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Global Educational Partnerships and Community Cohesion. How can these initiatives inform one another?

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Abstract

Until 2010 all schools in England were encouraged to create ‘international links’ and to teach the ‘Global Dimension’. One outcome was the formation of Global Education Partnerships (GEPs) whereby schools in different countries worked together to foster mutual understanding. During the same period England experienced a number of difficult events such as the Oldham Race Riots of 2001. As a result, two key government reports (Cantle, 2006 and Ajegbo, 2007) saw a vital role for schools in nurturing cohesion (tolerance, respect, integration) in the community. All schools subsequently had a duty to promote what was termed Community Cohesion (CC). This research explores the possible relationship between GEPs and CC given they have areas of commonality in cultural dialogue and understanding. Can activities in one inform and benefit the other? What does this actually look like in schools? The research focuses on two parallel case-study schools in England. It explores the perspectives of staff and pupils through interviews, and from both this and school documentation ascertains what understanding and value is placed on GEPs and CC in school, what activities take place and whether these inform one another. Initial findings have emerged from one case study. There would appear to be two ‘meta-narratives’: on the one hand, while there is an acknowledgement of the importance of CC, government school inspections (Ofsted) drive understanding, values and delivery, with the dangers of a tokenistic ‘tick-box’ culture. On the other hand, for some pupils and staff, there is an element of ‘othering’ taking place, whereby the focus is on people from ‘other’ countries and culture. Questions are raised about the extent to which external factors (e.g. inspections) and inherent values influence the potential for CC and GEPs to work effectively together to bring about greater equality and understanding. A second case study of a school with a different approach to CC and GEP will shed further light on this important issue.

Keywords: *Community Cohesion, global educational partnerships, international links, othering.*

Terms used:

Within this paper the terms Global Educational Partnership and Community Cohesion will be used. When referring to Global Educational Partnerships (GEP) I am referring to the association between two or more schools, with at least one of those schools located in England and at least one located in the Global South.

Community Cohesion (CC) refers to the duty of all maintained schools in England to promote community cohesion under section 23A(6) of the Education Act 2002. This was the result of the Education and Inspections Act of 2006, which in turn responded to recommendations from the Cante Report of 2006.

Introduction: Global Educational Partnerships, Community Cohesion a possible relationship between the two?

International school links with the Global South have occurred informally in England since the 1980s – a time when increasing media exposure to events such as the Ethiopian famine in 1984 resulted in raising awareness of poverty issues within the British public. These international links were informal in the sense that they were not in response to education policy and often occurred through the experiences and motivations of individual teachers.

However a change occurred when in 1999 Clare Short, then Secretary of State for International Development (and part of the previous Labour government), urged: ‘...every school in the country to have the opportunity to develop a link with a school in the South’ (cited in Mackintosh, 2007).

This was followed by the Department for Education and Skills’ (DfES – now known as the Department for Children, Schools and Families DCSF) publication: ‘Putting the World into World Class Education’ (DfES, 2004). One of many targets from this policy was to have every school in England create an ‘international link’ by 2010. This reflected Claire Short’s wish to have all schools developing school partnerships ‘based on equality and mutual learning’. It is also worth noting that at the same time Gordon Brown, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, pledged increasing funds to £4.5 million to support school links, particularly within the Commonwealth.

In creating and developing a Global Educational Partnership, one could argue that the intended goals could include fostering mutual understanding between individuals in two culturally different countries.

During the same period (and government), England experienced a number of difficult and challenging social problems and events, which centred on racial tension within communities. In the summer of 2001, violent riots in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley reported as ‘race

riots', resulted in the Home Office commissioning the 'Cantle Report on Community Cohesion'. This argued that the teaching ethos of schools should reflect the different cultures within the school and within the wider community, and that Citizenship education should address these issues (Ajegbo, 2007, Cantle, 2006). Concern was expressed about the 'development of segregated communities, leading parallel lives' (Chen, 2008, p.78) and this was exacerbated by the bombings in London in July 2005. As a result of these events and the changing political and social climate, Citizenship in particular, and schools' responsibilities in general came under close scrutiny. The educational response to this was the Ajegbo Report published in 2007 entitled 'DfES Curriculum Review: Diversity and Citizenship' (Ajegbo, 2007). An outcome, which had repercussions for all schools across England, was the duty that all schools promote Community Cohesion. This was seen as a positive; schools would have to demonstrate and evidence their activities in promoting Community Cohesion under the new school inspection framework for Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education).

Goals of Community Cohesion could be seen as tolerance, respect and cultural understanding. These goals are not dissimilar to the goals of Global Educational Partnerships. If we can take these goals as areas of commonality this research explores the potential relationship between the two. Is it possible that activities related to a school's global partnerships, could inform and benefit their activities in the local community with relation to Community Cohesion or vice versa? What would this look like in a school? These are the questions this research seeks to explore.

This paper will present initial findings from one of the two case study schools, and discuss the possible implications of these findings. In the next section the research design and methods are introduced.

The research and methods

My research questions focus on the viewpoints and opinions of individuals involved in schools' global educational partnerships and Community Cohesion. This is a deep, penetrative investigation on a small scale within two secondary schools in England. The approach is a qualitative study that is:

1. Case study based;
2. Exploratory;
3. Emergent and iterative.

This paper presents the findings from school 'T'. School T is a comprehensive secondary community college in Devon, South West England. The school is in a small coastal town and is reasonably isolated, certainly from large conurbations. Both the town, and the school, are

predominantly white mono-cultural. The age range of the pupils is 11-18, and they comprise both boys and girls in the lower school and sixth form.

It is important to note here that while many of the 'headline' events relating to racial tension in communities have occurred to the north of England in urban areas where the ethnic character of communities is more diverse, issues relating to racial prejudice still occur in white mono-cultural rural communities such as those found in the South West. Garland and Chakraborti explore the issue of exclusion and 'othering' of ethnic minority residents in rural England. They find that 'the conflation of rurality with notions of Englishness and 'whiteness' serves to reinforce this marginalization' (Garland and Chakraborti, 2006, p159). This process of 'othering' resonates with key findings of this research (see section 1). With a more specific focus on the southwest Jay presents a disturbing picture of racial prejudice and discrimination against ethnic minority residents in the south west of England (Jay, 1992). I would argue this is still happening today.

Having taught in secondary schools, I value the pupil perspective as a reliable and honest view of school activities, so accessing this was a priority for the research. This approach is endorsed by Ruddock and Flutter who about the value of the pupil perspective and pupil participation (Ruddock and Flutter, 2000). Equally the staff perspective is important and the relationship between the two provided further insight into the activities in the schools and the potential relationship between GEP and CC. Therefore the research methods involved pupil and staff interviews and school documentation analysis.

Following a pilot study I refined the interview process for staff and pupils. The pupils interviewed were in Years 7,8,9 and 12 (ages 11-17). The pupils were interviewed together in small focus groups of 4 individuals. They all completed a short 'pre-interview' questionnaire.

The staff interviewed ranged from class teachers to senior managers and non-teaching staff, all selected because they had some involvement in either GEPs, CC or both.

Initial findings

What I present here are the initial findings for school T in relation to pupil and staff understanding of GEPs and CC, and the activities that relate to these that were evident in the school. In the early part of the data analysis I was very interested in the responses of staff and pupils to the interview questions. However in time I realised it was not *what* was being said, but *how* individuals were saying things that was important. By this I mean that while the content of pupil or staff responses to questions was useful, the language that was used provided further insight into values and understanding and contributed to the central themes

emerging from the findings. These central themes that emerged from the language I have called ‘meta-narratives’ and the meta-narrative for pupils is presented first.

1. Pupil meta-narrative

For the pupils (and evident among some of the staff), the meta-narrative is ‘otherness’. By otherness I am referring to ‘othering’ of cultures that emerges from the language consistently used by many of the pupils (rather than an overt prejudice). While there were examples of unity such as the Year 12 comments stating ‘we’re all kind of the same’, what becomes evident are the pre-dominant use of the term ‘them’ or ‘other’, or indeed presenting a notion of ‘othering’ through the language and phrases used. This is at the very centre of the issues around Community Cohesion and could be seen to contrast with the goals of Community Cohesion outlined in the introduction. ‘Otherness’ can be expressed as ‘difference’ and an example of this can be seen here: ‘Cause we learn that everyone's different and the worlds like, like we all think we're the same but we're not, there's like, around the world there's different people, different beliefs, different religions’ (year 8 boy). This is a very explicit reference to difference. However, there are also more implicit references such as: ‘Cause you know how to talk to them and like not be disrespectful towards them ‘cause you know what they do’ (year 8 girl). Here the girl is trying to say something positive about the usefulness of teaching about culture in school, yet uses the term ‘them’ reflecting a notion of ‘other’. This language is used by others: ‘Because like you understand different races and stuff and you learn to get on with other races’ (year 8 girl), and: ‘And you could learn so much more about their religion and what their life's like’ (year 8 boy).

Otherness underpins or becomes the ‘lens’ through which pupils interpret and understand Community Cohesion and global educational partnerships, school activities and even the influencing factors affecting the delivery of these in school and therefore helps contextualise the other ‘sub-themes’ that emerge from the data.

2. Pupil understanding of Community Cohesion

Having established the meta-narrative of ‘otherness’ in the language used, in this section I explore *what* is said in relation to pupils’ understanding. Firstly of Community Cohesion and then global educational partnerships.

2.a ‘Its only fair’

As a starting point I looked through the pre-interview responses and noted that for year 7, 9 and 12 the majority of the pupils thought that Community Cohesion was ‘very important’ while for year 8 they all thought it was ‘quite important’. Recurring themes that emerged

from each of the year groups was ‘fairness’, ‘understanding other cultures’, along with a sense of ‘importance’ in doing this. Knowing that the pupils thought CC was either very or quite important – I felt it necessary to explore this further.

In the year 7 interviews, one of the girls begins with this response: ‘Cause it's like basically showing you it's really fair, it's only fair to have like everybody equal and like say if you're black or Asian then like it wouldn't be fair if you got treated slightly differently’ (year 7 girl). The idea of ‘fairness’ is brought into the discussion. I was interested to learn that this was also evident in the year 8 discussions, in which they also referred to the idea of CC's usefulness at a more personal level: ‘it's very useful as well because say we went to their country, we want them to treat us how we would treat them and if it was the other way round they would want us to treat them as they would treat us’ (year 8 girl).

This quote reflects a multitude of related themes. The pupil is trying to communicate a sense of justice and equality. However, other themes that emerge here relate to a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’. The pupil is talking from a personal perspective; ‘us’ while her language in referring to ‘them’ indicates to the notion of ‘otherness’; the meta-narrative.

2.b Learning and understanding

Many of the pupils acknowledged the importance of learning and understanding different cultures to enable cohesion in communities, or as they say ‘getting on’: ‘Because like you understand different races and stuff and you learn to get on with other races’ (girl: year 8). This notion of learning about cultures develops further as each of the group listens and responds to one another: ‘We learn how the culture develops from just people to their rituals and what they believe in and what they do yearly, it sort of, it gives you an indication of how people in general think...’ (Year 8 girl). In this response the pupil has developed the notion of learning and religion and has made reference to beliefs, cultures and even how people might think. However, again in this response, the pupil is talking about ‘other’ and ‘they’ therefore ‘othering’ the religion/people. Is this then reflective of an effective approach to teaching and learning about different cultures in school T?

2.c Grounding experience: ‘I had a friend....’

I noted that the year 7s in particular were quick to ‘ground’ their responses by relating to real experiences they had had, and especially mentioning ‘friends’. This is an example of the effect, within a group, that one pupil's comment can have on other members, as they think and recount similar examples. However, all of the comments bear relevance to how important they perceive CC. In coding this, I named it ‘I had a friend’ because it was these initial words from a pupil that caught the attention of others, allowing them to talk about

their own experiences. An example of this is: 'Community cohesion is, I think it's very important because I had a friend at primary school and he was a Muslim and we got on really well and I understood that he couldn't come to a few lessons because of prayers and everything' (year 7 girl). This year 7 girl is contextualizing her answer by relating to an experience, a friend who was a Muslim, and within this is some reference to understanding reflecting comments from year 8 and 12.

3. Pupil understanding GEP

Case study School T was a recipient of the British Council's International School Award, given to schools with successful and active global school partnerships. A member of staff described the school to me before the research took place as being active in a number of international partnerships that ranged in type and size but included partners in Japan and Taiwan, as well as language partnerships in Europe. In reality the only active partnerships were the language partnerships and exchanges where pupils visited from France and Spain, and a 'link' with an Austrian school. Therefore the interviews had to take this into account and discuss a hypothetical GEP with the Global South in addition to the existing partnerships to assess understanding and perceived benefits or problems.

3a 'see, like, other cultures'

The pupils identified the benefits of learning about and 'seeing' other cultures when asked about their understanding of GEPs and their benefits. A year 7 girl stated: 'I think the good things about it, you get to see like other cultures, speaking...' This is a perspective a year 9 pupil also expresses: 'You could learn about the way they live and the language that they speak'. Rather like the perceived benefits of CC, these pupils can see the benefits of GEPs in a positive way, yet their language again distinguishes between themselves and the 'other'.

3b 'know how it would feel to be different'

Other pupils, when considering what it would be like to partner with a school somewhere more distant, discuss the potential benefits with India suggested by one pupil: 'If you were to go to India you would know how it would feel to be different because they're a different, maybe a different religion or different beliefs and like they're just different and you'd know how it would feel to be placed in like a weird place that you don't know much about and you feel different to everyone else so if they were coming over to here and coming to school we would sort of get a hint of what they would be feeling' (year 7 boy). This comment displays real empathy and insight into the challenges someone visiting their school from India would experience. However, the 'othering' displayed through explicit difference is clear.

4. Staff meta-narrative

A number of sub-themes emerge from the staff interviews and exploration of school documentation yet one theme emerges as the context through which many staff interpret and understand Community Cohesion in particular, and to some extent global educational partnerships. This meta-narrative is the school inspections known as 'Ofsted'. 'Ofsted' emerges as a theme from the staff interviews particularly with senior management, and is also evident in the staffing structure of the school, where members of staff have responsibility for the different elements of the Ofsted inspection criteria, such as CC. While I have labelled the school inspections as the meta-narrative, it is actually more than that – it is how this is valued by the staff that becomes important. For example the head teacher states: 'And I think the drive for schools to create national community cohesion for an Ofsted criteria was simply that, it was an Ofsted criteria box that had to be ticked' (head teacher). The language used here suggests CC is 'created for an Ofsted criteria' and that is was '[a] box to be ticked'. This perspective is shared by KB the member of staff with responsibility for CC in the school: 'there was lots of benefits for us partnering with somebody in Birmingham but...how can you justify the resources to put to it? We could 'cause it ticked a box for Ofsted and it obviously was enriching for our students and all that kind of stuff as well'.

In addition to a 'box-ticking' perspective towards CC, KB also provides an insight into how she thinks CC is perceived by schools nationally: 'I don't think any school would have welcomed the community cohesion framework that was imposed in the last kind of reshuffle of the Ofsted guidance because it gave schools something else to do, something else to focus on' (KB).

A third member of the senior management team mentions a diversity week that was organized for the pupils and where a number of topics and issues related to diversity, culture, sexuality and identity were covered: 'and we sort of ticked a box I think when Ofsted came and we'd had diversity week' (AR). This week was intended as an annual entitlement for pupils, yet had only ever been organised just prior to a school inspection.

The staff would appear to perceive CC in the school inspection as a tokenistic box-ticking exercise, therefore de-valuing it as an activity in school with importance and meaning for the pupils. This could then influence the type and quality of provision delivered in school this is presented in section 7.

5. Staff understanding CC

As mentioned the meta-narrative for the staff is the influence of the school inspections and Ofsted. This was evidenced in the interviews with staff regarding their understanding of Community Cohesion and its benefits. On one level this is reflected by the school's staffing structure where the senior management of the school had specific responsibilities relating to particular inspection criteria. For example there was a senior member of staff (non-teaching) with responsibility for Community Cohesion. And on another level, despite attempting to explore personal views, many of the staff articulated their understanding through 'Ofsted' definitions. Perhaps this is understandable given that Community Cohesion is a specific, inspected duty performed by the schools. However if one accepts the benefits outlined in the introduction, of greater tolerance, respect and cultural understanding, it is significant that staff do not explicitly refer to these aspects of CC.

5a. Ofsted

A senior member of staff was asked about his understanding of CC and its benefits. This particular individual was a driving force behind many of the whole-school activities relating to citizenship and religious studies. However, even his understanding reflects Ofsted's own definitions: 'To me it is about, I mean the Ofsted thing was, it was about your own community, your local community, your national community and your international community, there's all of those' (AR).

This perspective is very similar to that of the member of staff responsible for CC whose first response was:

'Community cohesion, it's about, for me, we focus quite locally on our community cohesion and internationally' (KB). This response mentions local and international, similar to AR's response and also reflecting the Ofsted inspection of the school, which found the 'national' element of CC lacking in the school. This is something I wanted to explore with the head teacher as described in the next section.

5b 'there is no urgency'

Many of the staff identified the school's white mono-cultural catchment as a significant factor in their approach to CC. One might expect this to be a positive influence, encouraging engagement. However the head teacher implies the opposite when asked why he thought national links were not developed from the school:

'I don't know, I don't know what the barriers are there. I actually think there's no urgency from this community to make those links' (head teacher). The head appears to shift some of the responsibility on to the local community rather than the school. This is referred to again

when I asked him if he believed there was a greater need for CC given the white mono-cultural character of the town: 'Personally I do, I think there's a huge need, but convincing the local community of students, let alone the local community of adults that there's a need is another thing' (head teacher). The head here implies that the pupils and the local people would need convincing of CC's benefits for it to be an important part of school policy or the curriculum. This raises an interesting question about who or what drives the curriculum in school T.

5c 'othering'

One comment of the head teacher's linked the benefits of CC to a lack of racial incidents in the school. This is something AR also identified, as well as one of the pupils. However the head teacher contextualises this within the white mono-culture and lack of 'need':

'I mean we have the odd one or two Asian students...I think we have two black Afro-Caribbean, none of them have suffered any incident of abuse here, ... which is an indication that there is some kind of tolerance, but whether it's because it's so exceptional that it's accepted as being exceptional, therefore they're just one of us but slightly different' (head teacher).

This reference clearly reflects the 'othering' in the language used by the pupils, but one could consider this to be more significant given the status of the head teacher and the potential influence he has on the school.

6. Staff understanding GEP

When discussing CC with the teacher AR, he contextualised his understanding through Ofsted. However, when asked about his views on the benefits of GEPs, AR provides a much more holistic and personal perspective. An example of this is:

I would see it as trying to understand that we are basically one world, that all cultures contribute to the world in which we live in ... and that it's important that we have an awareness of what everybody contributes, so races, cultures, religions, the lot, the whole lot (AR).

This response uses inclusive language and counters the 'otherness' described before. This is very similar to another teacher's views – the geography teacher NS states: '...the global partnership implies a two-way relationship between an educational setting in one country and an educational setting in another country'. NS shows here insight into the 'partnership' element of GEP. Both AR's and NS's comments may indicate the importance of individuals

in schools to provide opportunities for pupils that are exceptional and against the norm for that establishment. The head teacher illustrates his understanding through examples of GEPs in the school and makes the following comment: ‘Whether it has any effect on developing tolerance, respect, appreciation of diversity, I don’t know to be honest, but we feel as though just giving them some models of what students, children their own age from other countries look like, might be useful’ (head teacher). Again what stood out here in the analysis was that on one hand the head teacher acknowledges the benefits of the GEPs but on the other his language is ‘othering’ describing ‘models of what students...from other countries might look like’.

7. School Activities

Having considered both pupil and staff understanding and valuing of Community Cohesion and Global Educational Partnerships, I investigated the activities taking place in the school. How do the activities compare to the pupil and staff perceptions?

7a School activities according to the pupils.

Citizenship as a non-core subject in the National Curriculum is open to interpretation in a state school with regards to how and when it should be delivered. Some schools choose to deliver it as part of the weekly provision to Key Stage 3 (11-14) pupils. School T’s method of delivery is through one day per half term (six weeks) where pupils experienced a ‘theme day’ related to citizenship including topics such as fair-trade. There was very little mention of these days or the themes by pupils when asked about where in school they learn about citizenship, cultures and religions.

What was mentioned was the delivery through Social and Moral Studies (the school’s equivalent to Religious Education), visits to local places of worship and delivery through, geography and assemblies.

What became evident in the interviews was that the pupils listed topics rather than describing what they learned. An example of this is: ‘We did Sikhism and we’re learning about the guru’s and stuff like that and about like rights of passage in other religions’ (year 7 boy). I interpret ‘we did Sikhism’ as a topic that was delivered in a procedural manner, rather than a topic taught with much meaning or depth. This may well be typical of how young people describe experiences, however with a lack of further description or explanation from the pupils this becomes an interesting finding.

7b School activities according to the staff.

The staff perception of the school activities is notably different. What becomes evident from interviewing staff is that the pupils actually offer far more insight into curriculum delivery and messages delivered through assemblies than staff, whose references to these are limited and vague. Several staff mentioned a diversity week delivered to the pupils on an annual basis, but with further investigation I found this was only delivered when the school was due an Ofsted inspection. AR suggests this was to tick a box for Ofsted: 'we sort of ticked a box I think when Ofsted came and we'd had diversity week' (AR).

When interviewing KB, the member of staff responsible for Community Cohesion, she described how she had completed a curriculum review for Ofsted to map out and identify where in the school there was provision for CC or GEP related activities. Her response was generic; 'Cause they do lots in history, they do lots in English' (KB). This comment 'they do lots' is repeated by AR another senior member of staff: 'we do a lot in maths... We've got projects going on with people coming and doing maths projects with the youngsters. Every subject area we've got lots and lots' (AR). This comment, rather like KB's lacks clarity. Ultimately AR says 'as long as it's there and it's coming through it must be making a difference'. This suggests a lack of insight and understanding as how it might be making a difference to pupils.

Conclusions

The conclusions I draw from these initial findings are tentative. I set out to explore whether there was a relationship between the activities of a school's GEPs and CC, and whether these activities could positively inform one another.

It would appear from the data that there is a clear process of 'othering' taking place among the pupils. While many of them can see and value the importance of Community Cohesion related activities, and would welcome further opportunities to experience global educational partnerships, there appears to be a subtle distinction being made between 'us' and 'them' when considering cultural understanding. This is further supported by individuals claiming there is no 'need' to learn about other cultures because there are not any in the local area, and the head teacher describing a lack of 'urgency' in initiating links with other schools with different characters of catchments in other parts of the country because of a perceived 'lack of need'.

The dominance of 'othering' as a discourse or meta-narrative is interesting. Findings from the interviews suggest that it relates to the values of staff and the structure and character of the school, more specifically the school's approach to the Ofsted inspections, which appear to dominate many aspects of the school's activities. It is possible, too, that it reflects the

dominant discourse in the local community, which bears significant influence on the pupils. This would resonate with Garland and Chakraborti's research in rural English communities.

While Ajegbo may have felt that the duty of schools towards Community Cohesion, reinforced by Ofsted inspections was a positive response to his proposals, it would appear in School T this is not working as it was intended. The staffing structure focussed on creating roles to provide evidence for school inspections. KB, as a non-teaching member of staff, saw her role not in leading change but collecting evidence and reporting on activities for the inspections. Her responses were very much 'what' not 'how' things happened. The 'box-ticking' response to the school inspections did not appear to be conducive to deep, quality education relating to cultural understanding, tolerance and respect. The 'diversity week' was an example of an opportunity to deliver something meaningful being done for the sake of the school inspection.

In addition the staff (including those with significant influence such as the head teacher) seem to not to value the activities relating to CC and GEPs. It would appear that activities that do occur are there because of a minority of staff who value them which then limits the level of provision experienced by all pupils. Language used by the head teacher, 'othering' pupils with non-white ethnicity, may compound this and contribute to staff and pupils' perceptions.

In relation to the initial research goals I would conclude that there is no or little relationship between GEP and CC in school T. On the contrary, there may be a negative relationship between pupil perceptions and school goals. The school's focus on the school inspections is influential on the school's activities and therefore the pupils' experiences. This may not be wholly responsible for the pupils' perceptions and values, but neither does it challenge them. In addition the head teacher's comments regarding a 'lack of need' from the community raises questions about who influences the curriculum in the school. Is the curriculum driven by government policy, the head teacher or pupils and local residents? This perspective resonates with Gaine's suggestions that both individual and institutional motive (or lack of) is a critical problem in managing change relating to racism (Gaine, C. 2000). While the school's inspections may have ensured that Community Cohesion was addressed, for school T the drive and focus to pass these inspections would appear to have led to a superficial approach which de-valued effective teaching relating to these issues in the school.

Implications

In 2010 at the last general election England's government changed from Labour to a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition. Education and the curriculum have experienced a

number of significant changes during that time. One element of this is the relative lack of importance placed on citizenship in the curriculum, in addition to Community Cohesion becoming relatively less high profile as a duty and area for school inspection.

In addition the National Curriculum is currently being reviewed. Although none of the content is agreed and finalised there is concern among some that the proposals will not support the learning about other cultures. For example there seems to be an absence of significant Black history in the new history curriculum, and a lack of global citizenship and sustainable education in the new geography curriculum. How will schools deliver a curriculum that supports the learning of cultures around the world and nationally promote tolerance respect and understanding?

As Europe has faced huge economic and political change in recent years, a key question arises about how we can make Global Educational partnerships meaningful in schools. In addition, as our societies are still unsettled by extremism and racist attacks, there is a need to ensure that schools still have a key role in promoting a cohesive community. With the removal of CC this is a key issue.

At the recent CICE conference (Lisbon 2013) one peer suggested that as Community Cohesion is no longer an explicit inspection criteria, the framing of this research needs to change. I would argue that the recent educational and policy changes make this research more relevant and important as a record of activities and their legacy that can both inform schools and policy for the future.

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