National Education Union: National Union of Teachers Section – written evidence (CCE0240)

1. The National Education Union - NUT Section welcomes the opportunity to respond to the call for evidence from the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement’s.

2. The following response focuses on the place of global learning for global citizenship and engagement as a cornerstone of citizenship and civic engagement.

Question 1: What does citizenship and civic engagement mean in the 21st century? Why does it matter, and how does it relate to questions of identity?

3. Citizenship and civic engagement begin in the classroom. Education is a fundamental building block for creating communities of young people who feel and demonstrate that they are part of the wider community; locally, nationally and internationally.

4. In the 21st Century, citizenship and civic engagement cannot and must not be interpreted in the exclusively national sense. To do so is to fundamentally misunderstand the society in which British people, and perhaps especially young British people, live. The internet and the complete saturation of social media throughout young people’s daily lives have meant that they are increasingly aware that they act within a global sphere, as global citizens.

5. Global citizenship and civic engagement matters therefore to ensure a sense of belonging in a diverse and constantly communicating world. Global citizenship and civic education teach children to better understand and interpret messages as positive or harmful and empowers them to make a choice between the two. This choice can be the difference between respect and hatred.

Question 5: What should be the role of education in teaching and encouraging good citizenship? At what stages, from primary school through to university, should it be (a) available, and (b) compulsory? Should there be any exemptions? Should there be more emphasis on political participation, both inside and outside classes? How effective is current teaching? Do the curriculum and the qualifications that are currently offered need amending?

6. Schools have an important role to play in teaching children about global citizenship and civic engagement.

7. There is a range of ways schools currently teach global citizenship: in some schools it is taught as a discrete subject or through subjects such as PSHE; in others, global citizenship education is mapped and planned through a whole school curriculum approach. We are concerned, however, that changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, assessment and accountability reforms – in particular, the EBacc, and Progress 8, are
undermining the ability of many schools to deliver effective global citizenship education.

8. The House of Commons Select Committee on Education concluded in April 2017 that a high stakes assessment system ‘can negatively impact teaching and learning, leading to narrowing of the curriculum and ‘teaching to the test’, as well as affecting teacher and pupil wellbeing’. These comments are relevant to the place of global citizenship education, which is finding itself marginalised by a system which prioritises success in a few test-focused subjects.

9. It has long been established (EPPI Centre 2004) that the quality of dialogue and discourse is central to learning in global citizenship education. Dialogue and discourse are connected with learning about shared values, human rights, and issues of justice and equality. These are complex skills. It is questionable whether their development is adequately covered in the curricula.

10. A modern, broad, balanced and engaging curriculum should include global citizenship within it. Where curriculum design does not include this, it must be revised. Where the drivers of practice – such as high-stakes testing and examinations – serve to steer schools away from them, these drivers must also be changed.

11. Teaching global citizenship and the responsibilities of being part of the international community are now fundamental for citizenship education. Engagement at this level matters immensely, not only for building respect and community cohesion, but for building globally aware citizens who are able to identify in their peers, locally and internationally, that which they have in common. This in turn supports a more peaceful society and world at every level.

12. Evidence from Think Global / Ipsos MORI suggests that ‘[t]hose who learnt about different religions and/or cultures at school have a greater tendency to be comfortable with the mix of people of different religions and races in Britain.’ The same research suggests that learning about global issues increases levels of desired social engagement. These are both key elements to developing strong and active international citizens.

13. Research has also proven that global learning positively impacts schools, leading to improved community cohesion, better school ethos and a stronger pupil voice. This in turn creates a more positive environment for education outside of citizenship and civic engagement.

14. Teachers must have the space, time and resources to teach global education, and to ask and explore difficult questions with their students in a free and safe environment. The positive impact of a good relationship with teachers is already well-established, with better teacher-student relationships leading to reduced instances of antisocial behaviour even years later. A positive relationship between teachers and students in relationship to global citizenship and civic engagement dialogue should be encouraged.
15. Given the aforementioned pervasiveness of social media and the internet, global education should be compulsory from an early age in order to best equip students with the tools required to operate positively in the 21st Century environment. This should include dialogue about belonging, respect, political engagement and global values, including fundamental human rights. Historical lessons and the consequences of unchallenged hatred should come at a later stage in a child’s school career, after the foundations of respect have been built.

Question 8: What are the values that all of us who live in Britain should share and support? Can you identify any threats to these values, which affect the citizenship of, for instance, women or various minority groups? If so, how can their citizenship be strengthened?

16. The values that are set forth as so-called ‘British values’ in the government’s Prevent strategy (i.e. democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs) are in fact international values, featured in both the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Commonwealth Charter, among other international covenants and treaties.

17. Framing these values as exclusively ‘British’ is in itself threatening, as it suggests that those who are not by nationality, or do not identify as, ‘British’ are excluded from these values. British people should share and support values without interpreting these as part of a national agenda. Doing so inherently protects those who are otherwise marginalised, as universal applicability of values means no one is excluded.

18. Global values such as respect for diversity, freedom of thought, and equality of opportunity underpin not only local societies, but international communities. These values also protect marginalised groups, as they are in themselves inclusive of such groups. Supporting all citizens, through education, to feel included in the applicability of values and encouraging open, free and positive discussion about these values strengthens global citizenship and in turn creates more active and cohesive communities, both nationally and internationally.

Question 9: Why do so many communities and groups feel “left behind”? Are there any specific factors which act as barriers to active citizenship faced by different communities or groups - white, BME, young, old, rural, urban? How might these barriers be overcome?

19. To suggest that there is one, or even a few, reasons why communities feel ‘left behind’ is a serious oversimplification of a complex issue. Individuals should be treated and consulted only in relation to their situation, without being expected to, or interpreted as, speaking for others. Although we recognise the importance of group identity, in how individuals see themselves and are seen by others,
individuality and uniqueness should be treated as the formative factor in any questions about feeling ‘left behind’.

20. With this in mind, there are some underlying factors that may contribute to communities feeling ‘left behind’. For example, discrimination faced at school by other children can have a detrimental impact on a young learner. Children can also learn attitudes such as racism from home, but bring this to school. Global education, teaching a sense of belonging within a diverse and international community, is therefore vital in combatting these attitudes. To do so furthermore encourages a shift in parental attitudes, once the education is brought back to the home.

21. The same is true of media representations of marginalised communities, including minority ethnic groups, certain faith groups, LGBTI and people with disabilities. Again, having strong global education from an early age would teach students how to challenge stereotyping in the media. Having learning resources in schools that include diverse representations of individuals and communities is also important in combatting biases that may arise from other areas of life.

Question 10: How do you see the relationship between citizenship and civic engagement on the one hand and social cohesion and integration on the other? What effect does the level of diversity in schools and workplaces have on integration in society as a whole? How can diversity and integration be increased concurrently?

22. Education for global citizenship and civic engagement is vital to create more cohesive communities. Education gives children the tools to work together for social cohesion and identify those factors that limit integration. It empowers young people to take an active part in their own community and starts them early on a path of understanding and celebration of diversity. A positive and respectful relationship with teachers, ideally of diverse backgrounds, who open dialogue about the importance of respect and the consequences of unchallenged hatred, is one of the most important ways of creating strong and engaged global citizens.

23. Teachers must be given the space to have these conversations, free from the burden of programmes such as Prevent. This allows more diverse groups of students to be welcomed into a positive community of children inspired to challenge hatred, concurrently increasing diversity and social cohesion.

24. Diversity in schools is very important. Evidence shows that positive relationships with individuals of different ethnic groups and social backgrounds encourages children ‘to decrease prejudice’ and have ‘more cross-group friendships’. This inherently creates a more cohesive and integrated community, but it also encourages a ripple effect out to the wider community. If children are learning positive lessons of inclusivity in school, this is likely to be brought home with them after they leave the classroom.
Question 12: Can you give examples of initiatives and role models that have helped promote a positive vision of British Citizenship within a tolerant and cohesive society?

25. *Remembering Srebrenica*: The lessons of the genocide in Srebrenica are as important today as they ever have been. In a heterogeneous yet integrated community, living side-by-side was not enough to ensure peace. Physical proximity did not prevent societal divides that ended in devastating violence.

26. The charity *Remembering Srebrenica* creates toolkits and activities to teach children about the genocide. These activities help children learn about the consequences of intolerance and hatred that go unchallenged. Through simple activities, such as a football match, children are made aware of this historical tragedy but given space and time to properly understand the lessons to be learned.

27. Understanding history is an important part of global citizenship education, as it encourages and inspires young people to not let similar events happen in their time.

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3. Ibid.