid: 3).

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5 It has special significance now as we are at the midpoint of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).
What unites all of these views on the role of education is the belief in its power to bring about social transformation through changing attitudes and behaviours. In most nations, education is considered instrumental in bringing about change for social, economic or democratic progress. These are all important elements for sustainable communities, as stated previously. Meanwhile, the challenges of globalisation have brought a new global dimension to many education systems based on growing recognition of the need to prepare children for a changing future, in which we are all interdependent (Osler and Vincent, 2002; QCA, 2007; DEA, 2009a). Yet traditional conceptualisations of education for developing human capital tend to place more focus on equipping people with global skills for work (Sen, 1999; Osler and Vincent, 2002; DfES, 2004; Newell-Jones, 2007). The WDEFA encourages “an expanded vision” to basic education which broadens its scope and delivery methods, whilst recognising that this will depend on context and will change with time (WDEFA, 1990: 8). The EFA vision has brought to the fore debates about quality education, with traditional intrinsic and instrumental goals of education being called into question and education models being strongly promoted which are more relevant to the needs of learners, their families and communities whilst adhering to the goals of education as stated in the UDHR (GMR, 2005). Agenda 21 and the WDEFA recognise the importance of lifelong learning and active and participatory approaches to assure learning acquisition and promote learners’ rights to reach their fullest potential (WDEFA, 1990; GMR, 2005).

Yet, when education for sustainable development is implemented in a system which has traditionally focused on education for an increased standard of living, this poses a challenge (Robinson and Shallcross, 2006). Newell-Jones believes there is an urgent need for debate on how global skills “can be set in a framework of poverty reduction, human rights and sustainable development as opposed to a competitive euro-centric economic perspective” (2007: 6). Robinson and Shallcross argue that education for sustainable development “will need not only to change knowledge but to transform societal values and actions; the entire way in which we perceive relationships between human driven social and economic systems and the natural environment” (2006: 236). What is needed are whole learning institution approaches to social and environmental change with learning institutions becoming “communities of practice… in which people learn how to act by participating in learning rather than experiencing teaching” (ibid: 244).
The WWF are also critical of education systems “essentially designed according to a blueprint of the past, not the future” (2009c: 1). In the UK context, this blueprint is “designed to encourage the values of individual success, largely measured in material possessions – locking them [children] into an unsustainable spiral of ever-increasing consumption” (ibid: 2). They advocate “more ambitious changes in national education systems around the world” as their vision of a world “where we all live within the natural resources of one planet” needs a “huge amount of will and determination” to make it happen (2009b). Teaching children the knowledge, skills and values they need to live differently is key to this (WWF, 2009c). Steiner agrees that education should “offer space for visions of something different and better for individuals, communities and the planet as a whole” (1993: 9). The opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, for which education should prepare children “extend beyond passing examinations and getting a job. They are to do with personal fulfilment, civic duty and social engagement. Students can become empowered to recognise the potential for change in society and their part in this.” (ibid: 15)

Another aspect of the quality education debate is “the role of the curriculum as a social and political means of transmitting power and knowledge” (GMR, 2005: 33). Freire is critical of traditional systems which use a ‘banking’ concept of education where “knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (1996: 53). In other words, knowledge is a form of power, which adds another dimension to the argument about inequalities and begs the question whose knowledge of sustainable development is of value? Newell-Jones argues that “there is a need for increased awareness of the implications of limited perspectives, in particular, western-centric thinking” and that we should draw more on multiple perspectives by “learning from resource-poor, as well as resource-rich contexts” (2007: 8 and 9). This view is at the heart of participatory rural and urban appraisal techniques, which value the knowledge of people in communities in the global South over ‘outsider’ forms of knowledge (Willis, 2005; UKOWLA, 2007). Promoting the voices of those who are marginalised in society is a pedagogy aimed at redressing social inequalities (Freire, 1996; GMR, 2005). Therefore, a further challenge for education is redressing the knowledge base. We can learn a lot from communities in developing countries who already follow a sustainable way of life, such as indigenous tribes. The WDEFA recognises that “traditional knowledge and indigenous cultural
heritage have a value and validity in their own right and a capacity to both define and promote development” (WDEFA, 1990: 6). Therefore this knowledge should be given more status in education for sustainability.

Global citizenship education is one model of education increasingly being promoted as a response to the needs of learners and their communities. The next chapter will look at how it can meet the challenge for education to bring about real change to the way we live our lives in order to build more sustainable communities.

2. The Role of Global Citizenship Education

2.1. A different approach to education and citizenship

What global citizenship education offers is a new approach to education in line with that proposed by critics of traditional systems. Citizenship education which has traditionally centred on preparing young people to be citizens in their nation only has come in for criticism for giving too much priority to national identifications and not preparing students with the knowledge and skills they need to function in an interdependent global world (see Nussbaum, 1996; Osler and Vincent, 2002; Banks et al, 2005). Therefore, global citizenship education is “a renewed paradigm of citizenship” which “goes beyond consideration of one’s country alone” (Steiner, 1993: 7). For example, the English Department for Education and Skills defines global citizenship as “that part of the Citizenship curriculum which refers to global issues, events and perspectives; also being or feeling a citizen of the global community as well as cultural or national communities” (Najda and Bojang, 2007: 108).

Global citizenship is also about being politically activated to bring about change. Kinnock observes that the global perspective has gained importance as we become more interdependent yet lack an understanding of the political and social structures that shape our lives or how we can challenge these through knowledge of rights (in Osler and Vincent, 2002). Citizenship education was seen as a key driver for political and community engagement in England when it was made statutory in English schools from 2000, as the following quote from the then UK Lord Chancellor illustrates:
A healthy society is made up of people who care about the future. People who willingly contribute to its development for the common good… People who want to be practising citizens. Before this can happen they need to have a sense of belonging – of identity – with the community around them… Citizenship education must give people confidence to claim their rights and challenge the status quo while, at the same time, make plain that with rights come obligations.
(cited in Crick, 1998: 61 emphasis in original)

2.2 **Active citizenship for sustainable development**

This construct of citizenship education marries well with education for sustainable development. Recent English education policy documents have prioritised sustainable development to equal status with the global dimension offering a new approach to thinking about both education and citizenship: “Sustainable development is a way of thinking about how we organise our lives and work – including our education system – so that we protect our most precious resource, the planet” (QCA, 2009a: 4). Citizenship is now embedded in education for sustainable development: “responsible citizens sustain and improve the environment locally and globally, take account of the needs of present and future generations in the choices they make, can change things for the better” (ibid: 2). The new English secondary curriculum for citizenship\(^6\) highlights specific opportunities for learners to develop their understanding of sustainable development:

> Citizenship helps learners become informed, critical and active citizens. It enables learners to consider the actions they and others can take to influence decisions affecting communities and the environment. In citizenship learners investigate and debate different viewpoints on the challenges facing society, including those relating to sustainability and the risks associated with not pursuing sustainability. They use their research to plan and take responsible action, as agents of change, to develop a more informed society and sustainable future. (ibid: 10)

How global citizenship education helps learners is by, firstly, building knowledge of interdependence so that they are aware of what it means to be a global citizen and that as communities we are all linked (Fountain, 1990; Steiner, 1993; Osler and Vincent, 2002; DfES, 2005). Secondly, learning about the concept of sustainability not only

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\(^6\) implemented from 2008
exposes young people to the interconnections between the economy, society and the natural world but also offers the opportunity to question the fairness of current power structures, by developing political or critical literacy skills (Osler and Vincent, 2002; UKOWLA, 2007). Fountain agrees that young people “need to develop a sense of what constitutes a healthy society” (1990: 3). They can learn to question if a ‘developed’ country is really healthy when there are inequalities of wealth, and economic growth has come at the expense of the environment (ibid). Therefore, global citizenship education is not just about imparting knowledge, like most traditional approaches to education. It is a form of problem-posing education, as advocated by Freire, in which learners are not passive recipients, but become critical thinkers, enabling them “to overcome their false perception of reality” (1996: 67).

Global citizenship education also encourages “an open-mindedness to listen to different voices, especially those of the disadvantaged and oppressed” (Steiner, 1993: 3). Opportunities for multiple perspectives, including those from resource-poor contexts, are created and the Western-centric knowledge base is challenged. Woodward argues that “gaining knowledge in itself does not create the power to change conditions in everyday worlds. Knowledge needs to be accompanied by understanding and a willingness to critically review knowledge in light of other knowledge.” (2005: 10) Fountain refers to this skill as ‘perspective consciousness’: an awareness that our own perspective is only one of many. “Our perspective may not be universally shared, and potential for misunderstanding and conflict arises when we try to use our own point of view to interpret or evaluate the ways of life, behaviour or beliefs of others”. (Fountain, 1990: 2) For example what is seen as poverty or charity by one person may not be by another, as the following quotes from Gambian teachers involved in partnerships with schools in the UK show: “We thought we were OK until our partners described us as poor.” “Stop dumping your unwanted old computers and clothes on us.” (UKOWLA, 2007: Section 5b)

Therefore global citizenship education allows learners to critically evaluate the values needed to live in sustainable communities. Steiner (1993) and Osler and Vincent (2002) highlight the importance of establishing values first as they are what form attitudes, which mediate between values and behaviour. For instance, life in the global South is often portrayed in a negative sense: ‘different from’ is generally construed as ‘worse than’ such as associations with poverty and disease (Steiner, 1993). However, Steiner
notes that when given opportunities to examine evidence to challenge these views, young people are often able to question their assumptions. For example, a Scottish pupil makes the following observation based on learning about Malawi through her school’s link:

I am intrigued by the Malawian way of life, culture and community. Perhaps, if asked a year ago what I would like to do given the chance to visit a less economically developed country, I would have answered, ‘I want to help people’. Now, I feel there is so much to learn from those who recognise the most important aspects of life, even in the face of poverty and loss. (British Council, 2007: 4)

By using human rights as a value base, global citizenship focuses on promoting and respecting the rights we share in order to ensure everyone has an active part to play in a community. Steiner believes that education should “inform students about everyone’s right to equal treatment and equality of opportunity and about the many ways this right is denied throughout the world, including in their own society” (1993: 10). For instance, focusing on human rights can help in dealing with controversial issues such as racism and distribution of power and resources, issues which lie at the heart of why some communities are unsustainable. For Shiman, allowing students to evaluate needs and rights is an educational practice which “requires that teachers not present students with a world view to absorb, but involve them in creating one of their own” (1991: 192). This view can also apply to one of sustainable local, regional and national communities. If students understand the local and national dimensions to human rights as well “and make the concerns their own, they are on the road to becoming active citizens in this global community” (ibid: 191).

Another way in which global citizenship education can contribute to sustainable development is by teaching us an ‘awareness of human choices’ (Fountain, 1990: 3). Steiner believes that “learning and teaching must go beyond a superficial ‘greening’ of personal behaviour” (1993: 7). The choices we make about consumption and “the importance of life-styles based on a sustainable relationship with finite natural resources, and a just relationship with people in countries in the South” should follow (ibid). For her this is the most challenging goal of global citizenship education because “it asks us deep questions about how we live our own lives and about how our own society and the world economy are organised” (ibid). The WWF agrees that ‘private
sphere’ actions are limited unless combined with collective ‘public sphere’ change as “the solutions to many environmental problems are multifaceted” (Gayford, 2009: 5).

Global citizenship education also offers opportunities to take action for change.

Global citizenship education “is ultimately education for action” as “the learning process can support children in taking meaningful, effective action in the outside world” (Fountain, 1990: 3 and 75). Fountain believes that “children need to see themselves as people who have the power to affect the world around them” (ibid: 75). This belief is underpinned by Freire’s argument for ‘problem-posing education’ where “thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world” (1996: 58). For example, Rutter observes that a “key factor in determining the success of citizenship initiatives in lessening the hostility expressed to asylum-seekers appears to be the potential of young people in being able to do something to support refugees, rather than passively absorb information about refugees” (2005: 148-149, her emphasis). In a recent audit of English schools which have implemented a ‘learning for sustainability’ approach, the WWF reports that “it is apparent that pessimism can turn to hope when young people are given knowledge about how to act, and when what might be described as ‘unfocused fear’ is replaced by factual information and practical strategies for addressing issues” (Gayford, 2009: 5). Linking learning to action also helps pupils develop problem-solving and analytical skills, thus helping them have a clearer understanding of the complexities of sustainable development (QCA, 2009a).

Fair Trade is a good example of learning and action that goes beyond a ‘greening’ of personal behaviour as it is based on an understanding of power and income inequalities. It is also a link between local and global communities and can be a first step in showing people how their purchasing choices can help fulfil the needs of other communities. For example, after learning about Fair Trade, pupils in Yorkshire, England persuaded their schools and local supermarket to sell more Fair Trade products (DfES, 2005). Pupils at a primary school in London sourced Fair Trade school uniforms and bags and held meetings with governors and parents to convince them to buy them (QCA, 2009a).
2.3 The school as a model community

As a whole school approach, global citizenship education “can inform the whole school ethos, leading to a school which is inclusive, just and democratic and promotes social and environmental responsibility, respect and co-operation” (DfES, 2005: 5). Osler and Starkey believe that “enabling people to experience the positive and supportive feeling of working and living in a community becomes a vital role for schools” as schools can help them apply the model to the complexities of wider society (1996: 170).

By reflecting what is taught in the classroom, schools can reinforce global citizenship learning by helping young people see the links between ethical practice and the global dimension (DfES, 2005; Oxfam, 2006). Adopting sustainable practices can help schools fulfil their duty to “improve the environment and quality of life of local people” and “of people in other parts of the world” (QCA, 2009a: 11). The belief that education has a clear role in helping to build sustainable communities underpins the English Department for Children, Schools and Families’ National Framework for Sustainable Schools which aims at all schools being sustainable by 2020 (ibid).

As well as being a model sustainable community, the school is inclusive valuing the contributions of young people, parents and non-teaching staff. Young people are involved in the governance and organisation of the school through school councils, for example, thus ensuring more equitable power relations in schools (Pike and Selby, 1988; Osler and Vincent, 2002; Banks et al, 2005; Gayford, 2009). Democratic learning environments also involve students being fully active and participative in the learning process and values the contribution learners bring to their learning from their social, ethnic and religious backgrounds (Osler and Vincent, 2002; DfES, 2005). This good quality learning creates a more positive atmosphere based on respect and tolerance (QCA, 2009a; Gayford, 2009). For example, by focusing on ‘grass roots ideas’ from the pupils themselves Farrington’s school changed from one with discipline problems to one where pupils became empowered and conflicts were resolved (cited in Ballin and Griffin, 1999). A primary school in Andover, England observed that a class which had implemented rights-based activities into their lessons was more tolerant and respectful

7 the former Department for Education and Skills
of members of the group and children who had not been interested in school were able to engage more with their learning (DfES, 2005).

2.4. Engaging with the wider community

Through global citizenship education schools can involve and contribute to the development and enrichment of the wider school community. The importance of involving the wider community in citizenship education is well-established (see Pike and Selby, 1988; Crick, 1998; Osler and Vincent, 2002; DfES, 2005; Najda and Bojang, 2007; WWF, 2009c). This comes from recognition that citizenship education is not limited to the confines of schools and that “many problems can be tackled as a community” (Crick, 1998: 47). One way in which schools can reach out to the community is by working with their local community “to develop sustainable neighbourhoods” (WWF, 2009c: 3). Learning about climate change at school has inspired many young people to take their messages to the wider community to try and bring about change. For example, a school in Assam, India has developed a flood awareness campaign in their local community with the help of traditional knowledge from elders (QCA, 2009a). Pupils at a primary school in a Bangladeshi community in London decided to hold a Green Fair because they wanted to demonstrate what they had learnt to parents and the wider community and pass on tips on energy conservation. Pupils at a primary school in Norfolk, England are also keen to share their knowledge with their families. One pupil stated: “It’s important to learn about sustainable development in schools. We can tell our parents at home how to save energy. Together we can make a difference.” (ibid: 45)

Parents and other community members can also share knowledge with the school. Their experiences of ethnic or historical traditions or as role models in the community, for example, lend to the richness of multiple perspectives that young people need in order to make informed judgements (Najda and Bojang, 2007). When these adults come from marginalised groups, this can help them feel more valued and included in the community. For example, elders can be a marginalised group in society although their knowledge of sustainable traditions is of great value. In the UK more sustainable and healthier consumption patterns in keeping with those adopted during World War II, such as ‘grow your own’, are being promoted, which have shaped the way many of our
elders\(^8\) still live. Their involvement in sustainable citizenship activities with young people can be a mutual learning experience.

Global citizenship education can engage young people in their local and global communities by activating their rights to be involved in making decisions which affect their lives\(^9\) and making their communities better. Young people are often portrayed negatively in the media, associated with being disengaged from society (Osler and Starkey, 2005; Envision, 2008). However, research shows that young people are interested in global issues (Osler and Vincent, 2002; DEA, 2009b; Gayford, 2009). Global citizenship education empowers learners to find their voice in deciding the future. For example, more and more international and regional youth conferences are taking place on climate change and other related global issues, which report that young people are making informed and powerful suggestions about the future sustainability of their communities (see Unicef, 2009b; UNEP, 2009).

Yet young people need to feel valued by their community to want to be engaged. Global citizenship education can be extended through non-formal channels to help “young adults, excluded from school and already feeling a sense of marginalisation, be given the opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes required for active citizenship” (O Cuanachain, 2005: 83). Programmes, particularly outside formal schooling, are promoting young people as leaders in their communities (for example Envision, 2008; ISCVT, 2009). The Institute for Sustainable Communities values the role that young people can play in making their communities thrive “since young people are the leaders of tomorrow” (ISCVT, 2009c: 1).

By empowering young people to realise their capacity to make a difference, global citizenship education can raise their self-esteem, which can give them the confidence they need to take on new challenges, find solutions and to interact positively with others (Griffin in Ballin and Griffin, 1999). For example, ‘disaffected’ pupils at a school in England have been able to identify with pupils in Peru through their school link and subsequently their school attendance and engagement has improved (QCA, 2009b). As

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\(^8\) I have chosen to use the term ‘elders’ as I believe it has a more positive connotation, associated with wisdom, than the term ‘the elderly’, which we tend to use in the West and is used in the UK education policy documents referred to.

\(^9\) Article 12, Convention on the Rights of the Child (Unicef, 2009a)
well as increasing their social capital, global citizenship education can enhance young people’s aspirations and social mobility, thus increasing their human capital too (DEA, 2009a).

Being engaged in school and wider communities can also give young people pride in their community and help them achieve a sense of identity. Creating an awareness of one’s self and others is an important part of global citizenship education as it helps students “to feel positive self-esteem and to respect and enjoy their own culture, and also other people and their cultures; to feel empathy with people whose life experiences are different from their own” (Steiner, 1993: 10). Fensome and Sandbach agree that “the foundation of good relationships is self-acceptance leading to acceptance of others” (in Ballin and Griffin, 1999: 39). It can be especially important for young people to accept their own identity when it is not the majority one in their community. “Difference is often perceived as negative and inferior” and this can make those from minority groups feel excluded from the wider community (ibid). Another problem is that those from majority groups, living in rural communities or mono-racial ‘pockets’ in multiracial cities, can be unaware of the diversity that exists around them (Miskell in Ballin and Griffin, 1999; QCA, 2007). By highlighting conflicting rights or the denial of rights that exclude certain minority communities from larger communities, global citizenship education allows learners to explore diversity in their local, regional and national communities before developing a sense of their belonging to the wider global community.

For example, a global school partnership between a primary school in Leeds, England and a school in Asuncion, Paraguay conducted projects in their communities based on mutual recognition by their teachers that the children “knew little about certain communities on their doorstep, leading to stereotyping and misunderstanding of those communities”: for the Leeds school this was Traveller and Roma communities and for the Asuncion school the indigenous Maka community (British Council, 2007: 12). Not only does global citizenship education teach about rights-based conflicts but it provides learners with opportunities to acquire conflict resolution skills themselves, which can be important for living in unstable communities.

The need to foster a sense of identity may also be important for the community itself. Communities whose livelihoods have depended on an industry which collapses can lose
their identity and community spirit. This can threaten social cohesion but also be a catalyst for more sustainable regeneration. For example, two schools in Durham, an ex-mining area of England, have worked in partnership with local businesses to develop community leadership skills in their pupils and knowledge around sustainable livelihoods based on their mining traditions (QCA, 2009a).

Another means of community outreach is through partnerships between school communities, NGOs and civil society. Partnerships with other stakeholders can “create both shared values and a sense of responsibility for making delivery of sustainable communities a reality in their area” (Egan, 2004: 34). For example development NGOs can help schools learn about sustainability through resources and teacher education (see Oxfam, 2008). Partnerships can also help build social cohesion as different groups interact for the first time.

2.5. Linking communities

Other partnerships which are an effective way of delivering global citizenship education and bringing local and global communities together are school and wider community links. Firstly, school links make global citizenship education for sustainability real. In the words of Archbishop Emeritus, Desmond Tutu: “Through linking, the complex and asymmetrical nature of global interdependence becomes evident as people from varying economic, political and social situations, connect and challenge each other’s understanding of the world.” (cited in UKOWLA, 2007: Foreword) “Linking can enable discussion on global issues to take place and provide an opportunity for marginalised voices to be heard.” (ibid: Section 3c) This is especially significant for global community links, as people in the global South are the ones who are most affected by the economic and environmental challenges facing communities today, and the partnership enables them to say what their needs are for a sustainable future. “Listening to partners and using their knowledge to gain an understanding of a global issue from their local perspective, helps us to reflect on our own practices and to make connections with the global agenda” (ibid). For instance, the recent WWF study of pupils’ perspectives on learning for sustainability found that those who had school links believed they could learn from other cultures’ attitudes towards family and care of elders (Gayford, 2009). And a secondary school in England has used visits from teachers from its partner school in Kenya to learn about conservation, water use and
recycling, knowledge it then shares with local primary schools (QCA, 2009a). In recognition of the opportunity for learning from different perspectives, the Department for Education and Skills is working towards all English schools having an international link by 2010 (DfES, 2004).

Secondly, learning directly from poor communities can potentially activate more meaningful action for positive change. It can help very different communities identify common ground and concerns such as climate change (Crick, 1998; DfES, 2005; Najda and Bojang, 2007; QCA, 2007; UKOWLA, 2007). Osler and Vincent (2002) note that parallel concerns between local and global communities are not always made explicit by policy-makers and curriculum developers, and so links between communities can make these connections real. For example, a global school partnership between a primary school in Leeds, England and Gujarat, India has given learners

> a real context for learning about the wider world… They have discovered that, despite the great diversity between the two cultures, they share common ground and responsibility for sustaining and improving life on the planet.

(British Council, 2007: 6)

Thirdly, building a sustainable community link can help build a sustainable community. They are mutually reinforcing, as they require the same skills and knowledge. The link helps to act as a mirror through which communities can look at themselves more closely. Previously excluded or marginalised sectors of the community, such as women or young people, may become more involved (UKOWLA, 2007). The global partnership can be built on a link within the local community, for example with a school or community in the native country of a diaspora or ethnic group, thus contributing to social inclusion and strengthening local identities (DfES, 2005; UKOWLA, 2007). A primary school in Slough, England, where the majority of pupils are of South Asian ethnic origin, forged a link with a school in Delhi, India to help the English children “stay in touch with their cultural roots” (DfES, 2005: 21).

Forming links in clusters, with other schools in their vicinity, can not only help individual schools form a more sustainable global link but also help their pupils address issues around diversity in their own region when the local school is in a different socio-economic or racial setting (DfES, 2005; Najda and Bojang, 2007; QCA, 2007; UKOWLA, 2007). The divisive impact on British communities of international
terrorism, racism and immigration has been instrumental in Britain’s policy focus on community cohesion, with citizenship education and community linking playing key roles (Crick, 1998). For example, the Bradford Schools Linking Project was set up to address issues of community cohesion in the north of England, following race riots in 2000 and the spread of Islamophobia after 9/11. “All our work is based on the premise that exploring and developing an understanding of who we are and where we live are fundamental to the health, safety, well-being and achievement of our young people and our district.” (Schools Linking Network, 2008) The Oldham Linking Project is another similarly motivated partnership in northern England, which started out by linking an urban school attended by children of Bangladeshi Muslim heritage with a rural school made up of white children and has now spread to linking over 40 primary schools in the area (DfES, 2005; Dyer, 2007). As well as building race and cultural awareness, pupils in both projects have discovered that they share the same concerns about the future (DfES, 2005; UKOWLA, 2007).

2.6. Lifelong learning

Even if it is not always labelled global citizenship education, training or education which shares the same purpose and approach can be applied at all ages and therefore is lifelong learning. The WDEFA recognises that child and adult education are “mutually supportive” and therefore “knowledge and skills that will enhance the learning environment of children should be integrated into community learning programmes for adults” (WDEFA, 1990: 10-11). In other words, supporting mechanisms need to be in place in the school and the wider community for education for sustainable development to be most effective. Not only are students activated by global citizenship education to bring about change if they want, but teachers become potential agents of change too. Wilkins believes that effective citizenship “requires that teachers see themselves as agents of social change. If this opportunity is grasped, citizenship education can be employed as a catalyst for promoting equality, enabling children also to see themselves as genuine social agents who will shape society.” (2005: 169) This should involve teachers learning from and with learners (Freire, 1996). It may require teachers questioning their own values and seeking out new knowledge on issues surrounding sustainability from a variety of perspectives.
There is also growing awareness of the importance of educating parents about the implications of global citizenship education. “Parent education can become an important means of developing support for the aims of the school” and “potentially multiply the benefits of the school-based approach” (Fountain, 1990: 76 and 90). Parents and other family members are often critical role models for children, who are “more likely to demonstrate positive environmental values if they are supported in the home” (Gayford, 2009: 6). The attitudes and values of parents and other family members will be more established than those of children and the influence of negative media, for example, can mean that these views conflict with those children bring from school. As we have seen families can learn about sustainability through the whole school approach, but it is more important that they learn first-hand in order to avoid mixed messages about the aims of global citizenship education.

As yet, though, global citizenship education is relatively new in adult education. The focus tends to be on community engagement with participatory methods often allowing otherwise marginalised groups of society to have a voice and feel part of the community (Hartley, 2005). Bergmüller (2005) describes a pilot project in Germany with ‘people of the third age’, for whom, she rightly argues, opportunities for social participation are especially important. We could add that issues around diversity are also an important component of citizenship learning for them as the communities in which they live have probably become more multi-racial in their lifetime. Hartley (2005) argues that creating community space for citizens to actively engage at a local level will naturally incorporate the global level. For example, “working with refugees and migrant workers naturally brings the wider world into local communities and contributes to diversity and enrichment for all participants” (Hartley, 2005: 21). Hartley (2005) and Newell-Jones (2007) identify a growing need for and interest in this type of active citizenship learning, which is led by the concerns and interests of the participants. Newell-Jones believes that “all actors and agencies have crucial roles to play, in partnership with learners, in ensuring that the global dimension is embedded across adult learning” (2007: 7). There are signs that this is starting to happen in England. The Learning Skills Council is working towards embedding sustainable development into all further education programmes by 2010 in recognition of education providers’ responsibility to build the capacities of their communities (LSC, 2005).
There are indications that global citizenship education is making a difference in helping to build sustainable communities but its real effectiveness depends on whole school and community involvement. The next chapter will address some of the successes and challenges of implementing the approach in my local region.

3. A Regional Perspective

3.1. Research rationale and methodology

My empirical research is aimed at giving a more balanced focus on the realities of global citizenship education by presenting a regional perspective based on the experiences of those directly involved. My interest in global citizenship education comes from my professional background as an educator but as it is an area of education I am less familiar with, my first aim was to gain an overview of how it works in practice through making contact with a wide range of professionals in the field in my local area. My intention was to follow this up with more detailed questionnaires, interviews and class observations but time constraints meant that it was not possible to collect a large sample or conduct a long-term study of behaviours. Instead I discovered that the variety of individual and collective data I gathered from pupils, teachers, head teachers, development education consultants, education planners and community workers in conferences, workshops, school and NGO visits gave me a valuable snapshot of the priorities and challenges they faced in implementing global citizenship education.

During the process of conducting my research I became aware that I needed to be flexible and responsive in my research methods in light of new information and knowledge (Pole and Lampard, 2002). Therefore my interviews became less structured and I only carried out questionnaires with those who were unable to do interviews as I adopted a more open approach in order to engage with other professionals in cooperative enquiry (Laws et al, 2003). Although qualitative in nature, I was able to quantify the data collected in order to identify some key trends. Giving equal focus to

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10. The perspectives of parents and other members of the wider community not directly involved in the profession would have made a more representative sample from which to evaluate the impact of global citizenship education in the wider community, but again this was not feasible.

11. In keeping with research ethics, consent was sought to include names where necessary.
the process and product also means that the research methods have in part reflected the pedagogy of global citizenship education: social-constructionist research means “the researched are actively engaged in constructing their world, as is the researcher” (ibid: 273).

3.2. General observations

My first observations were made in my work place where I was interested to discover that global citizenship education was going on with adult learners of English as a foreign language, albeit on a very small scale and not explicitly. The comments made by the director and teachers on the programme gave an added perspective from a very different educational context to that where global citizenship education normally takes place. The young adults (aged 18 to mid 20s) from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Japan, China, Vietnam and The Republic of Congo were on a university general English programme and the course director had chosen topics reflecting current social issues which would generate discussion and also give the students some insight into British society. They had visited and interviewed staff working in local charities in the community and members of the Leeds Black Elders Association had visited their classes to talk to them about immigration and migration. One teacher reported that “the charities project particularly hit home as they (the students) did not think that in a rich country as Britain there would be so much poverty” and subsequently some students were interested in volunteering locally. Another teacher reported that learning about Fair Trade was a new concept for many students, who said they would now buy Fair Trade products. Both teachers believed it was important for the students to be given the opportunity to hear different perspectives and have the freedom to explore topics which may be considered taboo in their country.

My first outside contact was with the Centre for Global Education, York, where I conducted an informal interview with one of the development education consultants. I also attended a global school network meeting with teachers from local primary schools which are part of a York community link with Begero, Ghana. One teacher completed a questionnaire and invited me to her school to observe a morning’s activities on the theme of health led by another class teacher, the Centre for Global Education and educators from a local history museum. Connections were drawn to past traditions and a previous school visit from one of the pupil’s grandmothers who had shared her
experiences, and to life in the Ghana community their school is linked with. In the workshop led by the Centre for Global Education pupils were asked to pose questions for class discussion generated from pictures of daily habits of water collection and use in Ghana. It was clear that they had empathy with the children they saw in the pictures, who were carrying water, but what was most striking was the maturity of the questions they were able to form at 9 years old such as “Why do we take things for granted when they have to work for food and water?” It was evident that their link with Ghana had helped pupils and teachers to connect to global issues.

My next visit was to Firth Park Community Arts College in Sheffield, where I interviewed the Associate Deputy Head Teacher (ADHT) and an adult learning teacher who initiated their cluster link with Karachi, Pakistan. Having seen how global citizenship education is implemented in a primary school, it was interesting to find out about the transition to secondary education. This school is very much a community inclusive model with active extended services making it the biggest provider of adult learning in the area. Community linking is well embedded in the ethos of the school, with links with Ugandan and European schools through music and languages, and the Karachi link set up with a global citizenship dimension through an adult learning class.

I attended two conferences organised by local development education networks. The Refugee Action Project Conference at Carmel College, Darlington was organised by the Tees Valley One World Centre to showcase their project (RAPT) on raising awareness and challenging myths about refugees and asylum seekers with six local secondary schools, sixth form colleges and their communities (see TOWC, 2009). It was attended by teachers, head teachers, pupils, local authority and voluntary sector education planners and providers, who all had a chance to share perspectives. Guest speakers Sir Keith Ajegbo, Berenice Miles and Robin Richardson gave talks on community cohesion and racist bullying in schools and pupils involved in the project presented dramas, videos and music based on their learning. It was clear that the project, which started in 2006 and was run by volunteer refugees, had achieved its aims with the pupils, and to a lesser extent had involved the wider community. The pupil presentations were largely self-initiated and aimed at spreading the message. Some were very powerful and

12 The activity used the Philosophy for Children approach which discourages questions that have a simple answer.
showed that they really understood the bigger picture and now had genuine empathy with refugees and asylum seekers.

The second conference was organised by the Yorkshire and Humber Global Schools Association to allow local development education centres working in partnership with local authorities on global citizenship education activities in primary schools to share the results of their projects with teachers. One was the Just Linking project developed through the Bradford School Linking Project and linked rural all-white and urban multiracial primary schools to celebrate local diversity and challenge stereotypes.

Following this conference, I visited the regional office of the British Red Cross, York where I interviewed a Youth Team Leader building capacities around first aid and flood awareness in schools and the wider community in North Yorkshire. She has been incorporating diversity awareness into her programmes in response to local requests. For example, she worked with a local agricultural college concerned that young adults studying there were not prepared for working alongside migrant workers in the region because they did not show much respect for diversity.

3.3. Key trends

Conversations with teachers, pupils and other stakeholders in global citizenship education revealed the following trends. Educational priorities will always depend on the socio-political context and the key concern for teachers in my region is preparing their students for diversity. This is partly because of changing demographics in the region. The region is largely rural with a non-white population of under 3%, although communities of migrant workers from Poland and Latvia can be found in some agricultural areas. Cities such as Bradford and Sheffield have a much higher ethnic mix, but again it is concentrated in pockets. Reports that the government plans to send more refugees and asylum seekers here has raised diversity awareness and respect high on local citizenship education programmes. The fact that a new ‘Identity and Diversity’ strand was added to the revised English secondary curriculum for citizenship in 2008 shows that diversity awareness is also a national priority (DCFS, 2007).

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13 based on statistics in the Children and Young People’s Plans of North Yorkshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire (2008)
The two schools I visited are fairly representative of the differences in diversity in this area: Dunnington Church of England Primary School is an all-white school in a fairly affluent village outside York, Firth Park Community Arts College is an inner-city multiracial school in a poor part of Sheffield. A teacher at the former reported that the school had become involved in the Ghana cluster link because it wanted to give the pupils “a more informed learning experience for when they make the move to the real outside world”, yet it was only because of an inspection recommendation that they had formed a link with a Leeds school. Staff at the latter told me that the school is more aware of the global dimension through being multiracial although about 20% of the pupils come from BNP voting families. They decided to form a link with a community in Pakistan with the intention that the link will help pupils explore identities because they have a large number of Pakistani pupils.

The fact that support for the BNP is growing in the area also worries local education providers. Ajegbo believes that immigration will be the main political issue deciding how people vote at the next British general election. Therefore, increased local support for anti-immigration policies is in potential conflict with the educational agenda to raise tolerance of diversity, suggesting that parents and families need to be more involved in global citizenship education. For example, a teacher at Dunnington Primary School reported that the pupils “are pretty good at challenging the stereotypes of the parents but there are always some parents and families who are very set in their ways.” A teacher involved in the Just Linking project notes “many of the staff have never worked in an inner city school. It’s an eye opener for the adults, let alone the children.” (Ashton et al, 2006: 8) Some parents and governors were less enthusiastic, saying they saw no value in linking with a contrasting community as they lived in an all-white area. However, after accepting invites to join one of the linking day’s activities they showed appreciation of the project (ibid).

The RAPT project illustrates similar findings. The Head of Citizenship at one of the participating school reported that pupils were eager to discuss issues surrounding refugees and asylum seekers but the problem was the attitudes they were bringing from home. As a result of the project, some pupils have challenged comments made by

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14 The British National Party, known for their anti-immigration policies, won two seats in the European Parliament this year despite a nationwide campaign against their support. One BNP MEP represents Yorkshire and Humber where the BNP vote increased by 1.8% (BBC, 2009c).
family and neighbours. Pupils reported that they wanted to see diversity awareness spread to the community in order to reduce social divide as “adults pass misconceptions onto children”. Anecdotal evidence of this comes from the moderator of RAPT who, at the launch of the exhibition to which the mayor was invited, asked the driver of the mayoral car his opinion on refugees and asylum seekers. His response that he did not know what “these people” are doing here prompted an invite to view the exhibition, which takes you through the asylum seeking journey. The moderator spoke to him again afterwards and he said he was “shocked” as he did not know about the dilemmas they faced. He then talked with one of the refugees helping with the exhibition, said he thought this information should go to more people and that he would tell his friends about the issues. This example shows the potential impact educating adults about the real facts can have.

Therefore the next step for global citizenship education in this region seems to be involving adults in learning about diversity. It is a challenge because it requires adults critically evaluating the information they receive and rethinking basic assumptions. For Ajegbo, the role of schools is not necessarily to try and change attitudes towards race and faith, but to provide the skills and forum to debate these issues to avoid the use of far-right media and political parties as alternative channels. As BNP supporters in the area are already being influenced in this way, it would seem that there is a local need to extend this service to the whole community through adult education. The WDEFA recognises the contribution extended services can make to a community (GMR, 2005). This is something the English Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS, 2006) also sees as important for making the school the hub of the community and building community cohesion, and as such has recommended that all schools have a core offer of extended services by 2010. Community schools, such as Firth Park, are already working very much in partnership with their community. For the ADHT, extending the school’s services to the community is “joined-up thinking” as it involves parents and school staff working together. What she calls the “0 to 90 agenda”\(^\text{15}\) not only encourages the notion of lifelong learning which is both sustainable and enriching, but improves community cohesion. Ajegbo agrees that schools need to engage more with the wider community “to create new concepts of what living together and national

\(^{15}\) We are learners from the age of 0 to potentially 90
identity mean”. Local education authorities and extended service co-ordinators have also identified a need for parents to be educated on diversity and The British Red Cross plans to spread its work on diversity to the wider community through extended school services, using college students as peer educators.

However, regional and national identity is only half of the picture. Our common humanity and a sense of solidarity with others in our communities, be they local, national or global, is what underpins global or cosmopolitan citizenship (Nussbaum, 1996; Sen, 1999; Osler and Vincent, 2002; Banks, 2005; Osler and Starkey, 2005; Appiah, 2006). The Just Linking project was keen to involve the pupils in recognising shared rights and responsibilities wherever and whoever they are. Celebrating diversity in their own locality laid the foundations for moving on to the bigger picture. Because they felt part of another community in their region it was easier for them to identify with the global community and address issues that affected them all regardless of race or background. Therefore, another challenge is getting the balance right between local and global identities (Banks, 2005). Examples from adult education show that providing community space for exploring local issues can involve global issues too. The Just Linking project is a model of how diverse communities can explore global issues together, which could be applied to adult education. The need to provide community space to continue this learning is clear from complaints made by pupils involved in RAPT that there are too many institutional constraints on them taking part in active projects. In the words of one of the development education consultants, “young people have the solutions but not the space”. The fact that some are finishing school this year and still want to be actively involved in raising awareness of immigration issues strengthens the case for lifelong learning opportunities being made available.

**Conclusion**

As poor countries strive to enjoy a Western standard of living, Western nations are being forced to acknowledge that this lifestyle is no longer sustainable. The competition for resources and the human impact of climate change are threatening communities all over the world. Everyone has a role to play in building global understanding and a sustainable future, as well as a right to that future. Working as communities towards sustainable development goals means communities can find their own local solutions to
the challenges, increase their sense of purpose and build their capacities to cope with change. They become sustainable through working towards sustainability.

Global citizenship education is a valuable tool in building sustainable communities because it gives people opportunities to address the environmental, social and economic challenges faced by society and explore the actions needed for sustainable development. But the scale of the challenge of mainstreaming global citizenship into society means that other community services must be involved. For global citizenship education to be sustainable it needs to be owned by the wider community. More joined up support and collaboration between stakeholders in building sustainable communities is one way forward but this requires community leaders taking a ‘leap of faith’ (DEA, 2009a). Partnerships are already forming between schools and NGOs with a shared mission to promote global citizenship, as local projects show. The fact that full school support of the approach depends on good leadership is well-documented (see for example Farrington, in Ballin and Griffin, 1999; DEA 2009a; Gayford 2009; WWF, 2009c). Full community support of global citizenship also needs good leadership to see the links between different agendas, such as community cohesion, economic and environmental sustainability, and form creative partnerships across all sectors of the community - education, media, business, local authority, faith and voluntary amongst others - which will help build sustainable communities. An integrated approach can empower young people leaving formal education to continue global citizenship activities and demonstrate leadership in their communities by engaging others on a collective journey to a more sustainable future.
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