



# Centre for Global Education Election Briefing on Global Learning

## Executive Summary

**Global learning supports** education about the key factors underpinning poverty and inequality in the global North and South, and how we can achieve sustainable development. It enables public action on the key issues underpinning poverty, inequality and injustice locally and internationally.

**Global learning is needed** because 3.4 billion people - almost half of humanity - live on less than \$5.50 a day while the wealth of the world's billionaires increased by \$900 billion in 2018 or \$2.5 billion a day. It is needed to tackle current global crises such as racism and the climate emergency and support delivery of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

**Global learning works** because it provides the values, skills, knowledge and understanding needed to make informed judgements on the key issues shaping our future. For example, the Global Learning Programme, a schools' project supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) from 2014-18, delivered training to 50% (535) of schools in Northern Ireland to enhance their capacity to teach about global issues and adopt a whole-school approach to global learning.

We have also seen how the climate strikes, as a form of global learning, have both informed and mobilized young people to address the climate crisis.

**More support for global learning is needed** because since the international recession of 2008 funding for global learning has been substantially reduced despite the UK government reaching the United Nations' target of 0.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product for overseas aid. Support for global learning has not recovered to pre-recessionary levels while the need for global learning has arguably never been greater.

**Centre for Global Education recommends** that the next UK government makes global learning integral to tackling global poverty through its role in developing deeper public understanding and engagement. It calls for enhanced support for formal and informal initiatives that strengthen engagement in global learning and introduce a grants programme for civil society to encourage greater innovation in the delivery of global learning.



## What is Global Learning?

Global learning supports education about the key factors underpinning poverty, inequality and social exclusion in the global North and South. It is a dynamic, interactive learning methodology that provides values, skills, knowledge and understanding on the social and economic influences that shape our lives. An important component of global learning is its capacity to support Global Citizenship Education (GCE), an active form of public engagement with the main issues that perpetuate poverty both locally and globally. Global learning is delivered in formal and informal education sectors with the capacity to build a sustainable commitment among learners to a just and equal world.

Around the world, international bodies such as UNESCO and the Sustainable Development Goals highlight the value and importance of encouraging approaches to learning that promotes a global outlook. The need for this outlook has been re-enforced by the rise of xenophobia and economic nationalism.

Global learning has been practiced in the UK since the 1970s. Initially sustained by returned missionaries and development workers who incorporated their experiences of the global South in their global learning practice, the sector was mostly funded until the late 1990s by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). In 1997, the Department for International Development (DFID) was established and enhanced government financial support for global learning under the auspices of a strategy (*Building Support for Development*, 1999) and [White Paper on International Development](#) (2000). This enhanced statutory support for global learning helped to sustain a network of more than 40 Development Education Centres (DECs) that provided grassroots global learning in towns and cities across the UK.

Since the global recession in 2008, support for global learning has been substantially reduced. Although it is funded through the overseas development aid budget which in the UK has

reached the United Nations' target of 0.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product, support for global learning has not recovered to pre-recessionary levels. However, over the past decade the need for global learning has arguably never been greater.

## Why do we need Global Learning?

We live in a world with stubborn levels of poverty. A [report](#) published earlier this year by Oxfam revealed that 3.4 billion people – almost half of humanity – have barely escaped extreme poverty and live on less than \$5.50 a day. At the other end of the economic scale, the wealth of the world's billionaires increased by \$900 billion in 2018 or \$2.5 billion a day. The human cost of inequality is devastating.

Global learning enables learners to understand the underlying causes of these inequalities and to take informed action based on analysis, enquiry and discussion. It also promotes values such as tolerance, respect, diversity and social inclusion. These are the kind of values we need to challenge the rise of intolerance and racism toward migrants and minority ethnic communities. Global learning also promotes the kind of democratic values and citizenship education which are a bulwark against the rising tide of populist nationalism witnessed locally and internationally. Global learning delivers critical thinking skills that enable learners to process 'fake news' and make informed judgements on the key issues shaping our future such as the climate crisis.

## Global Learning in Action

Although funding for global learning has been greatly reduced since 2008, the Department for International Development (DFID) supported a four year schools' programme between 2014 and 2018 called the Global Learning Programme (GLP). The aim of the GLP was to "support schools to teach about global poverty and international development, with a particular focus on upper primary and early secondary school". The GLP delivered Continuing Professional Development



(CPD) and support to 40,000 teachers across the UK to enhance their capacity to teach about global issues and engaged with 10,000 schools to adopt a whole-school approach to global learning.

A three-year longitudinal [study](#) into the impact of the GLP in schools in Northern Ireland carried out by Ulster University (Coleraine) found considerable evidence of teachers implementing global learning (GL) through their classroom practice, using a cross-curricular and whole school approach. It also found evidence of improved leadership in GL schools. For example, schools' ethos and vision with respect to GL had steadily grown over the four years and there was a steady increase, too, in the schools' inclusion of GL in School Development Plans. Also, comparisons before and after training showed an increase in teachers' understanding and perceptions of, and attitudes towards, five key aspects of global learning.

Building upon the success of the GLP, the British Council and Department for International Development have jointly funded a new three year schools' initiative called Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning (CCGL). The new programme combines grants for schools to take up international partnerships with schools in the global South, with In-service Teacher Training courses on a range of curricular-related topics offered to various levels according to the needs of schools. This programme is also delivered on a UK-wide basis and ends in August 2021.

## Why we need more support for Global Learning?

A DFID [review](#) of global learning (also known as development education) in 2011 found that "Awareness-raising activity – in particular development education – plays an important role in creating an environment that supports efforts to tackle global poverty". Overwhelming global problems can sometimes cause inertia and a sense of powerlessness among learners, particularly young people. The Climate Strikes inspired by 16 year-old Swedish schoolgirl, Greta Thunberg, have illustrated the power of global learning to inspire

action toward positive social change. We believe that development education should, therefore, continue to be a prevalent part of learning in formal and informal education across the UK.

Recent research by [Barnardo's](#) and [Girlguiding](#) shows that the climate crisis is one of the top concerns for young people. [Research](#) has also shown that youth engagement in social actions can reduce anxiety and improve their well-being. Action projects are an excellent learning experience through which pupils can develop key thinking skills, capabilities, attitudes and dispositions that will develop them as 'contributors to society and the environment'. With this in mind, we believe that the forthcoming General Election offers an opportunity to prioritise global learning and ensure it is taken up by all parties within their manifestoes.

We are specifically calling for the following:

- **UK government to review and identify ways in which it can progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in terms of learning about global issues and promoting a sense of global citizenship.**
- **DFID to consult relevant stakeholders across the UK including appropriate and relevant educational bodies to identify how the promotion of a global outlook and a global mindset can be a feature of educational programmes.**
- **Give greater emphasis to supporting initiatives that encourage and support young people's desire and engagement in wanting to secure a more just and sustainable world.**
- **Continue to support current programmes but look into introducing a grants programme for civil society organisations that can encourage greater innovation and support for initiatives that broaden engagement in global learning.**



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